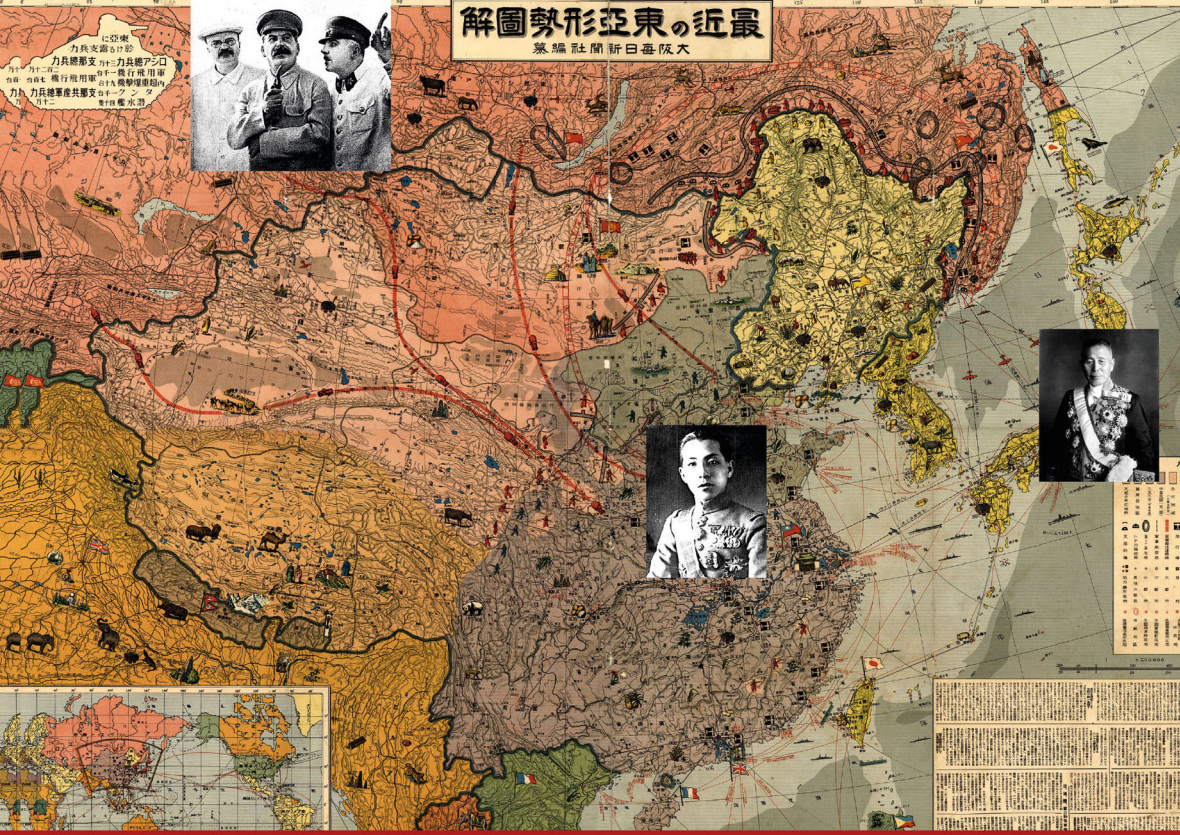

STALIN, JAPAN, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY OVER CHINA, 1894–1945

ROUTLEDGE OPEN HISTORY

HIROAKI KUROMIYA

ROUTLEDGE

Stalin, Japan, and the Struggle for Supremacy over China, 1894–1945

Stalin was a master of deception, disinformation, and camouflage, by means of which he gained supremacy over China and defeated imperialism on Chinese soil. This book examines Stalin's covert operations in his hunt for supremacy.

By the late 1920s Britain had ceded place to Japan as Stalin's main enemy in Asia. By seducing Japan deeply into China, Stalin successfully turned Japan's aggression into a weapon of its own destruction. The book examines Stalin's covert operations from the murder of the Manchurian warlord Zhang Zuolin in 1928 and the publication of the forged "Tanaka Memorial" in 1929, to Stalin's hidden role in Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the outbreak of all-out war between China and Japan in 1937, and Japan's defeat in 1945. In the shadow of these and other events we find Stalin and his secret operatives, including many Chinese and Japanese collaborators, most notably Zhang Xueliang and Kōmoto Daisaku, the self-professed assassin of Zhang Zuolin. The book challenges accounts of the turbulent history of inter-war East Asia that have ignored or minimized Stalin's presence and instead exposes and analyzes Stalin's secret modus operandi, modernized as "hybrid war" in today's Russia.

The book is essential for students and specialists of Stalin, China, the Soviet Union, Japan, and East Asia.

Hiroaki Kuromiya is a professor of history emeritus, Indiana University, USA. He has authored, among others, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s* (1998), *Stalin* (Profiles in Power) (2005), *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (2007), *Conscience on Trial: The Fate of Fourteen Pacifists in Stalin's Ukraine, 1952–1953* (2012), and *Zrozumity Donbas* (2015), and coauthored *Między Warszawą a Tokio: Polsko-japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904–1944* (2009, with Andrzej Pepłoński) and *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus, and Japan, 1904–1945* (2016, with Georges Mamoulia).

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Abbreviations, Transliterations, and Bibliographic References

1. Abbreviations

AAN, AVP, RGASPI, and other abbreviations for specific archives are listed, and their full names are spelled out in the Bibliography.

CCP: Chinese Communist Party (Communist Party of China)
CER: Chinese Eastern Railway (KVZhD in Russian)
Comintern: Communist International
FDR: Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945)
FER: Far Eastern Republic (1920–22)
GRU: Soviet military intelligence (*Glavnoe razvedyvatel'noe upravlenie*)
IMTFE: International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Tokyo War Crimes Trial, 1946–48)
JCP: Japanese Communist Party
KMT: *Kuomintang/Guomindang* or Chinese Nationalist Party
MPR: Mongolian People's Republic
OKDVA: Soviet Special Far Eastern Army
SCAP: Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

2. Transliterations

Russian and other languages that use one of the Cyrillic alphabets are romanized according to the Library of Congress systems. Chinese is romanized using the pinyin method, except for some familiar cases, such as Chiang Kai-shek (instead of Jiang Jieshi) and Taipei (instead of Taibei). Japanese is generally romanized according to the modified Hepburn system, except with a hyphen (-) instead of an apostrophe (') after *n* before a vowel or y (e.g., *Kan-ichi*).

3. Bibliographic references

The Bibliography provides full bibliographic information for every source cited in the footnotes. In each chapter, the first footnote citing a specific source provides the full citation, except for the name of the publisher. Subsequent footnotes citing that source use shortened citations.

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Introduction

After the successful Russian Revolution of 1917 and the failed revolutionary attempts in Germany, Hungary, and elsewhere in Europe over the next few years, the Soviet dictator Iosif V. Stalin (Joseph Stalin, 1878–1953) was determined to take the revolution to China. Almost all the world's imperialist powers had a large stake in China. There Stalin faced the largest imperialist power, Great Britain, and the most ambitious one, Japan, a neighbor of both China and the Soviet Union. The United States, meanwhile, carefully monitored its stake in China so as not to lose out to other powers. Stalin's greatest weapon in this struggle for control was to use China's nationalism against these two imperialist powers. In the end, Britain came to accept Chinese nationalism, but Japan did not. Thus, by the 1930s, the competing interests of Soviet Communism and Japanese imperialism led to a momentous rivalry whose nature and geopolitical ramifications are still not fully understood to this day. To investigate this period properly requires a fresh understanding not only of the Soviet Union and Japan during this time but also of the United States—which under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) came down decisively on the Soviet side. In essence, this power struggle caused Stalin to turn to the United States as a proxy—and with a deft sleight of hand, to guide Japan toward self-destruction in China and thereby create an immediate backdrop for the victory of Communism in China in 1949. Meanwhile, at the end of World War II, Japan found itself at war with an unexpected foe in the Soviet Union, with whom it had deceived itself into believing it could have a political romance. This book examines the battle for supremacy in China, particularly between the Soviet Union and Japan,[1] and investigates the secret histories of this period that those in the West and Asia alike have been content to leave hidden.

The genius of Stalin's political strategy in China evolved during the long years of the Bolsheviks' underground conspiratorial work before 1917, during which they developed a highly sophisticated art of disinformation, camouflage, and deception. During the revolution, they emerged as the sole ruling party and opened their ranks widely to mass membership. Nevertheless, the party's political operations remained highly conspiratorial. Decision-making was confined to a narrow circle of individuals (the Politburo) and often to just the dictator—first Vladimir I. Lenin (1870–1924) and then Stalin. Although policy implementation

[1] On the long struggle for hegemony in China, see Bruce A. Elleman, *International Competition in China, 1899-1991: The Rise, Fall, and Restoration of the Open Door Policy* (London, 2015) and S.C.M. Paine, *Wars for Asia, 1911–1949* (New York, 2014).

Figure 1. Soviet dictator Stalin with his lieutenants, Viacheslav Molotov (left) and Voroshilov Kliment (right), 1937

was accompanied by mass campaigns, its actual mechanism was often opaque, with hidden forces (the secret police) working behind the scenes. When it came to international politics and diplomacy, the Bolsheviks were necessarily constrained by foreign forces they could not control. The sense that the Soviet Union was surrounded by hostile capitalist countries, far mightier in economic power than the first socialist state, reinforced the Bolshevik conviction that any and all means were justified to fight against the enemy camp. From the earliest days of the Soviet government, its guiding principle was deception unhindered by any pretense of fair play—and deception that fully utilized all the might of espionage and counterespionage.[2] At the same time, the Bolsheviks disdained democracy as institutionalized deception of the masses based on hypocritical principles.

Stalin had a stated affinity for Asia. He is known to have declared himself to be "Asiatic," a "Russified Georgian-Asiatic," and the like. As an avid reader, he was familiar with Asia, and although there is little evidence that his knowledge was substantial, he turned out to be a master of both *ninjutsu* (忍術)—the Japanese art of ninja (stealth, camouflage, and sabotage)—and *jūjutsu* (柔術), a quintessentially Japanese martial art that attempts to use an opponent's own

[2] For a good exploration of this subject, see Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1927* (Armonk, NY., 1997).

force against him or her. It was precisely these stealth tactics that Stalin would use against Japan to defeat it resoundingly and gain hegemony in East Asia.

As a military tactician, Stalin's understanding of *ninjutsu* may well have been influenced by the famous dictum of Sun Tzu (Sun Zi, 孫子, ca. 544–496 BCE): "War is deception" (兵者, 詭道也). In a March 1937 speech that he delivered shortly before Marshal Mikhail N. Tukhachevskii (1893–1937) and numerous other Red Army commanders were executed, Stalin declared:

> To win a battle in war, several corps of Red Army soldiers may be needed, but to ruin the victory at the front a few spies will suffice somewhere in army headquarters or even in the division headquarters who can steal an operation plan and pass it to the enemy.[3]

For Stalin, deception was not simply a tool of war but also a guiding principle. Nor were these mere words. A strategy of deception was almost certainly a key element of his approach to Japan. Take for example the "small war" at Khalkhin Gol (also known as the Nomonhan Incident) in 1939, in which the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) defeated Japan and Manzhouguo (Manshūkoku in Japanese, a puppet state created in 1932 in Manchuria in northeastern China). Komatsubara Michitarō (小松原道太郎, 1886–1940),[4] the commander of Japan's main fighting unit, the Twenty-Third Division, was likely a Soviet agent.[5]

Likewise, in 1924 Stalin expressed his belief in *jūjutsu* quite clearly to China's leader-to-be Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石, Chiang Chung-cheng, Jiang Jieshi, 1887–1975). According to Suzuki Teiichi (鈴木貞一, 1888–1989), a China specialist in the Japanese Army who knew Chiang well, when Chiang asked Stalin for help in creating an army of fourteen divisions, Stalin apparently rebuffed him: "You don't need excessive forces. The armed forces are the last resort. You must exhaust all other means to lead the enemy to collapse before using arms."[6] The commander of the Red Army, Lev D. Trotskii (1879–1940), and his deputy, E.M. Sklianskii (1892–1925), gave similar advice to Chiang: What mattered was not so much the size of a military force as the deployment of subversion behind enemy

[3] I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* (Stanford, CA, 1967), 1:219.

[4] Here and elsewhere, the name order is family name–given name for East Asians unless they refer to themselves in the Western order (given name followed by family name).

[5] See Hiroaki Kuromiya,"The Mystery of Nomonhan, 1939," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 24, no. 4 (December 2011): 659–77. On the "honey trap" against him, see also A.G. Zorikhin, "Iapono-sovetskaia voina . . . dolzhna byt' provedena kak mozhno skoree," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 1 (2000): 54.

[6] Quoted in Suzuki Teiichi, "Hokubatsu to Shō-Tanaka mitsuyaku," *Bessatsu chisei 5: himerareta Shōwashi*, December 1956, 21–22. Although no record of Chiang's meeting with Stalin has been found, it is possible that he did meet Stalin but deleted any mention of him later. See Yuan Nansheng, *Sidalin Mao Zedong yu Jiang Jieshi* (Changsha, 2003), 44; *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae. Dokumenty. T. 1. 1920–1925* (Moscow, 1994), 312–13.

Figure 2. Chiang Kai-shek, China's political leader, 1943

lines—a strategy that would weaken the enemy, which then could be crushed.[7] Undoubtedly, their advice reflected the view of the Soviet leadership as a whole. Here, too, Stalin, Trotskii, and Sklianskii may well have been influenced by one of Sun Tzu's other famous dictums: "To break the enemy without fighting is the best of the best" (不戰而屈人之兵, 善之善者也). In the same vein, Stalin gave Bulgarian Communists the following advice in 1948:

> You should not be afraid of any "categorical imperative" regarding moral responsibility. We are not bound by any "categorical imperatives." The key issue is the balance of forces. If you are strong, then strike a blow. If not, do not enter the fray. We agree to fight not when the adversary wants us to, but when it is in our interests to do so.[8]

In the 1930s, Stalin lured Japan ever deeper into China, used Chinese and U.S. forces to exhaust the Japanese military, and then in 1945 struck a coup de grâce against Japan. It turned out to be a masterful stroke.

* * * * *

This book makes bold claims about the history of the interwar struggle for supremacy over China: It was Stalin who had the Manchurian warlord Zhang

[7] *VKP (b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae*, 280, 306–8. Chiang's account is in *Jiang Zhongzheng xiansheng nianpu changbian*, ed. Lü Fangshang (Taipei, 2014), 1:226–27.

[8] Georgi Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933–1949*, ed. Ivo Banac (New Haven, CT, 2003), 442–43.

Zuolin (張作霖, 1875–1928) murdered in 1928 and blamed Japan for his assassination. With the ultimate aim of destroying Japan's aggression on Chinese soil, Stalin induced Japan to invade Manchuria in 1931. To the same end, Stalin engineered the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 1937, which led to an all-out war between Japan and China. Simultaneously, Stalin engaged in provocative and diversionary activity to exhaust Japanese forces in China. For example, he was responsible for the major border clashes between Japan and the Soviet Union, beginning with the Kanchazu Incident (which took place just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident) and ending with the Battles of Lake Khasan in 1938 and Khalkhin Gol in 1939. Perhaps above all, Stalin dictated how the world and history would understand the events, in large part because he took extraordinary measures to hide his hand. Even though it was the Soviet Union that in August 1945 broke the 1941 Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact and started a war against Japan, Moscow managed to secure a seat on the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), also known as the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, which held Tokyo responsible for conflicts that Moscow had actually caused. This deflection of blame was Stalin's tour de force.

Although this book radically reinterprets the history of interwar East Asia, it does not in any way absolve Tokyo for its crimes of aggression. Rather, it attempts to chart systematically Stalin's hidden hand in the history of Japan's aggression in Asia. Stalin engaged Japan with such skill and foresight that even now it is difficult to discern his presence.[9] Virtually no credible account of Stalin's covert actions has been written in Japan, China, or the West. The unfortunate result is that the world essentially repeats the Stalinist accounts of international history.[10] Moreover, although Japanese nationalist circles peddle conspiracy theories about the Soviet Union, China, and the United States on the flimsiest of evidence, what these circles fail to imagine is that their heroes, imperial Japanese radical nationalists, in fact worked with (and in some cases actually worked for) the Soviet Union in undermining the Anglo-American liberal world order that they insisted stood in the way of Japanese imperialism.

Although it is possible that some of the Japanese nationalists unwittingly carried out Stalin's bidding, others consciously did so. Within this latter category, some Japanese nationalists were Soviet agents, while others were not; yet, they knowingly worked with the Soviet Union in the hopes of advancing the agenda of Japanese imperialism. The prominent journalist Ozaki Hotsumi (尾崎秀実, 1901–1944), the right-hand man of the German journalist and now-infamous Soviet spy Richard Sorge (1895–1944), is well known to have been a Soviet agent and was executed for treason in 1941. Under the guise of being a patriotic nationalist, he penetrated the highest echelons of the Japanese government and

[9] Even the latest Russian account of Stalin and the Far East has nothing new to say on the subject. See Oleg Mozokhin, *Stalin i Dal'nii Vostok* (Moscow, 2020).

[10] Even the most recent accounts of Stalin's strategic moves in Eurasia make no substantive break with them. See for example Alfred J. Rieber, *Stalin and the Struggle for Supremacy in Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2015).

Figure 3. Ozaki Hotsumi, a Japanese journalist, political adviser, and Soviet agent, before 1940

made incalculable contributions to keeping Japan mired in China after 1937. In contrast, Komatsubara was almost certainly an unwilling collaborator. Having fallen into a "honey trap" while he was a military attaché in Moscow in the late 1920s, he appears to have been blackmailed into working for Moscow.[11] Kōmoto Daisaku (河本大作, 1883–1955), an ultra nationalist, is widely believed to have been responsible for the assassination of Zhang Zuolin in 1928. He is also one of the men who engineered the Mukden Incident, Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Although Kōmoto confessed to Zhang's murder and even published his confessions, there is substantial doubt about his part in the assassination. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moscow admitted that its secret services were, in fact, responsible for Zhang's murder and that it had shifted the blame onto Japan. Although we cannot know for sure whether Kōmoto was a Soviet agent, we can at least say that he consciously collaborated with Soviet operatives. Chapter 2 discusses this case in detail. There are other similar collaborators, many of whom are discussed in the book. These men worked with Communist foes of Japanese imperialism because they had a common interest in fighting against a world order dominated by the West. Other figures are more difficult to understand, such as Tanaka Ryūkichi (田中隆吉, 1896–1972), an enigmatic Japanese intelligence officer involved in Japan's numerous conspiratorial operations in China (most notably the spread of Japan's military operations to Shanghai in early 1932). Russian historians have now acknowledged that Tanaka was a Soviet agent.[12] At the IMTFE after the war, Tanaka proved to be an invaluable asset for the prosecutors (including those from the Soviet Union). He incriminated his former army colleagues and later died after suffering a nervous collapse. The Russian acknowledgment does not necessarily prove that Tanaka was actually a Soviet agent—but if he was, many of the unaccountable Japanese operations in

[11] See Kuromiya, "Mystery of Nomonhan."

[12] A. Kolpakidi and D. Prokhorov, *KGB. Prikazano likvidirovat'. Spetsoperatsii sovetskikh spetssluzhb 1918–1941* (Moscow, 2004), 199. Their account includes inaccuracies that are discussed in Chapter 3.

Figure 4. Richard Sorge, a German journalist and Soviet agent in Japan, 1940

interwar China begin to make perfect sense. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 explore these cases in detail.

The fact that the Communist Bolsheviks sought out right-wing nationalists for subversive operations is not in the least surprising. They repeatedly made it clear that they were willing to work with the right under certain conditions. Here the Soviet-German collaborations in the 1920s and 1930s are particularly instructive. In 1923, a German nationalist and member of the paramilitary Freikorps ("Free Regiments"), Albert Leo Schlageter (1894–1923), was executed by the French military for sabotage in the French-occupied Ruhr. Karl B. Radek (1885–1939), a Polish-German-Soviet Bolshevik who would play a prominent role in the failed German revolutionary uprising in the autumn of 1923, came out in praise of Schlageter as "a courageous soldier of the counter-revolution" who "deserves to be sincerely honoured by us, the soldiers of the revolution." In June 1923, Radek delivered a speech at a plenum of the Communist International (Comintern) Executive Committee:

> But we believe that the great majority of the nationalist-minded masses belong not to the camp of the capitalists but to the camp of the workers. We want to find, and we shall find, the path to these masses. We shall do all in our power to make men like Schlageter, who are prepared to go to their deaths for a common cause, not wanderers into the void, but wanderers into a better future for the whole of mankind; that they should not spill their hot, unselfish blood for the profit of the coal and iron barons, but in the cause of the great toiling German people, which is a member of the family of peoples fighting for their emancipation.
>
> This truth the Communist Party will declare to the great masses of the German people, for it is not a party fighting for a crust of bread on behalf of the industrial workers, but a party of the struggling proletariat fighting for its emancipation, an emancipation that is identical

Figure 5. Tanaka Ryūkichi, a Japanese intelligence operative and suspected Soviet agent

> with the emancipation of the whole people, of all who toil and suffer in Germany. Schlageter himself cannot now hear this declaration, but we are convinced that there are hundreds of Schlageters who will hear it and understand it.[13]

Radek suggested that in opposing foreign capitalist forces, the Communists and nationalist patriots like Schlageter could find common political ground. Thus, for a brief period in 1923, joint nationalist-Communist actions did take place, and "posters with the Soviet star and swastika appeared together" in Germany.[14] Radek was keenly interested in German-Soviet cooperation. Already in 1919–1920, while sitting in a German jail after taking part in the failed revolutionary attempt, Radek was courted by Germans, including Heinrich Laufenberg

[13]Karl Radek, "Leo Schlageter—The Wanderer into the Void," *Labour Monthly* 5, no. 3 (September 1923): 157. Radek's speech was published with a preface by the journal's editor, who said that it was "likely to become one of the historical documents of the European revolution" at the "very moment when fascism and Communism were on the point of coming to grips [*sic*] for the soul of the tortured German masses." Ibid., 152.

[14]Michael David-Fox, *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2015), 196. This kind of Nazi-Communist hybridization was not uncommon in interwar Germany. For example, in 1931, Richard Scheringer (1904–86) famously defected from the Nazi Party and joined the German Communist Party; see Louis Dupeux, *National bolchevisme. Stratégie communiste et dynamique conservatrice* (Paris, 1979), 415, 565–68. Scheringer's conversion led to a Communist campaign to recruit leftist Nazi members and the creation of "so-called 'Scheringer Staffeln' from units of the banned Rotfrontkämpferbund, whose members sported Soviet armbands with their SA uniforms." See Timothy Scott Brown, *Weimar Radicals: Nazis and Communists Between Authenticity and Performance* (New York, 2009), 117, 182. The campaign was not too successful, with more people defecting from the Communist Party to the Nazi Party than the other way around. See Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, *Nationalbolschewismus in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), 285. Nevertheless, the Communist interest in right-wing radicalism never ceased. Scheringer studied Russian in the Reichswehr and believed that from a military point of view, the Soviet Union was Germany's ally. See his memoir, *Das Große Los. Unter Soldaten, Bauern und Rebellen* (Hamburg, 1959), 187–88, 226–27. Scheringer remained devoted to Communism for the rest of his life.

Figure 6. Karl Radek, a Polish-German-Soviet Bolshevik and Sinologist, 1925

(1872–1932) and Fritz Wolffheim (1888–1942), who sought to collaborate with Soviet Russia against the post–World War I order that the Treaty of Versailles had created in 1919. Radek was impressed by these German "National Bolsheviks," and he and other Bolsheviks saw the potential for an alliance.[15] This sentiment certainly helped sustain the alliance established by the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo, in which Weimar Germany and the Soviet Union stood together against the Versailles world order for a decade until 1932. Famously, the two countries secretly collaborated on military matters.

Even after Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) came to power in 1933, Radek courted Germany, certainly with Stalin's approval. In 1934, he and Nikolai I. Bukharin (1888–1938), an old Bolshevik, met "Professor Oberländer," a young National Socialist professor from the University of Königsberg who was visiting Moscow and was a "trusted friend" of Erich Koch (1896–1986), the East Prussian *gauleiter* (Nazi regional leader). Radek and Bukharin expressed their fulsome admiration for the "wonderful German people," with Radek going so far as to say: "There are magnificent lads in the SA [*Strumabteilung*, storm troopers] and SS [*Schutzstaffel*, protection squadrons]. You'll see, the day will come when they'll be throwing hand grenades for us." Radek and Bukharin also "expressed

[15]See Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, "Karl Radek in Berlin: Ein Kapitel deutsch-russischer Beziehungen im Jahre 1919," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 2 (1962): 101.

their firm conviction that the Nazi regime would collapse in economic and social crisis."[16] Within a few years, after they had rendered excellent service to Stalin, the Soviet dictator had both men killed for supposedly being German (as well as Polish and Japanese) "spies."

In retrospect, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 can be traced to Moscow's peculiar infatuation with fascism.[17] In fact, Radek, who in the first half of the 1930s served as Stalin's personal diplomat, repeatedly suggested that Moscow would be willing to work even with Nazi Germany in opposing the imperialist powers that dominated the world. Before Hitler came to power, Radek had predicted Hitler's victory and did not rule out the possibility of Nazi-Soviet cooperation, although he regarded Hitler and the Nazis as "too politically stupid" ("*politisch viel zu dumm*") to comprehend such a possibility.[18] In August 1934, Radek openly expressed his admiration for German students wearing the Nazi SA uniform and their willingness to sacrifice. He compared them to the young Communists in the Red Army and the Prussian volunteer forces who had fought against Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) in 1813. Radek insisted that Nazism was an "unwitting pacesetter of Communism" ("*unfreiwilliger Schrittmacher des Kommunismus*").[19] That same year, Radek told the German ambassador that Moscow would not do anything that would jeopardize the possibility of returning to a political rapprochement with Germany.[20] These remarks reflected Stalin's political thinking at the time. Radek was extremely useful to Stalin, who allowed him to put out political feelers that Stalin himself could not or would not utter publicly. Culturally refined, pleasantly eccentric, and sharply cerebral, Radek possessed the rare verbal ability to express provocative and even taboo ideas with disarming charm and wit. For that reason, Radek's remarks are an important guide to Stalin's thinking.[21] Yet, Stalin viewed Radek as a loose

[16]Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir-History of German-Soviet Relations, 1918–1941* (New York, 1953), 268.

[17]Certain philosophical and institutional affinities between fascism and Communism sustained relatively friendly relations between Italy and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and their political "rapprochement" in 1933–1934. See J. Calvitte Clarke III, *Russia and Italy against Hitler: The Bolshevik-Fascist Rapprochement of the 1930s* (New York, 1991).

[18]Ernst Niekisch, *Erinnerungen eines deutschen Revolutionärs* (Köln, 1974), 217. On Niekisch and "national Bolshevism," see David-Fox, *Crossing Borders*, chap. 7.

[19]Quoted in *Deutschland und Sowjetunion 1933–1941. Dokumente aus russischen und deutschen Archiven. Bd. 1: 30 Januar 1933–31 Dezember 1934* (Oldenbourg, 2014), 1319. Some Nazis became covert but witting "pacesetters" of Soviet Communism. Walther Stennes (1895–1983), an SA officer who in 1930–1931 rebelled against Hitler's "legalism," was expelled from the Nazi Party, became Chiang Kai-shek's bodyguard and personal intelligence man, and worked for the Soviet secret police under the code name *Drug* (Friend). See V.L. Peshcherskii, "Vrag moego vraga . . . ," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1998, no. 3, 59–71; Jerrold Schecter and Leona Schecter, *Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed American History* (Washington, DC, 2003), 15–16. For other cases of Nazis becoming Soviet agents, see Kurt Possanner von Ehrenthal (1898–1933) and Karl-Günther Heimsoth (1899–1934), see *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi razvedki* (Moscow, 1996), 2:181–195.

[20]See Jean-François Fayet, *Karl Radek (1885–1939). Biographie politique* (Bern, 2004), 685.

[21]However, Stalin almost certainly did not share the following ideas Radek expressed (but

cannon who knew too much and spoke too much; once his political utility had been exhausted, Stalin had him killed in jail in 1939.[22]

* * * * *

In tracing Radek's work, we can see how the Bolsheviks carefully cultivated nationalists as political allies as a strategy to advance their Communist aims. It is no surprise, then, that their willingness to collaborate with nationalists became even more manifest in Asia. From the mid-1920s, when Sino-Soviet relations were normalized after the chaos caused by the Russian Revolution and subsequent civil war (1918–20), Moscow subordinated the Chinese Communists to the hegemony of the Chinese Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang/Guomindang*, or KMT 國民黨). This strategy was based on careful studies of Asia in general, and China in particular, where industry was embryonic and the proletariat small. Radek was an influential and knowledgeable figure among the Bolsheviks in Asian as well as European affairs. In 1909–1911, while living in Leipzig, he had studied the history of China (and international politics) and collected a vast number of maps,[23] suggesting an interest in geopolitics. Later, Radek became the founding president of the Sun Yat-sen Communist University of the Toilers of China, established in Moscow in 1925. His studious, diligent reading[24] and prolific writing show that he was also intimately familiar with Japan and its history.[25] Radek was an admirer of Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), a noted Japanologist and geographer who is considered the father of the Nazi doctrine of *Lebensraum* (living space, the belief that Germany needed "living space" to survive) and who taught both Adolf Hitler and Rudolf Hess (1894–1987). Radek kept a copy of Haushofer's book *The Geopolitics of the Pacific Ocean* (*Geopolitik des Pazifischen*

that Radek himself may not have believed in): "We actually do not work at all according to a 'theory,' do not have any 'ideology,' rather we have only an aim." Quoted in Schüddekopf, *Nationalbolschewismus in Deutschland*, 13.

[22] The ever jocose Radek was one of those whom Stalin characterized as "slaves of their tongue—their tongues manage them." With Radek, one could never know when and what his tongue was "liable to blurt out." See Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin*, Profiles in Power (Harlow, 2005), 63.

[23] Faye, *Karl Radek*, 68.

[24] Radek "read every conceivable serious journal." Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, trans. Peter Sedgwick with George Paizis (New York, 2012), 161.

[25] See for example Karl Radek, *Portraits and Pamphlets* (London, 1935); his preface to O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *Militarism and Fascism in Japan* (New York, 1934), a translation of O. Tanin and E. Iogan, *Voenno-fashistkoe dvizhenie v Iaponii* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1933). This book was translated into Japanese and published in 1936 as 近代日本政治史: 日本に於けるミリタリズム及びファシズムの發展を通して見た (Tokyo: Sōbunkaku, 1936). In October 1933, Stalin had instructed Radek to write the preface with "some corrections" to the earlier version of the Tanin and Yohan text (published for limited circulation in Khabarovsk in 1933) which, its title notwithstanding, did not clearly brand Japan as "fascist." With Radek's corrections that Japan was fascist, Stalin intended to use this book to raise public opinion in the Soviet Union and "all other countries" against Japan's militarist fascists. *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska. 1931–1936 gg.* (Moscow, 2001), 396. Tanin (O.S. Tarakhanov [1901–1938]) and Iogan/Yohan (E.S. Iolk [1900–1937]) were both Soviet military intelligence officers.

Ozeans, 1924) on his desk and regularly sent Haushofer the Soviet journal *The New East* (*Novyi Vostok*).[26]

Yet, for Moscow, Japan represented a more complex problem than China. Because Japan was a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy, political intervention and manipulation from without had to be more subtle and covert than in China—a country divided by warlords, with whom Moscow was able to forge both open and clandestine relationships. Thus, to understand how Moscow laid the groundwork for its intervention in Japan requires an in-depth look at Japan's internal political circles—specifically, why both left- and right-wing groups shared a common interest in the Soviet Union. In fact, Japan—including its right-wing nationalist circles—covertly tried to cultivate the Soviet Union as an ally. As Chapter 1 discusses, in the wake of the Washington Naval Conference (1921–22), which ended the Anglo-Japanese Alliance that had been in effect since 1903, Japan became isolated and alienated from the imperialist world order with which it had faithfully engaged for almost twenty years. In this new international environment, Japan sought new partners in the Soviet Union and Germany, two countries that were also isolated from the post–World War I world order.

Although both the left and the right courted the Soviet Union, Moscow found it nearly impossible to work with Japanese Communists because the Communist Party was outlawed and persecuted. In contrast, Moscow had no trouble working with Japan's right-wing nationalists, who were eager to oust Britain and the United States from Asia (under the slogan "Asia for the Asians") and considered Moscow a convenient (though at times problematic) ally. Consider Suzuki Teiichi, who was vehemently hostile to the Anglo-American world order. In 1919, while studying economics as an army officer, he was deeply affected by *The Tale of Poverty* (*Binbō monogatari*, 貧乏物語, 1917) by the Marxist economist and journalist Kawakami Hajime (川上肇, 1879–1946).[27] When Suzuki served in China from 1926 to 1927, his army superior encouraged him to associate with the Soviets. He went to the Soviet embassy "almost every other day," holding numerous conversations with Ambassador Lev M. Karakhan (1889–1937); Aleksandr I. Egorov (1883–1939), a Soviet military adviser in Beijing; and others who welcomed him. Egorov proposed that "Russia," Japan, and Germany work together to kick out the Anglo-Saxons from China.[28] Later, Suzuki was sent to London to study at the London School of Economics and took courses with Harold Laski (1893–1950), a Marxist political scientist and member of the British

[26] Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk. Band 1. Lebensweg 1889–1946 und ausgewählte Texte zur Geopolitik* (Boppard am Rhein, 1979), 222.

[27] Suzuki Teiichi, "Waga kaisō (2)," *Fumi* 49 (July 1982), 24–25.

[28] *Suzuki Teiichi shi danwa sokkiroku (jō)* (Tokyo, 1971), 63; *Suzuki Teiichi shi danwa sokkiroku (ge)* (Tokyo, 1974), 137, 278. Suzuki insisted that he meant to "work with Russia" and not be manipulated by "English cunning" until Japan gained some "assurance" from the United States. *Suzuki Teiichi shi danwa sokkiroku (ge)*, 237. See also Suzuki Teiichi, "Yo to Konoe Fumimaro kō," *Fumi* 44 (December 1980), 3–4.

Figure 7. Tanaka Giichi, Japan's Premier (1927–1929), before 1929

Labour Party. Suzuki's main interest was in the Soviet Union.[29] After World War II, the IMTFE indicted and sentenced him to life imprisonment for his role in, among others, instigating hostilities against the United States and Britain in 1941. A Japanese historian who interviewed Suzuki after World War II was surprised to learn just how anti-American and pro-Soviet he turned out to be.[30]

Suzuki's sentiments were not uncommon among right-wing Japanese military men and politicians, including prominent figures such as General Tanaka Giichi (田中義一, 1864–1929), who was prime minister from 1927 to 1929 and famous for reputedly being responsible for the forged document known as the Tanaka Memorial, and General Araki Sadao (荒木貞夫, 1877–1966), who was war minister from 1931 to 1934 and the top-listed defendant at the Tokyo Trial. Both Tanaka and Araki had served as military attachés in imperial Russia, spoke Russian, and remained sympathetic to the Soviet Union as an international political partner while remaining adamantly anti-Communist (though not necessarily anti-Russian or anti-Soviet). Taking advantage of Moscow's insistence that the Soviet government had nothing to do with the Comintern, these men found it convenient to denounce Communism on the one hand while courting Moscow on the other. Even the emperor's younger brother Chichibunomiya (秩父宮, 1902–1953), who was reprimanded by the emperor for supporting the radical rightist programs of suspending the constitution to "renew" or "renovate" (革新) the Japanese body politic, was interested in the Soviet experiment. In 1929, he began studying Russian at the Army Staff College.[31]

[29] Suzuki Teiichi, "Waga kaisō (5)," *Fumi* 52 (April 1983), 42.

[30] Hosaka Masayasu and Hirose Yoshihiro, *Shōwaki no ikkyū shiryō o yomu* (Tokyo, 2008), 121.

[31] "Chichibunomiya denka Rogo gokenkyū," *Jiji shinpō*, 7 April 1929, 7. On Chichibunomiya's

The simultaneous occurrence of world capitalism's woes in the form of the Great Depression beginning in 1929 and the Soviet planned economy's stupendous development (at least in numbers) during the First Five-Year Plan (1928–32) caught the attention of Japan's right and left alike. The right began to see Soviet-type economic planning (which they called a "controlled economy") as a way to overcome the failure of capitalism. In 1934, with the participation of Suzuki Teiichi and other officers, the army published a pamphlet titled *The True Meaning of National Defense and a Proposal for Strengthening It* (国防の本義と其強化の提唱). The pamphlet caused a sensation both inside and outside Japan because it urged Japan to "adopt state socialism." According to the *New York Herald Tribune*: "The first chapter, dealing with national defense and domestic problems, says that 'society must be reformed and the economic system readjusted to bring about a more even distribution of wealth.' "[32] The pamphlet also called for a unified, rational control of the strategy, ideology, armed forces, and economy under the state. Many commentators characterized the pamphlet as advocating "national socialism" and an American-style "New Deal." Some even called the authors "Communists." However, the Soviet Communist Party newspaper, *Pravda*, disagreed, calling it a manifesto of "militaristic fascist elements."[33] *Pravda* was correct in not calling it "Communist," because the pamphlet dismissed internationalism as incompatible with Japan. It also explicitly rebuked Communism for squeezing the population for the sake of rapid economic development and thereby failing to cultivate the national livelihood that was essential to national defense.

It was often difficult to distinguish between Japan's political left and right, which were both radically opposed to capitalism. This was one of the driving forces behind both sides' sympathetic attitude toward the Soviet Union, even if it was not reciprocated. One of the most important pre–World War II Japanese ideologues of nationalist "state socialism," Takabatake Motoyuki (高畠素之, 1886–1928), was initially a Marxist who in the 1920s published the first complete Japanese translation of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. The Japanese ideologues of state socialism were supporters of Stalin's "socialism in one country,"[34] a doctrine arguing that, in their view, socialism could co-exist with nationalism in one country. It suited the Japanese nationalists, who rejected the rival theory of internationalism ("permanent revolution") advocated by Stalin's foe, Trotskii. Many radical Japanese political groups in the immediate post–World War I years (such as the Rōsōkai 老壮会) initially included both left and right members. Many adherents of "pan-Asianism," such as Mitsukawa Kametarō (満川亀太郎, 1888–1933) and Ōkawa Shūmei (大川周明, 1886–1957), were supportive of the

closeness to the radical right, see Hata Ikuhiko, *Shōwashi no nazo o ou. Jō.* (Tokyo, 1999), 96–97.

[32]Wilfrid Fleischer, "Army Demands Japan Adopt State Socialism," *New York Herald Tribune*, 3 October 1934, 36.

[33]"Vystuplenie iaponskoi voennshchiny," *Pravda*, 5 October 1934, 5.

[34]See Tatiana Linkhoeva, *Revolution Goes East: Imperial Japan and Soviet Communism* (Ithaca, NY, 2020), 208–9.

Figure 8. Ōkawa Shūmei, one of Japan's most famous nationalist ideologues, 1936

Russian Revolution as anti-imperialist and anti-Western. While they were against Communism and imperialism, they had a weakness for the Soviet Union: Its imperialism, as long as it was not anti-Asian, was "moral and justified," whereas Western imperialism was "predatory."[35] Essentially, Ōkawa's ideology "differed from communism only in its adherence to [Japan's] imperial nationalism. In its pursuit of the violent abolition of the current system, Ōkawa's idea was similar to Lenin's war communism."[36] In fact, Ōkawa once expressed admiration for Karl Marx as his "teacher."[37] Ōkawa, Mitsukawa, and other like-minded pan-Asianists supported Japanese-Soviet cooperation.

The 1934 army pamphlet reflected ideas expressed by firebrand nationalist ideologues such as Ōkawa Shūmei and Kita Ikki (北一輝, 1883–1937). Kita knew Marxist literature well and was influenced by it; so were some (possibly

[35] Ibid., 76. On these and other Japanese pan-Asianists, see Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York, 2007); Christopher W.A. Szpilman, *Kindai Nihon no kakushinron to Ajiashugi* (Tokyo, 2015). On Ōkawa, see Vasilii Molodiakov, *Rossiia i Iaponiia: mech na vesakh. Neizvestnye i zabytye stranitsy rossiisko-iaponskikh otnoshenii (1919–1948)* (Moscow, 2005), 32–33.

[36] Shinji Yokote, "The Ideological Impact of World War I on East Asia: The West, Communism, and Asianism," in *Russia's Great War and Revolution in the Far East: Re-imagining the Northeast Asian Theater, 1914–1922*, eds. David Wolff, Shinji Yokote, and Willard Sunderland (Bloomington, IN, 2018), 195. "War communism," a term coined by the Bolsheviks, refers to Russia's economy during the civil war period, when the state eliminated the market and controlled the national economy almost totally from above.

[37] See his 1930 acknowledgment: Ōkawa Shūmei, *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1961), 109–110. Many other right-wing ideologues such as Ōgishi Yoriyoshi (大岸頼好, 1902–1952) and Endō Yūshirō (遠藤友四郎, 1881–1962) were former Communists.

many) prominent army officers. Kita was on friendly terms with the famous Marxist-turned-anarchist Ōsugi Sakae (大杉栄, 1885–1923), who was murdered by the military police in 1923.[38] Many described Kita's ideas as "Communist."[39] The consequences of his ideological intermixing provide a highly instructive and illuminating example of how Japan was susceptible to Soviet manipulation, even when Moscow's involvement was hidden or ambiguous. On 26 February 1936, after a failed coup attempt by young army officers (see Chapter 4, p. 296), Kita was held ideologically responsible and executed in 1937. Without question, those close to the situation saw Soviet influence. Ozaki, a crypto-Communist who spied for the Soviet Union, called Kita a "revolutionary," even if his understanding might not be "Communist."[40] Having familiarized himself with the ideology of Kita and the coup leaders, Sorge wondered whether it might not, in fact, be a Communist uprising. He told his friend Prince Albrecht von Urach (1903–1969), a German nobleman working as a journalist in Tokyo, that "the Japanese Communists may have had some connection with the uprising, and that he [Sorge] did not dismiss the possibility of a Communist Japan still ruled by the emperor."[41]

It is possible, however, that Moscow was more directly involved in what became known as the February 26 Incident (or the 2.26 Incident of 1936). A prosecutor in charge of investigating the failed coup privately stated that the Comintern (a euphemism for Moscow) was actually behind it.[42] If so, this involvement would not have been anomalous: Japanese investigators were aware of Moscow's instructions to its operatives in Japan; by adding rightist content to leftist thought, they could turn the army "Red." Therefore, they should continue to work with the nationalists toward eventual Communist insurrections under the guise of nationalist movements.[43] Rumors were flying in the 1930s about Moscow's financing of Japan's right-wing movements.[44]

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[38] Harada Seiji, interview by Itō Takashi : "Sugao no Kita Ikki to 2.26," *Rekishi to jinbutsu*, December 1975, 116. Harada Seiji (原田政治, 1899–1983) worked as a fundraiser for Kita and knew his political operations well.

[39] George M. Wilson called Kita a "right-wing left extremist." See his *Radical Nationalist in Japan: Kita Ikki, 1883–1937* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 93.

[40] *Gendaishi shiryō (2): Zoruge jiken (2)* (Tokyo, 1962), 137, 158–159.

[41] F.W. Deakin and G.R. Storry, *The Case of Richard Sorge* (New York, 1966), 174. The account is based on the authors' interview with von Urach. Some Japanese Communists believed that the mutiny would grow into a revolution. See Makise Kikue, *Kutsumi Fusako no koyomi: Meiji shakaishugi kara Zoruge jiken e* (Tokyo, 1975), 108. Kutsumi Fusako (九津見房子, 1890–1980) was a member of the Sorge spy ring in Japan.

[42] Hara Hideo, Sawachi Hisae, Sakisaka Tetsurō, comps., *Sakisaka shiryō 7: Kensatsu hiroku 2.26 jiken* (Tokyo, 1990), 3:24. In 1940, a leading Japanese commentator on international affairs also suspected that Moscow had been behind the February 26 Incident and the similar coup attempt that took place earlier on 15 May 1932. Hanzawa Gyokujō, "Kominterun no Tōa katsudō to sono waga kokujō ni oyoboseru eikyō" (no pagination), Masaki Jinzaburō bunsho, no. 2423, Kokkai Toshokan Kensei shiryō shitsu, Tokyo.

[43] *Naimushō shūhō* 5 (25 May 1936), article 4; 10 (29 June 1936), article 2.

[44] See for example *Kido Kōichi kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 1966), 247–250.

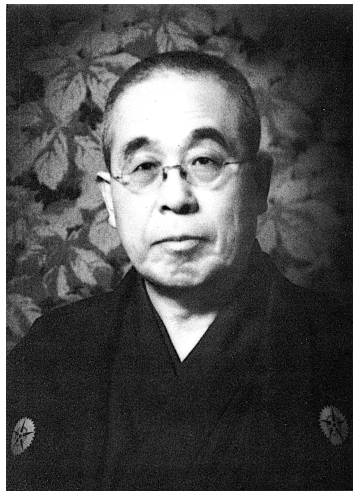

Figure 9. Kuhara Fusanosuke, 1939, a pro-Soviet Japanese industrialist who had a secret meeting with Stalin in 1927

In other words, Moscow saw the ambiguity of Japan's political left and right as an opportunity to exert influence. Indeed, some Japanese rightists did not disavow Marxism-Leninism entirely: They simply wanted to put the Japanese nation at the center of their ideology.[45] According to Tokugawa Yoshichika (徳川義親, 1886–1976), a nobleman who associated with both the right and the left, they pursued the same goal, and when it came to reorganizing the state, there was no real difference between them.[46] Moscow skillfully exploited this "no difference." In fact, the Japanese police noticed that in the wake of the February 26 Incident, the Japanese left made a "right turn," becoming often indistinguishable from the right.[47] In writing to Lev Karakhan in March 1932 from Tokyo, Aleksandr A. Troianovskii (1882–1955), the Soviet ambassador, emphasized that not all militarist-fascist movements were hostile toward the Soviet Union, that Soviet economic development impressed Japan, and that Japan understood the importance of the Soviet Union in its geopolitical calculations.[48] Although we cannot know for sure whether Moscow actually stood behind the February coup in Japan, it is evident that there was ample ground for collaboration between Moscow and Japan's political right. Moscow did not miss this golden opportunity. While some leftists like Ozaki worked for Moscow under cover, some rightists were also willing to work with (if not always *for*) Moscow.

Kuhara Fusanosuke (久原房之助, 1869–1965) was one such example. An affluent and powerful industrialist who founded what later became the huge Hitachi multinational conglomerate, Kuhara (like the nobleman Tokugawa)

[45] See for example the case of Ōkawa Shūmei, discussed in Nakano Masao, *Kakumei wa geijutsu nari* (Tokyo, 1977), 100.

[46] Ibid., 87.

[47] Keihokyoku Chōsashitsu, *Sayoku undō no Nihonka* (Tokyo, 1937).

[48] See AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, ll. 20, 24, and 37.

Figure 10. Sun Yat-sen, co-founder of the KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party), 1911

associated with both the left and the right. In fact, he admired both Hitler and Stalin. Kuhara entered politics in the 1920s and in 1927 became one of the only foreign private citizens until then to meet with Stalin in Moscow. Directed by Tanaka Giichi, Japan's prime minister at the time, Kuhara seems to have struck a secret verbal deal with Stalin regarding the political control of the Asian continent and played an important yet little understood role in Japan's slide into World War II (see Chapter 2). Yet, Kuhara escaped persecution for war crimes because in 1916, he lent a vast sum of money to Chinese revolutionaries, one of whom was Sun Yat-sen (孫中山, 孫逸仙, 1866–1925), who had co-founded the KMT in 1912. After World War II, Kuhara worked to achieve friendly relations between Japan and both the Soviet Union and Communist China.[49]

Such exceedingly mysterious and politically suspect figures were not exclusive to Japan's political right. Kamei Kan-ichirō (亀井貫一郎, 1892–1987), a nobleman and former diplomat who called himself a "*ninja*" (忍者), spoke English, French, and German comfortably and in the 1920s joined Japan's Social-Democratic Party (社会民衆党), which he stated to an American journalist in 1928 was "conducting the most strenuous fight against the [*sic*] Japanese Imperialism in China and the [*sic*] capitalism."[50] He knew both Ozaki (a Communist) and Kita (a radical nationalist). While playing an active role in the socialist movement, Kamei simultaneously carried out secret work for the Second Department (Intelligence) of the Army General Staff. In the mid-1930s, Kamei joined a group of Soviet experts to study Japan's political system known as the emperor system (tennōsei 天皇制) and helped the Soviet Union formulate its policy toward Japan. While

[49] See Kuhara's biography: Yonemoto Jirō, *Denki Kuhara Fusanosuke ō o kataru* (Tokyo, 2006).

[50] Kamei Kan-ichirō to George E. Sokolsky, 17 August 1928, George Sokolsky Papers, box 67, folder 4, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. Sokolsky (1893–1962) was an American journalist who reported from China for fourteen years from 1918 to 1932.

promoting political cooperation with the Soviet Union against the imperialist world order, Kamei also expressed great interest in Nazism and, in 1937–1938, engaged in political intrigue involving Finnish Communist and Comintern leader Otto Kuusinen (1881–1964), Hitler, Rudolf Hess, and other Nazi figures. After World War II, Kamei appears to have worked for American intelligence in Japan. His life and work were so dramatic and mysterious that his biographer called him a "monster" (*kaibutsu* 怪物).[51] Kamei's case is discussed throughout this book.

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Likewise, it is important to note that some radical Chinese nationalists were also hand in glove with the Soviets. Like their Japanese counterparts, radical nationalists in China were against liberalism and capitalism, promoted the idea of "China's Stalin" (as well as "China's Hitler" and "China's Mussolini"), and entertained "goals and policies" that were "similar to those that [had] appeared in Chinese Communism."[52] Of the dozen or so graduates of the KMT's Whampoa Military Academy[53] who went on to study in the Soviet Union, *all* later joined the so-called Blue-Shirt Society, an ultranationalist secret society within the KMT. This could not have been accidental. Even more graduates went on to study in Japan, and many of them also joined the society. In both the Soviet Union and Japan, these Chinese nationalists studied shoulder to shoulder with their Communist classmates and maintained close relationships with them after returning to China.[54] It would have been surprising if Moscow had *not* recruited agents from among these Whampoa graduates. In fact, there were numerous Communist spies in the ranks of the KMT, including three famous master spies who deeply infiltrated the KMT (even its special operations departments): Li Kenong (李克農, 1899–1962), Qian Zhuangfei (錢壯飛, 1895/96–1935), and Hu Di (胡底, 1905–35).[55]

Yuan Shu (袁殊, 1911–1987) was another master spy who infiltrated the KMT. Having studied in Japan, where he was exposed to Marxism, he be-

[51] Takahashi Masanori, *Kaisō no Kamei Kan-ichirō. Gekidō no Shōwashi o kage de sasaeta eiketsu* (Tokyo, 2000).

[52] Lloyd E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927–1937* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 43, 81, 145. See also Maria Hsia Chang, *The Chinese Blue Shirt Society: Fascism and Developmental Nationalism* (Berkeley, CA, 1985), 17–18.

[53] The academy was established in 1924 with the CCP's participation and with the financial support of the Soviet Union.

[54] See Deng Yuanzhong, *Guomindang hexin zuzhi zhenxiang: Lixingshe, Fuxingshe, ji suowei "Lanyishe" de yanbian yu chengzhang* (Taipei, 2000), 54–55. See also Maggie Clinton, *Revolutionary Nativism: Fascism and Culture in China, 1925-1937* (Durham, NC, 2017), 38.

[55] See Hao Zaijin, *Zhongguo mimizhan* (Beijing, 2010), 11–12, 34–35. Three KMT intelligence organizations in Shanghai, Nanjing, and Tianjin, created in 1930 under the guise of news agencies, were "from top to bottom completely in their hands." See Fang Ke and Dan Mu, *Zhonggong qingbao shounao Li Kenong* (Beijing, 1996), 43; Kai Cheng, *Zhonggong yinbi zhanxian de zhuoyue lingdaoren Li Kenong* (Beijing, 2018), 14–15.

came a Communist. In 1931, he started working for the Chinese Communist Party's intelligence service. As instructed, Yuan infiltrated the KMT's intelligence units and ultraright circles (such as the Blue-Shirt Society), as well as Japan's diplomatic and intelligence corps in Shanghai. Chinese historians later called him "white skinned but red hearted" (白皮红心), referring to the labels attached to the anti-Communist nationalists (the "Whites") and the Communists (the "Reds").[56] In 1941, Yuan provided Moscow with critical intelligence on Japan's military moves (see Chapter 5, p. 406). Wang Dazheng (王大楨, aka Wang Pengsheng [王芃生], 1893–1946) was yet another. While studying in Japan, Wang became acquainted with key Japanese political, military, and ideological figures, including Yasuoka Masahiro (安岡正篤, 1898–1983), who was a scholar of the Chinese neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming (王陽明, 1472–1529) and was widely regarded as an ideologue of Japanese radical nationalism. In his work as a diplomat and an expert on international affairs, Wang Dazheng employed many Chinese nationalists who had studied in Japan and become Communists.[57]

As Chapter 2 discusses, there are strong hints that Zhang Zuolin's eldest son, Zhang Xueliang (張學良, 1901–2001), was an accomplice of Soviet and Japanese conspirators in his father's assassination. Zhang Xueliang then turned against the Soviets and fought them in a brief war in 1929 over the control of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER or KVZhD in Russian), after which he abruptly changed his allegiance and quietly colluded again with Moscow, this time against Japan in an alliance that led to Japan's occupation of Manchuria in 1931. Next, Zhang Xueliang, a self-acknowledged "fanatic patriot" (爱国狂),[58] flirted with fascism. In 1933, he traveled to Europe and met Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), "whom he came to admire."[59] Zhang believed that China's future lay in "totalitarianism," either by fascism or by Communism.[60] In the end, Zhang chose Communism. Although he did not make his choice public during the 1930s, toward the end of his life, Zhang confessed that his heart lay with Communism (see Chapter 4, p. 315).

In his senescence, Zhang still asserted his respect for Stalin as a political leader, whereas he dismissed both Hitler and Mussolini as having failed and

[56] See Zeng Long, *Wo de fuqin Yuan Shu: huanyuan wumian jiandie de zhenshi yangmao* (Taipei, 2016), 10, 100; Hu Zhaofeng, Feng Yuehua, and Wu Min, *Jiandan qinxin: hongse qingbaoyuan Yuan Shu chuanqi* (Chengdu, 1999), 35–43, 63–67.

[57] See Pan Changlong, " '9.18,' 'Tianzhong zouzhe' yu Wang Pengsheng," *Waiguo wenti yanjiu*, no. 3 (1997): 42–45.

[58] During their first visit in 1991, Zhang's first sentence to the interviewers was "I'm a fanatic patriot." See *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)* (Beijing, 2014), 1:61, 1:104, 4:1017. See also *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Beijing, 1992), 2:1181.

[59] Zhang's standard English biography, Aron Shai, *Zhang Xueliang: The General Who Never Fought* (New York, 2012), 37. Unfortunately, Shai's book fails to incorporate much relevant literature. In addition, while Shai and some other Zhang biographers state that Zhang met Hitler in Germany, other sources do not confirm this meeting. Zhang asserted that he did not meet Hitler, who was in Munich when he visited Berlin. See *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi*, 1:166.

[60] Wang Shujun, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi* (Jinan, 2002), 1:515.

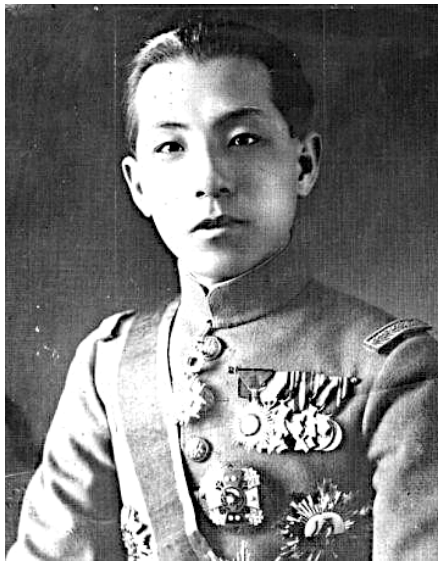

Figure 11. Zhang Xueliang, a key player in Stalin's China strategy, 1928

"gone down." In Zhang's opinion, Chiang Kai-shek had also failed as a leader because his love for himself was greater than his love for his country. In contrast, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders, Mao Zedong (毛澤東, 1893–1976) and Zhou Enlai (周恩来, 1898–1976), were "awesome" (厉害), according to Zhang. About the terror committed by the Communists, he was more philosophical, citing a famous line from a Tang-era poem: "一将功成万骨枯" ("the achievement of a general costs ten thousand lives").[61] Although Zhang in no way deferred to foreigners, he turned out to be an invaluable political asset for Moscow. As this book discusses, he played a pivotal role in all major events in Stalin's struggle for supremacy over China before World War II: Zhang Zuolin's assassination in 1928, the release of the Tanaka Memorial in 1929, Japan's occupation of Manchuria in 1931, and the formation of the Second United Front between the CCP and the KMT in 1937. Although Zhang is well known for his role in the Xi'an Incident (the forceful detention of Chiang Kai-shek) in 1936 (see Chapter 4, p. 310), historians have inexplicably ignored his major role as China's supreme conspirator. Significantly, a member of Zhang's entourage, Yan Baohang (閻寶航, 1895–1968), subsequently known as China's Richard Sorge, was an invaluable spy planted deep inside China's political and military establishment (see Chapter 3, p. 176 and Chapter 5, p. 404). Unlike Sorge, however, Yan was not caught by the enemy. Wrongly accused of being a "counterrevolutionary," he was arrested by his leader, Mao, and died in prison in 1968 during the Cultural Revolution.[62]

The stories of these Japanese and Chinese men highlight a critical factor

[61] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi*, 6:1714, 1717–1718. Zhang quoted the poem slightly differently: "一将成名万骨枯" ("the fame of a general costs ten thousand lives").

[62] Jin He, *Yan Baohang zhuan* (Shenyang, 2008), 518, 521; memoirs by his son Yan Mingfu

in Japanese-Soviet-Chinese relations in the interwar period—i.e., that Moscow secretly, consistently, and masterfully cultivated agents and influencers in Japan and China. In general, the Chinese were far more hard-nosed and aware of Moscow's hidden political agenda than were the Japanese. Both political wings of the Japanese government and of the military establishment in particular entertained the naive hope that they could develop and promote a productive and allied political relationship with the Soviet Union, in contrast to the direction of their Anglo-American relations. The Soviet Union, however, did not entertain any such hopes and in fact used this very aspect of Japan's political aspiration to manipulate the Japanese expertly. Some of these Japanese men may have thought that by working with the Soviets they could influence and control Moscow. If so, they were delusional; it was the other way around. Moscow used these leftists and rightists to do its own bidding. The manipulation was not always successful—but even when it was successful, Stalin rarely showed his hand. What these men failed to appreciate was the strength of the strategy that the Soviet Union developed as political and military *maskirovka* (camouflage, deception). Moscow secretly used enemy forces to implement its policies, while at the same time deploying its full political, diplomatic, economic, and military power behind the scenes.

We can trace this strategy back to the Higher School of Military Camouflage (Высшая школа военной маскировки), founded in Moscow in 1918, the year after the Bolshevik Revolution. The school's 1927 manual notes: "The enemy cannot be duped by concealment alone." Therefore, it is necessary to "create the wrong impression about our actions and intentions in the enemy. . . . The main methods of creating the wrong impression in the enemy . . . are: (1) spreading disinformation, (2) carrying out deceptive actions, and (3) creating disguised objects."[63] In 1923, the Politburo approved the creation of a bureau of disinformation within the secret police.[64] In 1925, a disinformation division was created within the Soviet military intelligence agency (GRU), which spread disinformation (for example, inflating the actual strengths of the Red Army) to disorient capitalist countries.[65] In general, the GRU's military disinformation operations were more active than those of the Soviet secret police.[66]

(阎明复), *Yan Mingfu huiyi lu* (Beijing, 2015), 56–86. Yan Baohang's Russian code name was "Pavel" (巴维尔) (74). Mingfu became a Russian specialist who interpreted for Mao and other CCP leaders in the 1950s and 1960s.

[63]V.N. Lobov, *Voennaia khitrost' v istorii voin* (Moscow, 1988), 18–19. This school is discussed in "Vysshaia shkola voennoi maskirovki," *Krasnyi ofitser*, no. 1 (1918): 11.

[64]Vladimir Voronov, "Ot sovetskogo dezinformbiuro," 23 February 2019, accessed 1 July 2019, https://www.sovsekretno.ru/articles/ot-sovetskogo-dezinformbyuro-/. Voronov questions whether this bureau was actually created. If it did exist, exactly what kind of work it carried out is unknown. Rumor in Moscow has it that not a single document has been declassified from its archive.

[65]See a 1925 report in *Glazami razvedki, SSSR i Evropa, 1918–1938 gody. Sbornik dokumentov iz rossiiskikh arkhivov* (Moscow, 2015), 164–69.

[66]Evgenii Gorbunov, *Stalin i GRU* (Moscow, 2010), 57.

Maskirovka constitutes the core of what, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014, has come to be known as "hybrid war."[67] In its essence, however, hybrid war is nothing particularly new; Moscow used it in Asia during the 1920s, 1930s, and beyond when the world's attention was fixated not on the Soviet Union but on Japanese imperialism. Subsequently, this subversive strategy came to be known as reflexive control (рефлексивное управление) in the Soviet Union (and after its collapse, in the Russian Federation). The "objective of reflexive control is to force an enemy into making objective decisions that lead to his defeat by influencing or controlling his decision-making process."[68] Reflexive control techniques include intimidation, enticement, disinformation, deception, manipulation, concealment (camouflage), diversion, paralysis, exhaustion, and provocation.

To be effective, reflexive control demands a deep understanding of the enemy and its vulnerabilities. Imperial Japan's weaknesses included its sense of superiority over Russia and the Soviet Union (a by-product of Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5), its sense of injustice at the hands of the Western powers (in the post–World War I settlement), its anti-Americanism (partly a response to the anti-Japanese Immigration Act of 1924), its violently nationalistic ambitions regarding Manchuria (as Japan's economic "lifeline"), and its fragile economic foundations. All these weaknesses manifested themselves in the form of Japan's self-righteousness about its imperialist expansion. Moreover, Japan held its military forces in such high esteem that they became almost unaccountable for their actions. The Soviet Union studied Japan carefully, understood both its strengths and its weaknesses, and exploited those vulnerabilities accordingly. The Japanese government and the armed forces proved incapable of withstanding the covert provocations of its neighbor, with whom Japan had long dreamed of forming a political romance. The result presaged the doom of the Japanese Empire long before the Pacific War broke out in 1941. In fact, the notion that the United States caused Japan's collapse is for the most part historically inaccurate. However successful Japan may have been in the 1941 Pearl Harbor attack against the United States, the home of *ninjutsu* and *jūjutsu* had by then already been soundly defeated at its own game by Stalin. Japan had simply failed or refused to understand that defeat. Tellingly, Japan's final defeat at the hands of Stalin would come one week after his declaration of war against Japan in 1945.

[67] Today's Russian military forces have a two-volume textbook on *maskirovka*, which is "three times longer than Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*." Lucy Ash, "How Russia Outfoxes its Enemies," 28 January 2015, BBC News website, http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31020283.

[68] Timothy L. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17, no. 2 (2004): 243. See also Michał Wojnowski, " 'Zarządzanie refleksyjne' jako paradygmat rosyjskich operacji informacyjno-psychologicznych w XXI w.," *Przegląd bezpieczeństwa wewnętrznego*, no. 12 (2015), 11–36. For an analysis of Russia's hybrid war against Ukraine as an example of reflexive control, see Alya Shandra and Robert Seely, "The Surkov Leaks: The Inner Workings of Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine," Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies Occasional Paper, London, July 2019.

By its very nature, Stalin's game of deception is difficult to prove, for concealment was its essence. Even after nearly a century, Moscow still carefully guards its archives. Numerous files and even parts of files in the former Soviet Communist Party Archive (RGASPI) remain classified. The Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AVP RF) in Moscow does not make its lists of documents available to researchers, in effect allowing access only to those documents that the Russian government and its agencies deem politically acceptable.[69] Although the archive of the secret police (FSB) is not closed, many of the files ostensibly available to researchers are sealed and cannot be read.[70] The Russian Ministry of Defense archive (TsAMO), which presumably contains Soviet military intelligence documents, is virtually closed, as is the Russian Presidential Archive (AP RF). It is highly revealing that, as far as we know, none of the Japanese archival documents that the Soviets captured in Manchuria in 1945 have been made accessible. (By contrast, much of the Polish, German, and French archives that the Soviets captured during World War II were either returned to their countries of origin or made available to researchers.) In brief, Moscow—first the Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation—has de-classified those archival documents that suit its interpretation of history and has held back those that do not. East Asia in general, and China and Japan in particular, occupies a special place in Moscow's concealment of historical truth.

Moreover, in history as in politics, Moscow still engages in disinformation. The case of Ataman Grigorii M. Semenov (1890–1946) is a good example. The head of the anti-Bolshevik Russian émigré community in the Far East, Semenov secretly collaborated with Moscow—although in attempting to hide his clandestine life, he did not always follow Moscow's instructions. We now know that Semenov had contact with Richard Sorge. In 1931, for example, Semenov reported to Sorge that Japan was preparing for war with the Soviet Union.[71] Of course, this report was Moscow's disinformation (see Chapter 3, p. 229)—a complicated case of one secret Soviet agent providing disinformation to another. Still attempting to conceal Semenov's role as a Soviet collaborator, Moscow continues

[69] Documents relating to Soviet-Japanese relations are an exception. With the participation of the AVP, a Japanese scholar cataloged many relevant documents during the 1990s. See Chiharu Inaba, comp., *Sovetsko-iaponskie diplomaticheskie otnosheniia (1917–1962 gg.), katalog dokumentov (po materialam Arkhiva vneshnei politiki RF)* (Tokyo: Nauka, 1996). Yet, the AVP now disowns the catalog (which does not list classified material, in any case).

[70] By contrast, the Ukrainian secret police archive of the Soviet period is now wide open. Many new works based on its documents are expected to be published in the future. See the latest studies dealing with post-Stalin Soviet foreign operations based on them: Sanshiro Hosaka. "Repeating History: Soviet Offensive Counterintelligence Active Measures." *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, no. 0 (2000): 1-30 (online publication accessible at https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2020.1822100); Sergei Zhuk, *KGB Operations Against the USA and Canada in Soviet Ukraine, 1953–1991* (London, 2022).

[71] M. Alekseev, *"Vash Ramzai." Rikhard Zorge i sovetskaia voennaia razvedka v Kitae 1930–1933 gg.* (Moscow, 2010), 412; Yang Guoguang, *Gongxun yu beiju: hongse diewang Zuoerge* (Beijing, 2012), 40. We don't know whether either Semenov or Sorge knew that the other man was actually a Soviet agent.

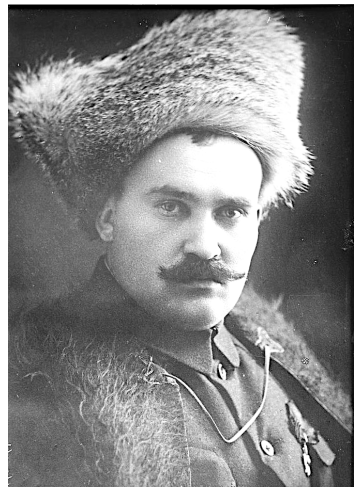

Figure 12. Ataman Grigorii M. Semenov, leader of the anti-Soviet Russian émigré community in China and a Soviet agent, 1920s

to spread disinformation that Semenov was a Japanese agent.[72] Historians should not be fooled by Moscow's strict and elaborate control of information.

Yet, no one—not even Moscow—can hide everything. Fragmentary information can sometimes provide a valuable clue to historical mysteries. When read carefully and critically, both published and unpublished materials, as well as declassified archival documents, are illuminating. The *absence* of documents in archives is also quite significant. I have made every effort over many years to gain access to as many documents as possible in Moscow and elsewhere. Although in matters of intelligence and camouflage, a smoking gun is rarely found, a clear, logical line of events does emerge through close analysis of the available documents, as I lay out in the following chapters.

This book's focus on Asia also addresses some peculiar lacunae in historiography. Moscow's covert operations in Europe are better known than those in Asia. In the 1920s in particular, Moscow's spectacular covert operations against Western intelligence services and émigré groups through the creation of fake anti-Soviet organizations inside the Soviet Union have become widely known.[73] In Soviet Ukraine from 1920 to 1924, there was a special organ charged with exporting revolution to the West (Poland).[74] Yet, Moscow found its covert operations in the West increasingly difficult because the West quickly learned the

[72] See Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Ataman Semenov's Secret Life," *Przegląd Wschodni* 13, no. 2 (2014): 535–56.

[73] On the case of the famous "Trust" operation and other similar ones, see Costello John and Oleg Tsarev, *Deadly Illusions: The KGB Orlov Dossier Reveals Stalin's Master Spy* (New York, 1993).

[74] See O.O. Hisen, *Derzhavnyi terorizm: Diial'nist' zakordonnoho viddilu TsK KP(b)U "ZAKORDOTU". 1920–1924* (Kam'ianets'-Podil's'kyi, 2016); V.S. Sidak, ed., *"Zakordot" v systemi spetssluzhb radians'koi Ukrainy. Sbornyk dokumentiv* (Kyiv, 2000); V.S. Sidak and V.A. Kozeniuk, eds., *Revoliutsiiu naznachit'. Eksport revoliutsii v operatsiiakh sovetskikh spetssluzhb* (Kyiv, 2004).

lesson of these operations. Poland, a country bordering the Soviet Union and fiercely jealous of its newly gained independence in 1918, probably carried out the most effective intelligence and counterintelligence operations with regards to the Soviet Union, even though their effectiveness was severely limited by Moscow's own intelligence and counterintelligence.[75]

By contrast, Moscow found Asia to be an ideal playground for *maskirovka*. China, deeply divided by warlords, was an excellent target for covert operations, with the CCP willing to act as Moscow's agent. Japan proved to be an equally easy place for Soviet operations, because it was politically divided and unstable (in the twenty years between World War I and World War II, some twenty Japanese cabinets came and went) and also because it clung to the possibility of a political romance with the Soviet Union. The more unlikely such a romance appeared, the more hope Japan entertained, and the more desperate it became. As a result, contemporary Russia, China, and Japan all have reason to avoid speaking honestly about the complicated history of the 1920s and 1930s. Moscow's withholding of relevant documents does not seem inconvenient or unwelcome to either Beijing or Tokyo.[76]

Consequently, there is a glaring hole in the historiography of interwar Asia. The Soviet Union—the country that, along with Japan, played the most significant role in China between the two World Wars—still remains a shadowy figure in the background.[77] This book aims to bring that figure into the light.

This book's focus on China and Japan illustrates just how consistent and persistent Moscow's covert operations were throughout this period.[78] Information

[75] Andrzej Pepłoński, *Wywiad Polski na ZSSR 1921–1939* (Warsaw, 1996); *Kontrwywiad II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 2002); Andrzej Krzak, *Kontrwywiad wojskowy II Rzeczypospolitej przeciwko radzieckim służbom specjalnym 1921–1939* (Toruń, Poland, 2007).

[76] Some works have been published on these matters. On China, see M. Alekseev, *Sovetskaia voennaia razvedka v Kitae i khronika 'kitaiskoi smuty' (1922–1929)* (Moscow, 2010); V.N. Usov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Kitae: 20-e gody XX veka* (Moscow, 2002); V.N. Usov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Kitae: 30-e gody XX veka* (Moscow, 2007). On Japan, see Aleksei Kirichenko, *Shirarezaru NichiRo no nihyakunen*, tr. Kawamura Suguru and Nagochi Yōko (Tokyo, 2013); Kirichenko, *Iaponskaia razvedka protiv SSSR* (Moscow, 2016); Aleksandr Kulanov, *Shpionskii Tokio* (Moscow, 2014). By contrast, much scholarship has examined Moscow's anti-American espionage operations in both Russia and the United States, even if far from everything has been revealed. See for example John E. Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, CT, 2000); V.V. Pozniakov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Amerike 1919–1941*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 2015); M. Stanton Evans and Herbert Romerstein, *Stalin's Secret Agents: The Subversion of Roosevelt's Government* (New York, 2012); Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—The Stalin Era* (New York, 1999); Schecter and Schecter, *Sacred Secrets*.

[77] A few exceptions include: Dan N. Jacobs, *Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1981); Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*; John W. Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations 1937–1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism* (New York, 1988). Even in China, not much work takes full advantage of available Soviet and Russian sources. See, however, Xue Xiantian, *Minguo shiqi Zhong-Su guanxi shi: 1917–1949*, 3 vols. (Beijing, 2009).

[78] For a rare book that takes Asia seriously, see Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin. Waiting for Hitler, 1929–1941* (New York, 2017). Yet, even this work largely omits Stalin's invisible operations.

about Soviet espionage activities in Asia has emerged more slowly than information about those activities in the United States and Europe.[79] Newly revealed information has compelled historians to reevaluate Stalin's global ambitions—and naturally, it has forced me to review my own earlier accounts of Stalin and his era.[80]

For the sake of historical truth, historians must pose difficult questions. Some so-called heroes are likely to have been villains—and vice versa. The people of Russia, China, and Japan deserve the truth. Yet, Moscow and Beijing continue to hide relevant documents and spin untruths precisely because no one has posed the difficult questions that these governments would prefer to ignore. Although Tokyo may not hide documents the way Moscow and Beijing do, it is distinctly reluctant to rehash an embarrassing and dishonorable past. Likewise, Washington displays no willingness to examine seriously its odd political romance with Moscow during the 1930s and World War II.

Historians must also critically examine the Soviet Union's internal affairs. As with its external relations, Moscow engaged in extensive covert provocations that it camouflaged as anti-Soviet activities. As a result, untold numbers of innocent Soviet people perished.[81] They also deserve the truth, if only posthumously.

This book seeks to uncover these truths, as well as the many other truths buried under the tailored versions of history that Moscow, Beijing, and Tokyo would prefer to perpetuate.

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[79] On Stalin and Europe, see for example Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin and the Fate of Europe: The Postwar Struggle for Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA, 2019). Stalin found it almost impossible to engage in elaborate covert actions in Europe the way he did in Asia. However, for an important work on Stalin's covert operations in post–World War II Europe, see N.V. Petrov, *Po stsenariiu Stalina: rol' organov NKVD-MGB SSSR v sovetizatsii stran Tsentral'noi i Vostochnoi Evropy* (Moscow, 2011). For a work on Soviet intelligence that covers mainly Europe, see Jonathan Haslam, *Near and Distant Neighbors: A New History of Soviet Intelligence* (Oxford, 2015); see also Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–56* (London, 2012).

[80] See Kuromiya, *Stalin*; Kuromiya, "Stalin's Great Terror and The Asian Nexus," *Europe-Asia Studies* 66, no. 5 (July 2014), 775–93; Kuromiya and Andrzej Pepłoński, *Między Warszawą a Tokio: Polsko-japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904–1944* (Toruń, Poland, 2009); Kuromiya and Georges Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus, and Japan, 1904–1945* (Warsaw, 2016).

[81] The use of covert provocateurs is one of the least studied and least understood aspects of Stalin's terror. I have provided fragmentary information in my previous books: *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland, 1870s–1990s* (Cambridge, 1998); *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven, CT, 2007); *Conscience on Trial: The Fate of Fourteen Pacifists in Stalin's Ukraine, 1952–1953* (Toronto, 2012). For a striking case of Soviet provocation under the guise of a peasant rebellion, see A.V. Venkov, *"Delo Senina" ili operatsiia "Trest" na Verkhnem Donu* (Moscow, 2016).

CHAPTER 1

War and Romance (1894–1922)

In the imperialist power games of the nineteenth century, Japan was a relatively weak yet assertive non-Western upstart. By the middle of the century, this country that had virtually isolated itself from the outside world for more than two hundred years was forced to accede to Western pressure to open itself to foreigners—and specifically, foreign trade. Even though these and other changes nearly tore Japan apart, they eventually led to the defeat of the shogunate and the restoration of imperial rule in a new guise: the Meiji Restoration (1868). A survival strategy in the face of Western powers with superior military might, the restoration meant rapid Westernization and modernization. Japan's change of course roughly coincided with the Great Reforms that took place in Russia after its defeat in the Crimean War, 1853–56.[1] Sometimes, Japan's modernization (in practical terms, Westernization) took on a comical dimension, such as forcing Western manners and customs onto its population, in a way not dissimilar to the Westernization of Russia under Peter I (1672–1725).

Its humiliating defeat in Crimea put Russia on a collision course with Japan as Tsar Alexander II (1818–1881) turned his attention away from the West to the much weaker East. In 1860, soon after that defeat, Russia seized a Chinese settlement called Haishenwai on the coast of the Sea of Japan and renamed it Vladivostok, meaning "Conquer the East," a name with ominous overtones for Japan. (Vladivostok is only 700 km or so from Japan's northern coast, whereas it is some 6,500 km from St. Petersburg and 6,400 km from Moscow.) Japan had long been aware of a potential Russian threat because as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, Russians—like other Westerners—had frequently pressed the recalcitrant Japan to open. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Russia had come to see the Asian continent in general—Korea and China in particular—as ripe for imperial expansion—an attitude that brought Russia into competition with Japan. This rivalry culminated in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5 over the control of the Far East, with Japan emerging as the victor. Ironically, this war proved to be the beginning of Japan's political romance with Russia, a furtive romance that continued for several decades and exposed Japan's vulnerability to Russian secret intelligence.

[1] See the classic work Cyril E. Black, et al., *The Modernization of Japan and Russia: A Comparative Study* (New York, 1975).

Timeline: *1894–95*: (First) Sino-Japanese War ‖ *1895*: Triple Intervention (Russia, France, Germany) ‖ *1896*: Li-Lobanov Treaty (China and Russia) ‖ *1899*: America's Open Door Policy ‖ *1899–1901*: Boxer Rebellion (China) ‖ *1902*: Anglo-Japanese Alliance ‖ *1903*: Completion of Chinese Eastern Railway ‖ *1904–5*: Russo-Japanese War ‖ *1910*: Japan's annexation of Korea ‖ *1911*: Xinhai Revolution (China) ‖ *1913*: War scare (United States and Japan) ‖ *1914–18*: World War I ‖ *1915*: Japan's Twenty-One Demands to China ‖ *1916*: Russo-Japanese Alliance ‖ *1917*: February and October Revolutions (Russia) ‖ *1918–21*: Foreign intervention in Russia's civil war ‖ *1919–20*: Versailles Conference ‖ *1921–22*: Washington Conference ‖ *1922*: End of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

1.1 Russia, Japan, and the United States to 1917

The modernization of Japan and Russia took two different political forms. Japan faithfully emulated the European states to various degrees in various fields and adopted a constitutional monarchy modeled on those of Britain and Prussia; in contrast, Russia remained an autocracy until 1917 in the belief that a strong autocracy was inherent in its nature. Japan's victory over Russia in 1905, the first incident in modern history in which a European power was defeated on the battleground by a non-European power, sent shock waves around the world. This war led Russia to adopt a quasi-constitutional political body. Even so, the Russian monarchy obstinately clung to centuries-old autocratic rule. Russia's poor performance in World War I was critical to the collapse of the Russian autocracy in February 1917 and to the Bolshevik Revolution in October of that year. The emergence of an anti-capitalist and openly atheist regime fundamentally changed the international order.

For the West, Japan's emulation of Europe made it a model state. For Britain and the United States, both of which had a stake in the Far East and entertained further ambitions there, Japan provided a convenient and valuable counterweight to Russia's growing expansion into the Asian continent. Japan, in turn, eventually found Britain to be a potential ally against Russia's advances into Asia. Initially, what prompted Japan to assert its own interests in Korea and China (particularly Manchuria) was Russia's construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, beginning in 1891. When the Japanese, the "first yellow people to go methodically to the white men's school,"[2] defeated China in a war over the control of China's tributary state Korea in 1894–95, the West was shocked:

> Japan's easy victory over huge China astounded the whole world. That these "highly intelligent children," as one of the early British ministers to Japan had characterized them, should have so rapidly acquired the technique of Western methods was almost unbelievable.

[2] Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York, 1920), 21. In 1921, this book was published in Japanese translation as 有色人の勃興 in Tokyo.

> Indeed, the full significance of the lesson was not immediately grasped, and the power of New Japan was still underestimated.[3]

Russia, France, and Germany quickly grasped the political significance of Japan's victory, however, and immediately intervened against Tokyo's seizure of the Liaodong Peninsula (including the city of Port Arthur) in northeast China—a diplomatic incident that became known as the Triple Intervention.[4] Given its limited military might in comparison with these three Western powers, Japan had no choice but to retreat. This humiliation became the impetus for Japan's decision to seek an alliance with Britain (which did not take part in the intervention). Although some Japanese politicians entertained the idea of forming an alliance with Russia against the other Western powers, those favoring Britain prevailed—on the premise that sooner or later, war with Russia would be unavoidable. Abandoning its traditional diplomatic stance of "splendid isolation," Britain accepted an alliance with Japan in 1902. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was the first alliance on equal terms between a Western and a non-Western state.[5]

Japan's rise did pose a potential threat to American maritime access to China. Now Japan dominated the vast tract of the western Pacific Rim from Taiwan to the northern tip of the Kuril Islands, leaving only a narrow channel between Taiwan and the Philippines as an unoccluded access path. Yet, Washington was not too worried at the time.

Undeniably, Japan and the United States were concerned about Russia's advance to the east, which did not stop in 1895. Russia's construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway led to an understanding among the imperial powers that the division of China was inevitable. In fact, it began in 1896, a year after the Triple Intervention against Japan. China and Russia signed a secret treaty (the Li-Lobanov Treaty) that allowed Russia to control northeast China (part of Inner Mongolia and Manchuria) almost unilaterally and build the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) linking the Russian cities of Chita and Vladivostok via the Chinese city of Harbin. By crossing through Chinese territory rather than remaining on Russian soil, this new route cut almost 1,000 km from the previous route between the two cities. (The railway was completed in 1903.) Almost three decades later, in 1924, a Soviet historian acknowledged that the Li-Lobanov Treaty was in effect a Sino-Russian military alliance, with the CER designed for the express purpose of preventing Japan from advancing across the Asian continent.[6] The Russian move accelerated the division of China: In 1898, Germany "leased" (that is, took) a large area of the Jiaozhou (Kiautschou) Bay,

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[3]Ibid., 21.

[4]German Kaiser Wilhelm II urged Russian Tsar Nicholas II to intervene "with all Europe against Japan" to "protect Europe from the incursion of the yellow race." See his 26 April 1895 letter in *Perepiska Vil'gel'ma II s Nikolaem II* (Moscow-Petrograd, 1923), 7–8.

[5]See the classic work: Ian H. Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907* (London, 1966).

[6]B.A. Romanov, " 'Likhunchangskii fond' (Iz istorii russkoi imperialisticheskoi politiki na Dal'nem Vostoke)," *Bor'ba klassov*, nos. 1-2 (1924): 77–127. Soon after seizing power, the Bolshevik

Figure 1.1. The Trans-Siberian Railway at the time of the Russo-Japanese War. The northern route (St. Petersburg–Vologda–Ekterinburg) was not fully completed until 1906.

including Qingdao (Tsingtao); then Russia "leased" the Liaodong Peninsula, including Port Arthur (part of Lüshun, formerly Dal'nyi/Dalian/Dairen), an ice-free port that Russia had long coveted. These leases posed an undisguised challenge to Japan. Moreover, Russia's lease of Liaodong allowed it to build an extension of the CER that connected Harbin to Port Arthur in 1903. After Germany and Russia acquired their leases, Britain gained the lease of Port Edward (Weihaiwei), across the Bohai Strait from Port Arthur, in that same year.

The Russo-Japanese War

Russia's action in China was, according to Sergei Iu. Witte (1849–1915), then finance minister of Russia, a "fatal step" that "marked the beginning of the process of carving up China." Russia's seizure of Port Arthur in particular was "the first step in a process that led us into war with Japan, a war that led in turn to revolutionary disorders in Russia" and that shook "the foundations of the Russian Empire."[7] The foreign division of China led to the anti-foreign

government published a large number of secret treaties that the tsarist government had signed with foreign powers. Yet, it did not publish this treaty until after China had acknowledged its existence in 1922. Russia had bribed the Chinese diplomat Li Hongzhang (李鴻章, 1823–1901) with 3 million rubles into signing this treaty, although Sergei Iu. Witte, the finance minister of Russia, denied the bribe. Part of the treaty became known in 1921 when Witte's memoir was first published abroad: See Sergei Iu. Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, trans. and ed. Sidney Harcave (Armonk, NY, 1990), 229–38.

[7] *Memoirs of Count Witte*, 282–83, 373.

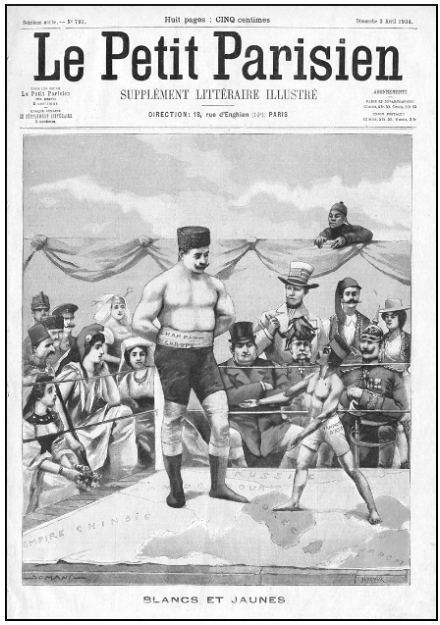

Figure 1.2. A French image of the Russo-Japanese War: "Whites and Yellows"

Boxer Rebellion in China (1899–1901), which in turn invited large-scale foreign intervention in China.

By all accounts, Russia had underestimated Japan. It did seek to placate Japan in 1898 by recognizing Korea as belonging to Japan's sphere of influence. Yet, in the end, the tsar ignored Japan, against the counsel of Foreign Minister Vladimir Lamzdorf (Lamsdorf) (1845–1907) and others, believing that Japan would not fight back and that Korea would become part of the Russian Empire.[8] Tsar Nicholas accepted the reckless policies pursued by his viceroy in the Far East, and "in his heart," according to Witte, "thirsted for the glory that would come from a victorious war."[9] Nicholas believed that victory would be easy, calling the Japanese "macaques" (макаки), or monkeys, even in official documents.[10]

In contrast, Japan had carefully prepared for war against Russia. It had spread an intelligence network far and wide, from Europe to Asia, and employed subversion within and outside Russia, targeting political opposition groups and national minorities. Russia was aware of Japan's intelligence work (which Britain assisted), but when hostilities broke out, Russia was taken aback and overwhelmed by Japan, having failed to match its war preparations. It was at this point that Russia began to emulate and develop Japan's intelligence practices

[8] Romanov, "Likhunchangskii fond," 90–91.

[9] *Memoirs of Count Witte*, 278, 366.

[10] Sergei Iu. Witte, *Vospominaniia. Tsarstvovanie Nikolaia II*, 2nd ed. (Leningrad, 1924), 1:239, 242.

("total espionage") to the extreme.[11] As a Russian historian has noted, "In a broad sense, the experience of Russian MI [military intelligence] during the Manchurian campaign [of 1904–5] laid the corner stone of the establishment of one of the most powerful secret services in the history of the twentieth century."[12] Thus, at this time, Russia was already laying the groundwork for its later intervention in Japan.

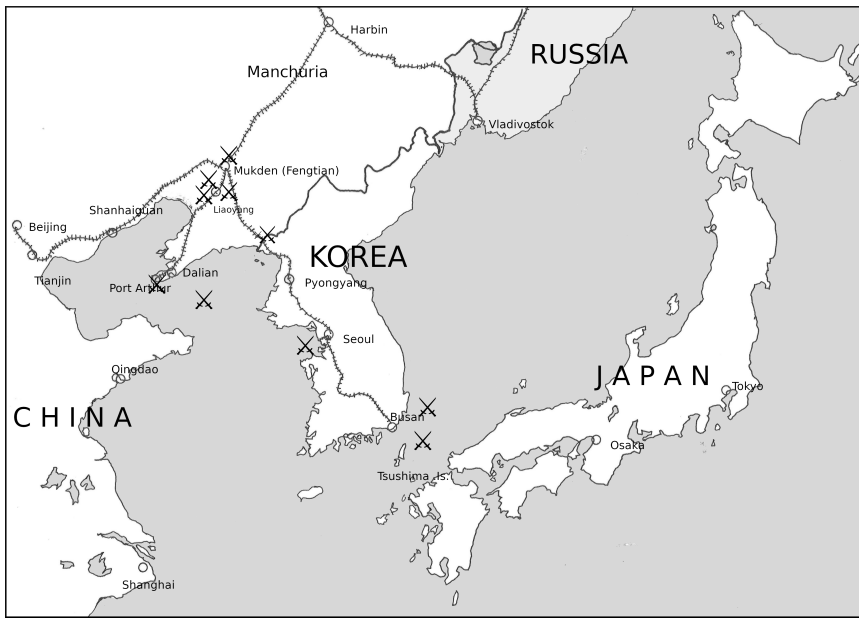

Figure 1.3. Major battles in the Russo-Japanese War. The Seoul–Busan Railway opened for operation during the war.

With Russia's Baltic Fleet almost completely destroyed at the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905, the Russo-Japanese War ended with what appeared to be Japan's spectacular victory. In fact, the victory was more fortunate than decisive, in the sense that by the time the two countries reached a ceasefire shortly after Tsushima, Japan's resources were almost exhausted. Although Japan was elated by the victory and the Japanese army came to believe in its invincibility, some Japanese military experts remained deeply concerned about the relative weakness of Japan's military manpower and national economy in comparison with those

[11] Hiroaki Kuromiya and Georges Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus, and Japan, 1904–1945* (Warsaw, 2016), chap. 2; Hiroaki Kuromiya and Andrzej Pepłoński, "Stalin, Espionage, and Counterespionage," in *Stalin and Europe: Imitation and Domination, 1928–1953*, eds. Timothy Snyder and Ray Brandon (New York, 2014), 73–91.

[12] Evgeny Sergeev, *Russian Military Intelligence in the War with Japan, 1904–05: Secret Operations on Land and at Sea* (London, 2007), 185.

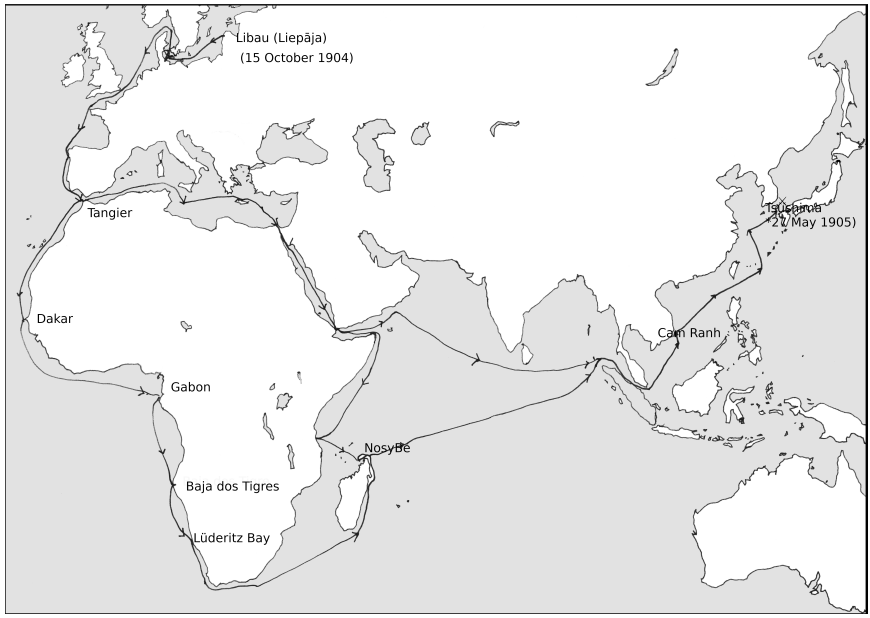

Figure 1.4. The Baltic Fleet was reorganized as the Second Pacific Squadron and dispatched to the Far East in three formations on different dates and along three routes, the longest of which was more than 30,000 km. Their parlous journeys were facilitated by France and Germany at their respective colonial bases. The three groups joined forces in Cam Ranh (in today's Vietnam) and proceeded to Tsushima, where they were destroyed in battle.

of other Western powers—Russia included. This concern came to haunt Japan after World War I.

The impact of the war

All the same, Japan's victory was epoch making. The defeat of a European autocracy by an Asian constitutional monarchy prompted many countries (Persia and Ottoman Turkey, for example) to explore a constitutional path in their own countries. It convinced the Ottomans, against whom Russia had waged successful wars since the nineteenth century, that Western powers were not unbeatable. Likewise, it gave many colonized peoples in the world (in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere) hope of liberation from Western colonial powers. It had a similar impact on oppressed national minorities (especially Muslims) within the Russian Empire.[13] As a German naval officer remarked at the time, "The role of the white race as Lords in Asia has ended. This is the beginning of a new era

[13] Klaus Kreiser, "Der Japanische Sieg über Russland (1905) und sein Echo unter den Muslimen," *Die Welt des Islams* 21, nos. 1–4 (1981): 224–26.

in world history."[14] A Belgian newspaper noted: "Port Arthur has surrendered. This event is one of the greatest events in modern history. . . . The significance of the disaster cannot be underrated now. For the first time the old world has been humiliated by an irreparable defeat dealt it by the new world, a world mysterious, and, to all appearances, adolescent, which was only yesterday won to civilization."[15] Quoting this article, Vladimir Lenin welcomed Japan's crushing victory over his own country:

> Advancing, progressive Asia has dealt backward and reactionary Europe an irreparable blow. Ten years ago this reactionary Europe, with Russia in the lead, was perturbed by the defeat of China at the hands of young Japan, and it united to rob Japan of the best fruits of her victory. Europe was protecting the established relations and privileges of the old world, its prerogative to exploit the Asian peoples—a prerogative held from time immemorial and sanctified by the usage of centuries. The recovery of Port Arthur by Japan is a blow struck at the whole of reactionary Europe. . . . This disaster implies a tremendous acceleration of worldwide capitalist development, a quickening of history's pace. . . . The Russian people has gained from the defeat of the autocracy.[16]

In contrast, we know little about how Stalin reacted to Russia's defeat. While he saw it as a sign of bankrupted tsarism, he also saw the surrender of Port Arthur as "disgraceful" (позорно).[17] Later, in the 1930s, he was determined to recover the southern half of Sakhalin, which had been lost to Japan.[18] Stalin listened fondly to the song "On the Hills of Manchuria," proclaiming revenge on Japan.[19] In light of highly emotional remarks he delivered in 1945 (see Chapter 5, p. 425), Stalin clearly did not share Lenin's assessment and instead entertained a deeply felt sense of resentment. His response to Russia's defeat is probably one of the few times when Stalin's political self—steely cold and devoid of human sentiment—failed him.[20]

Japan's presence on the world stage as the so-called liberator of the non-Western world reached its zenith in the years following its victory in the Russo-Japanese War.

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[14]Quoted in Rotem Kowner, ed., *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 2007), 304.

[15]Quoted in V.I. Lenin, "Padenie Port-Artura," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1967), 9:151.

[16]Ibid., 152, 158. An English version, *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1962), was freely consulted here and elsewhere in the present book.

[17]I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1953), 1:74.

[18]K.M. Simonov, *Glazami cheloveka moego pokoleniia. Razmyshleniia o Staline* (Moscow, 1988), 427–28.

[19]Artem Sergeev and Ekaterina Glushik, *Besedy o Staline* (Moscow, 2006), 22–23, 78.

[20]Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin*, Profiles in Power (Harlow, UK, 2005).

The U.S. reaction to Japan's victory

Within two decades, however, Japan's prestige had plummeted. As is often the case, victory turned out to be defeat in disguise. Just like in 1895, the Western imperial powers were again alarmed by Japan's victory. Sharing Britain's fear of Russian expansion, Washington had sympathized with Japan during the war, and American financiers had willingly supported Japan. (In 1899, the United States had already declared an "Open Door Policy" in China, a policy designed to secure for the United States equal footing with other imperial powers. The United States, along with Japan, had protested Russia's refusal to withdraw from Manchuria after China's anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion.) President Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. (1858–1919) hoped the war would weaken both Russia and Japan: At the beginning of the war, he told the German ambassador to the United States that it "is to our interest that the war between Russia and Japan should drag on."[21] A close investigation reveals Roosevelt's shifting and often studied response toward Japan. During the war, he was concerned about those in Japan who had favored a Russo-Japanese alliance over an Anglo-Japanese alliance. Yet, even in July 1905, when Japan's victory was certain, Roosevelt suggested to a Japanese envoy that Japan adopt an "Asian Monroe Doctrine," a doctrine for the exclusion of the West from Asia, although the president felt that it was not expedient for Japan to announce this doctrine at the time because he intended to announce it himself after he stepped down from office. Roosevelt even attempted to flatter the Japanese by saying that he had much more in common with the yellow-skinned Japanese than with the white-skinned Russians.[22] Roosevelt disliked Russian despotism and preferred Japan because it had adopted Western constitutional rule. Earlier, in July 1904, he had written to Secretary of State John Hay (1838–1905) that "the Japs played our game because they have played the game of civilized mankind."[23]

Roosevelt was conflicted, however. In a letter dated 13 June 1904 to Cecil Arthur Spring Rice (1859–1918), an Englishman and close friend, he began with a note: "Personal. Be very careful that no one gets a chance to see this" and then expressed his feelings about the Russian people and Russian despotism:

> I never anticipated in the least such a rise as this of Japan's, but I have never been able to make myself afraid of Russia in the present. I like the Russian people and believe in them. I earnestly hope that after the fiery ordeal through which they are now passing they will come forth faced in the right way for doing well in the future. But I see nothing of permanent good that can come to Russia, either for herself

[21] Theodore Roosevelt, quoted in Edward H. Zabriskie, *American-Russian Rivalry in the Far East: A Study in Diplomacy in Power Politics: 1895–1914* (Philadelphia, 1946), 108.

[22] *Nihon gaikō bunsho. Dai 37kan dai 38kan bessatsu. NichiRo sensō V* (Tokyo, 1960), 712, 742, 772–73.

[23] Eugene P. Trani, *The Treaty of Portsmouth: An Adventure in American Diplomacy* (Lexington, KY, 1969), 31–32.

> or for the rest of the world, until her people begin to tread the path of orderly freedom, of civil liberty, and of a measure of self-government. Whatever may be the theoretical advantages of a despotism, they are incompatible with the growth of intelligence and individuality in a civilized people.[24]

Roosevelt then recounted the view that he had recently expressed to two Japanese diplomats during a lunch in Washington:

> I told them that I thought their chief danger was lest Japan might get the "big head" and enter into a general career of insolence and aggression; that such a career would undoubtedly be temporarily very unpleasant to the rest of the world, but that it would in the end be still more unpleasant for Japan.[25]

Undeniably, the American president was growing increasingly concerned about where Japan's power could lead. Roosevelt proved prophetic in this regard. Although the war was fought on Chinese and Korean soil, both Japan and Russia completely ignored the interests of China and Korea—and it was China and Korea that suffered as a result. Japan behaved just like every Western imperial power, and often worse, deeply alienating even its ally, Britain. Describing Japan's behavior in Korea in 1908, the British journalist F.A. McKenzie (1869–1931) lamented Britain's disregard for Japan's brutality to Koreans:

> We owe it to ourselves and to our ally, Japan, to let it be clearly known that a policy of Imperial expansion based upon breaches of solemn treaty obligations to a weaker nation, and built up by odious cruelty, by needless slaughter, and by a wholesale theft of the private property rights of a dependent and defenceless peasantry, is repugnant to our instincts and cannot fail to rob the nation that is doing it of much of the respect and goodwill with which we all so recently regarded her.[26]

As if echoing the British ambivalence toward Japan, Roosevelt's conflicted feelings grew, even as he maintained an unconcerned air. He wrote to Rice in June 1904:

> Don't understand from the above that I was laying the ground for any kind of interference by this government in the Far East. . . . Of course, in many ways the civilization of the Japs is very alien to ours. . . . The Japs interest me and I like them. I am perfectly well aware that if they win out it may possibly mean a struggle between them and us in the future, but I hope not and believe not. At any rate, Russia's course

[24] *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Elting E. Morison (Cambridge, MA, 1951), 4:829.
[25] Ibid., 830.
[26] F.A. McKenzie, *The Tragedy of Korea* (New York, ca. 1908), vi.

> during the last three years has made it evident that if she wins she will organize northern China against us and rule us absolutely out of all the ground she can control. . . . There was nothing whatever to warrant us going to war on behalf of either side, or doing otherwise than observe a strict neutrality, which we have done. The good will of our people has been with the Japanese, but the government has been scrupulous in its impartiality between the combatants. . . . I do not anticipate that Tokyo will show a superior morality to that which obtains in Berlin, Vienna and Paris, not to speak of London and Washington, or of St. Petersburg. But I see nothing ruinous to civilization in the advent of the Japanese to power among the great nations.[27]

When the war turned favorable for Japan, Roosevelt began to fear Japan's dramatic rise more deeply, viewing it as a possible threat to the United States (particularly with regard to China and the Philippines, the latter of which the United States had seized from Spain merely a few years earlier). While simultaneously endorsing an Asian Monroe Doctrine, in July 1905, Roosevelt told the Russian ambassador to the United States that "in the beginning of the conflict," his sympathies had been with Japan, but that "with the development of the war," he had begun to favor Russia. According to the ambassador, Roosevelt understood that America's chief rival in trade and industry was not Russia but Japan. Therefore, "a considerable strengthening of Japan cannot coincide with American interests," and "the complete exclusion of Russia from the Pacific Ocean" was unwelcome to the United States.[28]

Now seeing an end to the conflict as beneficial to U.S. interests, Roosevelt offered to mediate peace between Russia and Japan. Meeting in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, they signed a treaty in September 1905; Roosevelt was awarded a 1906 Nobel Peace Prize for his mediation. He wanted to save the balance of power between the two countries in the Far East. The treaty allowed Japan to secure a big foothold in the Asian continent, especially the control of the Harbin-Port Arthur Railway (which Japan renamed the South Manchurian Railway), the lease of Kwantung Territory, and the creation of a military force (the Kwantung Garrison or the Kwantung Army from 1919 onward) to protect Japan's acquisitions in China. But Witte, Russia's plenipotentiary at Portsmouth, was jubilant about the outcome. When an American journalist asked him about the treaty, Witte proclaimed triumphantly: "Not only do we not pay so much as a kopek but we obtain half of Sakhalin now in their [Japanese] possession. . . . It was a complete victory for us."[29]

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[27] *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 4:831–33.

[28] See Zabriskie, *American-Russian Rivalry*, 120.

[29] Tyler Dennett, *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War: A Critical Study of American Policy in Eastern Asia in 1902–5, Based Primarily upon the Private Papers of Theodore Roosevelt* (Garden City, NY, 1925), 263.

Meanwhile, the growing U.S. involvement in Asian affairs led to the typical configuration of imperial contention: secret schemes amid fierce competition. It is widely believed that Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910, for example, was based on a secret agreement between Japan and the United States that allowed Japan to colonize Korea in exchange for Japan's recognition of U.S. possession of the Philippines (the so-called Taft-Katsura Memorandum of 1905, which Koreans consider to be America's betrayal of Korea).[30]

At the same time, the U.S. Navy began to draft secret war plans against Japan (known as War Plan Orange). For the first time in American history, the United States "prepared war plans in peacetime directed at a specific adversary."[31] Moreover, the goal of the war plans was the " 'complete' defeat of Japan, couched in terms such as 'enforcing submission' and 'imposing our will.' "[32] War Plan Orange marked the emergence of the United States as an imperial power. In fact, one could argue that these war plans were the beginning of the Pacific War that would officially break out in 1941.

While anti-Asian sentiment in general was not new, specifically anti-Japanese feeling had been smoldering in the United States since before the Russo-Japanese War. Roosevelt noted in March 1904 that the United States "as a whole tends to sympathize with Russia."[33] In February 1905, when it became clear that Japan would win the war against Russia, the San Francisco *Chronicle* ran a "banner, page one headline proclaiming 'JAPANESE INVASION THE PROBLEM OF THE HOUR.' "[34] In October 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education adopted a policy of requiring all public school students of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese descent to attend a segregated "Oriental School."[35] This new policy violated the 1894 treaty between the United States and Japan on the rights of ethnic Japanese living in the United States. Tokyo and Washington avoided open conflict by making mutual concessions (through a series of informal understandings known as the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–8), in which the United States promised to rescind San Francisco's school segregation policy, and Japan voluntarily limited immigration.[36]

At the same time, anti-American feelings were growing in Japan. There

[30] Tyler Dennett, "President Roosevelt's Secret Pact with Japan," *Current History Magazine*, October 1924, 15–21. In fact, this memorandum merely confirmed the informal agreement that had been reached between Japan and the United States. See Raymond S. Esthus, "The Taft-Katsura Agreement—Reality or Myth?," *Journal of Modern History* 31, no. 1 (1959): 46–51.

[31] Tal Tovy and Sharon Halevi, "America's First Cold War: The Emergence of a New Rivalry," in Kowner, *Impact of the Russo-Japanese War*, 150.

[32] Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897–1945* (Annapolis, MD, 1991), 363. See also 27–28.

[33] *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 4:760.

[34] Quoted in Charles M. Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855–1975* (Berkeley, CA, 1976), 50.

[35] Ibid., 54. Children of Chinese descent had been segregated since 1884.

[36] See Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley, CA, 1977), pp. 31–45.

was widespread sentiment among the Japanese that the Portsmouth Treaty did not do justice to Japan's victory in the war and was too charitable to the loser—and that the United States was responsible for the treaty. These ill-feelings toward the United States were not quite justified. After all, Tokyo had willingly renounced war reparations and some territorial gains in order to reach a ceasefire. But Russia's tactical diplomacy had certainly charmed the American public. Witte was overtly histrionic, adopting informal American manners with finesse while ignoring the traditional protocols of diplomacy. In contrast, Japanese diplomats had failed to appeal to the American public, observing punctiliously the formalities of Western diplomacy. The Japanese felt unwittingly tricked into accepting a raw deal.[37] In various parts of Japan, popular anger led to riots that targeted foreigners—Russians and Americans in particular.

In 1907, the crisis in American-Japanese relations even led to persistent rumors of possible war between the two countries. In 1908, however, the Root-Takahira Agreement smoothed out the conflict through mutual concessions: curbs on Japanese immigration in exchange for an American recognition of Japanese hegemony in Southern Manchuria and Korea.[38] But the United States did not easily cede Manchuria to Japan's hegemony. Secretary of State Philander C. Knox (1853–1921), railway tycoon Edward H. Harriman (1848–1909), and others made various attempts to "smoke out Japan."[39] For example, Knox proposed internationalizing the railways in Manchuria under Russian and Japanese control. These attempts failed because Russia and Japan worked in concert to thwart them. According to the Japanese scholar Chiba Isao, the Knox proposal was as shocking to the Japanese as the Triple Intervention had been. It served as yet another example of anti-Japanese sentiment and prompted the Japanese ambassador in Washington to note in his diary in 1910 that it would be "impossible to avoid war between Japan and the United States."[40]

Russo-Japanese rapprochement

In contrast, Russia and Japan began cooperating almost immediately after the end of the Russo-Japanese War. American concern about Japan's rise in the Far East gave Russia new opportunities for its own imperialist ventures. During the peace negotiations in Portsmouth, Witte had already broached the subject with his Japanese counterpart Komura Jutarō (小村壽太郎, 1855–1911), proposing an alliance between Russia and Japan:

[37] See Susanne Schattenberg, "Die Sprache der Diplmatie oder das Wunder von Portsmouth: Überlegungen zu einer Kulturgeschichte der Außenpolitik," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 56, no. 1 (2008): 3–26.

[38] For U.S.-Japanese relations of this period, see Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle, WA, 1967); Charles E. Neu, *An Unknown Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906–1909* (Cambridge, MA, 1967); Chiba Isao, *Kyū gaikō no keisei. Nihon gaikō: 1900–1919* (Tokyo, 2008).

[39] Philander Knox, quoted in David J. Dallin, *The Rise of Russia in Asia* (London, 1950), 100.

[40] Quoted in Chiba, *Kyū gaikō no keisei*, 214.

Figure 1.5. In general, the regions north of the Great Wall (marked by the undulating lines) were considered Manchuria and Mongolia. The definition of "Inner Mongolia" has changed over time, however. The map shows today's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The white line through Inner Mongolia delimits the extent of westward expansion by Manzhouguo in the 1930s.

> I attempted to have included in the treaty we were to sign at Portsmouth a provision for a postwar alliance between the two countries, whereby one would defend the other if the interests of either, as defined in the treaty, were menaced. When I discussed my idea with Komura, the chief Japanese plenipotentiary, he was evasive, but implied that the treaty might include something less binding than an alliance. So I sent a telegraph to Count Lamsdorf, our foreign minister, asking for instructions.[41]

Despite Japan's fear that a Russo-Japanese rapprochement might alarm Washington, Japan and Russia began forging a closer relationship against the United States soon after the end of hostilities, concluding four agreements between 1907 and 1916. These agreements contained secret protocols that demarcated each country's spheres of influence in Asia, with Korea falling to Japan, Outer Mongolia to Russia, and Inner Mongolia divided between them. The 1916 agreement, signed during World War I, led to a formal alliance between the two countries.[42] The secret protocol within this last (1916) agreement, which concerned China,

[41] *Memoirs of Count Witte*, 697.
[42] Michio Yoshimura, *Zôho: Nihon to Rosia* (Tokyo, 1991).

was directed against their common enemy at the time, Germany—at least according to Russian and Japanese negotiators.[43] Some Russian, American, and Japanese scholars argue, however, that the agreement was also or even primarily directed against the United States.[44] They may well be right, given the fact that Germany no longer posed a realistic threat to either side's sphere of influence in China. Moreover, the agreement was signed on July 3, the day before American Independence Day, as if to snub Washington.[45] If this interpretation is correct, Russia and Japan elaborately camouflaged their real target. Regardless of which country the agreement was directed against, Britain supported the rapprochement of Russia and Japan, both of which were fighting on Britain's side during World War I.

The Russo-Japanese alliance was a remarkable realignment of imperial powers on the Asian continent. In fact, it was part of a larger, global reconfiguration of forces: the Triple Entente based on the Franco-Russian Alliance (1894), the Entente Cordiale between Britain and France (1904), the Anglo-Russian Entente (1907) (which ended the so-called Great Game, the famous rivalry between Britain and Russia for hegemony over Asia), and the Franco-Japanese Treaty of 1907.

The alliance between Russia and Japan did not do away with mutual distrust, which died particularly hard among military leaders on both sides. But some Japanese, most notably Tanaka Giichi, came to the conclusion that Russo-Japanese agreements were preferable to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (which was renewed and expanded twice, in 1905 and 1911). Tanaka knew Russia well. In 1898, Captain Tanaka was sent to Russia's capital as an assistant military attaché and studied Russia diligently. Tanaka loved Russia but regarded it as a rival and enemy of the Japanese Empire in Asia. Returning from Russia in 1902, he took part in the Russo-Japanese War as a staff officer. After the war, he attained the rank of General, was knighted, and eventually became prime minister in 1927. Recalling his years in Russia, Tanaka used to tell Russians that "he had drunk so much vodka with Russian officers during his service in Russia that nothing could destroy the ties" between them.[46] As Chapter 2 discusses, Tanaka repeatedly confessed his "love" for Russia during the 1920s.

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[43]Peter Berton, *Russo-Japanese Relations, 1905–1917: From Enemies to Allies* (New York, 2012); Berton, "A New Russo-Japanese Alliance?: Diplomacy in the Far East during World War I," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, no. 11 (1993): 72. See also Konstantin Sarkisov, *Rossiia i Iaponiia. Sto let otnoshenii (1817–1917)* (Moscow, 2015), 659.

[44]E.A. Baryshev contends for example that when signing the agreement, Japan had both Germany and the United States in mind. See E.A. Baryshev, "Russko-iaponskaia konventsiia 1916 g. i ee mezhdunarodnoe politicheskoe znachenie," *Iaponiia. Ezhegodnik*, 35 (2006): 243–56; Bruce A. Elleman, "The 1907–1916 Russo-Japanese Secret Treaties: A Reconsideration," *Ajia bunka kenkyū* no. 25 (1999): 32–33; Hata Ikuhiko, "NichiRo sensō go ni okeru NichiBei oyobi NichiRo kiki (2)," *Ajia kenkyū* 15, no. 3 (1986): 65.

[45]I owe this point to an informal communication from Bruce A. Elleman.

[46]George Alexander Lensen, ed., *Revelations of a Russian Diplomat: The Memoirs of Dmitrii I. Abrikossow* (Seattle, 1964), 268.

Figure 1.6. Russia and Japan divided Manchuria and Inner Mongolia. As of 1916, the darker shaded areas of Manchuria and Outer and Inner Mongolia belonged to Russia's sphere, and the lighter shaded areas of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia belonged to Japan's. Arrows indicate two small areas whose spheres remained unclear.†

†See Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, "Imagining Manmō: Mapping the Russo-Japanese Boundary Agreements in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, 1907–1915," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 2 (March 2012): 1–30.

In 1906, soon after the Russo-Japanese War, Tanaka had begun to doubt the utility of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which he suggested was more beneficial to Britain than to Japan. Even though Russia (or a Russian-French-German bloc) still remained Japan's major obstacle in Asia, Tanaka proposed that Japan might consider advancing to the south (against European and American powers) rather than to the north (against Russia). He went even further, stating that at some point, Japan might do well to renounce the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and form a Russo-Japanese alliance, which would allow Japan to seize British interests in the Far East and divert Russia away from the Far East and toward India.[47] In subsequent years, Japan proceeded along those lines Tanaka had delineated.

Tanaka Giichi's secret affair with Russia

Tanaka's love affair with Russia involved far more than a mere endorsement of Russo-Japanese rapprochement: Tanaka secretly provided confidential military material to the Russian side. Along with church relics from Port Arthur, Tanaka

[47]Tanaka's memorandum quoted in Tsunoda Jun, *Manshū mondai to kokubō hōshin: Meiji kōki ni okeru kokubō kankyō no hendō* (Tokyo, 1977), 661–96. See also Kurosawa Fumitaka, "Meiji matsu, Taishō shoki no NichiRo kankei," *Gaikō shiryō kanpō*, no. 30 (March 2017), 57–74; Kobayashi Michihiko, *Nihon no tairiku seisaku 1895–1914* (Tokyo, 1996), 152–53.

"from time to time" handed information unavailable to the public (such as war lectures that had been read to Japanese officers) to the Russian military attaché V.K. Samoilov (1866–1916) and kept him informed about the work of various committees in the Japanese Army. He also helped to quash a scandal involving a Russian officer in Japan. Tanaka did all this even before the 1907 Russo-Japanese Agreement. Almost certainly to reward Tanaka for his secret service to Russia, Samoilov recommended to the Russian government that it decorate Tanaka with the Order of Saint Stanislav as an incentive for him to continue to provide confidential information to Russia.[48] One can only wonder about the extent of Tanaka's secret dealings with the Russians. Consider, for example, the draft of the document that Tanaka wrote detailing Japan's fundamental military strategy: the top secret Imperial Defense Policy of 1907. Did Tanaka leak it to Russia? Oddly enough, no historian has ever questioned what else Tanaka may have secretly shared with the Russians in addition to that mentioned by Samoilov. Understanding these dealings, to the extent that they did exist, is critical to making sense of the Soviet Union's eventual political strategy toward Japan and China.

Outwardly, Tanaka continued to promote a Russo-Japanese alliance, which materialized in 1916—and despite Tanaka's expectations, coexisted with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 helped clinch the Russo-Japanese Alliance of 1916. Japan sold weapons and ammunition to Russia, and at London's request, the Japanese Navy carried shipments of gold for Russia three times—the last of which was in 1917—so that Russia could purchase Canadian weapons and armaments.[49] This was and probably remains the apex of Russo-Japanese relations.

"War scare" in the Pacific

Meanwhile, Japan's relations with the United States soured further.[50] Sensing this deterioration, in 1909, Homer Lea (1876–1912), an American political adventurer in China, published *The Valor of Ignorance*, which he had written soon after the Russo-Japanese War. In his book, Lea insisted that war between Japan and the United States was inevitable ("In the national fabric of Japan and the United States, in their international and human relationship, conditions potential of peace are not to be found") and sounded the alarm that the United States was not ready for this war.[51] In his introduction to the book, retired Major-General J.P. Story echoed Lea's warning:

[48] See Samoilov's top secret reports to the Russian General Headquarters: Hoover Institution Archives, Russia. Voennyi agent (Japan), box 1, folder 1:1, 432–33, folder 1:2, 82–83 (21/8 December 1906). Tanaka's secret activity was first revealed by P.E. Podalko in his *Iaponiia v sud'bakh rossiian: Ocherki istorii tsarskoi diplomatii i rossiiskoi diaspory v Iaponii* (Moscow, 2004), 96–98.

[49] Saitō Seiji, "Nihon kaigun ni yoru Roshia kinkai no yusō 1916–1917 nen," *Kokusai seiji*, no. 97 (May 1991), 154–77.

[50] For a concise analysis of the estrangement between the two countries, see Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897–1911* (Cambridge, MA, 1972).

[51] Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York, 1909), 169.

> Japan now has sea supremacy in the Pacific. In the event of war, that supremacy could not be challenged until after we had constructed a sufficient fleet of colliers. Japan can within three months land on the Pacific Coast four hundred thousand troops, and seize, with only insignificant resistance, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.[52]

This book and many others on similar topics stoked fear of Japan. California's Alien Land Act of 1913 restricted Japanese immigrants from owning land, contributing to the estrangement of the two countries. During this time, American public opinion turned decisively against Japan: Racial fears in America "attached themselves to Japan more than to China because China was weak and Japan was strong."[53] Cries of "the Yellow Peril" could be heard in the United States with reference to the growing might of Japan. At the same time, the number of American Protestant missionaries wishing to go to Japan declined, while those wishing to go to China grew noticeably.[54]

In Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II, who had urged Russia's Tsar Nicholas II into a war with Japan by presenting it as a war between the white and the yellow races, continued to propagate his racist ideology. In a 1908 magazine interview, Wilhelm asserted: "We know this much about him [the Japanese]: he hates the White Man worse than the White Man hates the Devil. . . . The Japanese are devils, that's the simplest fact. They are devils." Referring to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, the kaiser claimed that England was "a traitor to the White Man's cause" and stressed "the necessity for united action in the East on the part of Germany and the United States."[55] Emphasizing his cordial relations with Roosevelt, Wilhelm tried to blandish the president to form a German-American alliance against the French-British-Russian-Japanese partnership.[56] Horrified at being implicated in Wilhelm's racism, Roosevelt advised against the publication of Wilhelm's racist remarks (which did not come out until 1934, during the presidency of Roosevelt's distant cousin Franklin D. Roosevelt, when relations with Japan had deteriorated sharply in the wake of Japan's invasion of Manchuria).[57] Wilhelm spread rumors about a secret Mexican-Japanese agreement allowing Japan to buy Baja California (which was to serve as a beachhead for the conquest of North

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[52] Ibid., xxi.

[53] James Reed, *The Missionary Mind and American East Asia Policy, 1911–1915* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 96.

[54] Ibid., 18, 26, 33, 97.

[55] Kaiser Wilhelm II, quoted in William Harlan Hale, "Thus Spoke the Kaiser: The Lost Interview Which Solves an International Mystery," *Atlantic Monthly* 153, no. 5 (May 1934): 517–19. This and more of Wilhelm's views are further explored in John C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile*, trans. Sheila de Bellaigue and Roy Bridge (Cambridge, 2014). See also Thomas G. Otte, " 'An Altogether Unfortunate Affair': Great Britain and the Daily Telegraph Affair," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 5, no. 2 (1994): 296–333.

[56] Kaiser Wilhelm II, quoted in Hale, "Thus Spoke the Kaiser," 517, 519-20, 523.

[57] *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 6:1163–64, 1292–94.

America). Although no such deal existed, Americans appeared willing to believe German disinformation. Thus, in 1912, the U.S. Senate adopted the "Lodge Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, extending to all nations, not just those of Europe, the prohibition against military intervention in the Americas."[58]

Under these circumstances, the apparent anxiety in America about Japan led to a war scare. In May 1913, amid fears of Japan's reactions to the Alien Land Act, rumors circulated that war with Japan was imminent—so much so that President Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) had to declare publicly that there would be no war with Japan:

> President Wilson has determined that nothing resembling a military or naval demonstration shall occur while the diplomatic negotiations with Japan over the California land bill are in progress. It is the intention of the Administration to allow no ground for alarming interpretation even upon the ordinary manoeuvers of the Army and Navy.[59]

However, according to Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was assistant naval secretary at the time, Washington was quite alarmed:

> Outside the executive departments at Washington it has never been known in this country that, during ten nervous days in the early summer of 1908 [obviously a mistake for 1913], the United States hovered on the edge of an ultimatum from Japan. Yet long before the events of 1914 centered attention elsewhere, an American-Japanese war was the best bet of the prophets. Its imminence began to be taken for granted. Responsible journalists, not only in America but in Europe as well, alluded to it as merely a question of time.[60]

This war scare was entirely America's: While the Japanese had a sense of eventual war with the United States, they felt not even a hint of alarm about war with the United States. The scare demonstrated the unwarranted fear of Japan in the United States at the time.

Japan's entry into World War I on the Triple Entente side (Britain, France, and Russia) did not assuage fears in the United States. Japan's seizure of German leased territories in China and German island colonies in the Pacific Ocean worried the Americans and Australians, who had long been weary of Japan in general and Japanese immigration in particular. In 1923, Franklin D. Roosevelt opined on this matter, without mentioning the United States but oddly enough

[58] David H. Grover, "Maneuvering for Magdalena Bay: International Intrigue at a Baja California Anchorage," *Southern California Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 276.

[59] "Wilson Puts Check on Rumors of War. Issues Order Against Military Movements That Might Cloud Japanese Situation," *New York Times*, 16 May 1913, 1.

[60] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Shall We Trust Japan?" *Asia: Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 23, no. 7 (July 1923): 475.

including Britain, on whose side Japan was fighting: "We have not forgotten the apprehension awakened in England and Australia by Japanese Naval operations in the Pacific archipelagoes in 1914–1915."[61] Roosevelt did note, however, that Washington feared Japan's possible move against the United States: "Many of us have not forgotten the real scares during the great war over the possibility of Japanese-German secret bases in Mexico and even in Alaskan waters."[62] Like the scare of 1913, this one is difficult to explain in rational terms because Japan, unlike Germany, entertained no interest in using Mexico or Alaskan waters to launch a military action against the United States. True, Germany tried (through the infamous Zimmermann Telegram of January 1917) to attract Japan and Mexico to engage in a joint action against the United States—but Japan refused.[63]

In contrast, Theodore Roosevelt, out of office since 1909, did not seem alarmed at all. Rather, he wrote in 1918 before World War I had ended that he was full of optimism for U.S.-Japanese relations. Dismissing German disinformation about Japan's plans for attacking the United States, he noted:

> Japan's part [in World War I] has been great; far greater than anything that she was called upon to do by her alliance with Great Britain. She first captured Kia-Chau [German leased territory in China], and sank all the Austrian and German ships there. She then drove the German ships out of the Pacific. Soon thereafter she lent three of her cruisers to Russia to strengthen her fleet in the Baltic. At present her destroyers are working together with the British and American destroyers in the Mediterranean Sea and off the coasts of England, Spain, and France. Her submarines have been working in company with the Italians. The transports from Australia and New Zealand have been convoyed safely by Japanese warships. . . . Two thousand Japanese are fighting in the Canadian Army. . . . Japan, alone among the Allies, has borrowed no money from the United States; and she also lent hundreds of millions to the other allied nations. The Japanese have made a record in war charities during the last four years which is of really extraordinary fineness and disinterestedness.[64]

This appreciation for Japan was not limited to Theodore Roosevelt and his circle. Some American media openly supported Japan's Monroe Doctrine (which, in their view, did not contradict the Open Door Policy) as an Asian version of the American Monroe Doctrine.[65] All the same, Washington feared Japan. Japan's

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., 476.

[63] On this telegram, see Joachim von zur Gathen, "Zimmermann Telegram: The Original Draft," *Cryptologia* 31, no. 1 (2007): 2–37.

[64] Theodore Roosevelt, "What the Japanese Stood for in World War," *New York Times*, 30 November 1919, s. 8, 1. His essay was published posthumously.

[65] Shizhang Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919–1937* (Westport, CT, 1995), 40.

seizure of the Yap Islands in the western Pacific Ocean in 1914 remained a source of conflict between the two countries because Washington considered it a grave threat to American control of the Pacific in general and Guam in particular.[66]

Japan's faithful observance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance during World War I hid a growing acrimony between the two countries. The 1911 renewal of the alliance implicitly excluded the United States as a potential enemy (that is, Britain would not be obliged to assist Japan in the event of war between Japan and the United States), raising criticism in Japan that the alliance was now a fool's errand. Because Japan and Britain had competitive interests in China, their reactions to the 1911 revolution in China (Xinhai Revolution) were not always in accord. An incident in 1915 contributed greatly to the deterioration of relations between Japan and Britain (and between Japan and the United States as well as other colonial powers). Taking advantage of the distraction of attention from Asia during World War I, Japan slapped China with its infamous Twenty-One Demands. If met, they would have greatly strengthened Japan's control over China, in effect nullifying the Open Door Policy. Although Japan was forced to withdraw some of its demands, the damage to Japan's relations with other powers was nevertheless apparent.

In 1917, while affirming its commitment to the Open Door Policy in China, Japan managed to secure its "special interests" in China (owing to the two nations' geographical proximity) in a secret agreement with the United States called the Lansing-Ishii Agreement. However, the exact nature of Japan's special interests remained open to different interpretations, leading to incessant conflict between Japan and America.[67] The agreement, which Japan did not disclose to its ally Britain, did not become known until 1935.

It is important to note that such shifting allegiances and oppositions were common among the self-interested imperialist states. The tensions between Japan and the United States in particular would set the stage for the Soviet Union's future collaborations with the United States.

As in most political love affairs, Japan's romance with Russia was more a case of a political expediency than mutual affection. The two nations schemed to gain advantage over each other. In the Far East, the imperial powers had long done so, ignoring Chinese, Korean, and Mongolian interests as mere political tools to serve their own interests. At a time when Japan and Russia were drawing closer to each other in opposition to America, Russia was also proposing a Russian-American entente to the United States.[68] This type of diplomatic double-dealing

[66]Timothy P. Maga, "Prelude to War? The United States, Japan, and the Yap Crisis, 1918–22," *Diplomatic History* 9, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 215–31.

[67]J. Chal Vinson, "The Annulment of the Lansing-Ishii Agreement," *Pacific Historical Review* 27, no. 1 (February 1958): 57–69. On Japan's role in World War I, see Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, MA, 1999). On U.S.-Japanese relations during World War I, see Noriko Kawamura, *Turbulence in the Pacific: Japanese-U.S. Relations during World War I* (Westport, CT, 2000).

[68]See Zabriskie, *American-Russian Rivalry*, 152.

was common in Japan's case, too, as later chapters will discuss. Yet, it is important to appreciate the extent of Russian and Japanese opportunism to grasp fully what would soon transpire; indeed, Japan's romance with Russia ended abruptly with the Bolshevik Revolution.

1.2 Soviet-American Secret Cooperation and the End of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1917–1922

The tsarist government fell in February 1917 under the pressure of World War I, a war that exacted heavy human and material toll on an exhausted population. It was followed eight months later by the overthrow of the Russian Provisional Government by the Bolsheviks. Once in power, the Bolsheviks denounced the covert diplomacy of their predecessors and immediately began to publish the secret treaties the tsarist government had concluded with foreign powers—including the secret protocol of the 1916 Russo-Japanese Agreement, which was published with the sensational headline "The Secret Agreement of Russia and Japan Envisaging a Joint Military Action against America and England in the Far East No Later Than the Summer of 1921."[69] This was a stunning political maneuver by the Bolsheviks. As discussed earlier, the agreement and its secret protocol were, in fact, directed against Germany, the two countries' common enemy at the time, although it is possible that they were implicitly directed against the United States as well. The Bolsheviks' publication of the secret protocol of 1916 was thus a calculated maneuver designed to pit two imperial powers, Japan and the United States, against each other and stir up their imperialist conflicts. In fact, once the tsarist government fell, the two countries became extraordinarily suspicious of each other over the future of the Russian Far East.[70] An uncertain future lay ahead.

Bolshevik diplomacy

As Communists, the Bolsheviks were militantly against the capitalist regimes and treated them as class enemies. Yet, they were also realists and did not object to dealing with these regimes in the short term to destroy them in the long term. Although the Bolsheviks denounced the secret treaties entered into by the tsarist government, they actually disclosed those treaties only when it benefited them. (For example, they did not disclose the Li-Lobanov Treaty discussed earlier in this chapter on p. 30.) Immediately after they seized power, the Bolsheviks confronted the need to survive in a hostile world. The two remaining Triple Entente

[69] *Gazeta Vremennago Rabochago i Krest'ianskago Pravitel'stva*, 8 December 1917, 2.

[70] See James W. Morley, *The Japanese Thrust into Siberia, 1918* (New York, 1957), 123 for a discussion of an American plan to build a railway from New York to Petrograd via Alaska and Siberia and "the extraordinary care taken by Japan's intelligence services from the summer of 1917 to collect and evaluate all rumors and reports from whatever source relating to American activities in northeast Asia."

powers, France and Britain, were enraged by Russia's unilateral withdrawal from World War I, while Germany, now in an extremely strong position in light of the Russian Army's disintegration, threatened to take much of the former Russian Empire's western territory. Ultimately, over the objection of many of his comrades, Lenin struck a deal with the Central Powers in March 1918—the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk—renouncing non-Russian territory to the west of Russia (including all of Ukraine and what eventually became the independent Baltic states). Yet, the whole time, the Bolsheviks were also negotiating hard with the Entente powers and the United States, whose military aid the Bolsheviks were willing to accept in exchange for rejoining the war against Germany. Even after this negotiation failed and Moscow signed a treaty with Germany, the Bolsheviks still wanted to continue negotiating with the capitalist powers in exchange for military assistance.[71] As Lenin aptly put it, the Bolsheviks were willing to take "potatoes and arms from the bandits of Anglo-French imperialism."[72] When the Bolsheviks were weak, Lenin explained, they were willing to strike deals, however "shameful," in order to bide their time until the next opportune moment arrived to resume their revolutionary activities against and even within the imperial powers.[73]

Japan presented a special problem for the Bolsheviks. If it assumed an anti-Western imperialist posture, Japan would gain a strong position in Asia, even if it too was unmistakably an imperialist power. According to Lenin, Japanese imperialism was "more frightening" than Western imperialism.[74] The Bolsheviks were intimately familiar with the American-Japanese rivalry over Manchuria after the Russo-Japanese War. Lenin, who had welcomed Japan's victory over Russia's autocracy because he viewed it as a progressive event, now became increasingly concerned about Japan's power and appeal. He believed that war between the United States and Japan over hegemony in the Pacific was inevitable, and he actively promoted the conflict. In June 1917, he declared that war between the two countries was "ready" (готова) and had been brewing for "decades."[75]

In fact, Washington and Tokyo fought for the spoils of Russia's revolution. Both of these capitalist countries viewed the emergence of an openly anti-capitalist, atheist state with great suspicion. Inside and outside the new Communist nation, intrigue existed to overthrow it. Ostensibly to keep Russia from abandoning the war against the Central Powers, many Western capitalist

[71]These negotiations are described in detail in David W. McFadden, *Alternative Paths: Soviets and Americans 1917–1920* (New York, 1993), chap. 3. See also Richard K. Debo, *Survival and Consolidation: The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1918–1921* (Montreal, 1992).

[72]V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineii* (Moscow, 1970), 50:45.

[73]Lenin's discussion in a March 1918 speech of a secret resolution by the Bolshevik party in 1918, quoted in Fedor N. Dingel'shtedt (F. Din), "Iz vospominanii agitatora peterburgskogo komiteta RSDPR(b) (s sentiabria 1917 g. po mart 1918 g.)," *Krasnaia letopis'* 22, no. 1 (1927): 67. This part of Lenin's speech was omitted from his publications.

[74]Ibid.

[75]V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1969), 32:284.

countries agreed to intervene in the Russian Civil War by supporting the forces that opposed the Bolsheviks. (The United States had just committed its military to helping the western front, and the disappearance of the eastern front was a matter of grave concern in America.) The Bolshevik confiscation of foreign assets and investments was an important factor as well. At the same time, however, the outbreak of Russia's civil war fortuitously—for the Bolsheviks—encouraged Japan to move into northern Manchuria and Siberia, an action that caused great alarm in Washington. Washington accused Tokyo of taking advantage of the chaos caused by the Russian Revolution and civil war to seize all of Manchuria and the Russian Far East. Moreover, Japan sent to Siberia almost ten times as many soldiers (some seventy thousand) as did the United States (some eight thousand),[76] in breach of their agreement.

Moscow saw the civil war as a golden opportunity to use the United States against Japan. Moscow even tried to buy American goodwill by exempting some U.S. enterprises in Russia from confiscation. As early as March 1918, Lev D. Trotskii, then Russia's foreign minister (the people's commissar of foreign affairs), sent a telegram to President Wilson in which he asked him "to take control of the trans-Siberian railway, to ensure that it did not fall into Japanese hands."[77] Although the American forces were too small to prevent the Japanese from taking parts of the railway, they did obstruct the Japanese and helped the Bolsheviks in Siberia. Writing to the Bolshevik Party Central Committee on 5 August 1919, Trotskii, then the commander of the Red Army, expressed concern that tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers had advanced into Siberia; although not a substantial number of troops considering the vastness of Siberia, he nevertheless expected America to provide more help to the Soviets:

> There is every reason to suppose that America will oppose the advance of Japan into Siberia more strongly than ever. . . . The strengthening of Japanese forces in Siberia, in conjunction with the eclipse of Kolčak [Kolchak],[78] would mean for America the Japanisation of Siberia, and this she cannot accept lying down. In this event we probably might even reckon on direct support against Japan from *the scoundrels in Washington* [emphasis added]. In any case antagonism between Japan and the United States would create a situation favourable to us in the event of our advancing into Siberia."[79]

As the head of the Red Army, Trotskii was confident that Asia would fall into his hands:

[76] See Hara Teruyuki, *Shiberia shuppei. Kakumei to kanshō, 1917–1922* (Tokyo, 1989).

[77] Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1927* (Armonk, NY, 1997), 30.

[78] Admiral Aleksandr V. Kolchak (1874–1920), the leader of the Omsk-based anti-Bolshevik government supported by most foreign countries at the time.

[79] *The Trotsky Papers 1917-1922*, ed. Jan M. Meijer, vol. 1, 1917–1919 (The Hague, 1964), 622.

> There is no doubt at all that our Red Army constitutes an incomparably more powerful force in the Asian terrain of world politics than in the European terrain. Here there opens up before us an undoubted possibility not merely of a lengthy wait to see how events develop in Europe, but of conducting activity in the Asian field. The road to India may prove at the given moment to be more readily passable and shorter for us than the road to Soviet Hungary. The sort of army which at the moment can be of no great significance in the European scales can upset the unstable balance of Asian relationships of colonial dependence, give a direct push to an uprising on the part of the oppressed masses and assure the triumph of such a rising in Asia. . . . We have up to now devoted too little attention to agitation in Asia. However, the international situation is evidently shaping in such a way that the road to Paris and London lies via the towns of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal.[80]

In January 1920, Trotskii further urged the Siberian Bolsheviks to "make all possible use of their [Japanese and American] antagonism" by supporting America, which wanted only "economic concessions," against Japan, which sought "territorial conquests."[81]

"The scoundrels in Washington," of course, did not always play into Moscow's anti-capitalist aims. In an October 1918 open letter to President Wilson, Karl B. Radek, a Polish-German-Soviet Bolshevik known for his sardonic wit and acerbic tongue (see Introduction, p. 7), made fun of American hypocrisy: Although Wilson supported freedom for the Poles and the peoples of Austria-Hungary, he remained silent about Ireland, India, and other colonized peoples in the world. Radek wrote:

> It cannot be unknown to you, Mr. President, that the capitalists of your country contemplate continuing in the future the same policy of conquests and exaction of super-profit from China and Siberia, and that, fearing competition on the part of Japanese capitalists, they are making military preparations in order to overcome the resistance which may be offered them by Japan."[82]

The Bolsheviks thus understood well America's opportunism, but entertained a certain regard for the "scoundrels in Washington," so long as they stood against colonialism. Lenin openly admitted that the Bolsheviks would seize "with two hands" the tiniest opportunity of amplifying discord between the United States and other capitalist countries. America was opposed to colonialism in general, and if it were to go any further, it would "help us ten times more."[83]

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[80] Ibid., 1:622, 625.

[81] *The Trotsky Papers 1917-1922*, ed. Jan M. Meijer, vol. 2, 1920–1922 (The Hague, 1964), 8–9.

[82] Karl Radek, *Portraits and Pamphlets* (London, 1935), 89–90.

[83] V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1970), 42:68.

Indeed, Washington made every effort to prevent Japan from monopolizing the Russian Far East to the exclusion of American interests. Later, in resuming diplomatic relations with Moscow in 1933, one of the "scoundrels in Washington," Secretary of State Cordell Hull (1871–1955), emphasized that during the Russian Civil War from 1918 to 1920, "American forces had not been in Siberia to wrest territory from Russia, but to ensure the withdrawal of the Japanese, who had a far larger force in Siberia with the intent to occupy it permanently."[84] Another "scoundrel," Robert F. Kelley (1894–1976), the State Department's chief of the East European Division, convinced the Soviets (by showing them the relevant documents) that "the American forces to Siberia had made a calculated effort to protect both Russian territory and Russian property during the [Japanese] occupation."[85] And undoubtedly, the Siberian Bolsheviks were grateful to William S. Graves (1865–1940), who commanded the American expeditionary forces in Siberia, fought against the Japanese, and helped the "revolutionary struggle" in Siberia.[86]

Lenin remained hopeful that Japan and America would clash, and he continued to stir up tensions. In December 1920, when the civil war had ended for all intents and purposes, Lenin declared:

> Are there any fundamental antagonisms in the present-day capitalist world that must be utilized? There are three principal ones, which I'd like to point out. The first, the one that affects us most, is the relationship between Japan and America. War is brewing between them. They cannot live together in peace on the shores of the Pacific, although those shores are more than three thousand kilometers apart. This rivalry arises indisputably from the relation between their capitalist aspirations. A vast literature exists devoted to a future Japanese-American war. It is beyond doubt that war is brewing and inevitable.[87]

Lenin went on to discuss a "preliminary deal" (the sixty-year concession of Kamchatka) that he had signed with the American entrepreneur "Vanderlip,"[88] even though he did not know for sure who Vanderlip was. (Vanderlip, according to Lenin, wanted to lease Kamchatka to help America to fight against Japan.) Lenin had no intention of following through with the deal but used the prospect of it to, as he proudly declared, "set Japan and America at loggerheads, to put it

[84] *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), 1:299.

[85] Robert Paul Browder, *The Origins of Soviet American Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ, 1953), 147. Browder based his account on his interview with Kelley.

[86] A view expressed by P.N. Karavaev (1884–1952), a Siberian Bolshevik. See RGASPI, f. 343, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 32–33.

[87] Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 42:60.

[88] Washington B. Vanderlip (1867–?), a mining engineer and entrepreneur. See Albert Parry, "Washington B. Vanderlip, the 'Khan of Kamchatka'," *Pacific Historical Review* 17, no. 3 (August 1948): 311–30.

crudely." Moscow thereby "gained a point." If Japan bridled at the concessions of Kamchatka, he would say, "Please defeat America. We've no objection." The deal, Lenin gleefully declared, "promises us tremendous advantages and weakens both American and Japanese imperialism."[89]

The preliminary deal was to go into effect only after Vanderlip had secured Washington's recognition of the Soviet government and diplomatic relations had been established. As Lenin indicated, however, the deal was motivated more by his desire to set "Japan and America at loggerheads" than by his desire for Washington to recognize the Soviet government. Thus, Moscow was happy not to honor the Kamchatka deal that required it to make restitution for the American properties and investments it had confiscated after the Bolshevik Revolution. Consequently, Washington refused to recognize Moscow, and Vanderlip failed to lease Kamchatka. Yet, this episode merely scratches the surface of a much darker and more coordinated partnership between Washington and Moscow during this period. In 1921–22, while Moscow was strategically striking deals with American businesses, it was also secretly working with Washington against Japan's interests. Their partnership was well enough hidden to have nearly vanished from history. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence to grasp the geopolitical aims of both states clearly, as well as Moscow's strategy in dealing with the capitalist "scoundrels in Washington."

The Washington Naval Conference, 1921–1922

The Russian Civil War had created grounds for common action by the United States and Soviet Russia. Japanese unilateral actions in the Russian Far East provided the spark. President Wilson was outraged, and an American diplomat vividly described Russia's sentiment:

> The landing of armed Japanese forces in Vladivostok sent a shudder through all Russians. Russia had had a war with the Japanese as recently as 1904 and '05, and the Russians felt about the Japanese landing on their soil a good deal the way we would feel about a Mexican incursion into Texas. All sorts of conditioned reflexes were triggered off. Everywhere the shout went up, even among those who in their despair had hoped and prayed for allied intervention, that the intervention if it came would be allied and not Japanese alone, because I think almost all Russians—and above all the aristocracy insofar as it survived—would turn Bolshevik as against the Japanese.[90]

[89] Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochineii*, 42:64, 67. On the Vanderlip saga, see also V.N. Kostornichenko, "Proekt kontsessii amerikanskogo predprinimatelia Vashingtona B. Vanderlipa i sovetskaia vneshniaia politika nachala 1920-kh gg.," *Americana* (Volgograd), 4 (2000): 79–88.

[90] DeWitt Clinton Poole, *American Diplomat in Bolshevik Russia*, eds. Lorraine M. Lees and William S. Rodner (Madison, WI, 2014), 128.

Not a shadow of the Russo-Japanese alliance remained. Naturally, Japan was destined to fail in its quest for hegemony in the Soviet Far East.

Observing Japan's failure with gratification—or even with the intention of clinching Japan's downfall, as some observers argued—the U.S. Department of War unilaterally and secretly (without notifying Japan or the U.S. State Department) withdrew its military forces from the Russian Far East.[91] Then, in March 1921, Washington lodged a formal protest against Japan's continuing presence in Russia's Far East.[92] The U.S. unilateral withdrawal and protest shocked and embarrassed the Japanese, who still kept a large contingent of occupying forces there. Japan protested that the lack of coordination was unfair to Japan because the dispatch of forces to Siberia in 1918 had been an American-Japanese coordinated action (although Japan did not note that it had sent far more soldiers than the United States and Japan had agreed upon). According to Shidehara Kijūrō (幣原喜重郎, 1872–1951), Japan's ambassador in Washington, U.S. secretary of state Robert Lansing (1864–1928) had no choice but to accept Japan's protest officially—but unfortunately, Shidehara lamented, the Japanese military leaders mistook this acceptance as approval of Japan's free hand in the Far East.[93] Meanwhile, Washington resolved to develop Cavite (in the Philippines) and the island of Guam into great naval bases, a move that Japan regarded as a grave menace. According to a contemporary observer,

> Responsible Japanese publicists charged the United States with pursuing exactly the same policy that Russia had made her own twenty years before. Japan at that time had not hesitated to draw the sword in defence of her interests, though in so doing she risked her existence; and she now intimated plainly that further American encroachment upon her sphere of influence would, if necessary, be resisted by force. . . . Thus it happened that during the winter of 1920–21 Washington was repeatedly advised through diplomatic and secret service channels that Japan was preparing to treat the fortification of Cavite and Guam as a *casus belli*.[94]

It was therefore in seeking to contain Japan that Communist Russia and capitalist America came together. Simultaneously, Britain and Russia were reaching a trade accord.[95] The Russian-American partnerships would culminate in the Washington Naval Conference (November 1921—February 1922). Over

[91] See the first-hand account by William S. Graves, *America's Siberian Adventure* (New York, 1931), 302–9. For a Japanese account, see Miwa Kimitada, "Rēnin to Nihon no kankei: Taiheiyō sensō zenshi to shite," *Gunji shigaku* 5, no. 3 (1969): 16–34.

[92] United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1921* (Washington, DC, 1921), 2:702–5.

[93] Shidehara Kijūrō, *Gaikō gojū nen* (Tokyo, 1951), 39–41.

[94] Hector C. Bywater, *Their Secret Purposes: Dramas and Mysteries of the Naval War* (London, 1932), 281–82.

[95] This de facto diplomatic rapprochement disappointed Poland. Andrzej Nowak contends

Figure 1.7. The Far Eastern Republic, 1920–22. The Kamchatka Territory originally belonged to the Far Eastern Republic. Although it was transferred to Soviet Russia in March 1921, it was still administered by the FER.

the course of 1921, the United States had come to realize that its half-built fleet of sixteen super-dreadnoughts were outclassed by battleships designed by its rivals, Japan and Britain. After spending a "prodigious amount of money," the U.S. Navy "found itself saddled with a second-class fleet" before it had even been commissioned. Washington attempted to save itself by calling for a naval limitation conference.[96] The result, which was the Washington Conference, focused on East Asia and the Pacific Ocean, Washington's main concerns. It was at this conference that secret U.S.-Soviet cooperation against Japan took place on using the Far Eastern Republic (FER or DVR in Russian) to contain Japan's power in Asia.

The FER was a buffer state founded in 1920 in Verkhneudinsk (known as Ulan-Ude today), a city in Buriatiia, Siberia, as a Bolshevik front: a "temporary fig

that this accord helped end the Polish-Soviet war in terms favorable to Moscow, calling London's acceptance of the Bolsheviks its first "appeasement," which is now "forgotten" but is comparable to its more famous Appeasement of Hitler in 1938. See *Pierwsza zdrada Zachodu: 1920—zapomniany appeasement* (Kraków, 2015).

[96] Bywater, *Their Secret Purposes*, 278–283.

leaf [временный фиговый листок]" created for diplomatic purposes to placate Japan, in the words of Georgii V. Chicherin (1872–1936), the Soviet commissar (i.e., minister) of foreign affairs.[97] It did not have a democratic government, despite how Soviet Russia had presented the republic to the outside world. Although the FER tried to pursue its own policies, Moscow always overrode them when they did not suit Soviet Russia's plans, particularly in foreign policy. For example, in July 1921, Moscow annulled an agreement between the FER and the Japanese company Mitsui regarding a twenty-four-year forestry concession.[98]

In March 1921, the FER put forward a plan to build a powerful radio station in the Russian Far East that could connect directly to both Moscow and Washington, of all places.[99] In the summer of 1921, the FER and Washington already appeared to be in contact with each other. In August, both the American ambassador in China, Charles R. Crane (1858–1939), a man with "unusually strong pro-Russian and anti-Japanese" views,[100] and his consultant, Stanley K. Hornbeck (1883–1966), who was to play a central role in American policy toward Asia in the subsequent two decades, traveled to Chita, the FER's new capital (which had moved from Verkhneudinsk in late 1920).[101] American diplomats and the FER were in continuous communication at that time.[102] The FER was somewhat alarmed because the United States, in an attempt to weaken Japan, had "focused its efforts on drawing the DVR [FER] into war with Japan."[103] At the same time, evidence shows that even before the Washington Conference, the FER had tried to exploit Washington against Japan. In early 1921, reports circulated that Japan and France had agreed that the army of General Petr N. Vrangel' (Wrangel, 1878–1928), which had been evacuated from Crimea under French

[97] *Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniia. Gody nepriznania, 1918–1926* (Moscow, 2002), 196.

[98] Mariia Fuks (Fuchs), "Rol' regional'nykh vlastnykh struktur vo vneshnei politike Sovetskoi Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke v pervoi polovine 20-kh godov," Sibirskaia zaimka, accessed 12 April 2014, http://zaimka.ru/soviet/fuchs1_p3.shtml; Ivan Sablin, *The Rise and Fall of Russia's Far Eastern Republic, 1905–1922: Nationalisms, Imperialisms, and Regionalisms in and after the Russian Empire* (New York, 2019), 212. Already, in January 1921, the FER's foreign minister, Aleksandr M. Krasnoshchekov (1880–1937), who had graduated from the University of Chicago in 1912 while in exile in the United States, angrily complained to Lenin about Moscow's disregard of the FER in dealing with foreign countries. See *Dal'nevostochnaia respublika: stanovlenie. Bor'ba s interventsiei (fevral' 1920–noiabr' 1922 g.). Dokumenty i materialy*, p. 2 (Vladivostok, 1993), 44–47. In 1924 Krasnoshchekov was tried on charges of "corruption" and executed in 1937. See Robert Argenbright, "Marking NEP's Slippery Path: The Krasnoshchekov Show Trial," *Russian Review* 61, no. 2 (2002): 249–75.

[99] *Dal'nevostochnaya respublika*, 56.

[100] Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door: America and China, 1905–1921* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1971), 69.

[101] Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck*, 52; Norman E. Saul, *The Life and Times of Charles R. Crane, 1858–1939: American Businessman, Philanthropist, and a Founder of Russian Studies in America* (Lanham, MD, 2013), 203.

[102] Svetlana Chervonnaya and Donald J. Evans, "Left Behind: Boris E. Skvirsky and the Chita Delegation at the Washington Conference, 1921–22," *Intelligence and National Security* 29, no. 1 (February 2014): 25–26.

[103] Ibid., 26.

protection, would be transferred to the Far East and armed by the Japanese to fight against the Bolsheviks. Then, Japan would rule over Siberia once it had been liberated from the Bolsheviks. This fantastic scheme was certainly disinformation, yet the American press and some U.S. diplomats in Washington, Tokyo, and Shanghai seemed to have believed it.[104] In the end, Washington reached the conclusion that the Franco-Japanese agreement was a fabrication.[105]

This episode did not alarm Washington about the Soviet disinformation campaign. The American press remained sympathetic to the FER, and the United States was afraid of alienating the FER into favoring Japan in Siberia. It was under these conditions that Washington extended an invitation to the FER to attend as a guest the Washington Naval Conference (which nine nations attended formally).[106] The FER delegation, like Witte in 1905, mounted a charm offensive in the United States, distributing numerous publications about its "democratic" government. One of Washington's aims at the conference was to discredit Japan's military presence in the Russian Far East by presenting it as an imperialist scheme rather than an anti-Communist war. Famously, Washington succeeded in breaking Japan's diplomatic code at the time (which became known years later, however).[107] Japanese diplomatic correspondence was also translated and leaked by "someone inside the Japanese headquarters in Harbin."[108] As a result, during the Washington Conference, the United States confidentially gave decrypted Japanese diplomatic correspondence to the FER representatives, who then exposed Japan's territorial ambitions in the Far East.[109] With its own strategy revealed, Japan was forced to accept terms that were unfavorable to its naval expansion. By leaking information on Japan to the FER, the United States hid its hand while privately working closely with the Bolsheviks. It is quite telling that a file in the archive of Chicherin, the people's commissar of foreign affairs, that deals with the Washington Conference is still classified. (In fact, its very existence is whited out in the catalog of the archive.)[110] Moscow probably has many conference-related documents that it wants to keep out of the public eye,

[104]On this disinformation campaign, see the file of the head of the FER: RGASPI, f. 144, op. 1, d. 160 (file of Petr M. Nikiforov). Nikiforov suggests that one source of this information was an American mole in Tokyo named Takuda, but the source was more likely a Russian mole (see ll. 6–6 ob.) who intentionally gave disinformation to the Americans. Petr Karavaev's file, cited above (see p. 53, footnote 86), is devoted to a triumphal account of how the United States and the FER worked together to discredit the Japanese (and to some extent the French as well).

[105]*Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922* (Washington, DC, 1922), 2:841.

[106]For a concise discussion of the conference that focuses on the Soviet and American governments, see Paul Duke, *The USA in the Making of the USSR: The Washington Conference, 1921–1922, and "Uninvited" Russia* (London, 2004).

[107]For a history of the Cipher Bureau, the first U.S. code-breaking organization, see Herbert O. Yardley, *The American Black Chamber* (Indianapolis, IN, 1931).

[108]Paul Welch Behringer, " 'Forewarned Is Forearmed': Intelligence, Japan's Siberian Intervention, and the Washington Conference," *International History Review* 8, no. 3 (2016): 368.

[109]This is the conclusion that Chervonnaya and Evans reach in their "Left behind."

[110]RGASPI, f. 159, op. 2. The missing file would be numbered 14.

even a hundred years after the event. Undoubtedly, however, Soviet Russia's covert work with the United States through the FER enabled both Moscow and Washington to achieve one of their principal aims: weakening Japan's position in the Far East.

At the Washington Conference, Japan presented itself as having been forced to eat humble pie, agreeing to return Shandong to China and withdraw its military forces from the Russian Far East (other than from North Sakhalin). Japan also agreed to uphold the Open Door Policy in China, a policy that Washington appeared to be most insistent about maintaining. Once Japan had withdrawn its forces, the political utility of the Far Eastern Republic expired; the republic was soon abolished and absorbed into Soviet Russia. We can appreciate here the lengths to which Moscow went in its manipulation of the geopolitical landscape: It established a puppet state that provoked U.S. intervention against Japan, only to dissolve it as soon as Moscow achieved this objective.

During these years (1918–1922), Moscow seduced the Americans with the prospect of attractive economic concessions for U.S. businesses, with the critical proviso that they would take effect upon Washington's recognition of the Soviet government. Moscow did not honor these deals because the recognition never came, and the United States failed to reap economic gains from its secret collaboration with the Bolsheviks.[III] It appears that the Far Eastern Republic promised some attractive deals to American businesses, but Moscow never intended to honor them. Moreover, the FER had almost certainly promised Washington that it would support the Open Door Policy, which Moscow had no intention of respecting. Regardless, a marriage of convenience had ended. Once Moscow had achieved its political goals, it lost interest in granting economic concessions to American businesses because Washington's recognition of Moscow was unlikely to occur. The Soviet government then dropped its economic concessions and dissolved the FER. Washington, for its part, remained suspicious of Moscow; having dealt successfully with Japan, it no longer needed the Bolsheviks, at least for now. Those Americans who had been most favorably disposed toward the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Moscow lost influence in U.S. political circles. Their partnership was predicated on illusory promises on both sides, which vanished as soon as their shared fear of Japan was, for the time being, relieved.

The end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance

Another defeat for Japan at the conference was the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. As we have seen, the alliance had been strained for some

[III] For example, Moscow did not honor its oil concession deals with Harry Ford Sinclair (1876–1956). Sinclair sued the Soviet government in vain. See *Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniia: gody nepriznaniia, 1918–1926*, 433, 435, 420–22, 424–27. See also Floyd J. Fithian, "Dollars without the Flag: The Case of Sinclair and Sakhalin Oil," *Pacific Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (1970): 205–22.

time.[112] In Britain, many voices were calling for an Anglo-American alliance instead of the Anglo-Japanese one. At the same time, Washington was pressing London to annul its alliance with Tokyo because it feared joint Anglo-Japanese actions against the United States in the event of an American-Japanese war. Beginning in the spring of 1920, "a campaign of speeches and newspaper articles" against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been taking place in the United States, Britain, and the British dominions (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). This campaign was led by the American journalist Thomas Millard (1868–1942) and the British writer Bertram Lenox Simpson (under the pen name B.L. Putnam Weale, 1877–1930) and financed by Charles R. Crane (see p. 57 earlier in this chapter), a wealthy American businessman who had been serving as the U.S. ambassador to China since March 1920.[113] Still, London was in favor of renewing the alliance with Japan, if only to safeguard its interests in the Pacific region. However, it faced strong objections from its dominions. (The politicians from Australia and New Zealand were not necessarily against the renewal; Japan was a reliable ally during World War I—and in any case, Washington did not appear to be a reliable partner because of its isolationism.) These dominions, all of them situated across the Pacific from Japan, entertained exaggerated fears of being inundated by immigrants from the supposedly "overpopulated" Japan—immigration that for Australia in particular would have violated its Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 (known as the White Australia Policy), which was intended to restrict non-British, and especially Asian, immigration. The dominions also worried that if war broke out between Japan and the United States, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance might draw them into the conflict. This fear was unfounded. The 1911 renewed Alliance had excluded the United States as a potential foe.

More generally, the dominions insisted that Japan's possession of former German islands in the Pacific (including the Marshall, Carolina, Marianne, and Palau Islands) was the beginning of Japan's expansion into the entire Pacific region. They felt exposed to Japan's threat and defenseless against it.[114] The debate assumed racial dimensions: Such characterizations of Western diplomacy as "the White Man's blunder" and of Britain as "the leader of the white peoples of the world" appeared in numerous publications at the time.[115] A book entitled *The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy*, published in New York in 1920, contended that Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War "signified a body-blow to white ascendancy" and that "the echoes of that yellow triumph over one of the great white Powers reverberated to the ends of the earth." Before

[112] For more on the decline of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, see Ian H. Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908–23* (London, 1972).

[113] Peter O'Connor, "Alfred Harmsworth, 1st Viscount Northcliffe (1865–1922): An Uncomfortable Visitor to Japan," in *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* (Folkestone, 2010), 7:328–29.

[114] E. George Marks described this fear in his *Watch the Pacific. Defenceless Australia. Japan's Impregnability* (Sydney, ca. 1924).

[115] See for example ibid., 27, 53.

the war, claimed the author, "the thought that white expansion could be stayed, much less reversed, never entered the head of one white man in a thousand."[116]

In the end, the Four-Power Treaty that the United States, Britain, France, and Japan signed at the Washington Conference in 1921 effectively annulled the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and stipulated the maintenance of the status quo in the Pacific (most importantly, in China).[117] Unlike Japan, which reaped enormous benefits from World War I, Britain was heavily indebted to the United States for its war loans. London found it difficult not to succumb to American pressure and chose to "please America" by accepting the American demands, including the cancellation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.[118]

Already stung by anti-Japanese immigrant policies in the United States, Japan had become even more sensitive to the issue of race after World War I. Earlier, at the Versailles Conference in 1919, Japan proposed that a "racial equality" clause be included in the covenant of the League of Nations. The conference failed to adopt it.[119] In return, Japan was allowed to keep the former German islands in the Pacific, as well as China's Shandong (which Japan soon agreed to give up at the Washington Conference, however). Japan could not have reasonably expected that its racial equality proposal would be adopted, given Japan's own extensive discriminatory measures against foreigners and foreign immigrants (including Chinese and Koreans). Japan's proposal was a cynical political ploy on the international scene, and it worked extremely well: Tokyo's complaint that the world was poised against Japan echoed loudly back at home.

At the Washington Conference, five nations (the four signatories of the Four-Power Treaty plus Italy) signed a treaty on naval limitations in 1922. These five nations agreed to limit the tonnage of their respective battleships by maintaining a set ratio that allowed the United States and Britain 525,000 tons each, Japan 315,000 tons, and France and Italy 175,000 tons each.[120] In addition, three concerned countries—the United States, Britain, and Japan—agreed not to fortify any military bases for ten years, other than those they already possessed.[121] This agreement, however, did not include Singapore. In fact, London had been entertaining what came to be called the Singapore Strategy: In the event of a war

[116] Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color*, 21, 149.

[117] The Four-Power Treaty was backed up by the Nine-Power Treaty, which was signed in Washington in 1922 by the four powers plus five additional nations (the Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and China), to ensure the Open Door Policy in China.

[118] Sir Robert Vansittart, quoted in Beverley Baxter, *Westminster Watchtower* (New York, 1938), 200; Maga, "Prelude to War?" 230.

[119] On the defeat of Japan's racial equality proposal, see Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London, 1998); Kristofer Allerfeldt, "Wilsonian Pragmatism? Woodrow Wilson, Japanese Immigration, and the Paris Peace Conference," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 15, no. 3 (2004): 545–72. "Significantly," says Allerfeldt, "there is no record of those who voted against" the proposal. Ibid., 565.

[120] *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1922*, 1:250.

[121] Ibid., 252–53.

between Britain and Japan, Britain would fortify Singapore to serve as a critical naval base in the Pacific. Britain eventually carried out this strategy, much to Tokyo's distress.[122]

World War I had thus elevated Japan to the status of a great power. Yet, the end of the war also left Japan isolated, facing alone a radically transformed world while also finding itself sandwiched between gargantuan potential enemies—the Soviet Union and the United States.

In 1922, the U.S. Department of War stationed a military observer in Chita, the capital of the FER, which Washington had not officially recognized. This observer was likely Philip Ries Faymonville (1888–1962), who was later stationed in Moscow as a U.S. military attaché from 1934 to 1939 and was known as Red Colonel because of "his extremely pro-Soviet" views.[123] In his communication dated 16 October 1922 to the American observer in Chita, "E.R.W. McCABE Lieutenant-Colonel, Field Artillery Chief, M.I. 5," stated: "From the point of view of the United States, the paramount reason for having military attaches in Japan, China and the Far Eastern Republic is the conflict of interests of the United States and Japan in the Region of the Pacific, and the possibilities of armed conflict resulting therefrom." McCabe went on to state that "Japan will be the aggressor in this war and her purpose will be to maintain a dominating position in the region of the Pacific, more especially on the continent of Asia." The paramount mission of the observer in Chita was: "To report upon the probable attitude of Russia (The Far Eastern Republic) and the employment of her armed forces and resources in case of war between the United States and Japan." Washington expected that Soviet Russia and the Far Eastern Republic (which McCabe considered "one and the same") would stand on the American side in the event of war with Japan:

> The declaration of a Blue-Orange [U.S.-Japanese] war will at once fill the Siberian people and to a lesser degree the inhabitants of Russia proper with a desire to turn the war to their own advantage. It will be felt that Russia will have everything to gain and little to lose in entering the war on the side of the United States provided there is a reasonable assurance that the United States will be successful. *These Russians in the position of authority would be at once appreciate [*sic*] that a Blue-Orange war would afford an opportunity for Russia to regain the position in the Far East which she held prior to the Great War and to some extent that position occupied by Russia before the Russo-Japanese*

[122] See F.W. Mohr, "Singapore," *Marine Rundschau: Zeitschrift für Seewesen* 6 (1925): 258. On the Singapore fortification in general, see W. David McIntyre, *The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base, 1919–1942* (London, 1979).

[123] See Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel, *The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America's Traitors* (Washington, DC, 2000), 218–19. Faymonville was sent to Moscow again in 1942 by Harry Hopkins (1890–1946), FDR's close adviser, against the objection of army intelligence. In Moscow, Soviet intelligence trapped and compromised Faymonville.

> *War of 1904* [emphasis added]. [If] Soviet Russia is given sufficient encouragement by the United States [it] will therefore decide to become an ally. The importance of Russia as an ally cannot be over estimated. Russia has a large well trained army which, with proper equipment and a steady flow of supplies, will prove a formidable adversary for the Japanese divisions. The possession of the port of Vladivostok by Russia will permit the shipment of submarines to that part which, when assembled, will threaten the Japanese fleet based on the Sea of Japan. This will probably be the most efficacious way of preventing food shipments between Korea and Japan. Sufficient funds would permit the repair of the Trans-Siberian Railway and, within a year, a possible fifteen trains per 24 hours could pass in both directions. A force of 200,000 Russians in Northern Manchuria would either force the Japanese to keep a large army in Northern Manchuria or would result in Japan sacrificing the raw materials which would be vital for her people during a Blue-Orange War.[124]

The Russians intercepted McCabe's communication because, astonishingly, the Americans used the FER's services to communicate with their Beijing office.[125] The English original and a Russian translation were forwarded to Trotskii, the head of the Red Army. Trotskii wanted to publish this intercept "of a sensational nature" in a foreign newspaper, but was overridden by Chicherin, the commissar of foreign affairs.[126] The Bolsheviks were happy to work with the United States against Japan. Although Tokyo may not have known all the details of Soviet-American cooperation, it was keenly aware of the new geo-political alignment in the Far East.

Japan's international isolation

These outcomes of the Versailles and Washington Conferences left Japan bitter. The "Washington System," referring to the international order created by the Washington Conference, became a symbol of national humiliation in Japan. From Japan's point of view, this was understandable: Its contribution to World War I was rewarded by Britain's betrayal and U.S. hostility. The outside world had not forgotten that this small, upstart Asian country had taken advantage of the West's preoccupation with the war in Europe by making a cunning move on China in 1915, issuing its Twenty-One Demands (see p. 48 in this chapter). Japan's response to the Washington Conference, particularly the actions of its

[124] RGVA, f. 33988, op. 2, d. 529, ll. 46, 49, 52.

[125] Maria Fuks (Fuchs), "Plany 'sine-oranzhevoi voiny' i pervye shagi rossiisko-amerikanskogo voennogo sotrudnichestva na Dal'nem Vostoke, 1920–1923," Sibirskaia zaimka, accessed 12 April 2014, http://zaimka.ru/soviet/fuchs2.shtml.

[126] RGVA, f. 33988, op. 2, d. 529, ll. 31–43. A partial Russian translation is Fuks (Fuchs), "Plany 'sine-oranzhevoi voiny.' "

navy, immediately alarmed Britain. The London *Times* published a report from Tokyo asserting that Japan's military had repudiated "the whole spirit of the Washington Agreement." A "conference of [Japanese] admirals and other high officials has come to the conclusion that the supersession of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance means that Japan must face single-handed any enemy who threatens her, and consequently it is necessary to extend connexions with neighbouring countries in order to make sure of supplies in such an emergency." This conclusion was, said the article, "a strange misapprehension of the spirit and object of the agreement concluded at Washington in regard to the Pacific." The article added that the Japanese press reactions to the Washington Conference were "decidedly unenthusiastic," and the tone of some was "frankly hostile. Japan had been humiliated, cheated, while Britain and the United States had secured substantial advantages at Japan's expense."[127] The article in the *Times* was soon followed by a commentary by Lord Northcliffe (Alfred Harmsworth, 1865–1922) that was published in the newspapers he owned, the London *Times* (19 April 1922) and the *Daily Mail* (18 April 1922): "Watch Japan! Plan to Control China."[128]

The world did indeed begin to watch Japan closely—for starters, by rejecting Japan's claim that it had been short-changed at the Washington Conference. Japan's position was not, in fact, as disadvantaged as it contended. An Australian commentator asserted that "Japan emerged from the [Washington] Disarmament Conference stronger, with greater prestige, than any other nation represented."[129] Although this assessment may well have been propagandistic, an acute German analyst noted in 1925 that the United States confidently made remarkable concessions at the Washington Conference: Japan's naval superiority in the Far East was evident, considering the distance the American fleet had to travel from its Hawaii base, and Japan would maintain that superiority for ten years. This time frame would give Japan ten years to prepare for a new future, particularly with its army, whose armaments lagged behind those of the European powers that had fought in World War I. According to the German analyst, the real victor (*Sieger*) at the Washington Conference was Japan, an outcome that was not properly appreciated.[130]

Soviet analysts were equally cognizant of the checkered results of the conference. Ever outspoken (often too outspoken), Karl Radek certainly reflected the views of the Soviet government when he reckoned that the Washington Conference had given Japan a temporary "reprieve" (передышка) in the arms race.[131] According to Radek, Japan had managed to secure this reprieve only because Washington was confident enough in the power of the dollar that it was willing to give up the right to fortify Guam, Corregidor (in the Philippines), and

[127]"Japan's Naval Policy: Anti-Washington Influences. Cabinet's Authority Overridden," *Times*, 6 April 1922, 11.

[128]O'Connor, "Alfred Harmsworth," 331, 336.

[129]Marks, *Watch the Pacific*, 54.

[130]Mohr, "Singapore," 261.

[131]Karl Radek, "Razryv mirnykh peregovorov s Iaponiei," *Pravda*, 27 September 1922, 1.

the Aleutians.[132] Meanwhile, Radek also felt that the pro-American choice that Britain had made at the conference was a colossal mistake. Describing his visit to Moscow in 1926 in the *Spectator*, a British political magazine, here is how a British member of the parliament characterized Radek's assessment:

> The Washington Conference was, he [Radek] maintained, a turning-point in our [British] destinies. Before that Conference we might have joined Europe in an economic alliance against the United States, and in the Far East have co-operated effectively with Japan, also against the States, and for the exploitation of China. This policy he thought might have been successful. Europe with our assistance might have freed herself from the death-grip of American finance, and have undercut the States in the markets of the world.
>
> Dominion pressure put a stop to all this, forcing a break with Japan and co-operation with the United States against our own interests. It remained to be seen whether this new policy was worth while.[133]

But although Moscow may have disapproved of these concessions to the United States, it seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed the conflict among the imperialist powers that it had incited behind the scenes at the conference. An article published in 1922 in the new Soviet journal *Novyi Vostok* happily claimed that "the Japanese-American conflict is assuming an ever-sharper character every day. War between the two countries seems already unavoidable."[134] A lengthy article, entitled "Japanese Imperialism in the Far East," published in the same journal just before Japan withdrew all its military forces from Russia (other than northern Sakhalin), shows how satisfied Moscow was with what it had achieved at the conference: Washington was hostile to Japan, and the British press were publishing "hundreds of articles about Japan's aggressive plans, about Japan's intrigues against Great Britain, China, India, and so on." Japan, from Moscow's perspective, was destined for catastrophe: "Just like tsarist Russia on the eve of 1905 and just like the German Hohenzollerns, who managed both to unite their former enemies (Russia and Britain) against them and to repel their former allies (Italy), imperial Japan—which does not possess the immense military force and economic power of *Deutschland über alles*—is fatally rushing toward an inevitable catastrophe."[135] For the Soviet Union, its secret collaboration with the United States and its use of the FER had evidently been a huge success.

Even so, the Bolsheviks were concerned about their own international isolation, particularly their failure to gain U.S. recognition. They expressed such

[132] Radek, "Vozvrashchenie Kolumba v Evrope," *Izvestiia*, 24 May 1933, 2, which is reprinted in Radek, *Podgotovka bor'by za novyi peredel mira* (Moscow, 1934), 135–41.

[133] Robert Boothby, M.P., "A Visit to Russia," *Spectator*, 10 July 1926, 42–43.

[134] M. P.,"Tikho-okeanskaia problema," *Novyi Vostok*, no. 1 (1922): 25.

[135] Mikh. Pavlovich, "Iaponskii imperializm na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Novyi Vostok*, no. 2 (1922): 57.

sentiments as "America will always be against Russia" and "the Japanese and Americans will unite concerning the division of spheres of influence" in the Far East.[136] Despite the rift they had incited between the two nations, Moscow's fears of American-Japanese cooperation had not been fully quelled.

Tokyo, at the same time, was acutely aware of a possible Soviet-American united front against Japan and had to explore the ways in which Japan could survive any future war against those two powers. Shortly after the Washington Conference, Araki Sadao, a Japanese Army officer, foresaw a joint Soviet-American action against Japan in the early 1930s. Araki was a Russian speaker who had worked in Russia from 1909 to 1913, been attached to the Russian Army during World War I as an observer, taken part in Japan's Siberian expedition, and later served as war minister from 1931 to 1934. As head of the Army General Staff's Department of the United States and Europe, Araki mapped out a strategy for fighting a war against these two opponents. Although we don't know the details of his strategy, Araki understood that Japan's armaments would be inferior to those of the United States. To fight such forces, he emphasized the proper training of the army and the careful planning of attacks.[137]

"Several wars will have to be waged"

Japan's entry into the imperialist game in the Far East complicated the region's international order. The Far East differed from the other parts of the world that the Western colonial powers had carved out. The two newcomers to the imperialist game—the non-Western Japan and the all-powerful isolationist United States—were both critical of the older Western imperial powers yet eager to stake out their shares in the Far East (in China and possibly the Russian Far East as well). To complicate the matter, Japan sought to emulate the United States by declaring a Monroe Doctrine for Asia, while presenting itself as the leader of the oppressed Asian peoples of Western colonialism. As a result of its victory over Russia in 1905, Japan had inspired admiration throughout the entire world, including China, the object of Japan's imperialist desire. Japan emulated its Western rivals and behaved just as they had toward China, in which Japan claimed its own special interests. The Western powers, including the United States, sometimes acknowledged Japan's special interests in China and at other times denied them. The long-term and short-term future of the Far East remained uncertain for all powers involved.

What *was* certain was that Moscow kept Washington—and other governments—informed of Japan's imperialist ambitions in the Far East. In 1921, for

[136] Remarks by P.A. Kobozev, who had become the prime minister of the Far Eastern Republic in 1922, quoted in Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)* (Leiden, 1991), 1:401.

[137] Araki Sadao, handwritten notes, "RoBei rengōgun ni taisuru teikoku no sakusen senjutsu," in Araki Sadao Papers, no. 47, I-1, Kindai Nihon hōsei shiryō sentā genshiryōbu, University of Tokyo, Faculty of Law.

example, Japan submitted seventeen demands to the FER. The first demand read: "The government of the Far Eastern Republic shall convert Vladivostok into a purely commercial port, placing it under foreign control and taking no measure interfering with trade." The fourteenth demand read: "The government of the Far Eastern Republic obliges itself never to maintain a naval fleet in the Pacific and to destroy the existing fleet."[138] Moscow rejected these and other demands as making the FER into Japan's protectorate.[139] When Moscow leaked these demands the following year, the *North China Star* jumped at the opportunity to expose Japan's imperialist schemes (already apparent in the Twenty-One Demands that Japan had presented to China in 1915), proclaiming that they divulged "the true designs of Japanese militarism in no lesser degree than the 21 points presented by them to China, and no State, unless it openly agrees to become a colony of Japan, will ever accept them."[140] By leaking Japan's new demands, Moscow achieved a propaganda coup against Japanese imperialism. Moscow's savvy intelligence tactics allowed it to find ways to dictate how Washington and the rest of the world understood and engaged with Japan's attempts to expand its influence to Asia.

What had begun as Japan's desire for a political romance with Russia had thus given way to fear and uncertainty over the future of the Far East for all involved. Soon after the Washington Conference, two Russian émigré observers—who were no friends of the Soviet government and were keen analysts of military affairs in the Far East—made these comments about the future contest in the Far East:

> Japan has undisputable and important strategic advantages. Undisputable because these advantages are created by nature itself in the shape of enormous distances and of the situation of islands and continents. And Japan has taken clever advantage of these natural conditions. She has assured the possession of these natural advantages by clever strategical preparation which now allows her formidable Army and Navy rightly to consider themselves the masters of the Far East. . . .
>
> American statesmanship may entrust the General Staff of the United States Army with the following objects:—
>
> 1. To compel Japan by force to alter her aggressive policy in China and in Siberia.
>
> 2. To defend the Philippines or to recapture them in the event of their seizure by Japan at the outbreak of war. . . .
>
> The most effective method of attaining these objects, namely

[138] Alexander Lensen, *Japanese Recognition of the U.S.S.R.* (Tokyo, 1970), 27, 29.

[139] *Moskva–Tokio. Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia 1921–1931. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2007), 1:20.

[140] *North Star China*, 19 May 1922, quoted in Lensen, *Japanese Recognition of the U.S.S.R.*, 26, 46.

> the capture of the Japanese mainland by the United States Army—belongs to the realm of strategical phantasy.[141]

On the one hand, Japan had no true ally and was, as Radek pointed out, economically far inferior to the United States. On the other hand, Japan's natural geographical advantages and military strength meant that Japan posed a genuine threat to the West. The situation in the Far East was so complicated and uncertain that these two observers had to declare that the "motives which will prompt Japan to engage in the struggle are so deep and so vast that not one but several wars will have to be waged before a solution is reached."[142] This was a truly ominous prophecy that would prove all too accurate.

Yet, if anything, this political confusion and complexity were exactly what Moscow was hoping to achieve. Stalin welcomed "struggle, conflicts, and wars between our enemies" as a catalyst for revolution.[143] If necessary, he sought to create that confusion and complexity. For that reason, Japan's struggles to handle Moscow's hidden geopolitical maneuvers were only just beginning.

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[141] N. Golovin and A.D. Bubnov, *The Problem of the Pacific in the Twentieth Century*, trans. C. Nabokoff (London, 1922), 158, 160–61.

[142] Ibid., 81. Their book was soon translated into Russian and published in Prague in 1924 as *Tikhookeanskaia problema v XX stoletii* (Prague: Plamia, 1924). It was also translated into Japanese and published in Tokyo in 1930 as 太平洋攻防吉界第二大戰 (Tokyo: Banrikaku shobō, 1930).

[143] Iosif V. Stalin, "K voprosu o proletariate i krest'ianstve," quoted in Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin, vol. 1, Paradoxes of Power, 1878--1928* (New York, 2014), 558. For the text of this speech, see also Chapter 2, p. 86.

CHAPTER 2

Stalin, Zhang, and Tanaka (1922–1929)

By the time the Washington Conference had ended, it was evident to the world that Japan, uncoupled from Britain, was isolated internationally. Washington was most satisfied with the outcome, yet the future remained uncertain. What *was* certain from Japan's point of view was that if Japan were forced to fight the United States or a combined American-British adversary, there were only two possible paths. One was an anti–Anglo-American alliance (most likely with Germany and the Soviet Union). The other was China; either Japan could ally with China against the Western imperialist powers or exploit China to confront them. The first option was not particularly attractive: Germany had been severely weakened by World War I, and the Soviet Union was in essence hostile to the capitalist regimes. The second option would compromise and jeopardize the interests of the Western powers and therefore antagonize them all against Japan. In a very real sense, Japan was driven into a corner. In hindsight, a Pacific War appears to have been unavoidable.

Naturally, the Soviet Union looked at the situation somewhat differently. Although Moscow's rapprochement with Berlin (the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo) could be supplemented by a similar arrangement with Japan, that alliance would antagonize the most economically powerful nation in the Pacific, the United States. If Japan were to forge a united front ("Asia for Asians") with China against the West, the Soviet Union would lose hegemony over China to Japan, and a pan-Asianist Asia would turn against Soviet imperialism. In 1925, the new Soviet ambassador to Japan, Viktor L. Kopp (1880–1930), reported on this duality to Moscow: Japan was both an imperialist state and a people fighting for the very existence of a "colored Eastern nation." Kopp pointed out the danger of injuring Japan's national self-esteem (obviously referring to the recent American immigration policy) and of Soviet "hypocrisy" (i.e., Soviet colonialism) toward China in the exploitation of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER).[1] Even without Kopp's analysis, Stalin was acutely aware of this difficulty. The best scenario for Moscow was to keep Japan both from allying with China and swallowing it up by awakening Chinese nationalism, while at the same time weakening the imperialist powers by encouraging them to attack one another. This highly complex strategy was exactly what Stalin pursued.

[1]Viktor L. Kopp to G.V. Chicherin, 15 and 18 May 1925 AVP, f. 0146, op. 8, p. 110, d. 3, ll. 42; Kopp to Stalin, 16 May 1925, ibid., l. 46.

Timeline: *1921*: Founding of CCP ‖ *1922*: Treaty of Rapallo (Germany and Russia); Founding of JCP ‖ *1924*: Asian Exclusion Act (United States); Opening of Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations ‖ *1924–1927*: First KMT-CCP united front ‖ *1925*: Opening of Soviet-Japanese diplomatic relations; Sun Yat-sen's death; Fuse Katsuji's interview with Stalin ‖ *1926*: Chiang Kai-shek's coup in Canton; Britain's Christmas Memorandum ‖ *1927*: Chiang's coup against CCP in Shanghai; Northern Expedition (China); Meeting between Stalin and Kuhara Fusanosuke ‖ *1928*: Meeting between Stalin and Gotō Shinpei; Northern Expedition; Jinan Incident (Japan and China); Assassination of Zhang Zuolin; "unification" of China; Zhang Xueliang's change of banner (China) ‖ *1929*: Sino-Soviet War.

2.1 Soviet-Japanese Rapprochement

Shortly after the Washington Conference, J.W. Robertson Scott (1866–1962), an English journalist who had lived in Japan for a few years, wrote a two-part article entitled "Japan Contra Mundum" (Japan against the World), which laid out the state of affairs that he believed would lead Japan to further entangle itself with Soviet interests. He began with this assessment of the world's attitude toward Japan and the Japanese:

> During a recent journey round the globe I found myself in no place where I did not meet people who distrusted the Government of Japan and disliked the Japanese. . . . The Japanese are as unpopular if not more unpopular than the Germans. Besides being suspected on every Continent they are hated and despised at their own doors by a people five times more numerous [China].[2]

Noting a recent dramatic shift of Western opinions of Japan from the romantic to the fearful, Robertson Scott explained why:

> Japan aspires to gain, and, in the opinion of some excellent judges has every chance of gaining, the headship not only of the Yellow Races but of Asia, the Continent which is joined to Europe by one of the world's longest frontiers, the Continent which in the part of it in which the Japanese flag flies is only a hundred miles from American territory, the Continent which is the largest and most populous of all the Continents. . . . Of Japanese relations with China this much may be said with certainty, that Japan knows China in ways that no Western nation can ever hope to know her and exerts an influence among the Chinese with which no Western people can possibly cope.[3]

[2] J.W. Robertson Scott, "Japan Contra Mundum and What the English-Speaking World Is Facing," *Review of Reviews* 65, no. 390 (June 1922): 623.

[3] Ibid., 624–25.

Asia mattered, Robertson Scott insisted, because

> "The problems of the Pacific," [as] the most statesmanlike mind the public life of the British Empire has told me, "are the world problem for the next fifty years or more. There Europe, Asia and America are meeting and there the next great chapter in human history will be enacted. In China the fate of the greatest human population on earth will have to be decided."[4]

Therefore, Robertson Scott emphasized, "*the problem of Japan is a problem for the English-speaking peoples whose territories surround Japan*."[5] Having lived in Japan, Robertson Scott understood Japan's complaints and conundrum: The West had carved up almost all of Asia except for China, with much of the continent divided into spheres of influence that were already in the hands of the West. Thus, "the Western world has unconsciously prepared a situation for Japan from which, in present world conditions, there has seemed to many Japanese to be no way of escape."[6] Japan had emulated the West, as a result of which it had come to be disliked everywhere:

> But by nothing that Japan has done that was ill done has any informed and thoughtful student of her policy been surprised. Given Japan's past, given the way by which she has been led until this day, given her domestic and moral stage of development, given the attitude of the world towards her and the world's international code, . . . such developments as have taken place were to be expected.[7]

Acknowledging American and British responsibility for the situation (America for opening up Japan in the mid-nineteenth century and Britain for making Japan a "Great Power"), Robertson Scott warned against the "thrashing of Japan" (which had become almost a form of entertainment in the United States). The English-speaking world had "conspicuously" done two things to Japan: It had "succeeded, whatever Japan may pretend to the contrary, in deeply offending Japan, in helping the growth of distrust of both America and Great Britain and in paving the way to an understanding with Russia and Germany which may take Japan far."[8] History proved Robertson Scott right: The Soviet Union led Japan very far—to destruction.

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[4] Ibid., 624.

[5] Ibid., 625.

[6] J.W. Robertson Scott, "Japan Contra Mundum," pt. 2, "If the English-Speaking World Were Japan," *Review of Reviews* 66, no. 391 (July 1922): 89.

[7] Ibid., 91.

[8] Robertson Scott, "Japan Contra Mundum and What the English-Speaking World Is Facing," 631.

Japan's limited choices

France understood the "problem of Japan" as not merely a "problem for the English-speaking peoples" but for themselves as well. Paul Claudel (1868–1955), a French poet who served as France's ambassador to Japan from 1922 to 1928, saw the problem as a global one. The abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the formation of an Anglo-American bloc greatly disquieted Japan. Japan's position had become "dangerous," because of the suspicions of the Anglo-American world, which was determined to give Japan as small a share of the Chinese pie as possible. France understood that, as a result, it was Japan's only way out of isolation, other than the Soviet Union and Germany.[9] In fact, until the mid-1930s, France remained Japan's closest international partner.

Like France, Moscow understood Japan's international isolation and courted Tokyo after realizing that Washington was unlikely to recognize the Soviet government. Fearful of that isolation, Tokyo, too, sought some sort of rapprochement with Moscow. The initial contact began confidentially in Warsaw during the summer of 1921.[10] Then, in January 1922 (i.e., toward the end of the Washington Conference), a group of Soviets and Japanese diplomats met in Berlin in the presence of several German observers, including famed Japanologist Karl Haushofer (see Introduction, p. 11).[11] Tokyo's expectations were vastly different from Moscow's, however, and the negotiations failed twice more, in Dairen [Dalian] and Changchun, China. During these negotiations, despite the lack of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet government, U.S. intelligence was informing the Soviet side about Japan's objectives.[12] When the Changchun negotiations ended in failure in September 1922, Karl Radek published a lead article in the Soviet Communist Party's newspaper, *Pravda*. In it, he contended that Russia's importance was growing not just in terms of its military strength but also with respect to the international political situation facing Japan. In fact, Radek emphasized, Japan needed peace with Russia more than Russia did with Japan: Japan did not have enough resources to fight a war against both Britain and the United States. Then, Radek issued a warning to Japan: "A stronger China is the best means of pressure that America has on Japan."[13] At the same time, Radek declared that the political situation made Russia "*the decisive element in the Far East*" for both Japan and America.[14]

[9] Paul Claudel to A. Léger, 25 October 1925, in Paul Claudel, *Correspondence diplomatique. Tokyo 1921–1927*, ed. Lucile Carbagnati, preface by Michel Malicet (Paris, 1995), 208–9.

[10] AVP RF, f. 04, op. 49, p. 297, d. 54340, ll. 2–4.

[11] Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Karl Haushofer: Leben und Werk. Band 1. Lebensweg 1889–1946 und ausgewählte Texte zur Geopolitik* (Boppard am Rhein, 1979), 219–21; Wolf-Dietrich Gutjahr, *"Revolution muss sein": Karl Radek—die Biographie* (Cologne, 2002), 521.

[12] Mariia Fuks (Fuchs), "Rol' regional'nykh vlastnykh struktur vo vneshnei politike Sovetskoi Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke v pervoi polovine 20-kh godov," Sibirskaia zaimka, accessed 12 April 2014, http://zaimka.ru/soviet/fuchs1_p3.shtml.

[13] Karl Radek, "Razryv mirnykh peregovorov s Iaponiei," *Pravda*, 27 September 1922, 2.

[14] Karl Radek, quoted in Gutjahr, *"Revolution muss sein,"* 535.

Radek was correct that Japan needed Russia more than Russia needed Japan. The Soviet ambassador to China, Lev Karakhan, thought likewise, insisting to Stalin that Moscow had no need to offer substantive political concessions to Tokyo.[15] As Boris Nicolaevsky (1887–1966) once remarked:

> From the Japanese point of view, there was no other reasonable policy she could pursue. . . . Of course, Japan could wage war against Russia. Yet, even if she gained many partial victories, this would have been of no avail to her. Russia had unlimited opportunities for retreat while keeping her striking power intact. A blockade, the temporary loss of territory, etc., were not very dangerous to Russia. She would have been able to fight on practically without end, and her position would always have remained more favorable than that of Japan.[16]

Japan had been lucky in 1905 because Russia accepted peace, but the next time around was bound to be different. Some Japanese understood this, but many did not.

No matter how much Japan needed Russia, it could not easily embrace its northern neighbor: Russia was engaged in Communist subversion in Japan, as it was elsewhere. The impact of the Russian Revolution had been enormous in Japan (as in many other countries), just as the impact of Japan's 1905 victory over Russia had been in Russia and throughout the world. Communist parties sprang up everywhere—in Germany, France, Italy, Britain, Poland, China, the United States, Brazil, and elsewhere, and in those countries where Communism did not gain traction on its own, Moscow created Communist parties. They joined the Communist International (Comintern), which had been founded in Moscow in 1919, and received material, financial, and human assistance from Moscow.[17] The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) was formed in 1922 with the direct help of the Comintern. An illegal party, it was subject to repeated repression by the government. With or without direction from Moscow, some Japanese socialists and anarchists tried to create their own revolutions by organizing workers, peasants, and particularly soldiers, using agitation and propaganda. Although the JCP didn't influence Japanese politics in any substantive way until after World War II, the Soviet Union's ideology, as an alternative to Japanese imperialism, did enjoy considerable influence over the Japanese population. The Japanese government was therefore particularly sensitive to the question of Communist propaganda and subversion.

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[15] See *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina s polpredom SSSR v Kitae L.M. Karakhanom: dokumenty, avgust 1923 g.–1926 g.* (Moscow, 2008), 274, 419 (13 July 1924, 9 January 1925).

[16] B. Nicolaevsky, "Russia, Japan, and the Pan-Asiatic Movement to 1925," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (May 1949): 260–61.

[17] See Fridrikh Firsov, *Sekretnye kody istorii Kominterna. 1919–1943* (Moscow, 2007); Iosif Linder and Sergei Churkin, *Krasnaia Pautina: Tainy razvedki Kominterna. 1919–1943* (Moscow, 2005).

Tokyo, like London and Paris, was keenly aware of what Moscow had done in Germany in 1923 when it mounted an all-out effort to stage a Communist revolution. Moscow's attempt failed, but its partnership with Germany (the Rapallo system, established by the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo) survived. Although Moscow categorically denied its intervention in Germany, Germany recognized its duplicity (*die Duplizität der russischen Politik*) and did not trust Moscow. Nevertheless, the Entente powers' extortionist terms at the Versailles Conference made it necessary for Berlin to maintain relations with Moscow.[18] Tokyo was also apprised of Moscow's duplicity in Germany and did not trust the Bolsheviks. In addition, Tokyo knew that Moscow was helping the Koreans subvert Japan, both from within and without. In 1921, Moscow had given 200,000 gold rubles to the "so-called Korean Government," to ensure that it would "carry on revolutionary struggle by every means, including military means, against Japan in Korea and beyond."[19] Radek remained convinced that in spite of Moscow's subversive activities, Tokyo, like Berlin, had no choice but to come to terms with Moscow. He would soon be proved right.

The China card

Radek was also right that a strong China would provide a counterweight to Washington (and for that matter, Moscow) against Japan. In his communication of 16 October 1922, quoted in Chapter 1 (see p. 62), "E.R.W. McCABE Lieutenant-Colonel, Field Artillery Chief, M.I. 5," the American observer in China, emphasized China's importance to the United States:

> A war between the United States and Japan will be of almost as much importance to China as to the combatant countries. Sympathy for the United States, whom the Chinese regard as almost their only friend in the family of nations, will be almost universal. The wide spread hatred of the Japanese, coupled with the hope that if the United States is successful that [*sic*] the natural result will be freedom for China from Japanese domination, will make the Chinese leaders keenly alert in their study of the proper course for China to follow.[20]

McCabe cautioned that the past U.S. treatment of China had often been disappointing to the Chinese and that the Chinese in north China and Manchuria,

[18] See Ulrich Brockdorff-Rantzau (German ambassador in Moscow) to Berlin, 2 May 1924, in *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945. Serie A: 1918–1925. Band X: 7. April bis 4. August 1924* (Göttingen, 1992), 137. For a Soviet diplomat's account of Moscow's subversive activities in foreign countries, see Grigorii Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru* (Moscow, 1997), originally published in two volumes in Paris in 1930–31.

[19] Lev Karakhan to Stalin, 12 April 1922, Papers of Dmitrii Antonovich Volkogonov, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, box 27, folder 9. The "Korean Government" refers to the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea, a Korean government-in-exile in Shanghai.

[20] RGVA, f. 33988, op. 2, d. 529, ll. 50–51.

familiar with the Japanese troops, had "a wholesome respect and fear" of the Japanese. As a result, Chinese neutrality might not be easily maintained. Still, McGabe noted firmly, American determination to expel the Japanese "from the mainland of Asia" could rally all of China, including north China and Manchuria, to the side of the Americans.[21] Thus, a moderately strong China was in the best interests of the United States.

Moscow entertained a similar interest in a strong China but faced difficult—and at best uncertain—policy decisions. China was flailing, divided, and weak in the 1920s. In the wake of the 1911 Xinhai Revolution and the death of Yuan Shikai (袁世凱, 1859–1916), who had emerged as dictator after the revolution, China devolved into the so-called warlord era, split into a myriad of fiefdoms controlled by military cliques that engaged in incessant, internecine battles for hegemony over China as a whole. Japan and other imperialist powers tried to take advantage of this situation to expand their influence in China. Japan coveted Manchuria, seeking to separate it from other parts of China and place it under Japanese control, while at the same time claiming that a divided China did not constitute a state. This assertion placed the Soviet Union in a delicate situation. Stalin agreed that China was divided, had no unified central government, and therefore did not constitute a state.[22] Yet, the Soviets were convinced that a divided China would ultimately foster national liberation.[23] More importantly, however, Moscow saw China as the key to dealing with the imperialist powers. Thus, in spite of its complicated stance toward China, Moscow shifted its global revolutionary strategy decisively to Asia—and particularly to a divided China.[24] Moscow sought to turn the Chinese people against all the imperialist powers, while at the same time sowing discord among those powers—particularly Japan, Britain, and the United States. Chinese revolutionaries were eager to make use of any of the world's powers in order to make China stronger and eventually expel all of them from China. Chinese politicians and warlords therefore began to turn to the Soviet Union for both assistance and inspiration.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was the most prominent of the Chinese political forces. The CCP was founded in 1921, riding the wave of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, China's anti-imperialist movement that arose in response to Japan's retention of Shandong, as permitted by the Versailles Treaty. This provision of the treaty turned Chinese sentiment decisively against the West and Japan. Even though China had previously signed secret treaties with Tokyo that acknowledged Japan's control of Shandong, China refused to sign the Versailles Treaty, mobilizing the Chinese population against its humiliating loss to Japan of the historic birthplace of Confucius (孔子, 551–479 BCE), China's

[21] Ibid., ll. 50–51.

[22] Stalin's conversation with Gotō Shinpei, 7 January 1928, in *Nihon gaikō bunsho. Shōwa ki I. Dainibu daisankan (Shōwa 2nen–Shōwa 6nen)* (Tokyo, 1989), 466.

[23] Vl. Vilenskii-Sibiriakov, *Chzhan-Tszo-Lin (man'chzhurskaia problema)* (Moscow, 1925), 60.

[24] "Our leaders," Chicherin noted in 1924, always emphasize that "the East is as important as or even more important than the West." *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina*, 360.

greatest philosopher.[25] Moscow took advantage of the situation, helped found the CCP, and without hesitation supported the CCP politically and financially.[26] Moscow, however, remained skeptical of the CCP's appeal to the Chinese people as a whole and thus of its ability to unite China (at least in the short term) against imperialism. Instead, Moscow was more interested in backing China's Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang/Guomindang*, commonly known as the KMT rather than the GMD) as China's unifying force. Founded in 1911 soon after the Xinhai Revolution, it proved to be the most popular party, capturing 45 percent of votes in the National Assembly elections of 1912. In 1913, however, Yuan Shikai tried to establish dictatorial power in defiance of the KMT, which in turn attempted to overthrow his government. Yuan crushed the KMT, but in 1919, it was revived in Shanghai by one of its co-founders, Sun Yat-sen, who had long advocated the "Three Principles of the People" (三民主義)—nationalism, democracy, and the livelihood of the people—as China's political philosophy.

Sun was a shrewd and savvy political operator who had lived for many years in the United States, Japan, and Europe. As a politician, he engaged in double dealings with friends and foes alike to get whatever financial and military help he could from foreign countries. Deeply influenced by the Russian Revolution, Sun "made a psychological identification between the Russian Revolution and his own efforts, and between himself and Lenin." By mid-1922, he had apparently come to the conclusion that "the only real and sincere friend of the Chinese Revolution was Soviet Russia." When asked about its dictatorial government, he "replied without hesitation, 'I do not care what they [the Soviets] are if they are willing to back me against Peking [Beijing].' "[27] Sun wanted to replace the internationally recognized Beijing government with his own revolutionary one. While helping Sun, however, Moscow was also negotiating with Beijing for the resumption of official diplomatic relations. Sun, for his part, proposed to Moscow in May 1922 that China and Soviet Russia form a military alliance against Japan—while at the same time, Sun was seeking help from Japan.[28] Moreover, Sun was simultaneously calling for Japan to join a German-Soviet-Chinese alliance. Sun argued that Japan had made the mistake of joining in World War I on the side of the Entente and had dropped the ball on "the golden opportunity of making Asia exclusive for the Asians" and "a heaven-sent opportunity of making herself the leader of the Orient." (Sun did not mention that China also had joined the war on the same side in 1917.) According to Sun, "such an Asia would

[25] Bruce A. Elleman, *Wilson and China: A Revised History of the Shandong Question* (Armonk, NY, 2002).

[26] In the late 1920s for example the CCP was receiving millions of U.S. dollars (in today's value) annually. Calculated from Yang Kuisong, "Gongchanguoji wei zhonggong tigong caizheng yuanzhu qingkuang zhi kaocha," in *Zhong-E guanxi de lishi yu xianshi*, ed. Luan Jinghe (Kaifeng, 2004), 253–55, 267.

[27] C. Martin Wilbur, *Sun Yat-sen: Frustrated Patriot* (New York, 1976), 112–13, 123.

[28] G.N. Peskova, "Stanovlenie diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii mezhdu sovetskoi Rossiei i Kitaem. 1917–1924 gg.," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 4 (1997): 118.

have opposed the Whites, especially the Anglo-Saxons."[29] Sun added that it was not too late for Japan:

> If Japan really wishes to see Asia controlled by the Asiatics, she must promote relations with the Russians. Russians are Asiatics. There runs in their veins Asiatic blood. Japan must make common cause with the Russians in opposing the aggression of the Anglo-Saxons. In shaking hands with Russia in the work of asserting the rights of the Asiatic alone lies hope of salvation from the catastrophe to which Japan and the other Oriental countries are being forced by the unsatiable ambition of [the] Anglo-Saxons.[30]

Sun was thus clearly positioning China's interests alongside those of the Soviet Union and Japan at the same time that the Soviet Union and Japan were recognizing the centrality of China to their ambitions.

For these reasons, by 1923, Sun had come to accept the Soviet Union as his most trusted ally, even as the Soviet Union continued its play of imperialist hegemony over China. Sun chose not to question Moscow's persistent colonial policy in Manchuria openly. True, on paper, Moscow renounced its extraterritoriality in China as a demonstration against the other imperialist states clinging to their colonial powers there. Yet, when it came to the control of the CER, which extended from Manzhuli to Harbin and Suifenhe in Manchuria, Moscow first abjured its control without recompense (the Karakhan Manifesto) and then withdrew that renunciation.[31] Stalin was concerned that China would yield control of the railway to the imperialist powers.[32] Moscow demanded the presence of Soviet military forces in exchange for surrendering sole control of the CER to China.[33] Sun, however, was not in control of Manchuria; the man who ruled it was the warlord Zhang Zuolin. In 1922, Georgii Chicherin, the people's commissar of foreign affairs, had written to Adol'f A. Ioffe (Joffe) (1883–1927), the Soviet plenipotentiary to China, instructing him not to make any concessions to China regarding the CER. Giving the CER to China effectively meant in

[29] "Sun Urged Japan to Join Germany," *Japan Advertiser*, 25 November 1922, 1. The article appeared in an American-owned, English-language newspaper published in Japan.

[30] Ibid. The *Japan Advertiser* rebutted Sun by contending that "the invitation of British and American enmity combined would have meant ruin for China and Japan alike." It did agree with Sun that Japan lost the golden opportunity of standing with China by its "predatory policy" toward China and that it was not too late for Japan to correct its mistake. See "Dr. Sun's Regrets," *Japan Advertiser*, 26 November 1922, 4.

[31] See Bruce A. Elleman, *International Rivalry and Secret Diplomacy in East Asia, 1896–1950* (London, 2020), 151–58.

[32] Testimony by Henk Sneevliet, a Comintern delegate to China in the early 1920s, quoted in Tony Saich, *The Origins of the First United Front in China: The Role of Sneevliet (Alias Maring)* (Leiden, 1991), 1:133. Sneevliet's recommendation that the railway be returned to China was not accepted by Moscow. Stalin is said to have cited the case of Persia as an example of a time when Russia's withdrawal led to "an increase in American influence."

[33] Peskova, "Stanovlenie diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii," 116.

effect giving it to Japan. Any agreement with China, in Moscow's conception, had to lead to Soviet control in the future: The Soviets were to reconquer the CER. They could not do so now, Chicherin had explained to Ioffe, but "in the near future, we'll have to deal with Manchuria" (в недалеком будущем нам придется взяться за Маньчжурию).[34]

Sun could not have known about these Soviet schemes, and he accepted Soviet advisers, most prominently Mikhail M. Borodin (1884–1951), who transformed the KMT into a revolutionary party modeled on the Soviet Communist Party. The CCP was forced to work within the KMT while still maintaining autonomy. Mao Zedong, a founding member of the CCP and later its undisputed leader, attended the First National Congress of the KMT, held in 1924 under Soviet tutelage, and then began to work for the KMT's central executive committee. That same year, the KMT, in cooperation with the CCP and with Moscow's support, founded the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou. The academy trained many commanders who went on to fight against the imperialist powers in subsequent decades. Chiang Kai-shek, the academy's commandant and Sun's protégé, had in 1923 been sent to gather information in Moscow. Impressed by the Russian Revolution, Chiang studied the Russian language in China for some time. However, according to the memoir of his second wife, Ch'en Chieh-ju (陳潔如, 1906–71), Chiang came back critical of Moscow. In a report objecting to Sun's appointment of Borodin as an adviser to the KMT while he was away in Moscow, Chiang wrote to Sun, warning him that "the sole aim of the Russian Party is to make the Chinese Communist Party its legitimate heir" and that Moscow wanted to sovietize China and annex Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet.[35] Ignoring Chiang's objections, Sun accepted Moscow's directives and assistance.

Unsurprisingly, the Bolsheviks continued to engage in double dealing. Even as Moscow acknowledged China's sovereignty over Outer Mongolia, Moscow began to exert tight control. Soviet military forces were stationed there, and Moscow viewed the creation of a "people's revolutionary government" in Outer Mongolia as one of the "most important successes of its politics." Outer Mongolia, under Soviet control, would serve as a guarantee against the "permanent threat" from Japan. Soviet documents show that Moscow had no intention of

[34] Ibid., 121.

[35] Ch'en Chieh-ju, *Chiang Kai-shek's Secret Past: The Memoir of His Second Wife, Ch'en Chieh-ju* (Boulder, CO, 1993), 135–36. Chiang's forty-page report seems to have been lost, and its full contents are unknown. See Yang Tianshi, *Zhaoxun zhenshi de Jiang Jieshi: Jiang Jieshi riji jiedu* (Taiyuan, 2008), 123. Yang's analysis of Chiang's Soviet journey shows that Chiang read Marxist-Leninist literature intently and was not entirely negative about the Soviet Union. However, although he admired Sun, he was indeed critical of Moscow's position regarding China. Ibid., 116–17, 121, 125–26. When his son, Chiang Ching-kuo, joined the "Communist Party" (in fact, the Communist Youth League) in the Soviet Union in 1926, Chiang did not rebuke him. See Yu Minling, "Jiang Jieshi yu lian-E zhengce zhi zaisi," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan*, no. 34 (2000): 73. For Chiang's own retrospective account of his view of the Soviet Union, see his *Soviet Russia in China: A Summing-up at Seventy* (New York, 1957), 23–24.

making any concessions on this matter, recognizing China's sovereignty "only theoretically."[36] Despite considerable Chinese resistance to Soviet control of Outer Mongolia, Sun recognized the treaty Moscow had signed with the Beijing government, Sun's enemy, in May 1924. This treaty led to the resumption of Soviet-Chinese diplomatic relations. (A secret protocol that both sides signed was not published. It stipulated that all former Sino-Russian agreements *not* be abolished but merely not enforced, allowing Moscow to retain the colonial power the tsarist government had exercised over China, including Outer Mongolia.)[37] Four months later, in September 1924, Moscow also signed a separate treaty with Manchuria's Zhang government in Mukden (or Fengtian, known as Shenyang today). Here, Moscow did make concessions: No Soviet military forces would be allowed in Manchuria, but the CER would not be given to China and would instead become a joint Soviet-Chinese operation.[38] Moscow justified the separate treaties with the two governments in China by contending that China had no central government that controlled the country as a whole.[39]

Rapprochement, 1925

In 1925, having seen China and many European powers resume diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Tokyo ultimately came to terms with Moscow. Radek proved to be right. As the *Japan Advertiser* noted in November 1922 in response to Sun's call for Japan to join a German-Soviet-Chinese alliance, Tokyo was exploring rapprochement with Moscow: "The new policy toward Russia," according to the newspaper, "is nothing less than what Dr. Sun is urging, policy aimed at 'shaking hands with the Russian.' "[40] In 1924, Karl Haushofer of Germany, invoking Sun's call, advocated a German-Soviet-Chinese-Japanese alliance, from which the United States and the "robber nations" (*Raubmächte*) of the West would be excluded.[41] In that year, Washington inadvertently pushed Japan closer to the Soviet Union. In May 1924, the United States adopted the Johnson-Reed Act ("An Act to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States, and for other purposes"), which effectively banned all immigration from Asia and nullified the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–8 (see Chapter 1, p. 39). This new law offended greatly Japan. Gao Zongwu (高宗武, 1905–94), who had studied in Japan for eight years until 1931 and subsequently became an important Chinese diplomat, recalled from his student years in Tokyo how deeply the anti-Asian immigration act had affected Japan: His fellow students often said that

[36] Peskova, "Stanovlenie diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii," 121–22.

[37] Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1927* (Armonk, NY, 1997), 100–103.

[38] Zhang had earlier extended several feelers to the Soviet side: Peskova, "Stanovlenie diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii," 115, 124.

[39] Ibid., 132–33.

[40] "Dr. Sun's Regrets," *Japan Advertiser*, 26 November 1922, 4.

[41] Karl Haushofer, "Berichterstattung aus der Indo-Pazifischen Welt," pts. 1 and 2, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, no. 7 (1924): 449; no. 12 (1924): 812.

had it not been for the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, war between the United States and Japan would have already broken out. When asked which country they disliked most, eight or nine out of ten said, "The United States in the West and Russia in the East."[42] Paul Claudel, the French ambassador to Tokyo, called the U.S. measure "truly stupid." He acknowledged Japan's hypocrisy in its ill-treatment of the Chinese and Koreans. (For example, thousands of ethnic Koreans and Chinese were massacred during the uncertain time following the 1923 earthquake.) Nevertheless, the U.S. measure was nothing less than an insult and a humiliation for Japan. The era of concessions had ended for Japan, he added, because all the concessions Japan had made to the United States had led to this insult. Claudel added that the Japanese military had begun to speak of "war."[43]

In subsequent years, Japan turned not to the United States but to the Russian Maritime Province and Siberia as outlets for its supposed "overpopulation." Although the highest circles of the Soviet government discussed and considered the subject, Moscow ultimately decided that Japanese immigrants on Soviet soil would be a security risk and accepted none. Nevertheless, the U.S. anti-Asian immigration measure of 1924 was a godsend for Moscow. The following year, Japan recognized the Soviet Union and resumed diplomatic relations. Tokyo made the announcement at Moscow's request on 21 January 1925, the first anniversary of Lenin's death. According to the agreement the two countries signed in Beijing (the Soviet–Japanese Basic Convention, or the Beijing Convention), Japan was to withdraw its military forces from North Sakhalin in exchange for oil concessions, and the Soviet Union was to observe "neutrality" in the event of a Japanese conflict with a "third power" (an obvious reference to the United States). Both sides agreed that the Portsmouth Treaty of 1905 (see Chapter 1, p. 38) would remain in effect.[44]

China immediately complained that Moscow had violated the Sino-Soviet agreement of 1924, which abolished all tsarist treaties with foreign countries concerning China (a category that clearly included the Portsmouth Treaty). In fact, the Soviet Union and Japan did not explicitly cancel the treaties they had signed between 1907 and 1916.[45]

Unlike China, the Soviet Union appeared satisfied with the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention. Yet, Moscow's statements also revealed that in reaching the agreement with Japan, it had in mind another capitalist power. Chicherin publicly made the incendiary comment that for Japan, the Soviet-Japanese

[42] *Gao Zongwu huiyi lu* (Beijing, 2009), 1, 163.

[43] Claudel, *Correspondence diplomatique*, 273–75.

[44] The most comprehensive work on this subject is George Alexander Lensen, *Japanese Recognition of the U.S.S.R.* (Tokyo, 1970), which includes the convention in its official English wording.

[45] Moreover, Japan and the Soviet Union signed a secret protocol regarding the status of Bessarabia as part of the 1925 convention. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, 252–58. Earlier, in negotiating with China, Moscow had used a secret protocol to secure its control over Outer Mongolia. See ibid., 100–10.

rapprochement meant "the creation of a friendly rear" in the event of international complications—a thinly-veiled reference to war with the United States.[46] Karakhan, who had signed the convention with Japan, was more explicit: "The agreement with Japan, by strengthening our position in the Pacific, serves as a warning to America, which, by not concluding a treaty with us, only makes its own position worse." The agreement with Japan allowed the "full resumption" of Soviet rights on the CER, Karakhan emphasized. Then, he courted Washington: "There are not so many contentious issues dividing America and us as there were in our negotiations with Japan."[47] The Berlin correspondent for the *New York Times* reported Karakhan's statement under the headline: "Says Soviet Plans Big Japanese Trade: Russian Minister at Peking Writes of New Treaty as a Warning to America."[48]

The Soviet journal *Novyi Vostok* went out of its way to emphasize Russia's "Orientalism" by quoting Baron Roman R. Rozen (1847–1921), a Russian diplomat who had served in Japan for many years: "Russia is a country more Asian than European," and therefore Russia should leave European affairs to the Europeans and concentrate on Asia. The journal called for a union of the workers of the Soviet Union and those of Asian countries, including Japan.[49] Another article in the same journal admitted that the vicious cycle of Japan's international isolation had forced the country to seek the "only way out" available: rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Still, the author gloated over what must have been an awkward and disappointing turn of events for Washington.[50]

In fact, Washington had been concerned about the "mirage of a Japanese-Russo-German alliance extending from the North Sea to the Sea of Japan."[51] The U.S. reaction to the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention was swift: Americans suspected a Soviet-Japanese secret alliance. Immediately after the announcement, the *Baltimore Sun* published an article entitled "Russo-Japanese Pact of World Importance" that argued that the convention "established, once and for all, the fusion of all the forces of the Orient in a league against the Occident." The author of the article, a Russian count who had been an officer in the Imperial Russian Army, warned against the alliance:

> It is evident that in associating herself with Russia in the exploitation of important [business] concessions, Japan is entering, so to speak, into a collaboration of interests which time will develop into a sort of indispensable alliance. As these two nations are the only ones so situated as to command in China, with the exercise of a little tact, they will be able to supersede any and all of the other powers and will make

[46]"Interv'iu tov. Chicherina o dogovore s Iaponiei," *Izvestiia*, 22 January 1925, 1.

[47]"Beseda s tov. Karakhanom," *Izvestiia*, 25 January 1925, 1.

[48]*New York Times*, 28 February 1925, 3.

[49]M. Pavlovich, "Godovshchina russko-iaponskoi voiny," *Novyi Vostok*, no. 7 (1925): 16, 19.

[50]V. Semenov, "Iapono-sovetskoe soglashenie," *Novyi Vostok*, no. 7 (1925), 26, 31.

[51]Lensen, *Japanese Recognition of the U.S.S.R.*, 199.

> that vast reservoir of men and resources converge into their orbit . . . This oriental bloc will be fatal to the Occident; so fatal, indeed, that, disguised under all sorts of subterfuges, it has always been feared."[52]

It was hegemony over China that concerned the Americans. The U.S. position in China was now shaken. Moreover, Moscow was stirring up nationalism in China against the imperialist powers. The author issued a dire warning: "Communism in Europe is a false alarm, but in the Orient it is disguised as nationalism and acquires therefore a certain right to be respected by us."[53]

The London *Daily Telegraph*'s diplomatic correspondent was equally suspicious of the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement, expressing astonishment that Japan had "gone further than any of the latter [the Western nations] in its endeavour to reach an agreement with the Soviet." Then, he warned: "Indeed, although the time is not yet, it may not be so far distant as is generally asumed [*sic*], when Russia and Japan between them would be tempted to practise, if not to proclaim, a pendant to the Monroe doctrine in the case of China."[54] France tended to be more sympathetic to Japan. *L'Écho de Paris*, for example, blamed Washington and London for adding insult to injury, declaring that France was always more considerate of Japan's cause than were the Anglo-Saxon nations. The newspaper then wondered whether it was still possible to make up for the annulment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.[55]

Welcoming the rapprochement with Moscow, some Japanese politicians were overtly provocative toward the United States. Gotō Shinpei (後藤新平, 1857–1929) was one of them. Gotō, the minister of foreign affairs in 1918 and mayor of Tokyo from 1920 to 1923, had long argued that the old continent (Eurasia, including Russia, China, and Japan) should stand up to the new continent (the United States). In 1923, Gotō embarked on a private initiative to normalize Soviet-Japanese relations by inviting Ioffe, the Soviet plenipotentiary to China, to Japan. His initiative contributed to the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement in January 1925. Then, in May 1925, Gotō gave an interview to a German journalist in which he was asked about the U.S. anti-immigration law. Gotō insisted that the climate of the Soviet Far East was not suitable for settlement but that California's was. He emphasized that it was Japanese farmers who had made large tracts of American land arable, and therefore the anti-immigration law was an egregious act of ingratitude. He stated bluntly: "The colonization of California

[52] Alef de Ghizé, "Russo-Japanese Pact of World Importance: New Treaty Leagues Forces of East against Those of West—Two Nations Now Able to Command Vast Resources of China," *Baltimore Sun*, 23 January 1925, 11. Another article in the newspaper contended that it was the U.S. immigration policy that turned the "eyes of Japanese statesmen from the Occident to the Orient." J.F. Essary, "Coolidge Firm in Attitude to Soviet Regime," *Baltimore Sun*, 24 January 1925, 2.

[53] Ghizé, "Russo-Japanese Pact."

[54] "Russia and Japan: Effects of Agreement; Power in the Far East," *Daily Telegraph*, 22 January 1925, 10.

[55] "Le traité russo-japonais implique-t-il un changement de la politique japonaise?" *L'Écho de Paris*, 26 January 1925, 3.

is a vital question [*eine Lebensfrage*] for Japan." If so, the journalist pressed him, would a military solution be the last resort if the United States refused to make concessions? Gotō replied that the law was not irrevocable and that there were politicians in America willing to change it. He continued, "Alas, the politician must sometimes think of war, but he mustn't talk about it." Gotō added, however, that he did not believe that the United States would unleash war, which would, in any case, meet the unanimous resistance of the "peace-loving Japanese people."[56] The *New York Times* Berlin correspondent reported on this interview under the sensational title, "WAR A POSSIBILITY, SAYS VISCOUNT GOTO." The article quoted Gotō's exclamation "I assure you the colonization of California by the Japanese is a life-and-death question for Japan" but omitted his statement that he expected the anti-immigration law to be revoked by the Americans themselves. In the article, the *New York Times* Berlin correspondent noted: "Goto's remarks are amazing in their frankness, considering the usually careful and diplomatic restraint of Japanese statesmen of the first rank."[57] The *New York Times* article caused a sensation in the United States. Later, Gotō disingenuously denied that he had ever discussed the "California question" with any journalist, while the German journalist who interviewed Gotō accused the American reporter in Berlin of sensationalizing the whole affair.[58]

The Soviet Union achieved at least one of its objectives in its rapprochement with Japan; by highlighting the potential threat of the strengthening East, it managed to further alienate Japan from the other imperialist powers. Ironically, the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement actually served to isolate Japan further in the realm of international politics.

2.2 Marriage of Insurance

The objectives of the convention become significantly more complex for both Japan and the Soviet Union, however, when we consider the agreement's impact on each nation's interests in divided China. The Soviet Union had, of course, struck deals with both China and Japan between 1924 and 1925. On the one hand, Moscow and Tokyo explicitly discussed the importance of pan-Asian unity, yet on the other hand, they were both pursuing hegemony over China.

The mutual interest in a pan-Asian alliance was crucial to Moscow's strategy because it gave the Soviet Union access to the Japanese political right. In Japan, significant impetus to recognize the Soviet Union did not come only from the left. Certain right-wing circles, deeply offended by Britain and the United States, sought to ally Japan with the adversary of the liberal capitalist countries. The

[56] Fritz Witkowski, "Gespräch mit Viscount Goto," *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin), 26 May 1925, morning edition, 4.

[57] T.R. Ybarra, "War a Possibility, Says Viscount Goto: Ex-Cabinet Minister Is Quoted in Berlin Newspaper on Japanese-American Affairs," *New York Times*, 26 May 1925, 6.

[58] Fritz M. Witkowski, "Mein Interview mit Viscount Goto. Ein Wort in eigener Sache," *Vossische Zeitung* (Berlin), 3 July 1925, evening edition, 1.

desire was more than psychological. Anti-liberals in Japan, like fascists in Europe, rejected the principles of laissez-faire. To Soviet Communists, these right-wing Japanese nationalists appeared to be almost Communists, as Kita Ikki did to Richard Sorge (see Introduction, p. 16). Many pan-Asianists treated Russia as a part of Asia. If fascist Italy and the Soviet Union could maintain a relatively cordial relationship at the time, they reasoned, why couldn't Japan and the Soviet Union do so as well?

Moscow came to terms with Japan in part for the same reason: to fight against the Anglo-American liberal capitalist regimes. Britain formally recognized the Soviet Union in 1924 but remained its foremost adversary, while Washington refused to recognize the Soviet government. In February 1925, immediately after Moscow opened diplomatic relations with Tokyo, Stalin wrote to Karakhan about a possible closer relationship with Japan (a relationship that Stalin emphasized was "very important").[59] Erich Obst (1886–1981), a German who coedited (with Karl Haushofer) Radek's favorite journal, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, visited the Soviet Union in 1924 and published the following observations: In Soviet Communist circles, the idea of a great "pan-Asian union" was "extraordinarily alive," and was discussed as the main goal of Soviet foreign policy. According to Obst, these Communist leaders were thinking of a "Soviet-Chinese-Japanese" alliance to which they hoped to attract India as well.[60]

Needless to say, such an alliance was Stalin's idea. In July 1925, Stalin gave an interview to Fuse Katsuji (布施勝治, 1886–1953), a Japanese journalist who had had an audience with Lenin in 1920. In one important respect, this was groundbreaking: Stalin, the de facto Soviet leader who officially had occupied no important government post and had never before given an interview, gave his first one to a Japanese—an unlikely choice. Everyone in Moscow was shocked. According to Fuse, when they met, Stalin greeted him by saying, "I too am an Asian" (Я тоже азиат).[61] During the interview, Stalin laid out a rationale for a Soviet-Japanese alliance:

> An alliance between the Japanese people and the peoples of the Soviet Union would be a decisive step towards the liberation of the peoples of the East. Such an alliance would mark the beginning of the end of the big colonial empires, the beginning of the end of world imperialism. That alliance would be invincible.[62]

Stalin cautioned, however, that imperialism was not just Western but Eastern as well; Japan was a good example. If Japan changed its political and social structure, as Russia had done, it would mean the liberation of the peoples of

[59] *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina*, 440.

[60] Erich Obst, "Sowjetrussische Aussenpolitik," *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, no. 1 (1925): 7–8.

[61] Stalin, quoted in Fuse Katsuji, *Sutārin den* (Tokyo, 1949), 193. On Fuse, see also Tomita Takeshi, *Nihonjin kisha no mita akai Roshiya* (Tokyo, 2017), chaps. 2, 3.

[62] I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1947), 7:228.

Asia. When Fuse asked him what he thought of the popular Japanese slogan, "Asia for the Asians," Stalin replied: "To the extent that the slogan 'Asia for the Asians' is a call for a revolutionary war against Western imperialism, but only to that extent, there is, undoubtedly, something in common between [the slogan and Bolshevism]." Yet, Stalin continued, two elements of the slogan were utterly incompatible with Bolshevism. First, it ignored the question of Asian imperialism, which was no better than European imperialism. Second, it implied that the interests of Asian and European workers were opposed, an implication that undermined the foundations of the liberation movement. According to Stalin, revolutionary movements in the colonial countries combined with those in the West would doom imperialism.[63]

Comparing Stalin's interview with the ideology of the Japanese nationalist ideologue Kita Ikki, Boris Nicolaevsky commented:

> All the . . . aims of this Japanese military-fascist organization [Kita Ikki's Yūzonsha] can be brought into full accord with the views which Stalin expressed in his interview. There is nothing in that interview that the authors of the Yusonsha [Yūzonsha] program could not accept. . . . There can be no doubt that he [Stalin] addressed himself to those very elements in Japan, both when he was speaking of "a revolutionary war against imperialists" and when, in the very interests of this war, he suggested the reorganization of Japan "in the image of the fundamental interests of the Japanese people." He regarded these groups of pan-Asiatics as most desirable partners in the big game he contemplated in the Far East, which Haushofer had defined with mathematical exactness as "the Eastern end of a Eurasian continental policy."[64]

Familiar with Marx and many other Western thinkers, Kita was, in fact, a socialist who advocated the restriction, if not the abolition, of private property: state control of "big capital"; the rights of people, including women; and even suffrage and citizenship for the Koreans.[65] True, Nicolaevsky was entirely correct in pointing out that Kita's ideas were inseparable from Japan's body politic based on the emperor's rule. Yet, as Ozaki Hotsumi said (see Introduction, p. 16), Kita was a revolutionary, and as Sorge suspected, his ideas resembled Marxism. This ideological affinity gave Stalin an excellent entry point for using Japan's right-wing circles against their own imperialist ambitions, as we will see later in this book.

It would be imprudent, however, to assume that Moscow saw its rapprochement with Japan and embrace of a pan-Asian alliance as its ideal geopolitical stance. The Soviet Union's actual interests were in China as the bulwark against

[63]Ibid., 228–31.

[64]Nicolaevsky, "Russia, Japan, and the Pan-Asiatic Movement," 288.

[65]See for example Kita Ikki, *Nihon kaizō hōan taikō* (Tokyo, 1923).

the imperialist powers, particularly Britain. Moscow had no real confidence that a German-Soviet-Chinese-Japanese alliance, if it materialized at all, would prove stronger than the Anglo-American camp. With political recognition not forthcoming from Washington, the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention offered Moscow a marriage of insurance against the United States—and a marriage of convenience.

By signaling the end of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and exacerbating the conflicts between the United States and Japan, the rapprochement insured Moscow's interests in Asia. As a means of strengthening its influence in China, the Soviet Union was thus more invested in intensifying existing conflicts than in unifying Asian interests. In fact, just a few days after the signing of the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention, Stalin reiterated his main approach to geopolitics:

> We have a third ally [in addition to the proletariat in the developed countries and the oppressed peoples of the colonized countries]—intangible, impersonal, but an extremely important one—that is, the conflicts and contradictions between the capitalist countries; impersonal as they are, they are undoubtedly the greatest support of our regime and our revolution. That may seem odd, comrades, but it is a fact. Had the two major coalitions of capitalist countries not been engaged in mortal combat during the imperialist war in 1917, had they not been clutching at each other's throats, had they not been busy with their own affairs and unable to find time to wage a struggle against the Soviet power, it is doubtful whether the Soviet power would have survived. Struggle, conflicts, and wars between our enemies, I repeat, are our greatest ally.[66]

If the Soviet Union was confident about its own aims, however, it was somewhat uncertain about Japan's, which were also a complex mix of convenience and insurance. On 23 June 1925, six months after the signing of the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention, Chicherin wrote to Viktor Kopp, the Soviet ambassador to Japan:

> Not one state, after recognizing our government, was so friendly in its expressions toward us as the Japanese one. Satō [Satō Naotake 佐藤尚武, 1882–1971, the Japanese ambassador to Poland] in his meetings with me is the very embodiment of friendliness. Your reports about the receptions at the crown prince, the empress dowager and the like also point to a strikingly, even exceptionally strikingly underlined friendliness. What is the meaning of this? That is what one must decipher. What do they expect? Do they want territory for immigration, do they want [commercial] concessions, or do they want a safe rear for the coming war with the United States?[67]

[66] Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 7:27.

[67] Lensen, *Japanese Recognition of the U.S.S.R.*, 343–44.

Japan's manifest expression of friendship toward the Soviet Union continued throughout much of the decade. When Kopp's replacement, Valerian S. Dovgalevskii (1885–1934), was recalled to Moscow after just six months in Tokyo in the autumn of 1927, Japanese officials held numerous farewell parties for him. Ivan M. Maiskii (1884–1975), who had just arrived in Tokyo, had to attend seven farewell breakfasts, five farewell lunches, one farewell tea, one concert, and one reception—fifteen in just three weeks. Dovgalevskii had to attend no fewer than thirty celebrations in his honor![68] When Aleksandr A. Troianovskii, the new Soviet ambassador, arrived in Tokyo in January 1928, he reported to Moscow that he had been welcomed as warmly as, or even more warmly than, Dovgalevskii had been in 1927.[69] In January 1928, Maiskii wrote in a private letter that the Soviet Union was treated in Japan as a "friendly nation," a chasmic difference from its treatment in Britain. He found it more enjoyable to work with Japanese diplomats than with those from other countries. Maiskii also stated that this friendly treatment was a reflection of Japan's isolation in the international arena and that by availing this situation, Moscow could reach some kind of agreement with Japan regarding Manchuria.[70]

The influential non-partisan Japanese journal *Gaikō jihō* (Diplomatic Review) did not lag behind on this matter. In the lead article in the February 1925 issue, the journal's editor, Hanzawa Gyokujō (半澤玉城, 1887–1953), congratulated the Japanese government for initiating diplomacy independent of the West for the first time in Japan's modern history. Peace in Asia could not be long lasting, he declared, "without the collaboration and friendship of the Soviet Union, China, and Japan."[71] Two years later, the journal continued to push the theme of an Asian alliance between the Japanese and the Soviets—both "non-propertied" (無産) peoples fighting against the "capitalist conquerors"—with Hanzawa calling for a "mutual understanding" between Japan and the Soviet Union regarding northern Manchuria. Hanzawa assumed that southern Manchuria belonged to Japan's sphere of influence and was not negotiable. His polite tone, however, was belied by his pointed insistence on Japan's military superiority in the Far East. Familiar with the geography and military capability of Siberia, Hanzawa added that Tokyo even knew "deep inner sides of the Vladivostok fortress." No matter how much the Soviet Union helped the Chinese, according to him, as long as Japan worked in tandem with Britain, the Soviet Union would not gain any foothold in China.[72]

Even after Tokyo's rapprochement with Moscow, no major Japanese politician gave serious thought to ending relations with Britain and the United States,

[68] Maiskii to Karakhan, 24 November 1927, in Ivan Mikhailovich Maiskii, *Izbrannaia perepiska s rossiiskimi korrespondentami* (Moscow, 2005), 1:283.

[69] AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, l. 41.

[70] Maiskii to A.P. Bogomolva and D.V. Bogomolov, 26 and 27 January 1928, in Maiskii, *Izbrannaia perepiska*, 292, 294–95.

[71] "NichiRo kokkō kaifuku," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 484 (1 February 1925): n. pag.

[72] Hanzawa Gyokujō, "Koppu taishi no kōtetsu," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 534 (1 March 1927): 1–16.

despite the deterioration of those relations. Imperialist powers, even Britain and Japan, still had reason to work together to defend themselves against the growing wave of Chinese nationalism, symbolized by the anti-imperialist May Thirtieth Movement (五卅運動) of 1925. Observers suspected Moscow of instigating strikes and fanning riots, which both the KMT and the CCP supported. China thus posed a serious threat to all the imperialist powers. Tokyo's heightened demonstration of goodwill toward Moscow was not just a reflection of Japan's sense of geopolitical isolation. Mitigating the threat of Moscow's support for China was a crucial prerequisite of Japan's own imperialist agenda. Like Moscow, Tokyo considered the rapprochement to be as much a marriage of insurance as of convenience.

Stalin and China

Moscow's political maneuvers in China during this period, particularly efforts to inspire communist and anti-foreign sentiment, were a major source of conflict for the imperialist powers. These efforts clearly were successful in pressuring Britain to cede some of its extraterritorial claims, leaving Japan as the major power opposing China's growing demands in the region.

Instilling this geopolitical pressure and division was, of course, Stalin's aim. His modus operandi was clear: Moscow would disrupt cooperation among the capitalist countries by promoting and exacerbating conflict from without. Moscow excelled in this realm. In 1925 and 1926, the Soviet Politburo issued several directives about maintaining good relations with Japan. The first and most explicit one, dated 3 December 1925, directed the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and the Communist Party commission in charge of China to drive a wedge between Japan and both Britain and the United States.[73] In the spring of 1926, the Politburo issued another directive stating that a friendly relationship with Japan was necessary at the current point in time—but that friendship did not mean it was not necessary to fight against Japanese imperialism. Whatever concessions had to be made would be made in order to "detach Japan from Britain," which was the "chief and uncompromising enemy of China's independence."[74]

It is important to note the centrality of secrecy for Stalin in China (as elsewhere). In May 1925, Stalin explicitly directed Karakhan to camouflage (замаскировать) Moscow's activity in China and use every kind of conspiracy (конспирация) to that end. To hide any trace of its operations, Moscow was to use Outer Mongolia as a contact point for correspondence between Moscow and China. Stalin emphasized that although it would take a little more time to

[73] *Moskva–Tokio. Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia 1921–1931. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2007), 1:699.

[74] *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae. Dokumenty. T. II. 1926–1927* (Moscow, 1996), 1:169.

operate in this way, it was worth the delay.[75] This degree of secrecy gave Moscow a powerful weapon over the other equally zealous powers competing in that region.

Three weeks after the Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention was announced in January 1925, the German newspaper *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger* carried a sensational scoop from an unnamed "Russian source." Without confirming the story's authenticity, the paper published the text of a "secret deal" for a "defensive-offensive alliance" among the Soviet Union, Japan, and China. The first clause of the agreement read:

> In the event of a military action by America, England, or France against China's central government in Beijing or any Chinese territory that has not been neutralized or constitutes a [foreign commercial] concession, Russia will make *a contingent of 200,000 soldiers available to China*. It is Japan's obligation to equip, arm, and feed them. Russia will relinquish 50 percent of its share of the Chinese Eastern Railway to which Japan has laid claim.[76]

The agreement then stipulated an exchange of Northern Sakhalin (to be given to Japan) for a big battleship, thirty submarines, and seven destroyers that would be built and delivered by Japan to the Soviet Union. In addition, Japan was to make Vladivostok into a first-rate fleet port and provide bank credit to the Soviet Union. Japan and the Soviet Union were to build and train a peacetime army of eight hundred thousand men in China. China was to buy military equipment, armaments, and munition from Japan (75 percent) and the Soviet Union (25 percent). The ultimate goal of this Soviet-Chinese-Japanese triple alliance, which was to last for thirty years, was to expel the United States and Britain, not just from China but from Asia as a whole.[77]

In the context of the times, this type of alliance was perfectly imaginable—but in reality, it lay in the realm of fantasy. The Japanese and Soviet embassies in Berlin immediately denied the existence of such a secret alliance. Nevertheless, the Berlin correspondent for the *New York Times* wrote:

> The Lokal Anzeiger's story fits in well with what I was told a few days ago in an informal talk by one of Europe's best known international authorities, to the effect that Japan, Russia, and China were certain to pool their interests eventually against the Occidental nations, especially the United States. This same expert added:
>
> "England feels herself so menaced in the Orient by Japan that she has been forced to acquiesce in an aggressive French European policy. This explains her recent humoring of France in the latter's

[75] *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina*, 527.

[76] H.W.F., "Die ostasiatische Sphinx. Ein geheimes Militärbündnis?," *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, 14 Feb 1925, 1.

[77] Ibid., 1–2.

> policy toward Germany. Thus France has been enabled to exert a tremendous pressure against Germany and kill all German hopes of finding a friend in Western Europe.
>
> This may drive Germany to seek alliance in the East, where Russia, Japan and China already are combining."[78]

The unnamed "Russian source" was almost certainly Moscow's secret services, which cooked up the "scoop" for consumption in Britain and the United States. It had the intended effect, at least in the United States. This "scoop" perfectly fit the pattern of propaganda and disinformation the Soviet government had been proliferating from the very beginning of its existence.

The fabricated "scoop" nevertheless reflected the fierce political and economic contention among imperialist powers for influence in China. Britain, the United States, France, and other imperialist powers exercised varying degrees of influence on Chinese warlords through advisers as well as material and financial assistance. Japan presented the most serious threat to the Western imperial powers. Many warlords—such as Chiang Kai-shek; Yan Xishan (閻錫山, 1883–1960) of Shanxi; and Sun Chuanfang (孫傳芳, 1885–1935), known as the Nanjing Warlord—had studied in military schools in Japan. Moreover, Japanese advisers surrounded Manchuria's Zhang Zuolin. The Western powers suspected Japan secretly coordinated its actions in China with the Soviet Union.[79] Moscow concocted the *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*'s "scoop" to heighten their suspicions of Japan. In fact, Moscow always acted independently and covertly while appearing to favor Japan over other imperialist powers.

Since 1924, Moscow had been supporting the KMT, now based in China's Guangdong (Canton) region in the south. Moscow's military advisers—most notably Vasilii K. Bliukher (1889–1938), who operated under the name of Galen in China—had been assisting its military, the National Revolutionary Army. Beginning in 1925, Moscow also supported the warlord Feng Yuxiang (馮玉祥, 1882–1948), known as Christian General, and his military forces (the Guominjun, or National People's Army) in Beijing in exchange for the legalization of the Communist movement in China.[80] In 1925–27, approximately 150 Soviet military and political advisers were working in China.[81] A Japanese diplomat stationed in the Soviet Union in 1926–27 was shocked to see bookstores in Moscow and Odesa filled with books on revolution in Asia with glaring red covers, viewing them as a sign of Moscow's extraordinary interest in fomenting revolution in Asia.[82]

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[78] T.R. Ybarra, "Credit Asiatic Deal Though It Is Denied: German Foreign Experts Believe Story of Russo-Japanese Alliance is Well Founded," *New York Times*, 15 February 1925, 25.

[79] For Japan's actions in China, which appeared unilateral to the Western powers, see Arthur Waldron, *From War to Nationalism: China's Turning Point, 1924–1925* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), chap. 8.

[80] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 174.

[81] See Viktor Usov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Kitae: 20-e gody XX veka* (Moscow, 2002), 221.

[82] See Kamimura Shin-ichi, *Hametsu e no michi: watashi no Shōwashi* (Tokyo, 1966), 6–7.

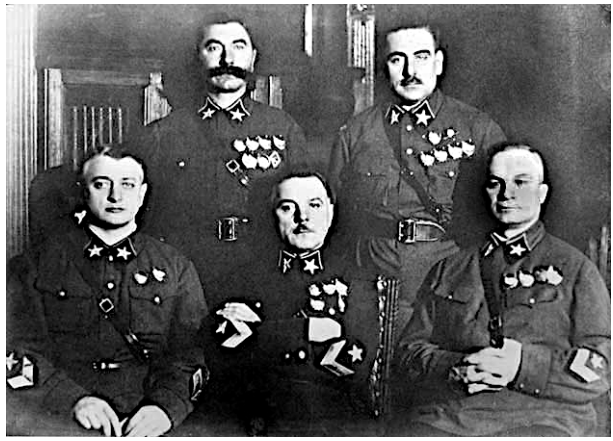

Figure 2.1. Vasilii K. Bliukher (standing on the right), a Soviet military commander in the Far East, and other Soviet marshals, 1937. Standing on the left: Semen M. Budennyi. Seated from left to right: Mikhail N. Tukhachevskii, Klimentii E. Voroshilov, and Aleksandr I. Egorov.

With its incessant civil war, industrial strikes, anti-foreign riots, and other disturbances, China had become a scene of carnage. In 1926 in Hankow, for example, according to a retrospective account by Chiang Kai-shek's future wife, Soong Mei-ling (see p. 172), "never a week passed when there was no demonstration of thousands upon thousands of Communist union-controlled workers shouting slogans of down with such and such a person, some tradition or mores, or some imperialistic country. It was usually down with English Imperialism." People observed Chinese Communists executing people who disagreed with them.[83]

In the midst of this chaos, Moscow was actively trying to subvert the KMT from within, expand the power of the CCP, and undermine the presence of the imperialist powers in China. The CCP even issued a training manual: Secrecy, disguise, and propaganda were its most important subjects, with particular emphasis placed on the military's secret work. From the time of the anti-foreign May Thirtieth Movement of 1925 to the spring of 1927, the CCP increased its membership a hundredfold.[84] Absolute secrecy was the key, and, as Stalin emphasized to Karakhan, every "conspiracy" had to be exploited to that end.[85] Nevertheless, the KMT sensed conspiracy afoot. Naturally, non-Communist Chinese leaders became suspicious of the Communists. Although Moscow assisted China's

[83]Madame Chiang Kai-shek, *Conversations with Mikhail Borodin* (Taipei, 1976), 108, 116.

[84]See Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, 259–81.

[85]A decade later, in 1935, Moscow emphasized that the secret activity of Communists to "degenerate" the anti-Communist military forces in China from within had to be kept secret throughout. *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. IV. VKP(b), Komintern i sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitae. 1931–193* (Moscow, 2003), 1:809.

anti-imperialist movements, it could not always control them. Feng gladly took Moscow's help but often ignored its directives. Chiang Kai-shek did not blindly follow his Soviet advisers. He was alarmed by the rise of Communists within the KMT, and in March 1926, he staged a coup against them (the Canton Coup or the Zhongshan Warship Incident). Even so, Moscow continued to support the KMT-CCP united front, with Chiang assuring Moscow that his position had not changed.[86] Moscow insisted to Chiang that his Northern Expedition to seize Shanghai and ultimately Beijing was premature, but Chiang plunged ahead anyway. Increasingly concerned about Chiang, Borodin schemed to have Chiang arrested, but failed.[87] After taking Shanghai, Chiang marched to Nanjing in March 1927. Meanwhile, without Moscow's encouragement but with its permission, the CCP staged an armed uprising in Shanghai. Simultaneously, Communist-led riots against foreign commercial concessions in Nanjing, now under Chiang's control, led to violence against foreigners (the Nanjing Incident). Apparently, the intention was to discredit Chiang in the eyes of foreign powers.[88] Alarmed, both Britain and the United States sent forces to Nanjing. Notably, although Japan had also been attacked in Nanjing, it refused to send forces, leaving Britain deeply dissatisfied. In April, the wave of riots spread to Hankow.

The Communist uprising in Shanghai led Chiang to turn decisively against the Communists (the Shanghai Coup, or the April 12 Incident). A large number of Communists were killed, with estimates ranging from several hundred to several thousand. The Chinese did not fail to see Moscow's influence behind the Shanghai uprising. Just before the Shanghai Coup, Zhang Zuolin had raided the Soviet embassy in Beijing, several months after he had set himself up in Beijing as China's ruler in December 1926. (His power was limited to Manchuria and the few neighboring provinces of Inner Mongolia and north China, however). During his raid on the Soviet embassy, Zhang impounded numerous documents that he thought would incriminate Moscow. He also captured Li Dazhao (李大釗, 1889–1927), a co-founder of the CCP who had taken refuge in the embassy, and had him hanged. Moscow subsequently broke off diplomatic relations with Zhang's Beijing government, although numerous Soviet consulates in Manchuria and Xinjiang continued to operate. Convinced that Moscow had incited the Nanjing Incident and that China was facing imminent Bolshevization, the following month (May 1927), the British government conducted a similar raid in London on the Soviet trade mission and Arcos, a Soviet trading company. London then broke off diplomatic relations with Moscow.[89] In both raids, Soviet officials had taken precautions, and the seized documents were less

[86] Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 56.

[87] A.I. Kartunova, *Politika Moskvy v natsional'no-revoliutsionnom dvizhenii v Kitae: voennyi aspekt (1923 g.–iiul' 1927 g.)* (Moscow, 2000), 230.

[88] See Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 233.

[89] Roger Schinness, "The Conservative Party and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1925–7," *European Studies Review*, no. 7 (1977): 393–407.

Figure 2.2. Mikhail Borodin, a Soviet adviser in China, in Wuhan, 1927

valuable than what might have been expected.[90] The trophies of Zhang's raid on the Soviet embassy, however, provide sufficient evidence of Soviet espionage and subversion under the cover of diplomacy. They were published in eleven volumes in Chinese and an abridged volume in English.[91] Most of the volumes were translated into Japanese, and a number of books about the seized Soviet documents were also published in English.[92]

The most arresting revelation in the documents seized in Beijing was that the Soviets had broken through the security of the Japanese diplomatic codes. According to a British report, the Japanese documents found in the raid were "comprehensive,"[93] a fact that Tokyo chose not to publicize. Indeed, it is unknown how Tokyo responded to this revelation.

[90] On the Arcos raid, see Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London, 2009), 152–57.

[91] The English volume is *Soviet Plot in China* (Peking: Metropolitan Police Headquarters, 1928). There are several Chinese volumes. For an analysis of the Chinese volumes, including two documents forged by the Beijing government, see C. Martin Wilbur and Julie Lien-ying How, *Missionaries of Revolution: Soviet Advisers and Nationalist China, 1920–1927* (Cambridge, MA, 1989). For a discussion of the forged documents, see Xi Wuyi, "Sulian 'yinmou' wenzheng 'zhi zhu-Hua wuguan xunling' bianwei," *Lishi yanjiu*, no. 2 (1985): 181–192. A Russian historian of Soviet espionage in China confirmed the incriminating nature of the confiscated Soviet documents. See V.N. Usov, "Piat' dokumentov 1925 g. sovetskoi razvedki v Kitae," *Восток*, no. 3 (2001): 113–130. Polish intelligence also intercepted Soviet documents showing unmistakably that the Comintern used the Soviet embassy in Beijing for Communist propaganda in China. See "Odpis wiadomości agencyjnej, dotyczącej współdziałania Narkomindeła i Kominternu w Chinach," RVGA, f. 308k, op. 9, d. 1262, ll. 2–3.

[92] See for example N. Mitarevsky, *World Wide Soviet Plots* (Tientsin, ca. 1927).

[93] As reported by the British embassy to London, NA, FO 371/12500, F 4134/3241/10 (28 April 1927).

Meanwhile, Chiang split from the KMT government and founded his own government in Nanjing. The original KMT government in Guangdong had moved to Wuhan after the initial success of the Northern Expedition and continued to maintain the KMT-CCP united front for a few more months. Soon, however, the Wuhan government, alarmed by Moscow's secret plans to turn the KMT into "revolutionary Jacobins," also turned against the Communists and merged with Chiang's Nanjing government.[94] Borodin escaped to Moscow with some thirty members of the CCP. They stayed in the Soviet Union and studied "security" (保卫) so that they could become, not surprisingly, intelligence and counterintelligence workers.[95]

Moscow faced a difficult balancing act between exerting control over China and inciting Chinese independence against foreign interference. The patronizing attitude of the Soviet advisers when they were still in China had stoked resentment among the Chinese and made the balancing act signally difficult. Borodin, whom Stalin directly controlled, had behaved like a dictator in China.[96] Moscow repeatedly had to admonish him and other Soviet advisers.[97] In February and March 1926, Stalin also called for a fight against "Russian chauvinism" and "imperialist practice" in the CER, emphasizing that it was the Chinese who were the masters of Manchuria.[98] Soviet diplomats, in turn, objected to Moscow's incitement of anti-foreign nationalism in China because it made Soviet relations with Western powers difficult. In early 1926, Maksim M. Litvinov (1876–1951), Chicherin's deputy, had written to the Politburo that he considered Moscow's China policy to be wrong because it would lead to dangerous complications in relations with Japan, Britain, and the United States. He proposed ending Moscow's material help to the "Chinese generals" and stopping its hostility toward Zhang Zuolin. Both Litvinov and Kopp, the Soviet ambassador to Japan, supported some kind of agreement with Japan regarding Manchuria. Otherwise, they said, relations with Japan would not improve.[99]

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[94] For the classic account, see Robert C. North and Xenia J. Eudin, *M.N. Roy's Mission to China: The Communist-Kuomintang Split of 1927* (Berkeley, CA, 1963), chap. 4. For Moscow's original instruction on "revolutionary Jacobins," see *VKP(B), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae. Dokumenty. T. II. 1926–1927*, 2:764.

[95] Hao Zaijin, *Zhongguo mimizhan* (Beijing, 2010), 2–3; Mu Xin, *Yinbi zhanxian tongshuai Zhou Enlai* (Beijing, 2018), 6.

[96] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 174. On Borodin in China, see Dan N. Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1981).

[97] G.N. Peskova, "Diplomaticheskie otnosheniia mezhdu SSSR i Kitaem v 1924–1929 gg.," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 2 (1998): 67, 69; *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae*, 2:167.

[98] *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae*, 2:60; *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina*, 609–11.

[99] *Ocherki istorii Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossii. Tom vtoroi. 1917–2002 gg.* (Moscow, 2002), 157–60.

Secret Soviet-Japanese cooperation

As a matter of principle, Moscow refused to accept the division of Manchuria into spheres of influence. Yet, there was much discussion over how to regulate relations in China in general and Manchuria in particular. The issue grew increasingly pressing when it became clear that Moscow's use of Chinese nationalism had proved successful. Britain's distrust of Japan deepened after Japan refused to participate in the joint military action in Nanjing in response to the Nanjing Incident in March 1927. Moscow's aim to direct Chinese nationalism initially against the British Empire, while remaining friendly toward Tokyo, had accelerated a split between Britain and Japan. Under relentless attack, London had begun a fundamental reassessment of its China policy by late 1926. That December, it issued a memorandum (the so-called Christmas Memorandum) calling for all foreign powers (including Britain) to explore ways to accommodate China's growing demands, even those that ran counter to their treaty rights and legitimate interests. As a result of the new policy, in February and March 1927, Britain agreed to relinquish its commercial concessions in Hankow and Kukiang (Jiujiang), its major Chinese concessions, ceding them back to China in a process known as retrocession.[100]

This retrocession was precisely what the Soviets had been hoping for. Stalin expected that Hankow would become "China's Moscow."[101] At the news of the Hankow retrocession, the Soviet diplomat Karakhan, now back in Moscow, apparently exulted that it showed the decline of the British Empire. The imperialist bloc had been broken up, and now was the time, Karakhan urged the Chinese revolutionaries, to deal with Japan. He advised caution, however: It was important for them to buy Japan's goodwill for now, and when the revolutionary forces had acquired enough power, they could oust Japan from China.[102]

Meanwhile, Moscow tried to influence how Japan responded to the anti-foreign campaigns in China. There is little evidence that Japan intended to follow Britain's lead. Shidehara Kijūrō, the foreign minister beloved by liberals in Japan and abroad, and his disciples, including Debuchi Katsuji (出淵勝次, 1878–1948), pursued accommodation with China differently: through an agreement with the Soviet Union, rather than by way of cooperation with Britain and the United States. In 1926–27, Shidehara and a group of his disciples initiated efforts to abolish unequal treaties and extraterritorial rights in China. Although these efforts did not go very far, owing to the chaos and division within China, the Chinese appreciated them.[103]

Following the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, liberal Japanese diplomats, distrustful of Britain and the United States, preferred to strike a deal

[100] C. Martin Wilbur, *The Nationalist Revolution in China, 1923–1928* (Cambridge, 1983), 72–77.

[101] *Pis'ma I.V. Stalina V.M. Molotovu. 1925–1936 gg. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 1995), 94.

[102] See Japanese intelligence in JACAR, B02030818200B, 13.

[103] See for example Okazaki Hisahiko, *Shidehara Kijūrō to sono jidai* (Tokyo, 2000), 252–58.

with the Soviet Union. To clear the way for such an understanding, they consistently denied the threat of Communism, even as their counterparts in Britain, sounded the alarm. These Japanese diplomats imagined, however fancifully, that they could productively separate the Soviet Union and its Communist politics, collaborating with one without being compromised by the other. The former minister of foreign affairs, Gotō Shinpei, who had alarmed Americans with his talk of California during a 1925 interview with a German journalist, exemplified this approach. During that same interview, when the journalist asked him whether the Japanese government was aware that the Soviet diplomatic mission used its position to spread Communist propaganda, Gotō replied that he was not worried: First, the Bolsheviks had changed recently (referring to the change known as the New Economic Policy and its accompanying effects on Soviet society); second, the "union of family, religion, and the emperor" was so deeply anchored in the being [*Wesen* in German] of the Japanese people that the possibility of their Bolshevization was "completely absurd." The Japanese deeply revered the emperor, Gotō insisted, and Communist propaganda would have few ill effects. Even Japanese socialists imagined no other body politic than monarchism.[104]

In April 1927, Shidehara told Sir John Tilley (1869–1952), the British ambassador to Japan, that he did not believe that Communism would overtake China, but even if it did, things would calm down after a few years, and foreign trade could resume. "It's not something to worry too much about."[105] Shidehara also underplayed the Soviet hand in Outer Mongolia, an attitude that pleased Moscow.[106] At various times, Shidehara openly emphasized his faith in Moscow's peaceful intentions in the Far East. Moscow welcomed Shidehara's statements as a "huge political gesture" toward the Soviet Union.[107] Indeed, Shidehara showed Moscow just how willing certain Japanese politicians would be to play into its hands.

We do not know exactly what sort of relationship Shidehara and his group of disciples desired with Moscow. What is clear, however, is that in 1926–27, they, Debuchi in particular, met frequently with Soviet diplomats in Tokyo, notably Grigorii Z. Besedovskii (1896–1963), to explore some kind of mutual understanding.[108] Before Besedovskii was posted to Tokyo in May 1926, Stalin gave him

[104] "Gespräch mit Viscount Goto," 4.

[105] *Nihon gaikō bunsho. Shōwa ki I. Daiichibu dai ikkan (Shōwa ninen)* (Tokyo, 1991), 544.

[106] AVP, f. 08, op. 10, p. 39, d. 288, l. 53 (6 February 1927).

[107] Ibid., d. 288, ll. 48–49 (6 February 1927); d. 289, l. 6 (23 March 1927). The 6 February 1927 report is reprinted in *Moskva–Tokio. Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia 1921–1931. Sbornik dokumentov. Kn. 2. 1926–1931* (Moscow, 2007), 82–91 from a copy in the Presidential Archive in Moscow, which means that Stalin had received a copy.

[108] A quick check of one archival file shows that Debuchi and Besedovskii met on 2 October and 23 December 1926 and 14, 20, 25, 29 January and 2, 3 February 1927. See AVP f. 0146, op. 10, p. 126, d. 6. In 1925, Debuchi had already given Kopp, the new Soviet ambassador, the impression that he believed that forging a closer relationship between Japan and the Soviet Union would represent the signature achievement of his career. See ibid., f. 0146, op. 8, p. 110, d. 3, l. 14.

explicit instructions. The key to developing the Chinese revolution lay in the position of Japan, Stalin told Besedovskii, and this meant that Japan had to be detached from Britain and prevented from engaging in joint actions against China. Stalin emphasized that doing so was Besedovskii's personal responsibility.[109]

Besedovskii worked hard at this task—and apparently succeeded. Few records remain in the Japanese archives: Debuchi evidently disposed of his diaries for 1927 and 1928 (as well as 1935 and 1936), and his 1926 diary contains few, if any, notes on these meetings.[110] Yet, considerable (though far from complete) records exist in Russia. The Shidehara group seems to have reached an agreement with the Soviet Union stipulating that Japan would gain considerable economic advantage over Britain in China, on the proviso that Japan not interfere in the affairs of northern Manchuria. This was initially an oral agreement that Debuchi and Besedovskii reached in the autumn of 1926; it included Soviet commercial concessions to Japan in fishing and trade in exchange for Japan's cessation of support for Zhang Zuolin.[111] The general content of the agreement must have been cleared in advance with Moscow. In January 1927, Besedovskii wrote directly to Stalin asking him to sign a "political and economic agreement with Japan as a necessary condition for the free development of China's national-social revolution."[112] However, Shidehara lost his position a few months later in the spring of 1927 with the change of cabinets. We have no evidence that the agreement was ever formally signed or whether either side ever honored the terms.

The agreement had been based on the Shidehara group's geopolitical strategy of squeezing Britain out of China by (1) supporting Chinese nationalism, (2) splitting the United States from Britain, and (3) encouraging American investment (which was far smaller than British investment) in China.[113] The group took a broad view of the Chinese situation and sought to protect Japan's interests in China as a whole, believing in the promise of a new order in the Far East. In other words, however important Manchuria was to Japan, they reasoned, China as a whole was more important. They could see the wave of China's national liberation movement and looked on Chiang Kai-shek as China's Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938), who would unite and modernize China just as Atatürk had united and modernized Turkey. This transformation of China would mean the decline of Britain in the Pacific. A new China, allied with the Soviet Union and Japan, would create a new order.

[109] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 175–77.

[110] "Debuchi Katsuji nikki," *Kokugakuin daigaku nihon bunka kenkyūjo kiyō*, no. 84 (1999); no. 85 (2000).

[111] See Besedovskii's accounts, in AVP, f. 08, op. 10, p. 40, d. 294, ll. 24–25 (30 October 1926); f. 08, op. 10, p. 39, d. 288, ll. 11–12 (12 January 1927); Karakhan's account in 1929, in AVP, f. 0146, op. 12, p. 138, d. 1, ll. 3–6 (10 January 1929). The 12 January 1927 report by Besedovskii is reprinted in *Moskva–Tokio* (kn. 2), 69–81. In April 1926, the Politburo mentioned a "possible tripartite agreement (USSR, Japan, China)." See *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae*, 2:169.

[112] *Moskva–Tokio* (kn. 2), 81–82 (14 January 1927).

[113] AVP, f. 08, op. 10, p. 39, d. 288, l. 54 (2 February 1927).

These possibilities convinced the Shidehara group, like Gotō earlier, that they could collaborate with the Soviet Union even as the Soviet Union's investment in the spread of Communism directly compromised Japan's own goals. The CCP-led anti-foreign riot in Nanjing in March 1927, for example, was a decisive turning point for the other capitalist countries that had invested heavily in China. The Shidehara group was certainly alarmed by the Nanjing Incident, fearing that Chiang might turn out to be "China's Kerenskii," referring to Aleksandr F. Kerenskii (1881–1970), Russia's prime minister who was overthrown by the Bolsheviks in 1917. In Moscow's view, the group even used the incident to push Chiang to fight resolutely against the Communists.[114] Yet, none of this stopped the Shidehara group from embracing the possibility of an agreement with the Soviet Union. In early 1927, according to Besedovskii, Debuchi couldn't resist gloating over the "failure of Britain's policy toward China." Japan had no sympathy for Britain with regard to the Nanjing Incident and categorically rejected its request for joint actions in China.[115]

This secret cooperation between Moscow and Tokyo has been unknown to historians until now. Historians have depicted Shidehara and other Japanese liberals as going to great lengths to work with the Western liberal regimes. In fact, they were secretly working with the Soviet Union against Britain.

The understanding between Tokyo and Moscow, moreover, was different from earlier ones that both Japan and the Soviet Union had toyed with for some time. As noted earlier, in 1925, Kopp, the Soviet ambassador to Japan, had repeatedly proposed to Moscow that the Soviet Union reach some kind of understanding with Japan regarding Manchuria "in the interests of our international policy in general." What Kopp proposed resembled the secret agreements that Japan and Russia had signed between 1907 and 1916 (see Chapter 1, p. 41).[116] The two sides had repeatedly exchanged similar ideas. For example, in 1926, Karakhan and Egorov exchanged such ideas with Suzuki Teiichi in Beijing (see Introduction, p. 12). Yet, the new agreement apparently reached between the two countries was different in that it involved China as a whole and its national liberation movement and was explicitly directed against Britain.

The new agreement was no guarantee that Japan would not intervene militarily in China—because there was no consensus in Tokyo on this matter. Moscow feared that Japan's armed forces might take independent action, as they had done in 1925 against Zhang Zuolin's lieutenant Guo Songling (郭松齡, 1883–1925), who had challenged Zhang with the support of the Soviet ambassador to China, Karakhan. (The rebellion failed, and Zhang ordered Guo to be killed.) To protect Soviet adventurism in China (carried out by Borodin), Stalin repeatedly and

[114] Ibid., d. 289, ll. 9–13 (23 April 1927).

[115] Ibid., d. 288, ll. 50–51.

[116] See AVP, f. 0146, op. 08, p. 110, d. 62–63, 67, 87, 99 (May–June 1925). See also Iaroslav Shulatov, "Sen kyūhyaku nijū nendai nakaba ni okeru NiSso kankei," in *Soren to higashi Ajia no kokusai kankei (1919–1941)*, ed. Asada Masafumi (Tokyo, 2017), 138–62; Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 189–90.

urgently asked Besedovskii to conclude a non-aggression pact with Japan. (Stalin seems to have given this directive in early 1927.) Though he was convinced that in Tokyo, unlike in Moscow, such an important measure could not be undertaken without much discussion, Besedovskii soon persuaded Debuchi to offer assurance that Japan had no aggressive intent toward the Soviet Union, just as the latter had no such intent toward Japan. Besedovskii let Stalin know that they had reached an oral agreement.[117] This still constituted no guarantee of Japan's military intervention in China, however.

What becomes clear from the Besedovskii-Debuchi agreements is that the historical literature, as it currently stands, presents a misleading picture of the geopolitical dynamics at the heart of Tokyo's diplomatic apparatus during this time. In light of this misrepresentation, a proper assessment of Tokyo's aims requires a careful reading of the available historical information. What both the Soviet Union and Japan have hidden from public view suggests, to an unexpected degree, an inversion of the supposed political relationships at the time. Nor do such relationships represent isolated instances; this approach to the Soviet Union by Japan extended from Gotō through Shidehara and Debuchi, and it then continued on through later political figures. Understanding the ongoing nature of Tokyo's relationships with Moscow over the years is especially important in evaluating the following steps taken by Tanaka Giichi, the next prime minister of Japan and the one who had been passing military secrets to Russia twenty years earlier (see Chapter 1, p. 44).

Meanwhile, Stalin was satisfied that he had driven a deep wedge between Japan and Britain. Britain's own assessment of its relationship with Japan is instructive in this regard. In 1928, George Mounsey (1879–1966), then head of the Far Eastern Department of the British Foreign Office, clearly detailed London's views of China and Japan during the previous two years:

> As it happened, during the years of 1925–1926 in particular, thanks largely to Soviet inspiration, it was against ourselves almost exclusively that the Chinese directed the first thrusts of their awakening wrath. And it was during that time that we learnt to realise how empty had become the mutual undertaking to co-operate in China and how determined Japan and the other Powers were to leave us to fight our own battle against Chinese boycotts and other newly acquired methods of aggression, and to avoid becoming involved in our quarrel and sharing in our misfortunes.
>
> We were thus drifting into the impossible position of being on one side tied to the other Powers by onerous obligations which, in the increasingly complicated situation developing in China, fettered our independent action at every turn, while we could obtain no help from those Powers, who left us to protect our most seriously jeopardised

[117] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 225–31.

> interests as best we could.
>
> It was in these circumstances that, after the complete break-down of the tariff conference in 1926 and after a final unsuccessful effort to bring Japan and the U.S.A. into line with our general views on a China policy, we decided to break away from these harmful and unprofitable ties and declare openly our own new policy in China, and then proceed to carry it out as and when occasion offered, independently of the other Powers whom, nevertheless, we kept informed of our actions and intentions as far as circumstances allowed.[118]

The Christmas Memorandum in late 1926 and the Hankow retrocession in early 1927 had helped stem the anti-British tide in China. Now, having divided the imperialist powers, Moscow was ready to turn China's nationalism against Japan, as Karakhan had urged in response to the news of the British retrocession from Hankow. When Besedovskii returned to Moscow in October 1927, Stalin thanked him for "brilliantly" accomplishing an "exceptionally important" work with Debuchi to dissuade Japan from taking joint actions with Britain toward China.[119] It is likely that later in his life, Debuchi destroyed his diaries for 1927 (and some other years) because he did not want the world to know about his close cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Tanaka, Stalin, and China

Shortly after Stalin secured Japan's agreement not to intercede in China on Britain's side, circumstances radically changed. Stalin's adventurism in China ended in ignominious failure when Chiang staged a successful coup against the Communists in April 1927. On the surface, this might have doomed Stalin's hopes for hegemony in China; yet, coinciding with Chiang's coup was a crucial political shift in power in Japan that gave Stalin a new opportunity in the midst of his failure. In March-April 1927, a financial panic hit Japan, the culmination of the post–World War I economic depression worsened by the Great Earthquake of 1923. The cabinet of Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijirō (若槻禮次郎, 1866–1949) collapsed. Tanaka Giichi became the new prime minster and appointed himself foreign minister as well. He denounced Shidehara's so-called kid-glove diplomacy (which was not popular with the Japanese population) and advocated active diplomacy.[120] Soon afterward, in May 1927, Tanaka reversed the Shidehara

[118] NA, FO 371/13171, F 4808/7/10, 3–4. Elsewhere, the British Foreign Office noted that "during past few troubled years His Majesty's Government has more than once been disappointed at the lack of assistance from Japan." FO 371/13172, F 5073/7/10, 3.

[119] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 261–62. Besedovskii saw Stalin in his office on 23 October 1927. See *Na prieme u Stalina* (Moscow, 2008), 26.

[120] In fact, as far as Japan's orientation toward a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union was concerned, there was little daylight between Shidehara and Tanaka. Akira Iriye wrote a long time ago that "much of what is usually attributed to Tanaka" traced back to Shidehara. See his *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921–1931* (Cambridge, MA, 1965), 125.

plan not to intervene in China and sent military forces to Shandong in north China, ostensibly to protect some twenty thousand Japanese residents in the region from the expected riots and looting by the Chinese soldiers marching in Chiang's Northern Expedition. No country, including Britain and the United States, objected to this action. Yet, the real reason Tanaka sent troops was almost certainly that he wanted to prevent Chiang's Northern Expedition and the unification of China.[121] After Chiang was defeated by Zhang and failed to reach Shandong, Japan promptly withdrew its forces.

Tanaka's deployment of military forces to China was a striking change of policy by Tokyo. It entirely subverted the reason Japan had remained out of the conflict in the first place. Historians have traditionally attributed the measure to Tanaka's active diplomacy and his desire to protect Manchuria, even though the military did not actually assist Zhang Zuolin in his battle with Chiang. Such explanations fail to consider fully Tanaka's history, which reveals a far more compelling reason for Tanaka to change Japan's China policy. His sudden military deployment to stop Chiang—who had only a month ago ruined Stalin's plans for the CCP—must be considered, above all, as a potential means to buy Stalin's favor. In addition to becoming the new prime minister of Japan, Tanaka carried into the highest position of the country a secret and deeply compromised past with Russia—one that he was undoubtedly afraid of having revealed. It was almost as though the perfect solution for his aims in China had fallen in Stalin's lap. Not only did Stalin have the power to completely ruin Tanaka's career, but also it seemed Tanaka was more than willing, as a result, to appease him. Of course, in 1927, with little communication, Tanaka was likely only guessing what Stalin wanted. At that time, Stalin had wanted to replace Chiang with someone more reliable and amenable to Moscow; even with a vast amount of financial help and bribery, Stalin's schemes had never succeeded. Indeed, the Communists were expelled from the KMT later that year in July 1927. Even though Chiang temporarily stepped down in August 1927 in a compromise move with the Wuhan government, both the Nanchang Uprising (August 1927) and the Canton (Guangzhou) Uprising (December 1927) were repressed, with several thousand Communists killed. These events are rightfully regarded as "Stalin's failure" in China.[122] The only event that could have possibly maintained Stalin's optimism was Tanaka's unexpected military deployment, which afforded a new opportunity to set China and Japan against one another. Perhaps this was why in July 1927, after the collapse of the KMT-CCP united front became evident, Stalin was unrepentant. On July 11, Stalin wrote to his right-hand man, Viacheslav M. Molotov (1890–1986): "Our policy [of backing the KMT-CCP

[121] The most significant insider account of this deployment is by Itagaki Seishirō (板垣征四郎, 1885–1948), one of the architects of Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria who was later convicted and hanged by the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. See Yatsugi Kazuo, *Shōwa dōran shishi* (Tokyo, 1971), 1:16–17.

[122] See the classic work: Conrad Brandt, *Stalin's Failure in China: 1924–1927* (Cambridge, MA, 1958).

united front] is and was the only correct policy. Never have I been so profoundly and firmly convinced that our policy was right."[123]

Stalin did not elaborate on his firm conviction. Yet, it was surely more than mere bluffing. Stalin clearly believed that China's nationalism was its greatest political weapon in the foreseeable future. It had undeniably worked against Britain; now, with Tanaka in office, it could surely work against Japan. Such a conviction made little sense in directly sovietizing China. But as a means of eliminating the competition for hegemony in China, it was the clearest path forward. In fact, in the 1930s, Stalin would come to terms with Chiang's KMT and once again promote the KMT-CCP united front under Chiang's leadership. If Stalin's China policy in 1927 appeared enigmatic, it was in large part because of this strategic thinking. His policy regularly appeared at odds with the CCP's political interests, and even shifted the blame for the massacre of Chinese Communists to the Comintern and the CCP leaders, which helped him trounce a fierce attack by Trotskii and his allies. His focus, undeniably, was on defeating his opponents in the Soviet Union.[124] From the larger perspective of geopolitics, Stalin's focus was well-placed. His failure in China notwithstanding, the Chinese people regarded Tanaka's deployment of military forces to Shandong as profoundly anti-Chinese, a blatant violation of China's sovereignty, and, more generally, in opposition to China's effort to unite itself. Anti-Japanese feelings spread to Manchuria, Zhang Zuolin's home base. The Northern Expedition had led to a large-scale migration across central China to Manchuria of people fleeing war and disorder. The nationalistic feelings they brought were rekindled in Manchuria, and a boycott of Japanese goods gathered momentum. Consequently, Japan's political as well as economic standing in China suffered greatly.[125] This decline pointed to an excellent prognosis for Stalin's long-term political aims in China. Now that Britain had been forced to accommodate Chinese nationalism, Stalin was ready to turn on Japan.

There is no evidence that after Tanaka's ascension to power in Japan, Stalin feared Japan's military intervention against Soviet political maneuvers in China. Obviously, when Tanaka deployed military forces to Shandong in May 1927, Stalin must have discussed and assessed such an important event. Yet, there is almost no trace of any discussion about it in Moscow. Besedovskii, who had witnessed Stalin's frantic efforts to secure a non-aggression agreement with Tanaka's predecessor, Wakatsuki, fails to mention the deployment in his memoir about his experience as a Soviet diplomat in Tokyo.[126] The military forces that Tanaka sent to Shandong did not interfere in the Soviet-backed uprisings in

[123] Stalin to Molotov, 11 July 1927, in *Pis'ma I.V. Stalina V.M. Molotovu*, 116.

[124] Bruce A. Elleman, *Moscow and the Emergence of Communist Power in China, 1925–30* (London, 2010).

[125] Soviet diplomats' assessment: AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, ll. 11–14.

[126] He makes only a passing reference to the appearance of Japanese forces in Shanghai and Hankow in the spring of 1927, as a natural reaction to Stalin's adventurism in China. He makes no mention of Shandong. Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 231.

China. Furthermore, significantly, Japanese military intelligence helped the Moscow-supported Wuhan government in the spring of 1927. They also kept Soviet advisers in Wuhan informed about the mood of the Chinese soldiers and commanders, their intrigues and treachery, and the like. Moscow considered Japan's help indispensable.[127]

The question arises here why neither Stalin, nor Besedovskii, nor any of the confidential files available in Moscow make much note of the fact that Japan sent military forces to China after all. Surely, such an important geopolitical act would demand extensive discussion, especially an act that Stalin had earlier urgently tried to forestall.

Clearly, Moscow welcomed Tanaka's military move. His deployment of military forces to Shandong did far more for Moscow than merely restrain Chiang. In the spring of 1928, Tanaka would again dispatch military forces to China, and this time, Stalin was explicit: He welcomed Tanaka's move and instructed the Soviet ambassador in Tokyo *not* to lodge protests with the Tanaka government (see p. 127 in this chapter).

As we consider the nuances of this event, which followed shortly after Besedovskii's agreement with Shidehara and Debuchi and was orchestrated by someone with a compromised history in Moscow (see Chapter 1, p. 44), it becomes increasingly hard to believe that the Soviet Union did not exert considerable influence over Tanaka's decision to send military forces to China.

Tanaka's Soviet connection

Throughout the period, Tanaka outwardly continued on friendly terms with the Soviet Union. He was vehemently anti-Communist yet regarded an agreement with Moscow as critical to Japan's survival in an unfriendly world.[128] Moscow's growing influence in China—specifically in the KMT-CCP united front—created tremendous anxiety in Tokyo regarding the advancement of Communism. In 1926–1927, when Japan's era changed from Taishō (1912–1926) to Shōwa (1926–1989) with the death of Emperor Taishō (嘉仁, 1879–1926) on 25 December 1926, Japan was so concerned about possible Communist disruption

[127] AVP, f. 0146, op. 10, p. 126, d. 3, l. 90.

[128] During the relatively liberal-democratic Taishō era (1912–1926), when all kinds of ideas were freely accessible, socialism and Communism made considerable inroads in Japan. Many Chinese students were exposed to Communism in Japan and returned to China as Communists: "Japan looked as if it were a producer of extremists [i.e., Communists]," according to a Japanese commentator. See first-hand observations in Yamada Katsuyoshi, "1920 nen Chūgoku kyōsantō seiritsu ki no ichi shiryō ni tsuite: Kudō Chū Gansū hōkoku kenkyū no ichi," *Shūkan Tōyō gaku*, 100 (2008): 315. See also Komai Tokuzō, *Tairiku e no higan* (Tokyo, 1952), 299. Sheng Shicai (盛世才, 1895–70), the governor of Xinjiang in the 1930s, had been one of those Chinese students. See Sheng Shiji, *Jiang Jieshi de fengjiang dali: wojia dage Sheng Shicai* (Taipei, 2000), 2–5, 150, 186. Moscow, too, hosted a large number of Chinese students: From 1921 to 1928, some 1,119 students were trained in the Soviet Union. See *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. IV. VKP(b), Komintern i sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitae. 1931–1937* (Moscow, 2003), 2:933.

that government and political party leaders held a special meeting. Tanaka was one of the participants.[129] Yet, he went out of his way to be friendly to Moscow.

Earlier, in 1925, when Tanaka had just retired from the army to enter politics, he told Kopp that he was interested in creating a tripartite Soviet-Japanese-Chinese bloc. Tanaka added in Russian "Мы будем друзьями" (We will be friends).[130] When Valerian S. Dovgalevskii, the Soviet ambassador to Japan, met Tanaka, now Japan's prime minister, in June 1927, he was alarmed by Tanaka's interest in the economic development of Siberia by Japan in the spirit of the Open Door Policy, as well as by his suggestion that Communist propaganda, not merely by Soviet officials but by private Soviet citizens as well, be banned in Manchuria and Mongolia. Yet, Tanaka ended the meeting with "*Но знайте, что я Россию люблю*" (But, please know that I love Russia).[131] When Tanaka gave his first reception as prime minister for foreign diplomats in Tokyo, he spoke for fifteen minutes with Dovgalevskii but spent no more than two minutes each with the British, German, and Italian ambassadors, begetting rumors in diplomatic circles in Tokyo. Moreover, Tanaka's first official dinner was with none other than Dovgalevskii.[132] When Tanaka received the military attachés in Tokyo in November, he broke with the established custom and had the Soviet attaché, Vitovt K. Putna (1893–1937), the most junior in terms of service in Tokyo, sit closest to him.[133] When Zhang Zuolin arrested Borodin's wife, Faina, in 1927, Japan apparently intervened, and she was freed to return the Soviet Union. Official records show that Tanaka was kept informed about her situation.[134]

In fact, Tanaka's outward friendliness was such that Soviet diplomats in Tokyo, who had feared Tanaka's active diplomacy, were relieved. They reported to Moscow that Tanaka wanted a closer relationship with Moscow. Ivan Maiskii characterized this desire for friendship as Japan's "romance" with the Soviet Union.[135]

Not only liberals, such as Shidehara and Debuchi, but also some right-wing nationalists such as Tanaka had tried to use Moscow as insurance against Britain and the United States. Tanaka had come to power advocating active diplomacy as opposed to Shidehara's soft diplomacy, and he represented a powerful faction within the Japanese Army that saw in Manchuria Japan's lifeline. Although Tanaka's new policy initially alarmed Soviet diplomats, they soon understood that Tanaka sought friendship with the Soviet Union. Tanaka's genuine love of Russian culture dated back to his sojourn in Russia as a military attaché. An

[129] See Yatsugi Kazuo (矢次一夫, 1899–1983), in *Gendaishi o tsukuru hitobito (4)* (Tokyo, 1972), 69.

[130] AVP, f. 0146, op. 8, p. 110, d. 3, l. 99.

[131] Ibid., f. 08, op. 10, p. 39, d. 289, ll. 44.

[132] Ibid., f. 08, op. 10, p. 39, d. 289, ll. 35–36.

[133] Maiskii to Karakhan, 24 November 1927, in Maiskii, *Izbrannaia perepiska s rossiiskimi korrespondentami*, 286.

[134] JACAR, B02030824400; Wilbur and How, *Missionaries of Revolution*, 422–23.

[135] AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, l. 27; p. 308, d. 54625, l. 22.

atheist before he went to Russia in 1898, Tanaka converted to Russian Orthodoxy while he was there. He russified his name (Giichi Nobusukevich Tanaka) and led an active social life in the Russian capital of St. Petersburg, where he arranged to get himself attached to the Emperor Alexander III 145th Novocherkassk Infantry Regiment. He became acquainted with the minister of war, Aleksei N. Kuropatkin. Increasingly critical of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance after the Russo-Japanese War (in which he took part), Tanaka handed over Japan's military secrets to Russia (see Chapter 1, p. 44). For his service, he was recommended for the Order of Saint Stanislav. When he became prime minister, Tanaka surely worried about the secret ties he had fostered with the Russian military attaché after the Russo-Japanese War. Moscow, in turn, would have known Tanaka's secrets. If they had been disclosed, Tanaka's political life would have been as good as dead.

Although there is no record showing that Soviet diplomats and officials were aware of Tanaka's earlier flirtation with Russia, Stalin undoubtedly knew and used it for his own ends: Soviet intelligence would certainly have thoroughly investigated Tanaka's past activity and reported the results to Stalin, including Tanaka's two-decades-old security breach of passing military secrets to Russia. It could not have been otherwise under Stalin. Tanaka went out of his way to express his love for Russia, yet we cannot help wondering whether these confessions of love were an attempt to mask his worries. Kopp reported to Moscow that Tanaka was a "brilliant opportunist."[136] Maiskii reported to Moscow that Tanaka was in no way an ideologue, unwilling and unable to form general political conclusions.[137] More importantly, Maiskii was skeptical of Tanaka's romance with Russia. Tanaka, according to Maiskii, wanted to threaten Zhang with Russia, and Russia with Zhang. Likewise, Tanaka used the cover of a romance with Russia to set Britain against Moscow and Moscow against London.[138] His active diplomacy, however, got him nowhere in China. It even backfired in that it spurred Chinese nationalism and Chinese boycotts of Japanese goods.

Tanaka's relationship with the Soviet Union reveals precisely the type of weakness that Stalin was so adept at exploiting. Tanaka's history of passing secret information to Russia left him at Stalin's mercy. While Stalin would never have left records that revealed his own intention of manipulating Tanaka's weakness, the effects are deeply embedded in the events of this period. As we have seen, Tanaka's decision to deploy military forces to China was self-destructive because it inflamed anti-Japanese Chinese nationalism—but his decision is far more understandable if we consider that Tanaka was trying to please the Soviet dictator by preventing Chiang from unifying China. The historical literature

[136] Ibid., f. 146, op. 8, p. 110, d. 3, l. 182.

[137] I. Taigin [pen name for Ivan M. Maiskii], "Iaponskii imperializm i Kitai," *Novyi mir*, no. 9 (1928), 231.

[138] AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, ll. 26–27 (27 January 1928); p. 308, d. 54625, ll. 21–22. Britain had the same view of Tanaka's line of politics. See James B. Crowley, "NichiEi kyōchō e no mosaku," in *Washinton taisei to NichiBei kankei*, eds. Hosoya Chihiro and Saitō Makoto (Tokyo, 1978), 114.

traditionally sees Stalin's China policy in 1927 as one of his greatest failures. Yet, Stalin achieved a far more important, and far more subtle, victory: securing the political influence to draw Japan into self-destruction in China. The reason there is little available record in Moscow of discussion about this important matter is that it was a strictly secret political achievement. Clearly, Besedovskii played a central role in this achievement, and that is the real reason Stalin was so pleased with Besedovskii's work in Tokyo. With this achievement, Besedovskii left Japan in September 1927. In his memoir, which he wrote in exile, Besedovskii still protected this secret by obscuring Tanaka's action as a natural reaction to Stalin's adventurism in China. But in fact, Tanaka's deployment of Japanese troops to China had nothing to do with Stalin's actions in China, and Tanaka withdrew those troops without interfering in those actions. Tanaka and his confidants, it seems, failed to grasp what Stalin was really doing, despite their evident fear of what Stalin knew. The rest of this chapter will examine the momentous consequences of that failure.

2.3 The Stalin Meetings

To Lenin, Japanese imperialism was a menace more baleful than Western imperialism (see Chapter 1, p. 50). Stalin had been aware of Lenin's concern and remained extraordinarily cautious regarding Japan. This wariness meant that the Soviet embassy in Tokyo was often left in the dark about the direction or goal of Moscow's diplomatic policy in Japan. Soviet diplomats complained about Moscow's apparent "directionless" diplomacy toward Japan. In a letter to Chicherin (dated 28 June 1928), Maiskii reported that he did not know what policy Moscow was pursuing with regard to Japan. When he worked in London, he told Chicherin, Moscow had regularly briefed the embassy about its political directions. In Tokyo, however, he was left clueless.[139] Aleksandr Troianovskii was equally unhappy, complaining to Moscow that the Soviet embassy in general knew little, and Moscow even less, about Japan.[140] Indeed, Moscow's position was often baffling. In 1927, Stalin considered appointing Trotskii, his political enemy, as ambassador to Japan.[141] Maiskii noted that no other Soviet mission had such a high turnover rate of personnel as the one in Tokyo.[142] All this suggests that Stalin sought to control Moscow's policy toward Japan personally and would not entrust it to his diplomats. Until 1927, he had pursued "friendship" with Tokyo using Besedovskii, but now Stalin began to explore a very different path—a conspiratorial one that he could not reveal to mere diplomats.

How Stalin pursued his new course is difficult to know. He did have spy networks already placed in Japan by then. Besedovskii informed Moscow "with

[139] Maiskii to Chicherin, 28 June 1928, AVP, f. 08, op. 11, p. 67, d. 330, ll. 72.

[140] Ibid., f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, ll. 52–53 (4 February 1928).

[141] *Pis'ma I.V. Stalina V.M. Molotovu*, 107.

[142] E.V. Khakhalkina and B.S. Zhigalo, "I.M. Maiskii i sovetsko-iaponskie otnosheniia v 1927–1929 gg.," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 3 (2019): 159.

great pride" that there were three "superbly conspiratorial" Communist cells operating in the Japanese Navy.[143] Soon after the opening of the Soviet embassy in Tokyo in early 1925, the Soviet military attaché's office recruited important agents in Japan (Sources 1504, 1506, 1521, 1524, 1526, 1531, and 1534, as well as "Agent Antenna"). Overall, forty percent of Soviet agents in Japan belonged to the army and navy.[144] Yet, it was Japan's new leader, Tanaka, who provided the opportunity for Stalin to pursue this course.

In late 1927, Tanaka sought a breakthrough by dealing directly with Stalin, who welcomed Tanaka's move. Traces of Stalin's developing secret strategy for drawing Japan into a fatal position in China can be seen in two sets of meetings that took place in late 1927 and early 1928.

Stalin, Tanaka, and Kuhara, 1927

It was extraordinarily unusual for Stalin to receive private foreign citizens: He had no official government position at the time. That was why it caused such a sensation when he gave an interview to the Japanese correspondent Fuse in 1925 (see p. 84). He did not give another interview to a foreign correspondent until 1930 (to Eugene Lyons, an American journalist working in Moscow). Yet, in late 1927 and early 1928, at a time when Stalin was facing not only a life-or-death battle against the Trotskii-led United Opposition but also the emerging economic crisis, he strangely received two private citizens from Japan—despite the fact that he had never even received Japan's ambassador to the Soviet Union. Although little was disclosed about their meetings at the time, speculation was rampant.

Several months after his ill-advised deployment of troops to China, Tanaka dispatched two emissaries to Stalin: Kuhara Fusanosuke (see Introduction, p. 17) and Gotō Shinpei. Kuhara was the first to meet Stalin, and this meeting was far more significant than the Gotō-Stalin meetings that followed. Kuhara was a wealthy businessman-entrepreneur turned politician. Like many businessmen, Kuhara used his vast wealth to support politicians of his liking. He was Tanaka's benefactor and confidant. Although Tanaka had wanted to appoint Kuhara as foreign minister, he met stiff opposition from many corners and appointed himself instead. Later, in May 1928, Kuhara entered the Tanaka cabinet as the minister of communications. Both Tanaka and Kuhara had been involved in a number of corruption scandals, which they had always managed to survive. Kuhara was often described as a "monster" (怪物) of double-dealing.[145]

[143] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 177.

[144] V.I. Lota, *Za gran'iu vozmozhnogo. Voennaia razvedka Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke 1918–1945 gg.* (Moscow, 2008), 111, 116–17, 148, 150. Presumably, there were agents 1505, 1507, 1508, and so on.

[145] Vitalii M. Primakov (1897–1937), who was a Soviet military attaché in Tokyo in 1930, depicted Kuhara as someone who spent millions of dollars to buy votes, then rewarded his business with lucrative deals when he became a cabinet member. See L. Vitmar [pen name for Primakov], *Po Iaponii. Ocherk* (Sverdlovsk-Moscow, 1933), 75.

Kuhara's Russian connections were not new: In 1916, when Grand Duke Georgii Mikhailovich, a grandson of Nicholas I, visited Japan, Kuhara hosted him at his home.[146] Kuhara had extensive business connections (oil, gold, and copper) with Russia before the Russian Revolution and still maintained potential business interests in Siberia, the Russian Maritime Province, and Sakhalin. Although Kuhara was not a Communist, he favored—as did many others who were critical of free-market capitalism, including Communists and fascists—a strong role for government in the economy. With the support of the state, Kuhara enriched himself handsomely and repaid the government as long as it supported his vision of Japan and the world. Clearly, Moscow was interested in people with money and power who, like Kuhara, were willing to do its bidding.

Tanaka explained Kuhara's trip to the Soviet Union (and Germany) as an economic mission. On 19 October 1927, shortly before his departure three days later, Tanaka and Kuhara visited Dovgalevskii, the departing Soviet ambassador. A Japanese newspaper reported that Tanaka had a secret talk with the ambassador for an hour.[147] Dovgalevskii reported to Moscow that he was surprised by the news of Kuhara's trip to Moscow.[148]

Diplomatic circles in Tokyo and the news media speculated on the real purpose of Kuhara's mission. Some suspected that Tanaka had enlisted Kuhara to help him explore the long-rumored German-Soviet-Japanese alliance. At any rate, Kuhara arrived in Moscow on 7 November 1927 and then moved on to tour Europe (where Kuhara met with Benito Mussolini). He then returned to Moscow, where he stayed between December 1–11, a time period that coincided with the 15th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (December 2–19). Yet, Stalin apparently took the trouble to meet Kuhara. No records of their meeting have been de-classified. Kuhara's behavior in Moscow was "extremely strange," according to Soviet observers. He was supposedly on an economic mission in Moscow but was uninterested in meeting anyone in charge of the Soviet economy, spending all his time instead going to museums and theaters, as well as drinking a great deal. No one had a clue about the purpose of his visit to Moscow. When Kuhara met Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau (1869–1928), the German ambassador to the Soviet Union, they got into a shouting match. When Brockdorff-Rantzau asked Kuhara his opinion of Germany (which he had just visited), Kuhara answered that he had come to see Brockdorff-Rantzau to learn his views of the Soviet Union.[149] And it appears that Kuhara did meet with Stalin (in addition to Chicherin and Karakhan); he later spoke about the meeting on numerous occasions. In Stalin's archive, there are Kuhara's "business cards" and a handwritten envelope addressed to Stalin in Japanese, Russian, and English.[150]

[146] *Kuhara Fusanosuke* (Tokyo, 1969), 208–13.
[147] "Shushō Ro taishi o tou," *Jiji shinpō*, 20 October 1927, 2.
[148] AVP, f. 08, op. 10, p. 39, d. 289, l. 77.
[149] Ibid., f. 04, op. 49, p. 302, d. 54491, ll. 16–17, 21.
[150] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 405, dok. 15.

According to Kuhara, he met Stalin once, only once, and spoke with him for more than four hours, with only one other person present at the meeting: Kuhara's interpreter, Konishi Masutarō (小西増太郎, 1862–1940), a Tolstoyan who had studied in Russia from 1886 to 1893.[151] Stalin greeted Kuhara by saying that he, too, was an Asiatic, and Kuhara, in turn, got the impression that Stalin was very "Oriental" (きはめて東洋人的).[152] Kuhara presented Stalin with his ideas for securing peace and prosperity in East Asia—to which, Kuhara claimed, Stalin gave his assent. Their agreement, according to Kuhara, was as follows: First, a buffer state was to be created out of Manchuria, Korea, and Siberia. This state was to be independent, demilitarized, and governed by the representatives of Manchuria, Korea, and Siberia. The Soviet Union, China, and Japan would refrain from interfering in the governance of this state. Here is how Kuhara described this "agreement" with Stalin when he was interrogated in 1946 in preparation for the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, officially known as the International Military Tribunal for the Far East IMTFE:

> In April 1927, when his cabinet was organized, I advised Premier Tanaka to take the solution of the Manchurian problem up as the foremost mission. And in regard to the measures, I proposed, Japan should never embrace any intention to invade other countries, but instead spontaneously offer Korea, while on the other hand, by having China furnish Manchuria and Mongolia, and Russia offer the area in Siberia east of the Baikal, establish a neutral zone in which no military armaments be applied, thus building a happy paradise land, internationally never to side by [*sic*, with] any country, for which purpose respective delegates from the three countries would be dispatched to control. The Premier fully assented to this proposal and gave me his word to actualize it.
>
> Some months later the Premier told me that although it was not difficult to talk China into this problem, he was much worried as to how he should break the ice with Russia, and asked me whether I would accept his offer to send me as a special envoy to Russia, and Germany, during which period I should verify Stalin's views *privately* [emphasis added], by submitting the problem as a personal proposition. The idea of the whole plan being originally my own I though[t] it not just to decline, and finally accepting it I started on my journey to Europe.[153]

It is noteworthy that Tanaka wanted Kuhara to meet with Stalin privately. Kuhara then discussed his meeting with Stalin:

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[151] See for example "Kuhara Fusanosuke jutsu," *Shakai kagaku tōkyū* 41, no. 2 (1995): 458 (1955 interview record).

[152] Kuhara Fusanosuke, *Zenshin no kōryō*, 2nd ed. (Tokyo, 1939), 242.

[153] Awaya Kentarō and Yoshida Hiroshi, eds., *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho* (Tokyo, 1993), 18:193 (26 March 1946).

> Stalin was at that time secretary of the Party and had made it his rule not to meet any foreigner, but [illegible: he?] did me a favor, sparing long hours in a de[illegible] in the latter part of November [*sic*]. Acquiring his full concurrence I was able to return to Japan quite satisfactorily.
>
> Presumably, as it was merely 10 years after the revolution, and domestic affairs in Russia were still unsettled, while, Japan, on the other hand had great reserve of power perfectly unconstrained, which is entirely contrary to present circumstances [1946], it must have been, I believe, rather much desirable to Stalin. I suppose he was delighted that stabilisation in the East was securable on account of this.
>
> On my way home I stopped at Peking to see Mr. Chang Tso Lin [Zhang Zuolin] and tried to negotiate with him, but as he was in great fear because the battle with Wu Pei-fu [? Chiang Kai-shek?] was disadvantageous we parted gaining nothing to the purpose, promising to meet again.
>
> Premier Tanaka was overjoyed when I reported the whole story on my return, he affirmed that as long as Russia is not opposed to it he was confident of China and our country.[154]

Machino Takema (町野武馬, 1875–1968), who was an adviser to Zhang, confirmed Kuhara's tale:

> In 1927 KUHARA had gone to Russia and on the way back he stopped in Mukden and at that time he told me of a plan that he had, to wit: That Manchuria was the cancer of Japan and unless she [Japan] did something about it, it would forever cause trouble. Hence, he suggested that Russia give up the Maritime Province, that China give up Manchuria, and Mongolia, and that Japan give up Korea, and that the three areas be merged into one independent neutral state. I told him that he was crazy to think that such a thing could be done, and that countries were not stock corporations. KUHARA told me that Stalin had agreed to this plan and that he was intending to go back to Japan and press it further. When he spoke to Chang Tso-Lin, Chang laughed in his face; but as I think of it now, it might have been the best plan of all.[155]

Okada Tadahiko (岡田忠彦, 1878–1958), a politician who was close to Kuhara, also testified to the same effect, stating that even though the confidential nature of the agreement meant that there were no documents, Stalin and Kuhara could testify to its existence.[156] Needless to say, Stalin's testimony was not taken.

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[154] Ibid., 18:193–94 (26 March 1946). See also ibid., 251–52 (18 March 1946).

[155] Ibid., 36:53 (11 April 1946).

[156] R. John Pritchard, ed., *The Tokyo Major War Crimes Trial: The Records of the International*

Kuhara's plan was hardly realistic: Japan would not give up Korea, and the Soviet Union would never relinquish Siberia or the Maritime Province. It is difficult to believe that Stalin honestly endorsed Kuhara's plan. Stalin had always been suspicious of Japan, as he was of every imperialist power. Some Japanese political operatives, for example, supported Russian émigrés who were advocating Siberian independence as a way to expand Japan's influence. Moscow must have known, as Maiskii noted, that Japan would "hang on to Manchuria by its teeth," resorting to force, if necessary, to protect its rights and privileges.[157]

The question therefore arises as to why Stalin met with Kuhara in the first place. It is, first of all, quite clear that Stalin would have been interested in such a meeting only if he had Tanaka's secrets at hand. Otherwise, we can hardly make sense of why he would meet with an eccentric, foreign capitalist whom Tanaka had sent to Moscow to make an unconvincing agreement. Undoubtedly, Tanaka had also given Kuhara a second and more confidential mission: to sound out how much Moscow knew about Tanaka's handing over of military secrets to Russia after the Russo-Japanese War. Aside from any agreement, then, both sides would have been able to use this four-hour conversation to determine what the other side made of Tanaka's past. Having taken advantage of Tanaka's vulnerability as a result of Japan's military deployment to China just a few months earlier, Stalin would have seen the political value in meeting with Tanaka's confidant. In this respect, the fact that the meeting occurred at all indicates that Stalin had larger intentions.

Yet, it is also possible that Stalin *did* endorse a plan with Kuhara. This point is important because, if he did, it would be entirely consistent with the pattern of self-destructive policy that Japan demonstrated both before (in the 1927 military deployment) and later, as we shall see. Of course, it is highly unlikely that Stalin shared with Kuhara anything but superficial expectations about the buffer state. Such an agreement would do little for Stalin's plans in the area. Yet, if such an agreement lowered Japan's guard as to the threat posed by Stalin, then it could have been well worth the temporary sacrifice. In the long term, Stalin almost certainly believed that under the cover of an agreement with Japan, he would be able to extend Soviet influence into Manchuria and beyond. In fact, Stalin and Kuhara had much in common when it came to politics. As Kuhara explicitly stated, for example, his own (non-capitalist, non-Communist) plans for global "co-existence and co-prosperity" emulated the Comintern's global strategy of spreading communism.[158] Moreover, Kuhara believed that as a politician, Stalin was far superior to Lenin.[159] There is no evidence showing that Stalin trusted Kuhara or Tanaka. It is far more likely that by this time, Stalin had grasped

Military Tribunal for the Far East (Lewiston, NY, 1998), 38:17,733–34 (4 March 1947) (hereafter cited as "IMTFE transcripts").

[157] Taigin [pen name for Maiskii], "Iaponskii imperializm i Kitai," 232. See also Maiskii's report to Moscow (23 February 1928), AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, l. 79.

[158] Kuhara, *Zenshin*, 220–21.

[159] Ibid., 244; Yamazaki Kazuyoshi, *Kuhara Fusanosuke* (Tokyo, 1939), 116.

the full potential of using the power of anti-foreign sentiment in China against Japan. With a prime minister already eager to appease Stalin for the sake of his political career, Japan was an easy target to lull into a false sense of security in China.

Considering all this, Stalin could well have calculated that "surrendering" Siberia to the new buffer state would be a strategic move. When Besedovskii spoke with Stalin before leaving for Tokyo in 1926, he jokingly asked Stalin what to say if Japan asked for "the other half of Sakhalin and Vladivostok as the price of their neutrality in Chinese affairs." Stalin looked at him seriously and replied somberly:

> I'm not a diplomat and I can't give you practical advice. *If a Soviet government is created in Beijing, we can give the Japanese not only Vladivostok but also Irkutsk to safeguard it from intervention* [emphasis added]. Everything will depend on the relations of power at the given moment of time in the revolution. Brest-Litovsk will be repeated in various combinations. It may be needed in the Chinese revolution as it was in the Russian Revolution.[160]

Stalin's logic was that once China became Soviet, the Soviet Union would be able to reclaim the lost territory effortlessly. His position was consistent. In 1923, when Stalin had been keen to create a Soviet government in Germany, he needed land access to Germany through Polish territory to render military assistance to the German Communists. Stalin instructed his diplomats in Poland to promise to give Poland Gdansk and East Prussia. Once a revolutionary government had triumphed in Germany, Stalin reasoned, the Soviet Union and Soviet Germany would be able to retake Gdansk and East Prussia from Poland easily.[161] Moscow took a similar stance in 1924 toward China, acknowledging its sovereignty in Outer Mongolia, in order to normalize relations with China. Yet, according to Japan's Kwantung Army intelligence, Moscow did not think the matter was of any consequence: It had no intention of returning Outer Mongolia to China, and in any case, it expected Mongolia and China to become "Red."[162] Even if Moscow had given up Siberia for Kuhara's scheme, Soviet Mongolia and Soviet China would have helped Moscow quickly retake Siberia.

In fact, as will be discussed later, in 1928 and 1929, Moscow had secret plans to establish Soviet power in Inner Mongolia and Manchuria through armed uprisings. Whether or not Kuhara had any inkling about such a plan, he certainly

[160] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 176. Brest-Litovsk refers to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that Soviet Russia signed with the Central Powers in March 1918. To save the Bolshevik government, Lenin accepted a humiliating peace, giving up all of Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, and the southern Caucasus to the Central Powers. After World War I, Lenin recovered them all except the Baltic states.

[161] Ibid., 94–95; V.I. Chernopërov, *Diplomaticheskaia deiatel'nost' V.I. Koppa i podgotovka bol'shevikami 'Germanskogo Oktiabria' v 1923 g.* (Ivanovo, Russia, 2006), 94–95.

[162] *Gendaishi shiryō (32): Mantetsu (2)* (Tokyo, 1966), 577.

sensed Japan's vulnerability. He could not have been entirely confident that his agreement with Stalin was not significantly at the expense of Japan's geopolitical interests. After returning to Tokyo from the Soviet Union, Kuhara went to see Troianovskii, the Soviet ambassador, at least twice in January 1928.[163] Meanwhile, at the time, neither Kuhara nor Tanaka spoke publicly about Kuhara's meeting with Stalin. As far as we can ascertain, Kuhara first wrote about the meeting in 1939.[164]

The following two incidents suggest that Kuhara, Tanaka, and Stalin did have at least some sort of secret understanding: First, the Soviet Union had aggressive plans for Manchuria that Vasilii Bliukher, then the highest Soviet military commander in the Far East, had asked Moscow for permission to execute at the time of the brief Soviet-Chinese War in 1929. Bliukher was baffled by Moscow's refusal. Later, after witnessing Stalin's refusal to condemn Japan's invasion of Manchuria, Bliukher told Troianovskii that he now understood why Stalin rejected his request in 1929: He suspected a secret deal between Stalin and Kuhara.[165]

Second, an incident that happened in Tokyo more than ten years later, in September 1940, also supports the case for a secret deal. A Polish woman, Pleśna or Plessner, twenty-five years old and the common law wife of a German doctor working in Tokyo, was arrested by the Japanese military police (憲兵). According to this woman, while she had been on a visit back to Poland in September 1939, she had gotten caught up in the war that Germany and the Soviet Union had started against Poland. She was detained by the Soviets, who forced her to spy for the Soviet Union with the promise that she would be allowed to go back to her husband in Tokyo. Trained as a spy in Moscow, she was sent back to Tokyo, where she arrived on 15 August 1940. Her handlers were the Soviet representative "Ionin" and the TASS (Soviet state news agency) correspondent "Samoilo." One of her assignments from Soviet intelligence was to find out exactly what Tokyo's policy was toward the Soviet Union. Her handlers told her to make contact with people close to Prince Konoe Fumimaro (近衛文麿, 1891–1945) and Kuhara Fusanosuke in particular. Kuhara was important, she was told, because there was some kind of "deal" between Stalin and Kuhara dating back to 1927.[166] The

[163] AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 303, d. 54512, l. 36 (27 January 1928 report).

[164] Kuhara, *Zenshin*, 241–46. See also Kuhara Fusanosuke, *Sekai ishin to kōkoku no shimei* (Tokyo, 1942), 64–65.

[165] As told to Kuhara by Troianovskii in "Kuhara Fusanosuke jutsu," 466–67. In a meeting with the Soviet ambassador to Japan, Konstantin K. Iurenev (1888–1938), on 30 January 1935, Kuhara mentioned his idea of a free state comprising Korea, Manchuria, Mongolia, and Siberia. Iurenev thought that Kuhara must be joking. As if regretting having revealed some deep secret, Kuhara asked him "not to tell anyone about this matter even as a joke." AVP, f. 0146, op. 15, p. 112, d. 114, ll. 26–27, 31–34; op. 19, p. 174, d. 74, l. 16.

[166] Zenkoku Ken-yūkai Rengōkai hensan iinkai, *Nihon kenpei seishi* (Tokyo, 1976), 675–77. Uncomfortable in her role as a spy, the Polish woman confessed her misgivings to a Japanese friend, and the Japanese military police stepped in. The police hoped to use her against the Soviets, but she was simply too feckless for the job. Both sides deemed her work inadequate. Later, she

fact that Soviet intelligence knew about Kuhara and Stalin suggests that a secret deal did exist.

Deepening the mystery of the Stalin-Kuhara agreement, Kuhara's interpreter, Konishi, died suddenly in Tokyo under strange circumstances in 1939. (After Tanaka Giichi died in 1929, Konishi was probably the only person other than Stalin and Kuhara who knew the detail of their agreement in 1927.) In December 1939, according to his family, Konishi collapsed and died of a heart attack at the Shinjuku Rail station in Tokyo. The family received the news of his death from the military police. Yet, newspapers reported a false story that he died at his home. His family suspected that the government was hiding something. Before his death, he had intimated to his family that he had been entrusted by Japanese politicians, perhaps including Konoe Fumimaro, whom Konishi had taught at the University of Kyoto, with a special mission to go to Moscow. Whatever the cause of his death might have been, Stalin still remembered Konishi in 1941, when he and Matsuoka Yōsuke (松岡洋右, 1880–1946), Japan's foreign minister, met in Moscow, as Stalin asked Matsuoka about Konishi.[167]

Stalin and Gotō, 1928

Compared with Kuhara's meeting with Stalin, Gotō's meetings were something of an anticlimax, yet they also reinforce the theory that Stalin had developed a secret strategy to draw Japan into a situation in China that was doomed to fail. Gotō was certainly not happy that Tanaka had dispatched another man to Stalin right before him. Gotō had met Stalin twice on 7 and 14 January 1928,[168] the latter being the day before Stalin set off for Siberia to deal with the country's economic crisis. His willingness to meet a foreign visitor twice amid pressing domestic issues reveals how important Stalin considered these meetings. Although no Soviet records of Gotō's meetings with Stalin are available,[169] Japanese records *are* available and have even been published.[170]

Gotō, as discussed earlier, was known to be pro-Soviet, and his reception in Moscow was exceptionally cordial. Even though he visited the Soviet capital as a private citizen, the Soviet government paid for his stay at the Hotel Savoi as well as other expenses.[171] (Gotō repaid his debt when he returned to Japan by proclaiming, as he had done many times before, that the Soviet government

married a Polish diplomat and left Japan. "Ionin" seems to refer to Grigorii A. Ionin, who worked as a representative for the Soviet travel agency Intourist and as a TASS correspondent in Tokyo. "Samoilo," probably "Samoilov," cannot be identified.

[167] See Furuhashi Yasuo, "Konishi Masutarō (1861–1939)," in *Zoku NichiRo ishoku no gunzō. Bunka sōgo rikai ni tsukushita hitobito*, ed. Nagatsuka Hideo (Tokyo, 2017), 52–53, 65–66.

[168] *Na prieme u Stalina*, 26.

[169] Vasilii Molodiakov, *Goto Simpei i russko-iaponskie otnosheniia* (Moscow, 2006), 192.

[170] *Nihon gaikō bunsho. Shōwa ki I. Dainibu daisankan*, 466–72. Tomita Takeshi, *Senkanki no NiSso kankei 1917–1937* (Tokyo, 2010), chap. 3, provides a concise history of Gotō's pro-Soviet activity.

[171] G.A. Bordiugov, ed., *Katsura Taro, Goto Shimpei i Rossiia* (Moscow, 2005), 231–32, 239.

had nothing to do with the Comintern.) During their two meetings, Stalin was quite frank with Gotō and seemingly accommodating toward Japan. Gotō wanted, among other things, a Soviet-Japanese agreement on China. (Before his departure for Moscow, he had made it clear to Soviet diplomats in Tokyo that the reason he sought a joint Soviet-Japanese effort was to counteract the infiltration of Britain and the United States into China.)[172] Stalin asked Gotō whether he thought it possible to proceed without involving China, to which Gotō responded, "No," adding that a Soviet-Japanese agreement was also necessary (in addition to one involving China). Stalin agreed that such an understanding was necessary and possible. Considering that Stalin had just told Gotō that China was so divided that it didn't constitute a state (see p. 75 in this chapter), Stalin's answer implied that he thought the Soviet Union and Japan could agree, without China's direct participation, to exclude Britain and the United States from China. Then, Stalin asked Gotō what prevented such an agreement, to which Gotō responded that Japan's diplomacy had been merely to follow Britain and the United States. What Japan needed to do was pursue an independent diplomatic policy. Gotō added that for this independent diplomacy to happen, Japan needed to "shake hands" with the Soviet Union. Stalin told Gotō that Japan's China policy had been mistaken; then, he asked what Gotō thought was wrong with Moscow's China policy. Gotō was supercilious, and his answer was unpersuasive: Moscow was too rash in its race for results and too ignorant of China. Gotō asked Stalin the same question about Japan. Stalin's answer was far more apt: Japan's China policy was "completely wrong"—because Japan didn't understand the essence of China's "social movement" (the rise of Chinese nationalism, which Moscow had been fomenting). Moreover, Japan had resorted to force too hastily and as a result had turned China into an enemy rather than a friend. Meanwhile, the United States had been far more successful with a "policy as soft as gypsum."[173]

This extraordinarily frank discussion might seem to show that Stalin was interested in genuine collaboration with Japan. In fact, it reveals just the opposite—that Stalin was confident that Moscow was now far stronger than Tokyo regarding China and that Tokyo was eager for a deal with Moscow. While Stalin showed sympathy toward Japan and implied that a deal might be possible, he had no intention of signing such an agreement. Tanaka's 1927 military deployment and the Chinese nationalist sentiment it inflamed meant that in China, the tables had decisively turned against Japan. Thus, Stalin began to plan a careful offensive while at the same time alleviating Japan's anxiety with woolly promises.

It is arresting to see how farsighted Stalin was compared with these Japanese politicians. While the Japanese were apparently envisaging the future in terms of retrograde, imperialist thinking, Stalin was trying to subvert imperialism itself. If the imperialist powers were striving to expand or at least safeguard their interests

[172] Ibid., 243.

[173] *Nihon gaikō bunsho. Shōwa ki I. Dainibu daisankan*, 466–72.

in the divided China, Stalin was confident that China, torn though it was by civil war, was a mighty force against imperialism. It is clear that Stalin could set the trap for Japan; the question was how to get Tokyo there.

The Stalin-Kuhara agreement

In March 1928, after both Kuhara and Gotō had returned to Tokyo, they went with Tanaka to meet with the Soviet ambassador, Troianovskii. Rumors began to circulate about agreements on the Soviet-Japanese delimitation of influence in China, Japan's plan to purchase the CER, Japan's loan to the Soviet Union, and the like.[174] Alarmed, the British embassy in Tokyo asked Tanaka and Debuchi whether such reports were true. They said they were not.[175] Clearly, however, Tanaka was trying to strike a secret deal with Moscow, taking advantage of its absurd insistence that the Soviet government had nothing to do with the Comintern; at the same time, he was attacking the Comintern and its influence in China and Japan. In December 1927, when the British ambassador to Japan, John Tilley, asked Tanaka about Kuhara's and Gotō's visits to Moscow, he had replied disingenuously that their visits "had no political objective." Yet, Tanaka surprised the skeptical Tilley by adding that "if the Russians again attempted to stir up Communist feeling in China," he could not sit still and do nothing. Tanaka said that he "would have to make very strong representations to the Russian Government, and it might be necessary to call a conference of the Powers." Although Tanaka had little control over China, inside Japan, he cracked down hard on the Communist movement. On the basis of Tanaka's statements, Tilley reported to London that it was "fairly certain that he [Tanaka] was not engaging in any very sinister dealings with the Soviet Government."[176] Tilley was wrong.

Here a question arises again: What exactly was this agreement between Kuhara and Stalin, an agreement that seems to have resulted in complex, even fatal, secret intelligence work? Stalin showed Gotō that he was quite confident in his power over the future of China. For this reason, although he may have found it expedient to agree to a sort of temporary buffer state, the veracity of Kuhara's statement about creating such a "paradise land" is hard to evaluate. Subsequent events, however, point to certain agreements Kuhara did *not* mention. The events suggest, first of all, that he and Stalin had agreed that the Soviet Union and Japan would work together to keep Britain and the United States out of China, particularly Manchuria and Mongolia—whose future they may well have agreed to determine jointly. Yet, it would seem that what was also included in this joint determination was the idea of "neutralizing," or disarming, Zhang's forces in Manchuria, a military presence that extended to the northeastern region of Inner Mongolia. The old secret treaties that Russia and Japan concluded

[174] "Rokoku ga Gotō shi o tsūjite wagakuni to jūyō kōshō o susumu," *Jiji shinpō*, 21 March 1928, 2.

[175] NA, FO 371/13167, F 2226/7/10, 1.

[176] Ibid., FO 371/13164, F 200/7/10, 1–2.

after the Russo-Japanese War, as well as the oral agreement that Debuchi and Besedovskii negotiated in 1926–27, called for the division of Manchuria into two separate spheres of influence. In contrast, Kuhara and Stalin's agreement supposedly involved a shared plan for Manchuria. Thus, some mutual understanding must have existed over how to handle Zhang's power. Stalin and Gotō agreed that Zhang should be "prevented from obstructing our work."[177] In fact, the following year, it was precisely this issue that provided Stalin with the clearest way to shape Japan's future in China.

The Chinese historian Sun Guoda (孙果达) has recently argued that Tokyo struck a deal in which Japan agreed not to threaten the Soviet Far East, and in return, the Soviet Union pledged not to prevent Japan from conquering China (including Manchuria). Sun has attributed this deal to Tanaka, citing no documentary evidence.[178] His conclusion is speculative, but if it is correct, Kuhara's talk of building a happy "paradise land" from Manchuria, Korea, and Siberia was merely a smokescreen. Either way, Stalin clearly knew that Japan would undoubtedly be caught up in China's nationalism and perish as a result.

2.4 The Assassination of Zhang Zuolin, June 1928

Stalin's brilliant first success in furthering his aims for Manchuria and Mongolia was the assassination of Zhang Zuolin in June 1928 (the Huanggutun Incident [皇姑屯事件]). Japanese assassins have long been blamed for this murder, and the man who was supposedly the chief plotter, Colonel Kōmoto Daisaku (see Introduction, p. 6), even proudly acknowledged that he had organized the assassination and took personal responsibility. It now appears that the real mastermind of the plot was Stalin. Although this claim needs to be critically assessed, most Russian literature on the subject acknowledges that Moscow was responsible for Zhang's assassination.[179] Using available sources outside of Russia, some Japanese historians concur.[180] Even some Chinese historians, including Tuo Tuo (托托), support this new interpretation.[181] Using Tuo as his source, Sun Guoda

[177] *Nihon gaikō bunsho. Shōwa ki I. Dainibu daisankan*, 470.

[178] Sun Guoda, " 'Tianzhong zouzhe' zhenwei zhi bian xintan," *Dangshi zongheng*, no. 2 (2016): 40–42. The plan Kuhara apparently discussed with Stalin is not unknown in China. See Liu Wangling and Zhao Jun, "Jiuyuan Fangzhizhu yu Zhongguo," *Huazhong shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehuikexueban)*, no. 5 (1989): 95.

[179] See for example M.V. Muzalevskii, ed., *Pochetnye chekisty*, vol. 2, pt. 4 (Moscow, 2010), 120 crediting Naum I. Eitingon (1899–1981) who was working in Harbin at the time. See also A. Kolpakidi and D. Prokhorov, *KGB. Prikazano likvidirovat'. Spetsoperatsii sovetskikh spetcsluzhb 1918–1941* (Moscow, 2004), 183–210; *Moskva–Tokio* (kn. 2), 6, 252.

[180] Most notable is Katō Yasuo, *Nazo toki "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu jiken"* (Tokyo, 2011). The most careful scholarly analysis of Zhang's murder was published in several installments: Iboshi Hideru, "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu jiken no shinsō," *Geirin* 31, no. 1 (1982): 2–43; 31, no. 2 (1982): 29–62; 31, no. 3 (1982): 24-66; 31, no. 4 (1982): 27–62; 32, no. 1 (1983): 27–48. Iboshi does not question Kōmoto's confession, however.

[181] See for example Tuo Tuo [Tuo Qiming], *Zhangshi fuzi yu Su-E zhi mi* (Huhehaote, China, 2008). This book relies largely on Russian sources, particularly Kolpakidi's and Prokhorov's work.

has recently argued in Chinese Communist Party journals that Zhang's murder was a joint enterprise between Soviet intelligence and Japanese conspirators.[182] A perusal of available Russian, Chinese, and Japanese documents suggests that Kōmoto was working hand in glove with Soviet intelligence. Certainly, he was given to backdoor dealing. Like Stalin and Zhang Xueliang (see Introduction, p. 20), he was convinced that competent intelligence and political ruse could shape the destiny of the state.[183]

Zhang and Stalin

Zhang was a trouble-maker par excellence. He began as a Manchurian *honghuzi* (紅鬍子, bandit) and went on to become a powerful Manchurian warlord and, in 1927, the head of the Beijing government.[184] Zhang was ambitious, harboring dreams of uniting China under his rule—but he was dependent on Japan for both his rule and his survival. During the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese captured Zhang, accused him of spying for Russia, and were planning to execute him. It was Tanaka who saved his life. It is widely believed that Zhang became deeply beholden to Japan after Tanaka intervened.[185] In 1925, when his lieutenant Guo Songling rebelled against him, Japan once again saved Zhang by helping him put down the rebellion (see p. 98). In 1927, Japan saved Zhang yet again by deploying forces to Shandong to stop Chiang's Northern Expedition. While much evidence also shows that Zhang found Japan's meddling in his affairs to be unbearable, he nevertheless disliked Russian and Soviet interference even more.

Many of Tuo's other sources, however, cannot be identified, affecting the reliability of the book's argument. On page 242 for example, Tuo claims that Okada Keisuke (岡田啓介, 1868–1952), who was Japan's prime minister from 1934 to 1936, had been recruited by the Soviet spy Richard Sorge. Tuo cites a Russian book as his source: V. Molodiakov (莫洛佳科夫), *Dongjing shenpan miwen shilu* [东京审判密闻实录] (Lishi yichan chubanshe [历史遗产出版社], 1996). The only book I have found in Tokyo and Moscow that resembles the book is Molodiakov's *Podsudimye i pobediteli (Zametki i razmyshleniia istorika o Tokiiskom protsesse)* (Tokyo, 1996). It contains no information on Okada. When I contacted Molodiakov, he confirmed that none of his work discusses Okada's alleged connections with Sorge. However, Tuo's discussion of Okada may be significant to the case of Sejima (see Chapter 5, p. 427). Other Chinese accounts that hold Moscow responsible for Zhang's murder provide no source. See for example " 'Huanggutun shijian': Zhang Xueliang fu bei Sidalin zhasi?" Juntian (钧天) news site, accessed 29 June 2020, (https://5455.org/history/82432.html).

[182]Sun Guoda, " 'Huanggutun shijian' xinkao zhi san: Sulian tegong yu Riben hezuo zhizao," *Shanghai dangshi yu dangjian*, no. 11 (2015): 13–15. Sun has published similar essays in other party journals as well, providing no new evidence.

[183]His testimony to Chinese interrogators in Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, comps., *Heben Dazuo yu Rijun Shanxi "canliu"* (Beijing, 1995), 753.

[184]On Zhang, see Gavan McCormack's classic work, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (Stanford, CA, 1977); Kwong Chi Man, *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria: Zhang Zuolin and the Fengtian Clique during the Northern Expedition* (Leiden, 2017).

[185]See for example Tanaka Giichi denki kankō kai, *Tanaka Giichi denki* (Tokyo, 1958), 1:324–30 (Kuhara wrote the preface to this biography of Tanaka); Tazaki Suematsu, *Hyōden Tanaka Giichi* (Tokyo, 1981), 1:149–53.

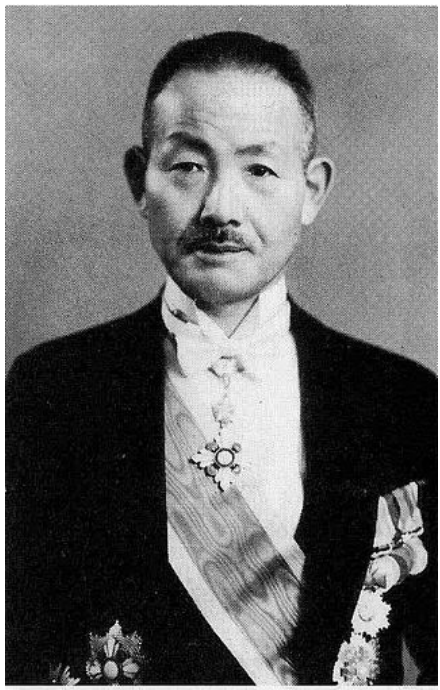

Figure 2.3. Kōmoto Daisaku, the self-acknowledged mastermind of the Zhang Zuolin murder

He surrounded himself with numerous Japanese advisers, but not a single Soviet one.

The main reason for Zhang's animus toward Moscow was that the Soviet Union's prized possession in China, the CER, was located in Zhang's domain of Manchuria. Since 1917, the Bolsheviks had tried to use the CER as a means to export revolution to Manchuria and China.[186] As one Russian historian has noted, the Soviet government intended to use the CER to turn northern Manchuria into a Soviet zone of influence and cut it off from the rest of China.[187] The Chinese called the CER China's "Red road" (红色之路), through which Moscow spread Communism to China.[188] Zhang disliked Communism and had no tolerance for Moscow's political use of the CER. According to the 1924 Sino-Soviet treaties, the CER was to be managed jointly by the Soviets and the Chinese, although the directorship remained in Soviet hands. This arrangement led to incessant conflicts between Zhang and the Soviets. One example concerned the numerous Russian émigrés ("White Russians"), former citizens of the Russian

[186] *Pis'ma I.V. Stalina V.M. Molotovu*, 77.

[187] See V.V. Chubarov, "Voennye konflikty v Kitae i pozitsiia SSSR (1927–1933 gg.)," *Sovetskaia vneshniaia politika. 1917–1945 gg. Poiski novykh podkhodov* (Moscow, 1992), 98.

[188] See for example Yun Zhanjun, "Zhongdong tielu zai Makesizhuyi Zhongguohua jicheng zhong fahui de zhongyao zuoyong: jianlun 'hongse zhilu' yu Zhongguo gongchandang jianli de guanxi," *Shijiqiao*, no. 11 (2019): 20-25.

Figure 2.4. Zhang Zuolin, assassinated in 1928

Empire, who refused to recognize the Soviet government yet still worked for the CER. Moscow wanted to fire these people. When CER director A.N. Ivanov tried to dismiss them unilaterally in 1925, Zhang took decisive actions against Soviet control of the CER and Manchuria, apparently hoping to rely on Japan's support. Stalin called Zhang "the most dangerous weapon in the hands of the imperialists against an independent and free China." He ordered Karakhan, the Soviet ambassador in Beijing, to organize the Chinese themselves to make a "violent attack" against Zhang.[189] By September 1925, Moscow had apparently already made an assassination attempt on Zhang: Moscow sent two assassins to Manchuria, Leonid Ia. Burlakov and his assistant Vlasenko. Before they could reach Zhang, however, his police arrested and imprisoned them, along with their guide, a Russian émigré named Medvedev. (They were released in a prisoner exchange in 1930.)[190]

Frustrated, Stalin issued a public warning in December 1925:

> I think that Japan will understand that she, too, must reckon with this growing force of the national movement in China, a force that is pushing forward and sweeping everything from its path. It is precisely

[189] *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina*, 540. Moscow knew that although Zhang was not a simple Japanese puppet, he had no choice but to rely on Japan for his survival, a situation that it claimed was a "tragedy." Vilenskii-Sibiriakov, *Chzhan-Tszo-Lin*, 39.

[190] Kolpakidi and Prokhorov, *KGB*, 192–94, which mistakenly states that this assassination attempt happened in 1926; Yumiba Moriyoshi, *Tōshi tetsudō o chūshin to suru RoShi seiryoku no shōchō. Gekan* (Harbin, 1938), 1157–62; *Gendaishi shiryō (33). Mantetsu (3)* (Tokyo, 1967), 346–52.

> because he has not understood this that Zhang Zuolin is failing. But he is failing also because he based his whole policy on conflicts between the USSR and Japan, on a deterioration of relations between them. Every general, every ruler of Manchuria, who will base his policy on conflicts between us and Japan, on a deterioration of our relations with Japan, is certain to fail. Only the one who bases his policy on an improvement of our relations with Japan, on a rapprochement between us and Japan, will remain on his feet; only such a general and such a ruler can sit firmly in Manchuria, because we have no interest in our relations with Japan becoming strained. Our interests lie in the direction of rapprochement between our country and Japan.[191]

Stalin told Besedovskii in 1926 that Zhang was "China's Kolchak," a reference to one of Stalin's erstwhile enemies.[192]

When Zhang arrested Ivanov in January 1926, Moscow was alarmed to the extreme. Declaring that he could not guarantee the Soviet ambassador's life under the present circumstances, Zhang demanded that Moscow recall Karakhan. In Moscow, voices had already been arguing that the Soviet government should use force to keep the CER in its hands,[193] but now the voices grew louder. Moscow made secret preparations for military operations in the Far East to browbeat Zhang into submission.[194] It was for contingencies like this that Moscow had never withdrawn its military forces from Outer Mongolia, in contravention of the Sino-Soviet treaties of 1924: It maintained at the very least a cavalry battalion in Ulaanbaatar.[195] In March 1927, reports came from Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia, that some four hundred ethnic Chinese and Korean members of the Soviet Red Army were disguised as *mazei* (馬賊, horse-mounted bandits) and about to enter the city to agitate workers against Zhang.[196] When Zhang raided the Soviet embassy in Beijing in April of that year, Moscow dispatched military forces to Outer Mongolia, including airplanes and "poison gas," according to a Japanese report.[197]

Ultimately, Zhang relented and released Ivanov. Moscow decided against further military intervention. Instead, it resorted to sabotage and subversion

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[191] Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 7:294.

[192] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 190. Admiral Aleksandr V. Kolchak, the leader of the anti-Bolshevik movement after the Russian Revolution, was executed by the Bolsheviks in 1920. See Chapter 1, p. 51.

[193] See for example V.M. Kriukov and M.V. Kriukov, *KVZhD 1929. Vzryv i ekho* (Moscow, 2017), 398–400.

[194] RGVA, f. 4, op. 19, d. 7, ll. 48–52, 55-56, 65, 68 (September 1926). See also *Pis'ma I.V. Stalina V.M. Molotovu*, 88–89, 123–24; *Sovetskoe rukovodstvo. Perepiska. 1928–1940* (Moscow, 1999), 74–75; "Iz kitaiskogo arkhiva V.A. Trifonova," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 3 (1990), 123.

[195] GKhTA, f. 2, sh. 586, kh. 7, 45. This was confirmed by U.S. officials in Kalgan (Zhangjiakou). See Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception*, 107.

[196] JACAR, B02030818300, 48.

[197] *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun*, 11 April 1927 (morning edition), 2.

while making compromises by dismissing Ivanov and recalling Karakhan.[198] Simultaneously, Stalin warned Zhang that "certain Japanese circles" were in agreement to "replace" him with someone else.[199]

Zhang and Japan

Zhang's relationship with Japan was far from cordial. Many Japanese power brokers were unhappy with Zhang, contending that he was merely using them for his own agenda. Once Zhang felt safe, he ignored all the promises he had made to Japan. Moreover, his administration was corrupt and inefficient, diverting the bulk of Manchuria's economic resources into armaments and war (on which more than 90 percent of the budget was said to have been spent). The common people in Manchuria suffered greatly from his misrule, which destabilized Manchuria both politically and economically. Zhang, in turn, never truly trusted his Japanese advisers and patrons. Although he preferred them to the Russians, he, in fact, harbored much rancor against the Japanese, convinced that they were merely using him to further Japan's imperialist ambitions in Manchuria.[200] He did not go out of his way to trammel the people of Manchuria from boycotting Japanese goods or taking anti-Japanese political actions. Like other politicians in China and elsewhere, Zhang tried to play one foreign country (Japan) against another (the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, or France). Yet, Zhang was also careful and calculating because he well knew that his power depended on Japan's support.[201]

Zhang's tergiversation disappointed and sometimes enraged Japanese politicians and militarists. They openly spoke of Zhang's "ingratitude" and tried to find an alternative ruler to back. One of them was Zhang's right-hand man, Yang Yuting (楊宇霆, 1886–1929), who was known to be pro-Japanese (and in fact had graduated from the Imperial Japanese Army Academy). In January 1929, after Zhang's death, Zhang's son Zhang Xueliang had Yang killed for allegedly conspiring against China's unification (see p. 160 later in this chapter).

By 1928, Japanese military circles had reached a consensus that Zhang had to be dislodged: He stood in the way of Japan's imperialist ambitions in Manchuria,

[198] For a case of sabotage (an unsuccessful attempt to destroy a rail bridge), see Aleksei M. Buiakov, "Proval operatsii 'Sungariiskii most'," *Sluzhu Otechestvu* accessed 29 May 2018, http://old.sluzhuotechestvu.info/index.php/gazeta-sluzhu-otechestvu/2015/mart-2015/item/1461-proval-operatsii-sungarijskij-most.html. Buiakov states that it was the organizer of this failed sabotage, Naum Eitingon (see p. 117, footnote 179 in this chapter), who succeeded in assassinating Zhang in 1928.

[199] *VKP(b), Komintern i natsional'no-revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Kitae. Dokumenty*, t. 2, 1:168.

[200] A U.S. diplomat correctly noted Zhang's position toward Japan as early as 1921. See E. Carlton Baker, "Attitude of Chang Tso-lin toward the Japanese," 6 December 1921, box 56, file "China: Chang Tso-lin." Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

[201] Zhang's position is best explained in Saitō Ryōe, "Chō Sakurin no shi," *Aizu tanki daigaku gakuhō*, no. 5 (1955), 3, 9, 16, 33, 35–36, 38–39. Saitō knew Zhang personally and played mahjong with him.

the lifeline in Japan's battle for survival in a competitive world order. They cloaked their overweening ambitions with anti-Western, pan-Asian slogans such as "Asia for Asians," emphasizing Japan's unique interests in Manchuria against other powers, particularly the United States (which, more than any other Western power, had long sought economic opportunities there) and the Soviet Union (which had revolutionary ambitions there). There is no doubt that there was strong anti-Zhang sentiment among Japanese nationalist imperialists. But liberals such as Shidehara and Debuchi had also ditched Zhang, as noted earlier. Debuchi, according to Besedovskii, referred to Zhang as a "bandit to whom the higher interests of the state were alien."[202] As for Shidehara, he was determined to abandon Zhang to his own fate.[203] Debuchi even hinted (according to a forged Litvinov "memoir" that Besedovskii actually wrote) that he would not mind Zhang's elimination:

> The Japanese are not very fond of the Mukden Bandit. Debuchi suggested to our *chargé d'affaires* [Besedovskii himself] in Tokyo that he could facilitate an attempt on his life if we agreed to such a course. We declined, of course, but it showed the lines on which the Japanese were thinking.[204]

Tanaka, however, was more accommodating toward Zhang, at least initially. In the spring of 1927, with Tokyo's support, Zhang and Chiang Kai-shek may have tried to work out a united front against the Chinese Communists and their backer, the Comintern. Their emissaries were communicating in Tokyo at that time,[205] but these talks led nowhere. In October 1927, just before Kuhara's meeting with Stalin, Tokyo managed to work out with Zhang the construction of five railway lines in Manchuria. These lines would have dramatically enhanced Japan's control of Manchuria. Moreover, the president of the South Manchurian Railway Company, Yamamoto Jōtarō (山本条太郎, 1867–1936), proposed to Zhang a secret Japanese-Manchurian alliance whereby Japan and Manchuria would form not merely an economic but also a military alliance. If such an alliance were to be concluded, Yamamoto proposed, Japan would make Zhang emperor of Manchuria. Even though Zhang did not sign the deals, he agreed to them orally. Yamamoto was exceedingly pleased, intimating to his confidant that the alliance was "tantamount to having bought Manchuria."[206] Zhang, however, waited another six months before signing anything.

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[202] AVP, f. 08 op. 10, p. 39, d. 288, l. 51 (6 Feb 1927).

[203] Ibid., d. 289, l. 33 (16 June 1927).

[204] Maxim Litvinov [Besedovskii], *Notes for a Journal*, intr. by E.H. Carr, preface by General Walter Bedell Smith (New York, 1955), 126. In this forged Litvinov "memoir," the reference to "our *chargé d'affaires*" is actually a reference to Besedovskii himself, who had a close relationship with Debuchi, as discussed earlier.

[205] Tobe Ryōichi, *Nihon rikugun to Chūgoku: "Shina-tsū" ni miru yume to satetsu* (Tokyo, 1999), 101. See also Kolpakidi and Prokhorov, *KGB*, 195 (discussing a telegram Zhang sent to Chiang proposing an "anti-Red" united front).

[206] Yamamoto Jōtarō denki hensankai, *Yamamoto Jōtarō denki* (Tokyo, 1942), 577–80.

The consequence of these multi-faceted dealings was a string of baffling events. In April and May, 1928 Chiang's renewed Northern Expedition led, astoundingly, to a second deployment of Japanese military forces to Shandong, ostensibly to protect Japanese residents in north China. Japan's aggressive move offended the Chinese but pleased Zhang, who apparently believed that Japan would support him against Chiang. Tokyo, however, had no interest in supporting Zhang. Instead, Tanaka strenuously urged Zhang to retreat to Manchuria from Beijing (where he had been since December 1926), claiming that Zhang would not be able to cope with Chiang's forces. Simultaneously, Zhang hurried to discuss an additional deal with Yamamoto whereby Japan would buy out the CER from under Soviet control, turn it into a Manchu-Japanese joint company, and invest heavily in Manchuria in general.[207] Although this new deal would not have pleased Stalin, he also knew that Zhang's death would vitiate it. What was going on? Why would Japan dispatch forces to Shandong a second time, but not for the purpose of defending Zhang?

The Jinan Incident

Whatever secret dealings were going on, Tanaka's deployment of Japanese forces to Jinan, Shandong, in April and May 1928 was a fatal move with regard to Japan's presence in China. It was a reprise of what he had done the previous year, a deployment that by all accounts had dramatically exacerbated Chinese nationalism against Japan. Shidehara warned against the deployment, which he said was a Communist trap.[208] Moreover, the move seemed only to weaken Zhang, given that Tanaka was at the same time urging Zhang to retreat to Manchuria. Then, on 18 May 1928, Tanaka issued a warning to both Zhang and Chiang that the Japanese troops would threaten to disarm them if they tried to expand their battle to Manchuria.[209] Although Chiang had no intention to pursue Zhang's forces into Manchuria, some Chinese officials saw Tanaka's warning as tantamount to a declaration of Japanese protectorate status for Manchuria. And this time around, Japanese forces not only occupied the Shandong railway but were also involved in actual battles with Chiang's forces in Jinan. Although opinions differ as to who provoked whom, what *is* clear is that the Chinese deeply resented the presence of Japanese forces on Chinese soil. And although both sides suffered civilian casualties, there were far more overall Chinese casualties than Japanese casualties: a total of 3,500 Chinese deaths versus 14 or 15 Japanese deaths, according to a Japanese government report on the Jinan Incident.[210] Equally clear is that

[207] Ibid., 612–14.

[208] See Shigemitsu Mamoru, "Sainan jiken kaiketsu," *Chūgoku kenkyū geppō* 42, no. 10 (1988), 41.

[209] JACAR, B02031861600.

[210] Tazaki Suematsu, *Hyōden Tanaka Giichi*, 2:677. The Chinese estimate was slightly lower: 3,254 Chinese deaths. See Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *"Jiuyiba" shibian* (Beijing, 1988), 39.

among Chiang's Revolutionary Army were many Communists who engaged in Communist agitation and distributed anti-Japanese propaganda among the soldiers and civilians, with titles such as "The Main Points of the Anti-Japanese Movement" and "The Political Importance of Armed Uprisings" (issued by the Soviet Communist Party).[211] This Communist agitprop within Chiang's army is not a whit surprising. In fact, it aligns perfectly with the instructions in the CCP training manual on how to subvert the KMT from within (see p. 91). British diplomats suspected that "Russians" were involved in creating the Sino-Japanese confrontation.[212] Tanaka managed to repeat the same mistake he had made in 1927, inspiring more revolutionary fervor among the Chinese. What Stalin had said to Gotō about Japan's misguided China policy—and specifically, Stalin's analysis of how Japan's hasty use of force had turned China into an enemy (see p. 115 earlier in this chapter)—seemed to be playing out to a tee.

Initially, at least, the other imperialist powers were sympathetic toward Japan's move. An article in the *Trans-Pacific*, an American-owned English-language newspaper published in Tokyo, justified Tanaka's policy:

> Mistake or not, Baron Tanaka's policy was known and he had given the Nationalists full notice of it. They made their plans with that knowledge and carried them through successfully to the point when, with the prize actually in their hands, an action by their own troops—mutiny, plot, or irresistible love of loot—gambled with the fate of the whole campaign."[213]

Pointing out the conundrum for Tanaka, who had to make a difficult decision, an article in the *Trans Pacific* two weeks later suggested that Japan take a referendum of the people of Manchuria:

> If Japan could take a plebiscite of the people of Manchuria it is a good guess to say that they would vote for intervention which would save them from coming under the harrow of Chinese civil war. But the residents of Manchuria cannot be polled. Neither Nationalists nor Northerners have ever dreamed of such a proceeding. Japan must decide her own course. Whatever she does will carry risk and will very likely involve undesirable consequences because there is no choice except a choice of evils."[214]

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[211] Iboshi Hideru, "Shōwa shonen ni okeru Santō shuppei no mondaiten (4)," *Geirin* 29, no. 2 (1980): 16–20, 26; JACAR, C04021745100, about Chinese soldiers who were found to be carrying Communist propaganda literature.

[212] NA, FO 262/1698, 386, 562–63.

[213] "Propaganda and News," *Trans-Pacific*, 12 May 1928, 4. For a vivid description of looting, violence, and chaos as seen by a Japanese military officer who accompanied the Revolutionary Army, see Sasaki Tōichi, *Shina naisōsen jūgunki* (Toyohashi, Japan, 1931).

[214] "Keeping War out of Manchuria," *Trans Pacific*, 26 May 1928, 3.

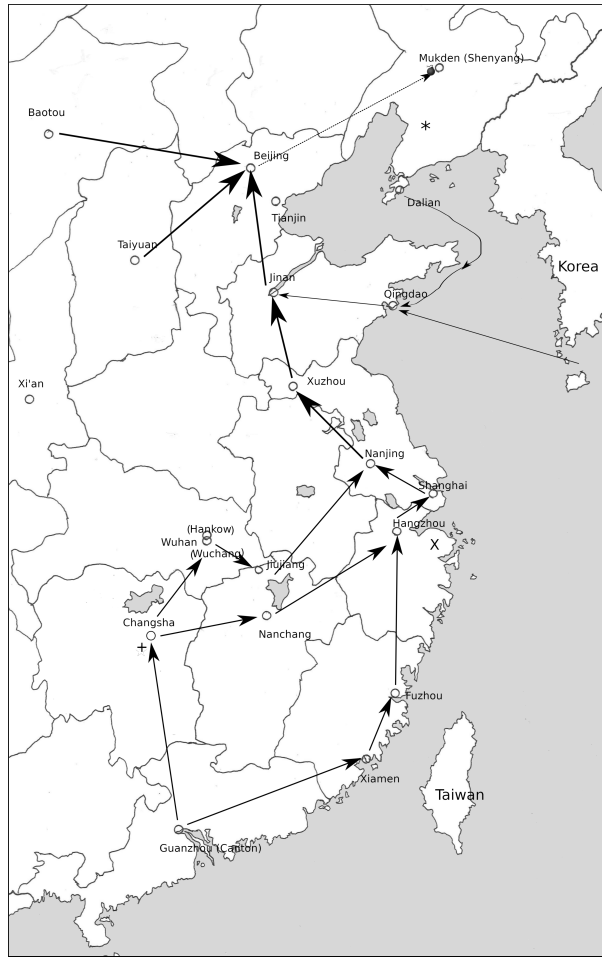

Figure 2.5. Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition (1926–28). During the first phase of expedition (1926–27), Chiang's forces reached Nanjing, and during the second phase (1928), they conquered Beijing. Japan sent military forces to Jinan, where they clashed with the Chinese. Zhang Zuolin retreated and was bombed just before reaching Mukden. In the map, the symbols *, x, and + denote the birthplaces of Zhang, Chiang, and Mao Zedong, respectively.

Japan was thus caught between Chinese nationalism and its commitments to Manchuria.

Unsurprisingly, Tanaka's deployment of forces to China pleased Stalin, who well knew that Shandong had symbolic significance for China because, as the impetus for the May Fourth Movement of 1919 (see p. 75), it was the cradle of Chinese nationalism. Shandong also had symbolic significance for Stalin, because the May Fourth Movement had greatly helped Moscow increase its

influence in China at the expense of Japan and the West. In 1928, Stalin must have cherished this play of history.

Significantly, it appears that on 20 December 1927, just nine days after Kuhara had left Moscow and before he had even returned to Tokyo, Tanaka had already made the decision to deploy Japanese troops to the Jinan area during the next phase of the Northern Expedition.[215] The timing could hardly have been a coincidence. If Stalin did not outright encourage Kuhara, at the very least, he appears to have approved the deployment with Kuhara beforehand. Given the timing and subject matter of the Kuhara-Stalin meeting, they almost certainly discussed it. Somehow, it fit into whatever plans Stalin and Kuhara agreed upon. Tanaka made his decision before Kuhara met Zhang in Beijing on December 24. Kuhara hid the meeting with Zhang from the Japanese diplomats in Beijing and asked his interpreter to keep it "strictly confidential."[216] The most likely explanation for this request for confidentiality is that Kuhara had asked Zhang to retreat. Concerned about Kuhara's secrecy, the interpreter reported it to his superiors at the Japanese embassy, who questioned Kuhara. Kuhara did not tell them about Zhang's retreat; instead, he mentioned setting up a neutral state from Manchuria, Mongolia, Siberia, and Korea. Kuhara told them that Zhang rejected his proposal and that he had therefore withdrawn it.[217] After Kuhara returned home, he contributed an essay to the diplomatic journal *Gaikō jihō*, explaining his trip. In this essay, he stated that he had stopped in Beijing simply because it was China's capital and for no other reason. He also asserted that Soviet power had been consolidated and would survive for the next fifty to sixty years "with no problem."[218] He did not mention his meetings with Stalin and Zhang. Clearly, he wanted to hide those meetings, at least for the time being. Given his manifest interest in Japanese diplomacy, it is suspicious that this essay was the only one he ever contributed to the journal. Something had compelled him to muddy the waters. After all, both he and Tanaka were given to a conspiratorial style of diplomacy.

When the deployment of Japanese forces actually took place in April-May 1928, Troianovskii, the Soviet ambassador to Japan, was so disturbed by Tanaka's move that he proposed to Moscow that it lodge a protest or at least express its displeasure with Tokyo. Remarkably, however, Stalin refused to do so, saying that he considered an official protest "inexpedient" (нецелесообразный). Directed by the Politburo not to take any action against Tokyo without consulting Moscow first, Troianovskii could not comprehend this Soviet inaction.[219] British diplomats also found that Moscow had adopted an oddly "hands-off" attitude.[220] Instead of issuing an official protest, the Politburo instructed the

[215] Tanaka Giichi denki kankō kai, *Tanaka giichi denki* (Tokyo, 1960), 2:862–66.

[216] Amō Eiji, *Amō Eiji nikki shiryō shū* (Tokyo, 1992), 5:1107–8.

[217] Ibid.

[218] Kuhara Fusanosuke, "Richi no Doitsu to jōnetsu no Roshia," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 558 (1 March 1928), 46–54.

[219] AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 308, d. 56425, l. 75 (17 May 1928).

Soviet press to criticize Japan's military actions.[221] The press denounced Japan's "imperialist occupation" of China, stressing that Japan supported Zhang against Chiang. In an apparent attempt to pit Washington against Japan, the newspaper *Pravda* declared: "Japan's war against the Southerners [Chiang's forces] is the expression of a silent and intense battle against America."[222] Likewise, the newspaper *Izvestiia* emphasized that Japan meant to reverse the results of the Washington Conference and retake Shandong, which it had given up earlier.[223]

The timing of Tanaka's decision, Kuhara's attempts to hide the meeting with Zhang, Stalin's unexpected complacency, and the details surrounding Tanaka's initiative overwhelmingly imply that Stalin was secretly supporting and encouraging Tanaka's military deployment, knowing that it would work against Japan. And unlike with Britain, Stalin could also effectively antagonize Washington against Japan. Moscow had attempted similar maneuvers a decade earlier, but Stalin's apparent influence over Tanaka (and Kuhara) enabled him to draw Japan into a far more dangerous situation. In fact, if not for outside influence, Tanaka's action would be difficult to explain, as Wang Zhengting (王正廷, 1882–1961, C.T. Wang), China's foreign minister, noted years later: "Why did the Japanese make another blunder by reoccupying the Shantung [Shandong] railway when they had returned it to China after the [*sic*] World War I has always been a *puzzle* [emphasis added] to me."[224]

In 1928, both Tanaka and Stalin appeared to be convinced that this time around, it would be impossible to prevent Chiang from unifying China (except for Manchuria).[225] Tanaka urged Zhang to leave Beijing and return to Mukden, arguing that unlike the previous year, he had little chance of prevailing against Chiang's now united and stronger forces. Zhang reluctantly accepted Tanaka's advice and left Beijing. After the skirmishes in Jinan with the Japanese forces, Chiang's army largely skirted Jinan and marched to Beijing, eventually achieving the so-called unification of China. There is no evidence that the Japanese forces sought to prevent Chiang's march on Beijing. Thus, Tanaka's deployment of Japanese troops in Shandong served no political purpose. These details serve only to further render Tanaka's action incomprehensible. Every decision seems to reflect a leader trying to balance his country's interests against those of its rival (the Soviet Union), and falling into the exact trap Stalin had foreseen with Gotō.

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[220] NA, FO 262/1698, 420.

[221] *VKP(b), Komintern i Iaponiia. 1917–1941* (Moscow, 2001), 44.

[222] "'Natsional'nye interesy' Iaponii, miroliubie evropeiskikh imperialistov i Liga Natsii," *Pravda*, 11 May 1928, 1.

[223] "Voina i zhenevskie mirotvortsy," *Izevstiia*, 11 May 1928, 1.

[224] Chengting Thomas Wang, *Ō Seitei kaikoroku: Looking Back and Looking Forward* (Tokyo, 2008), 129.

[225] Different accounts exist on whether Tanaka promised Chiang (when they met in Japan in November 1927—that is, before the Kuhara-Stalin meeting) that he would not block Chiang's Northern Expedition.

Tanaka was left with few options, yet he still seemed unwilling to jeopardize his relationship with Stalin. If Tanaka thought that his willingness to cooperate with Stalin was in the service of a joint approach between the two countries, Stalin had tricked him.

It is possible Tanaka toyed with the idea of disarming Zhang and occupying Manchuria militarily. Some political factions were urging Tanaka to do so and to make Manchuria independent of China proper.[226] Kōmoto Daisaku (who later confessed that he was the ringleader of Zhang's assassination) already had such plans in August 1927.[227] In 1932, Kuhara admitted that he had planned to disarm not only Zhang's army returning to Manchuria but also the rest of Manchuria: "Mukden and Jilin as well."[228] Curiously, at the time, certain circles within the Japanese government pressed for severing diplomatic ties with Moscow, as Britain had done a year earlier, "in order to break the political stalemate [政局の行詰まり]."[229] According to Hotta Masaaki (堀田正昭, 1883–1960), the head of the Euro-American Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was Tanaka who overruled them.[230] Of course, disarming Zhang's army was likely part of the Stalin-Kuhara/Tanaka agreement—and in fact, Tanaka had issued a warning to Zhang on 18 May 1928 (see p. 124). On the one hand, reneging on this threat would be a betrayal of his deal with Stalin; on the other hand, a military takeover of Manchuria would sink Japan in the sea of Chinese rage. Either was bad for Tanaka but perfectly fine for Stalin.

It was well-nigh certainly Stalin who demanded that Tanaka disarm Zhang's troops on their retreat back to Manchuria. As Tanaka knew, however, disarming them posed practical difficulties: Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchuria had at most only ten thousand soldiers, whereas Zhang's forces numbered three hundred thousand. For this reason, Zhang himself was not concerned about Japan's threat.[231] Stalin would have had a hard time believing that Zhang's proud soldiers would meekly surrender their arms to the Japanese. Yet, he may have reasoned that it would be fine if they did: Zhang, bereft of his military power, would no longer present much of a threat to the Soviet presence in Manchuria. If Zhang's forces resisted and clashed with the Japanese, however, that would be even better for Stalin, because it would only further inflame Chinese nationalism against Japan. Taking advantage of the resulting chaos, Moscow would be able to expand its influence in Manchuria greatly. Either way, Stalin would be able to exploit the situation to his political and military gain.

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[226] Their plan was to create disturbances in Manchuria and then advance Japanese troops into Manchuria on the pretext of quelling them. See Wada Kōsaku, *Rekishi no naka no teikoku Nihon* (Tokyo, 1991), 289.

[227] Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, and Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, eds., *Heben Dazuo*, 52.

[228] Kuhara Fusanosuke ni mono o kiku zadankai," *Bungei shunjū* 10, no. 4 (April 1932): 180.

[229] *Makino Nobuaki nikki* (Tokyo, 1991), 305 (1 May 1928).

[230] Discussed in AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 305, d. 54547, l. 90.

[231] Wang Shujun, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi* (Jinan, 2002), 1:217.

After Tanaka's May 18 declaration, the Kwantung Army prepared to send its forces to Shanhaiguan, the entry point to Manchuria from north China, to disarm the Zhang troops as they returned to Manchuria. Did Tanaka actually believe that such a decisive move would succeed? It seems unlikely. The May warning he had sent to Zhang and Chiang not to bring the war to Manchuria was probably a trial balloon that he had reluctantly floated, as directed by Stalin.

The trial balloon immediately popped. Machino Takema, Zhang's Japanese adviser, testified after World War II that he had gone from Beijing to Tokyo to dissuade Tanaka from carrying out the disarmament.[232] Debuchi, in turn, warned Tanaka that Washington might mobilize its forces against Japan, a threat that reportedly frightened Tanaka and the General Staff into countermanding the disarmament order.[233] Washington did inquire about Tokyo's true intentions in China. This query shocked the Tanaka cabinet into retreat, the full story of which, according to one Japanese account, cannot be told.[234] Caught between Stalin's demand for disarmament and Takema's advice against it—and alarmed by Washington's response—Tanaka chose to retreat. After May 18, the Kwantung Army impatiently waited for an official order to disarm Zhang's soldiers, who were returning to Manchuria en masse. To the army's frustration, no order came until a week later on May 25, when Tokyo officially canceled its disarmament plan. Kuhara exploded with anger when he heard the news, demanding to know what the point was of having Tanaka as prime minister. He was so angry that he grabbed a chair and almost struck Tanaka with it.[235]

Tanaka's decision may have been a huge disappointment to Stalin. Military action by the Kwantung Army would have made Tokyo the unquestionable violator of the terms of the Washington Conference (see Chapter 1, p. 61). Chinese nationalism would have risen to an even higher pitch. Stalin had clear plans in place to bring Soviet power to Manchuria and Inner Mongolia amid the probable chaos that Japan's military action would create. In this context, Zhang's subsequent murder appears to have been Stalin's contingency plan.

Stalin's hidden agenda in Manchuria and Mongolia

Stalin carefully prepared for the spreading of Soviet power to China's northeast. After Chiang's Shanghai coup in April 1927, Moscow shifted its CCP activity increasingly to Manchuria. From 1927 on, radical revolutionaries arrived in Manchuria disguised as refugees from the war-torn southern regions of China.

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[232] Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 36:54, 58.

[233] Kōmoto Daisaku, "Watashi ga Chō Sakurin o koroshita," *Bungei shunjū* 32, no. 18 (December 1954): 196; Sakuma Ryōzō, "Manshū jihen zenshi," BBK, bunko itaku 449, 62–64 (quoting Ishiwara Kanji).

[234] Yamaura Kan-ichi, *Mori Kaku* (Tokyo, 1940), 625.

[235] Okada Masukichi, " 'Kyokutō no fūunji' Kōmoto Daisaku," *Shūkan Yomiuri*, 13 (49) (November 1954): 20. Kuhara's own account is "Kuhara Fusanosuke ni mono o kiku zadankai," 179–80.

They conspired against Zhang under such slogans as "Down with Zhang Zuolin," "Down with the Mukden Warlord," and "Down with Imperialism." Moreover, according to Japanese sources, Feng Yuxiang, leader of the Guominjun, sent a military mission to Vladivostok that arrived in the Soviet port city on 28 April 1928. With Soviet support, he organized Korean Communist military units and connected them with Communists from Inner Mongolia to launch a joint strike against Zhang. Simultaneously, Moscow secretly sent Soviet-Chinese-Korean Communist military units to Manchuria to work with Feng's forces against Zhang. Tanaka was aware of these moves by Moscow.[236] Although further research is needed, there is little doubt about why Stalin made these moves in anticipation of Japan's disarming of Zhang's forces.

In Inner Mongolia, at least in those regions that Zhang controlled, Moscow prepared for insurrection. Sporadic and spontaneous anti-Zhang uprisings had occurred there earlier, but in 1928, the situation became more complex as a new group of people sought refuge in Inner Mongolia. The British consul wrote from Harbin:

> So oppressive has the Soviet regime become in Siberia itself that the Buriat population of Transbaikalia is migrating in large numbers to the region of Hulunbeir [Hulunbuir] in the north-west corner of the Province of Heilungchang [Heilongjiang]. More than a thousand families of about 10,000 souls have moved into Chinese territory to escape Bolshevik tyranny and taxation. They have been received by the Mongolian nomads. These Buriats are the descendants of former inhabitants of the Barga district [Xing'an/Hingan, the northeastern region of Inner Mongolia under Zhang's rule] who were forcibly abducted by the Russian authorities nearly a century ago to populate the barren steppes beyond the frontier and to serve as cavalry in the Siberian forces.[237]

There was a considerable pro-Japanese sentiment in Inner Mongolia in general, and Moscow found it difficult to channel the region's political mood away from Japan to the Soviet Union.[238] In addition, pan-Mongolian sentiment in Inner and Outer Mongolia, as well as Soviet Buriatiia, posed a potentially grave political risk to Moscow because it could cause Buriatiia to separate from the Soviet Union. Moscow's stance toward pan-Mongolism remained non-committal, leading many Mongolian revolutionaries to question Moscow's true intentions.[239]

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[236] See Iboshi, "Chō Sakurin," 3:37.

[237] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part II. Series E. Asia 1914–1939. Volume 34. China, January 1928–May 1928* (Bethesda, MD, 1994), 383.

[238] See RGASPI, f. 532, op. 4, d. 335, ll. 124–29.

[239] See for example the February 1928 discussion of Mongolians and Stepanov, a Comintern representative (see p. 165) in GKhTA, f. 2, sh. 580, no pag.

Nevertheless, in 1928, Inner Mongolian revolutionaries prepared for insurrection against Zhang and the Han Chinese control of Inner Mongolia in general. On 31 March 1928, the British consul in Harbin reported that

> thousands of leaflets denunciatory of Marshal Chang Tso-lin [Zhang Zuolin] and his policy are being distributed in the towns and villages of the interior. . . . Popular resentment against the marshal is said to be increasing in Northern Manchuria, and the Soviet agents are exerting themselves to stimulate and utilise it.[240]

In May 1928, the Japanese knew about the Soviet plan to "raise a revolution in Barga."[241] Kuhara, too, engaged in some unknown activity in Inner Mongolia to support the "Mongolian project" of Ataman Semenov,[242] who had begun working for Moscow by this time (see Introduction, p. 24). Zhang would be assassinated just a few weeks later. Moscow was almost certainly trying to take advantage of the resulting chaos to sovietize Inner Mongolia, just as some Japanese conspirators tried to exploit that chaos to capture Manchuria.

Under these circumstances, Tanaka began to sense some kind of trick on Stalin's part and became cautious. This realization, combined with Washington's warning noted earlier, forced Tanaka to decide against disarming Zhang. Therefore, Stalin apparently activated his contingency plan to murder Zhang and blame it on the Japanese.

According to a British report, when he left Beijing, Zhang had made "a short and extremely dignified statement apologising for the shortcomings of his administration whilst in Peking [Beijing]." He went on to say that he had no political ambitions inside the Great Wall and had "always been content to remain in Manchuria." He added, however, that "Bolshevik influence" in China "had been too strong and he had been compelled to come here [Beijing]." Zhang ended his statement with warnings against the "Red danger."[243]

Zhang's murder

On his way back to Mukden, early on the morning of 4 June 1928, Zhang's train was bombed in Huanggutun just outside Mukden at the intersection of the Beijing-Mukden line and the South Manchurian Railway. He died within hours. As he was dying, Zhang apparently believed that Japanese assassins had bombed his train, a belief apparently shared by his son Xueliang. The KMT immediately

[240] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 34:384.

[241] Reported by the British consul in Harbin, 7 June 1928, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part II. Series E. Asia 1914–1939. Volume 35. China, June 1928–December 1928* (Bethesda, MD, 1994), 177.

[242] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 34:383. Soviet intelligence reported some contact between Mongolian revolutionaries and a Japanese operative at the time. See *Mongoliia v dokumentakh iz arkhivov FSB Rossii (1922–1936 gg.)* (Moscow, 2019), 352–53.

[243] Telegram from Beijing, 1 June 1928, in NA, FO 262/1698, 581.

Figure 2.6. The damaged rail bridge after the bombing of Zhang Zuolin's train just outside Mukden. The caption says in Japanese: "4 June 1928, 5:30 a.m., conditions of destruction of the bridge base (east side)."

suspected a Japanese plot.[244] On June 12, the CCP issued Central Committee Announcement No. 52, in which it claimed the murder as a Japanese conspiracy and a step toward Japan's occupation of Manchuria.[245] Even a Japanese cabinet minister later recalled that at that time, "150 percent of the people" believed that the Japanese had murdered Zhang.[246]

The murder shocked Tanaka. According to an account given several years later to the Japanese court by Kuhara's confidant, Kubota Kinshirō (久保田金四郎, 1884–?), a Home Ministry official and prosecutor,

> "This is a pretty mess, KUBOTA" he [Kuhara] cried. Then I asked him to explain, he continued, "TANAKA is past mending. I warned him and he promised. Yet see what a mistake he has made. He has killed CHANG TSO-LIN [Zhang Zuolin]." When I asked him why CHANG's assassination was a mistake, he cried. "Japan is such a small country! For our safety, it is essential that Manchuria be made an unarmed free state just as Korea should have been. If Manchuria were a free country, there would be no more question of independence and we should be saved further trouble. I discussed the question with Prince SAIONJI [Saionji Kinmochi 西園寺公望, 1849–1940], who agreed with

[244] *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi. Xubian* (Taipei, 1981), 1:207–8.

[245] "Zhongyang tonggao di-wushi'er hao," *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji. Di-si ce (1928)* (Beijing, 1989), 258.

[246] Ogawa Heikichi bunsho kenkyūkai, *Ogawa Heikichi kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 1973), 626.

Figure 2.7. A rail car almost completely destroyed by the bombing of Zhang Zuolin's train. The caption says, in Japanese, "scene [of the bombing] as photographed from the northeastern side."

> my views. I talked it over with Prince KATSURA [? a mistake for Saionji?]. When Manchuria, Mongolia and Siberia have been set free, Japan will be safe. It has been my opinion that the TANAKA Cabinet could accomplish this, for CHANG TSO-LIN was returning to Manchuria defeated by Chiang Kai-shek's Central Army. If we could have caught and disarmed him at Shanghaikwan [Shanhaiguan], he could have been made to play ball. I talked to TANAKA and MORI KAKU [森恪, 1882–1932]. The Army was ready to send troops in case CHANG refused. But Tanaka, at the critical last moment, without consulting MORI or me, sent a wire indicating that CHANG should be allowed to pass through Shanghaikwan. So CHANG was murdered."
>
> I was amazed at what he told me. I have never repeated it to anyone because I am an insignificant official whom nobody would believe. Yet later when I came to know MORI during [the] HAMAGUCHI Cabinet [2 July 1929–14 April 1931], I told him the story and he confirmed that it was true.[247]

Kuhara suggested that Tanaka had Zhang murdered after having decided not to disarm him. Why would Tanaka kill Zhang after saving him? Kuhara's remark made little sense. It was a smokescreen. Interrogated after World War II, Kuhara did not blame Tanaka for Zhang's murder:

[247] Quoted in United States Army Forces, Pacific, and United States Far East Command, *The Brocade Banner; The Story of Japanese Nationalism* (Tokyo, 1946), 19–20.

> I believe TANAKA received a severe mental shock following the fatal bombing of Chang Tso-lin. The reason for it is that TANAKA had expected that Chang Tso-lin might be able to make Manchuria an independent country and was prepared to give him unsparing support. At the same time, TANAKA was in support of my suggestion to establish neutral zones between Japan, the Soviet Union and China but both ideas finally became impossible on account of the hatred felt toward the Japanese by Chiang Hsueh-liang [Zhang Xueliang], sone [son] and successor to Chang Tso-lin. From the very first, TANAKA believed it to be his mission to straighten up the Manchurian question but when things turned out this way, he must have felt that almost the whole of his life's ambitions was lost. Naturally his health was considerably broken down, so it appeared to me.[248]

In light of Kuhara's violent reaction to Tanaka's decision not to disarm Zhang Zuolin's forces (see p. 130), suspicions naturally arise that Kuhara then proceeded to coordinate Zhang's murder with Stalin and his assassins in waiting. If he actually did, it would be hardly surprising, given his dealings with Stalin and Zhang. It should be noted that later, after the CCP took over China, Kuhara engaged in a similar conspiracy with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai: In 1955, he visited Beijing and plotted with them to kidnap Chiang Kai-shek from Taipei to Beijing (see Chapter 5, p. 433). The plot failed, however. In any case, in an interview he gave in 1932, Kuhara cryptically stated that the secret of Zhang's murder lay in Tanaka's change of mind on May 25.[249]

Tanaka was shocked not only by Zhang's murder but also by the apparent involvement of Japanese military men. According to Okada Keisuke, the navy minister in the Tanaka cabinet, "When this news [that Zhang had been assassinated by the Japanese Army] reached TANAKA, he flew in[to] a rage saying it was a pity."[250]

Kōmoto Daisaku's conspiracy

Colonel Kōmoto, the self-acknowledged mastermind of the assassination scheme, left a detailed confession (which was published many years later in 1954).[251] He

[248] Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 18:248–49.

[249] "Kuhara Fusanosuke ni mono o kiku zadankai," 179.

[250] Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 37: 252.

[251] Kōmoto Daisaku, "Watashi ga Chō Sakurin o koroshita," 194–201. Kōmoto's confession was likely written by his brother-in-law, Hirano Reiji (平野零児, 1897–1961), who knew Kōmoto well and had been with him in a Chinese prison after World War II. Hirano was accused by Chinese authorities of having destroyed the evidence of Kōmoto's crime (photographs, autobiographical notes, essays) when Taiyuan was captured by the CCP. See Shanxisheng renmin jianchayuan, *Zhenxun Riben zhanfan jishi (Taiyuan) (1952-1956)* (Beijing, 1995), 420–21. For two interviews with Kōmoto in 1942 and 1945, see Mori Katsumi, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi* (Tokyo, 1976), 262–76; Netsu Shirō, *Shōwa tennō wa shiranakatta* (Tokyo, 1991), 21–114.

also went out of his way to leave documentary evidence, including personal letters written in April 1928, of his desire to get rid of Zhang, claiming that he had easily found accomplices who shared his sentiments about the Manchurian warlord.[252] Kōmoto went so far as to state that the top commander of the Kwantung Army, Lieutenant General Muraoka Chōtarō (村岡長太郎, 1871–1930), was among them.[253] One of Kōmoto's accomplices, Kawagoe Moriji (川越守二, 1895–1976), claimed that in January and February 1928, the Kōmoto gang deliberately bombed three CER bridges to see how the world would react. The foreign press speculated on the culprit, but few suspected the Kwantung Army or the Japanese. According to Kawagoe, this reaction supposedly convinced Kōmoto that even if he murdered Zhang, suspicions would not fall on the Japanese.[254] In other words, according to Kawagoe, Kōmoto had been scheming to assassinate Zhang several months *before* Tanaka changed his mind about disarming Zhang in May 1928. But the belief of the Kōmoto clique that no one would suspect the Kwantung Army or the Japanese even if Zhang was assassinated was no mere absurd miscalculation. (It would have been ridiculous for the gang to have compared minor sabotage activity against the CER, a Sino-Soviet joint enterprise, with the murder of the Manchurian warlord.) In other words, the Kōmoto group made deliberate attempts to pull the wool over the eyes of observers by offering an explanation of their guilt. Why else would the Kōmoto gang go out of their way to leave behind evidence of their murderous act? At the crime scene itself, the Kōmoto gang left evidence of their guilt that they knew would be uncovered—a detonating chord attached to the rail intersection where Zhang was bombed.

All this artifice suggests that Kōmoto was trying to cover something up. It is telling that when he underwent an appendicitis operation soon after Zhang's murder, he refused anesthesia (and was instead held down by his friends) out of fear that he might disclose something while in a medically-induced stupor.[255]

Meanwhile, deeply disturbed by Zhang's murder, Tanaka ordered an investigation into the bombing—but it and other investigations (including one conducted by Chinese authorities) did not reach a clear conclusion. No consensus emerged even on such basic matters as the kind of explosives used (yellow or black) or where they were placed (next to the train track, inside the train, on the

[252] Sagara Shunsuke, *Akai yūhi no Masunogahara ni: kisai Kōmoto Daisaku no shōgai* (Tokyo, 1996), 263–67; Mitani Taichirō, "Jūgonen sensō ka no Nihonguntai: 'tōsuiken' no kaitai katei," *Seikei hōgaku*, no. 53 (2001): 46–51.

[253] Kōmoto, "Watashi ga Chō Sakurin o koroshita." For a discussion by Kōmoto's granddaughter, see Kuwata Fumiko, *"Chō Sakurin o koroshita otoko" no jitsuzō* (Tokyo, 2019), 115–27.

[254] Kawagoe Moriji, "Watashi ga Chō Sakurin bakusatsu jiken no geshunin datta," *Maru* 18, no. 5 (1965): 52–57.

[255] Hirano Reiji, *Manshū no inbō sha: Kōmoto Daisaku no unmei teki na ashiato* (Tokyo, 1961), 90. See also the accounts of Kōmoto's daughters: "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu to Kōmoto Daisaku," in *Nijū seiki donna jidai dattanoka. Sensō hen. Nihon no sensō* (Tokyo, 1999), 388–89; "Intavyū: Kōmoto Kiyoko san," *This Is Yomiuri*, November 1997, 68.

bridge piers, or at all these locations).[256] What did emerge, however, was that Zhang's train, which consisted of some twenty railcars, was for some unknown reasons running sluggishly when it reached the railway bridge point where it was struck by the explosives. A careful examination of forensic evidence led Japanese investigators to conclude that a bomb had likely been placed in the train as well—and that the train slowed down so that the explosion of the bomb on board would set off the larger bombs in the bridge piers, causing a devastating explosion.[257] Absent Chinese accomplices on board slowing down Zhang's train, determined the Japanese, such a precise explosion would simply have been impossible.[258] A report based on investigations by a Japanese opposition party concluded that Zhang had been killed by a bomb placed inside his railcar—and without evidence, accused Tanaka of complicity.[259]

The Chinese side could not accept what appeared to be self-serving conclusions by the Japanese, whom it blamed for the bombing.[260] The British investigations, however, supported the presence of a bomb or bombs in Zhang's railcar itself, speculating that "a Communist posing as a railway porter" could have easily done the trick.[261] Thus, British diplomats in China considered China "unjust" in assuming that Japan was guilty.[262] Without ruling out Japan's involvement in the murder, they also regarded "Russians" (Soviets) as suspect. In fact, they reported that at about the time of the murder, "two Russian agents known to have been with [Mikhail] Borodin in Hankow were seen by a Dutch member of the Chinese Maritime Customs in Mukden."[263] One of these Russians may well have been Naum Eitingon, whom Russians credit with Zhang's assassination (see p. 117). The British embassy in Tokyo did not see what Japan could have gained from Zhang's murder:

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[256]On China's investigation, see Liaoningsheng dang'anguang, *Huanggutun shijian dang'an huibian* (Beijing, 2020), 1:144–66.

[257]Zhou Dawen (周大文, 1895–1971), who later became the mayor of Beijing, was on the same train as Zhang. Zhou heard one explosion followed quickly by a larger explosion. See Zhou, "Zhang Zuolin Huanggutun beizha shijian qinli ji," *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* (Beijing), no. 5 (1960): 130. Zhou's account of these two explosions matches Kōmoto's statement that his team first detonated a "spare bomb" and then another one that killed Zhang. See Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 269.

[258]JACAR, B02031915000, B02031915100; Inaba Masao, "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu jiken" in Sanbō Honbu, *Shōwa sannen Shinajihen shuppei shi* (Tokyo, 1971), 65–67, 73–75; and "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu, hokubatsu kankei denpō," Araki Sadao Documents, no. 386, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo. More generally, see Katō Yasuo, *Nazo toki*, which is one of the most detailed examinations of Zhang's murder.

[259]"Manshū bō jūdai jiken no shinsō," Kamei Kan-ichirō Documents, no. 318, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo; Kamei's testimony after World War II in Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 50:7.

[260]China's views are detailed in Gong Debo, *Ribenren mousha Zhang Zuolin an* (Shanghai, 1929).

[261]NA, FO, 317/13170, 225–27.

[262]Ibid., FO 371/13171, 121.

[263]Ibid., FO 262/1698, 729–30, a report by the British consulate in Dalian, 13 June 1928.

> If there were Japanese responsible [for the murder] it is not yet apparent how Chang Tso-lin's death has benefited their country. . . . Manchuria is on the threshold of serious disorder. This state of things affords an excellent opportunity for Soviet Russia to extend her rises to power and lends help to Russia in the Bolshevisation of Manchuria, Japan's position there will be gravely menaced.[264]

British journalist and longtime China resident Bertram Lenox Simpson, who wrote under the pen name B.L. Putnam Weale and had campaigned against the prolongation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in the early 1920s (see Chapter 1, p. 60), disagreed and pointed to the Japanese as the culprits. In doing so, however, he also revealed a "curious thing," as he put it: The Ford motorcar that took the wounded Zhang from the train soon after it was bombed was waiting 300 yards from the scene of the wreckage.[265] Lenox Simpson did not seem to have known that this car belonged to Zhang's men and not the Japanese.

Meanwhile, the Soviet government newspaper *Izvestiia* almost immediately implied that Japan was the suspect, reminding readers of its history of aggression against China.[266] Although John Van Antwerp MacMurray (1881–1960), the U.S. ambassador to China, seemed unclear about Japan's guilt, from the beginning, American diplomats in China were inclined to suspect Japan.[267] Cecil Dormer (1883–1979), a British diplomat in Tokyo, deplored America's hostility toward Japan: "Altogether there is a fear of America joining hands with the new influence in Peking [Feng Yuxiang, the Guominjun leader backed by the Soviet Union] against Japan."[268]

Although Kōmoto and his gang did not openly incriminate themselves at the time, much of the world (China, the United States, and the Soviet Union in particular) implicated Japanese conspirators in Zhang's assassination. The day after the murder, rumors had already circulated in Manchuria that Kōmoto was its chief conspirator.[269] Within a few months, the Japanese investigators came to the conclusion that Kōmoto and his gang were responsible for the murder.[270]

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[264] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 35:112–13.

[265] Gong, *Ribenren mousha Zhang Zuolin an*, 36. Weale was a sensationalist. Until Zhang's murder, he had been emphasizing the Soviet Union's danger to China, claiming that "Soviet Russia has her claws in a vulnerable spot, Manchuria. Those claws should be cut out without the slightest compunction so that every possible aid to unrest be removed." On Guo's rebellion against Zhang in 1925 (see p. 98), he wrote: "Every string in this affair was controlled by Soviet Russia; every idea regarding it emanated from Moscow." B.L. Putnam Weale, *Chang Tso-Lin's Struggle against the Communist Menace* (Shanghai, 1927), 151, 152.

[266] "Mukdentsy ostavili Pekin," *Izvestiia*, 6 June 1928, 1.

[267] John V.A. MacMurray, *How the Peace Was Lost: The 1935 Memorandum "Developments Affecting American Policy in the Far East,"* ed. Arthur Waldron (Stanford, CA, 1992), 124.

[268] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 35:113.

[269] Saitō, "Chō Sakurin no shi," 16.

[270] Usui Katsumi, "Chō Sakurin bakushi no shinsō," *Bessatsu chisei 5: himerareta Shōwashi*, December 1956, 38.

Figure 2.8. Naum I. Eitingon, now suspected as the organizer of Zhang Zuolin's assassination in 1928

Stalin's covert operation

It is noteworthy that suspicions against the Soviets (as opposed to the Japanese) emerged in China very soon after Zhang's murder. The Soviet press vigorously denounced these suspicions as Japanese disinformation.[271] On 14 June 1928, the Soviet state news agency TASS issued a special communiqué rebutting such reports.[272] Yet, a Russian book that re-published this communiqué in 2007 observed that Soviet disinformation intended to blame the Japanese for the crime, and in his preface to this book, G.N. Sevast'ianov, a Russian historian, stated that the Soviet secret service was, in fact, involved in Zhang's assassination.[273] According to Soviet sources, there were so many disguised Soviet agents among the Russian émigrés and the Chinese that it was easy for Moscow to carry out subversive operations in Manchuria and impute them to the Japanese.[274]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Pavel Sudoplatov (1907–96), a former Soviet spymaster who later wrote an engrossing memoir *Special Tasks*,[275] initiated a renewed discussion of Soviet involvement in Zhang's murder. Sudoplatov privately told several interlocutors about the 1928 feat of Soviet intelligence in China.[276] Sudoplatov was sometimes given to self-aggrandizement, and his utterances, like those of many others, cannot be taken at face value. On the basis of Sudoplatov's "confession," Dmitrii Volkogonov hinted in his 1992 book that Naum I. Eitingon, the Soviet special agent in China, was responsible for

[271] See for example "Mukdentsy ostavili Pekin," and "Pokushenie na Chzhan Tszo-lina," *Pravda*, 6 June 1928, 1, 2.

[272] See *Moskva–Tokio* (kn. 2), 251–52.

[273] Ibid., 6.

[274] Kolpakidi and Prokhorov, *KGB*, 197.

[275] See Pavel Sudoplatov and Anatoli Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness. A Soviet Spymaster* (Boston, 1994).

[276] Aleksandr I. Kolpakidi, personal interview with author in Moscow, 28 May 2018.

Zhang's murder.[277] Sudoplatov's revelation has led to further research, in the process of which it has become known that at least one Soviet agent was in Zhang's military headquarters.[278] We can assume that this agent aided in his assassination. Russian scholars have come to a broad consensus that Sudoplatov was correct in identifying Eitingon—and that his guilt was not a tall tale invented by the Soviet secret police.[279] By contrast, in China, there has been remarkably little interest in reexamining the murder case, and this new Russian account has been dismissed as historical fiction.[280] The most recent publication from the Chinese archives sheds no new light on this matter.[281]

Russian historians have identified two other operatives in the Kremlin-ordered operation against Zhang: Khristofor I. Salnyn' (Grishka, 1885–1939) and Ivan Ts. Vinarov (1896–1969).[282] Many years after the event, Vinarov stated that he "happened" to have been on a train heading in the opposite direction at the time of Zhang's assassination and therefore was able to photograph the scene of the bombing soon afterward. Since no such train was running at that moment, clearly, Vinarov must have been waiting nearby or riding in one of the railcars of the same train that carried Zhang. His memoir published in his homeland of Bulgaria contains one such photograph.[283] Apparently, Vinarov was tasked with photographing the wreckage of the bombing.[284]

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[277] Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Trotskii: politicheskii portret* (Moscow, 1992), 2:309.

[278] Lota, *Za gran'iu vozmozhnogo*, 119; Evgenii Gorbunov, *Stalin i GRU* (Moscow, 2010), 116.

[279] For another example of acceptance by a respected historian, see V.P. Safronov, "Voenno-politicheskie kombinatsii sovetskogo gosudarstva na Dal'nem Vostoke," in *Ot Versal'nogo mirnogo dogovora do kapituliatsii Iaponii v 1945 g. Logika mezhdunarodnogo razvitiia. Biulleten'* no. 4 (2012): 61; Safronov, *Voina na Tikhom okeane* (Moscow, 2007), 12. See also Usov, "Piat' dokumentov 1925 g. sovetskoi razvedki v Kitae," 129, in which he describes Eitingon as "the organizer of the killings of Zhang Zuolin and L.D. Trotskii."

[280] See for example Guo Junsheng, ed., *Zhang Zuolin yu Riben guanxi* (Shenyang, 2008), 168–74 (essay by Xu Che [徐彻]). The works of Tuo and Sun Guodo are exceptions. See discussion on p. 117 in this chapter.

[281] Liaoningsheng dang'anguang, *Huanggutun shijian dang'an huibian*. This two-volume work was published by a government order as part of a series of publications of archival documents on China's anti-Japanese resistance movement from the 1920s to the 1940s.

[282] Linder and Churkin, *Krasnaia pautina*, 368; Aleksandr Kolpakidi and Dmitrii Prokhorov, *Imperiia GRU. Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi voennoi razvedki*, (Moscow, 1999), 1:182–83; Molodiakov, *Goto Simpei*, 196; "Khristofor Salnyn': glavnyi diversant Pazvedupra," accessed 11 March 2019, https://www.e-reading.club/chapter.php/29995/9/Kochik_-_Razvedchiki_i_rezidenty_GRU.html. I received access to Salnyn's file (f. R-23317) in the Soviet secret police archive in Moscow. Much of the file was sealed, however, and there were signs that some portions of the unsealed part of the file had been removed. I could not find any information in the unsealed section of Salnyn's file on his part in the murder.

[283] See Ivan Vinarov, *Boitsi na tikhiia front: spomeni na razuznavacha* (Sofia, 1969), verso facing p. 337.

[284] In addition to Salnyn' and Vinarov, two German Communists, Wilhelm Zaisser (1893–1958) and Richard Stahlmann (Artur Illnen) (1891–1974) were working in Manchuria as secret agents of the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) and the Comintern. Exactly what they were engaged in is unknown. After World War II, Zaisser became East Germany's first minister of the Stasi (state security), and Stahlmann became a leader in East Germany's foreign intelligence service. See Usov,

Moscow's involvement in Zhang's murder can be inferred from the odd absence of any substantive discussion of the murder in the archival documents available to researchers. There is no record that the Politburo in Moscow ever discussed this event, which was certain to have dramatically changed the political dynamic of the Far East. On 31 May 1928, a few days before the murder, the Zhang situation may have possibly come up, but the "special files" of the Politburo does not reveal the subject of that discussion.[285] No documents of any substance can be found in the extensive publication of Soviet documents on China in the Moscow archives of the Soviet Communist Party, the Comintern, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[286] Nor is there any substantive discussion of the murder in the accessible files in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which houses the extensive correspondence of Soviet diplomats on every kind of subject except the Zhang murder. This omission is more than coincidental. Such a momentous event—the murder of, to quote Stalin, "the most dangerous weapon in the hands of imperialists against an independent and free China"—would not have been left undiscussed. Clearly, Zhang's assassination was no surprise to Moscow. The only conclusion we can draw is that relevant documents have not only been withheld from the public but have also been removed from the archives themselves. Moreover, Moscow's correspondence with Soviet military intelligence (the GRU) in China for all of 1928 cannot be found in the GRU archive in Moscow.[287]

Other odd matters are relevant in this regard. For example, almost a year *before* the murder, rumors began circulating in Manchuria about Japan's schemes against Zhang,[288] disinformation that was typical of Soviet preparatory operations. Moreover, as discussed earlier, the day after the murder, rumors had already circulated in Manchuria that Kōmoto was responsible. And just a few days before Zhang's murder, Matsuoka Yōsuke, vice president of the South Manchurian Railway Company at the time, remarked to a British diplomat in Dairen: "Our friends in the North [i.e., the Soviets] have been very quiet lately."[289] Apparently, the Soviets were intent on keeping a low profile before the big event.

The mystery of Kōmoto Daisaku

All this circumstantial evidence suggests that Moscow was directly involved in the Zhang murder.[290] Why, then, did Kōmoto deliberately leave incriminating

Sovetskaia razvedka v Kitae, 161, 191.

[285] RGASPI, f. 177, op. 166, d. 258, ll. 5–8, which were marked "to be held in secret" (на секретном хранении).

[286] See *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. III. VKP(b), Komintern i sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitae, 1927–1931. Chast'. 1* (Moscow, 1999).

[287] Aleksandr I. Kolpakidi, personal interview with author in Moscow, 28 May 2018.

[288] Saitō, "Chō Sakurin no shi," 2, 31.

[289] Consul Dening to London, 5 June 1928, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 35:156–57. Matsuoka made this remark "a few days ago."

[290] Note a somewhat similar incident. Gareth Jones (1905–35), a British journalist who exposed the 1932–33 famine in Ukraine, was murdered in 1935 in Japanese-occupied Manchuria. It was long

evidence and eventually confess to Zhang's murder? Self-incrimination should be accepted with caution. There is little doubt that Kōmoto wanted Zhang dead. According to Ozaki Yoshiharu (尾崎義晴, 1890–1973), Kōmoto had ordered him to storm Zhang's train car with his team and take Zhang down by sword if he was not killed by the bombing.[291] There are two possibilities: The first is that Kōmoto may have been a Soviet agent. If so, he had probably been blackmailed by Moscow for some sexual or financial indiscretion, a common Soviet practice. Kōmoto is said to have always been in need of money. The second is that Kōmoto collaborated with the Soviets for tactical reasons, because he believed that eliminating Zhang was necessary for the interests of the Japanese Empire, a belief likely exploited by Stalin, who also wanted Zhang dead.

Neither possibility seems to have been raised by scholars in Russia or Japan. Although it appears difficult to square Kōmoto's nationalist views with Communism, he did share a common goal (totalitarian control of government and the economy) and common enemies (the liberal world order and Western imperialism). Kōmoto was ideologically influenced by the pro-Soviet, anti-Western, pan-Asianist nationalist Ōkawa Shūmei (see Introduction, p. 14), who favored Soviet-Japanese cooperation and was fiercely critical of Zhang. In 1926, Ōkawa and Kōmoto met and shared political views in Dalian, China. The two men became close.[292] It is no surprise that Kōmoto would have found common political ground with Soviet intelligence. In fact, after Guo Songling's rebellion against Zhang failed, Moscow sounded out Tokyo about replacing Zhang with someone else: his son Xueliang; his right-hand man Yang Yuting; or one of his top generals, Zhang Zuoxiang (張作相, 1881–1949). Tokyo resisted, but, according to Besedovskii, Moscow's idea found much sympathy in Japan's "influential circles," including the Army General Staff.[293] It would not be at all surprising, then, if Kōmoto and others had collaborated with the Soviets to assassinate Zhang Zuolin.

Collaboration aside, we cannot completely exclude the possibility that Kōmoto was connected to the Communists in some way. His nephew was a Communist.[294] More importantly, Kōmoto knew a key member of the underground JCP: his son's childhood friend Okada Bunkichi (岡田文吉, 1901–66). When Japan was defeated in 1945 in World War II and Okada released from prison, the CCP invited him to its headquarters in Yan'an, China. Kōmoto was then working as an industrial manager in Shanxi, a city closer to the Communist camp city of Yan'an than to Beijing. Thanks to Kōmoto's protection, Okada was able

assumed that he was killed by the Japanese, but now it appears that the Soviets were responsible. See "Gareth Jones' Murder and the Strong Circumstantial Evidence of the Involvement of the Soviet Secret Police (OGPU/NKVD)," accessed 22 December 2011, https://www.garethjones.org/soviet_articles/purpiss_nkvd.htm.

[291] Ozaki Yoshiharu, *Rikugun o ugokashita hitobito* (Odawara, Japan, 1960), 108–109.

[292] Sagara, *Akai yūhi no Masunogahara ni*, 109–16; Hirano, *Manshū no inbō sha*, 116–19.

[293] Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru*, 170–71.

[294] Kimura Takeo, *Kōmoto Daisaku* (Tokyo, 1958), 119.

to reach Yan'an. Later, when Okada was dispatched back to Japan with secret assignments, Kōmoto again seems to have seen to his safety.[295] Dmitrii Prokhorov, a Russian historian who has written about Zhang's murder, stated in 2010 that Salnyn' and other Soviet agents had penetrated Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchuria and worked energetically within the army to spread Communism.[296] According to one report, in 1925, the CCP counted 50 of its members in the Kwantung Army and Japanese police in Mukden and 320 in Dalian-Lüshun.[297] In Manchuria and north China, the Soviet secret police supervised more than five hundred members who held "leading and controlling" positions in the CER and other Soviet institutions.[298] Thus, it is certainly conceivable that Kōmoto worked for or with Soviet operatives. Just before Zhang's murder, many Chinese people were observed sneaking in and out of Kōmoto's living quarters.[299]

Given the mounting evidence of Moscow's responsibility for Zhang's murder—evidence that Russian scholars have already drawn upon with confidence—plus Kōmoto's self-incrimination, the most convincing conclusion is that Kōmoto was, in fact, an agent of Moscow—or at least its willing collaborator.[300]

Karl Haushofer, who knew Kōmoto when he lived in Japan, listed him among his "favorite colleagues," calling him a "gracious, gallant, and militarily competent person."[301] Sogō Shinji (十河信二, 1884–1991), a rail specialist who had studied in the United States and later became very close to Kōmoto during the 1930s in Manchuria (i.e., after Zhang's murder), praised him as an "excellent

[295] Kawaguchi Tada-atsu, *Nikkyō hiroku: Chūkyō kokuhin no shuki* (Tokyo, 1953), 41–44.

[296] See "Tokubetsu taidan," APA Group, http://megalodon.jp/2010-0107-2038-44/www.apa.co.jp/appletown/pdf/taidan/0912taidan.html.

[297] *Gendaishi shiryō (33). Mantetsu (3)*, 563.

[298] Petr Balakshin, *Final v Kitae: vozniknovenie, razvitie i ischeznovenie Beloi Emigratsii na Dal'nem Vostoke* (San Francisco, 1958), 1:144.

[299] Hirano, *Manshū no inbō sha*. 108. See also "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu to Kōmoto Daisaku," 393.

[300] Similar to Kōmoto in this respect is Amakasu Masahiko (甘粕正彦, 1891–1945). A military policeman, he took personal responsibility for the 1923 murder of Ōsugi Sakae, an anarchist socialist; his romantic partner, the feminist anarchist Itō Noe (伊藤野枝, 1895–1923); and his six-year-old nephew. Yet, Amakasu did not seem to have killed them. He subsequently engaged in extensive intelligence and conspiratorial work in Manchuria and is regarded as the epitome of the radical Japanese right. However, Amakasu had little actual association with rightist circles (although he, like Kōmoto, was close to Ōkawa Shūmei, the pro-Soviet nationalist), protected many Communists and socialists (some disguised as "converts"), and married a woman from a family of Communists. After World War II, his daughter studied in Moscow, became a specialist of Russian literature, and worked for a Soviet-Japanese friendship society. Amakasu is one of the most puzzling and mysterious figures in modern Japan, someone whose life may, in fact, have been an elaborate masquerade of political deception and intrigue. On Amakasu, see Mutō Tomio, *Amakasu Masahiko no shōgai: Manshūkoku no danmen* (Tokyo, 1967), 38–39, 125, 188, 304; Tsunoda Fusako, *Amakasu tai'i* (Tokyo, 1975), 115–16, 237–39; Sano Shin-ichi, *Amakasu Masahiko: ranshin no kōya* (Tokyo, 2008), 163–64, 175–76, 305, 433–36, 438–39.

[301] Christian W. Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan. Die Rezeption seiner geopolitischen Theorien in der deutschen und japanischen Politik* (Munich, 2013), 111. For further discussion of Kōmoto and others, see 139, 141, 951.

soldier."[302] Yet, Kōmoto was also deeply involved in conspiratorial activities.[303] He had taken part in both the Russo-Japanese War and Japan's Siberian expedition during the Russian Civil War, and thereafter, he had long been engaged in intelligence work. Kōmoto was extremely interested in Russia, studied its military history intensely, and even had "Russian friends."[304] He was close to those Japanese militarists who looked to the Soviet Union for inspiration in world politics and military strategy, although they were ideologically opposed to Communism: for example, Ishiwara Kanji (石原莞爾, 1889–1949) and Nagata Tetsuzan (永田鉄山, 1884–1935). A close friend of Kōmoto's, Noda Ranzō (野田蘭蔵), was inspired by Marxism and even attempted an "uprising" for the "self-rule of the people" in Manchuria under Japanese occupation in the 1930s.[305] Two years after Zhang's murder, Noda asked Kōmoto about it. Kōmoto replied that he had taken responsibility for the murder, adding suggestively that "otherwise a lot [of people] would have been implicated" (否则牵连过多).[306]

When World War II ended, Kōmoto did not leave China, even though as Zhang's assassin, he would presumably have been wanted by the Chinese. The KMT government did, in fact, attempt to interrogate him.[307] However, Shanxi's warlord, Yan Xishan, provided him cover under a Chinese name (Huang Zhaofeng, 黄兆丰), and Kōmoto was not arrested.[308] As a result, Kōmoto was not tried at the IMTFE. When the CCP overran Shanxi in 1949, he did not attempt to flee. Kōmoto was arrested and later taken to Beijing, where he was interrogated. Before he left Shanxi, he said to his brother-in-law, Hirano Reiji (who was also imprisoned there): "If I speak with them, they'll understand me." Kōmoto claimed under investigation that he had initially been against killing Zhang but that the Kwantung Army commanders decided to murder him—and that he later took sole responsibility for the murder because he wanted to save them. Kōmoto emphasized to his Chinese interrogators that he had taken part in the assassination not of his own accord but to follow the orders of his Kwantung Army commanders.[309]

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[302] *Sogō Shinji danwa. Dai nikai sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1968), 62.

[303] "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu to Kōmoto Daisaku," 395.

[304] Kōmoto's granddaughter, quoted in Katō, *Nazo toki*, 114. On his study of the Soviet Union, see his records of interrogation by Chinese Communists in 1952: Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilin sheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo*, 13. Kōmoto also helped write the massive history of Japan's Siberian expedition that was issued in 1924 as a secret report: Sanbō Honbu, *Taishō shichinen naishi jūichinen Shiberi shuppei shi*, 4 vols. (Tokyo, 1924).

[305] Yamaguchi Jūji, *Kieta teikoku Manshū* (Tokyo, 1967), 127.

[306] Kōmoto Daisaku, quoted in Zhou, "Zhang Zuolin Huanggutun beizha shijian qinli ji," 134.

[307] See the instructions to interrogate him in Academia Historica, Taipei, https://ahonline.drnh.gov.tw/, doc. no.: 002-020400-00052-118.

[308] Jia Yuqin, *Yige laopai de qinhua tewu fenzi: Heben Dazuo wushinian zui'e xiaoshi* (Changchun, 1996), 110. Jia was involved in the publication of Kōmoto's interrogation records in Beijing in 1988 and 1995 and seems familiar with some unpublished information.

[309] Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo*, 33, 37; *"Jiuyiba" shibian*, 47, 49. After Japan's surrender in 1945, Kōmoto also

Of course, we should not assume that this "confession" is genuine. A retrospective account given by one of Kōmoto's Chinese interrogators, Ye Jilong (叶季龙), differs in critical respects from the published records. Kōmoto's interrogation was strictly controlled and held in secrecy by the CCP government. Even Ye's wife did not know what his job was. According to Ye, Kōmoto acknowledged his guilt and begged for forgiveness.[310] Moreover, China had every reason to present the murder as having been planned by the highest commanders of the Kwantung Army. At any rate, the Communist government in China kept Kōmoto in prison without charging him. Nor did it pursue the case of Zhang's murder particularly vigorously. In fact, the CCP treated Kōmoto with benignity. To atone for his "sin," he offered to dedicate his life to Communist China—for example, by taking part in the "liberation of Taiwan." He even told the triumphant CCP that it was myopic and against the teaching of Marx and Lenin to envision revolution only in China, whose People's Liberation Army had the "sacred mission of liberating mankind the world over."[311] According to Hirano Reiji, in prison, he enjoyed the nightly "study hour," when the prisoners studied Marxism-Leninism.[312] His children later testified that he had been in love with China and the Chinese.[313] Kōmoto was never released from Chinese captivity and died of cancer in Shanxi prison in 1953 or 1955.[314]

To complicate the matter, when Kōmoto was detained in Shanxi, he was also interrogated by a Japanese disciple of Ishiwara Kanji (see p. 144 in this chapter). In April 1945, Ishiwara instructed his follower Ishihara Takeshi (石原武) to stay in China and study the China scene because it was likely that the CCP would take power in China within a few years. Ishihara fought alongside the CCP on the way to Shanxi, where, in 1949, he encountered Kōmoto among the detained Japanese. Ishihara interrogated Kōmoto for six months. Ishihara explained to Kōmoto why he was there—that Ishiwara, his commander, had instructed him to work with the CCP—and the two shared memories of Ishiwara, who had just died in Japan.[315] Is it possible that Ishiwara sent Ishihara to coordinate

adopted a false Japanese name, Kawabata Daijirō (川端大二郎), which he used in Shanxi. *Heben Dazuo*, 289.

[310] On Ye, see Lin Weiguo (林卫国), "Zhanfan Heben Dazuo zhaogong renzui neimu," accessed 19 September 2016, http://www.shanxiql.com/qjfc/qbxs/94ddbc61863911e7aaa4c5fca12f0797.html. In a CCP history journal, Lin published a similar essay on the same subject but neglected to mention the control the CCP imposed on his work. If the CCP censored his article, one has to wonder why. See Lin, "Zhanfan Heben Dazuo de zuihou suiyue," *Dangshi wenhui*, no. 5 (2009): 57–61.

[311] Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo*, 760. The CCP's Red Army was officially renamed the People's Liberation Army in 1947.

[312] Hirano, *Manshū no inbō sha*, 7–34.

[313] Furuno Naoya, *Chōke sandai no kōbō* (Tokyo, 1999), 103.

[314] Jia, *Yige laopai de qinhua tewu fenzi*, 1, 153. This and some other Chinese accounts (such as Shanxisheng renmin jianchayuan, *Zhenxun Riben zhanfan jishi*, 351, 355) state that Kōmoto died on 25 August 1953 and not 1955.

[315] Kuwata, *"Chō Sakurin o koroshita otoko" no jitsuzō*, 405–412.

with the CCP on how to handle Kōmoto and Zhang's 1928 murder? This is not a fanciful speculation: Extraordinarily odd though it may appear, during the Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese army commanders in China maintained secret yet regular contact with the CCP (see Chapter 5, p. 429). The records of the Kōmoto interrogations that were published in China do not document the interrogations conducted by Ishihara but instead date from a later period (1950–53).

There are subtle hints that several of Kōmoto's Japanese army colleagues may have known something about his secret activity. Sasaki Tōichi (佐々木到一, 1886–1955), who was the top sinologist in the army, later claimed that it was he who inspired Kōmoto to assassinate Zhang. He cryptically stated in his memoir, posthumously published in 1963, that it would "never be possible to publish the truth about this incident."[316] Other curious matters are also pertinent to this case. For example, Tōmiya Kaneo (東宮鉄男, 1892–1937), the man who supposedly executed the bombing on the ground for Kōmoto, was a Russian speaker—like the Nazi-turned-Communist Richard Scheringer of Germany (see Introduction, p. 8). Tōmiya was killed in action in China in November 1937 and left behind copious diaries. After the war, Kōmoto's daughter asked Tōmiya's widow for his diary from 1928. But his widow said that no diary existed for that year (and that year alone).[317] In fact, it turns out that the diary for 1928 does exist in Tomiya's archive, but the entries from 28 May to 9 June 1928 have been removed.[318] According to diary entries that were not removed, on April 17, Tōmiya presented a plan, presumably to Kōmoto, to "shut down" the railway crossing where Zhang was to be killed on 4 June 1928. On May 17, he expressed nervousness about not knowing when Zhang would return to Mukden.[319] These diary entries support the contention that Kōmoto planned to assassinate Zhang well before Tanaka decided not to block the return of Zhang's armed forces to Mukden. They suggest that Kōmoto carefully hid the truth about Zhang's assassination.

Tanaka Ryūkichi and Kawashima Yoshiko

Another significant fact about Zhang's murder is the involvement of Tanaka Ryūkichi, a veteran intelligence officer whom Russian historians have identified as a Soviet agent (see Introduction, p. 6). Although other sources have not confirmed this contention, we cannot take it lightly. For two years, beginning

[316] Sasaki Tōichi, *Aru gunjin no jiden*, second ed. (Tokyo, 1967), 192. After World War II, Sasaki was interned in the Soviet Union and died in Chinese prison in 1955. This autobiography was published posthumously from his archive.

[317] See "Intavyū: Kōmoto Kiyoko san," 68.

[318] "ManMō kaitakudan wa kōshite okurareta: nemutteita Kantōgun shōkō no shiryō," NHK TV documentary, aired on 11 August 2006, accessed 18 April 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejMaOdvvZaw.

[319] Ibid.

in July 1927, Tanaka Ryūkichi worked as a Japanese intelligence operative in Beijing and Kalgan (Zhangjiakou) on the border of Inner Mongolia.[320] He knew Chinese and French well. Like Kōmoto, Tanaka (R) was deeply influenced by Ōkawa Shūmei, the pro-Soviet Japanese nationalist, and he testified at the IMTFE that Ōkawa was his friend.[321] Tanaka (R) was also known for his problems with women. At the IMTFE, he stated that when he was young, he had "played around quite a bit."[322] At one point, he fell in love with someone else's wife. They decided on a double suicide: She died, but he did not. The army quashed the scandal. Later, during the 1930s, Tanaka (R) was entrapped by Kawashima Yoshiko (川島芳子, 1907–48), also known as Jin Bihui (金璧輝) or Aixinjueluo/Aisin Gioro Xianyu in China and sometimes known as Asia's Mata Hari.[323] Born in China into the family of a Qing dynasty prince but adopted by a Japanese family, Kawashima grew up in Japan.[324] Owing to the nature of his work, Tanaka (R) must have had frequent interactions with Soviet and Chinese agents and officials in Kalgan. If Tanaka (R) became a Soviet agent, it may well have been while he was working in Kalgan. In any case, Tanaka (R) played a part in Kōmoto's assassination scheme. We know, for example, that shortly before Zhang's murder, he moved from Kalgan to Beijing and provided train information to Kōmoto.[325] At the IMTFE, Tanaka (R) became the prosecutors' star witness against his former colleagues. His testimony was, in many cases, misleading and often perjured, and according to some Russian historians, it is the Soviet prosecutors who dictated his testimony.[326]

In China, there is a widespread belief that Kawashima played a role in Zhang's assassination—specifically, that she seduced Xueliang's aide-de-camp, a man named Zheng (副官郑某), into stealing vital intelligence about Zhang's journey back to Mukden.[327] According to one account, her talent for seduction made her a superb spy.[328] Oddly, however, Kawashima's supposed role in the assassination is absent from Japanese accounts, and Chinese accounts provide no source for

[320] Hereafter in this chapter, I have referred to Tanaka Ryūkichi as Tanaka (R) to avoid confusion with Tanaka Giichi.

[321] Tanaka Ryūkichi and Tanaka Minoru, *Tanaka Ryūkichi chosaku shū* (Tokyo, 1976), 432–39; IMTFE transcripts, 1,960.

[322] IMTFE transcripts, 2,176.

[323] Tanaka and Tanaka, *Tanaka Ryūkichi chosaku shū*, 454. On Tanaka (R) and Kawashima, see Muramatsu Shōfū, "Dansō no reijin wa ikiteiru," *Ōru yomimono*, 10, no. 2 (1955): 96–117.

[324] On Kawashima, see for example Phyllis Birnbaum, *Manchu Princess, Japanese Spy: The Story of Kawashima Yoshiko, the Cross-Dressing Spy Who Commanded Her Own Army* (New York, 2015); Terao Saho, *Hyōden Kawashima Yoshiko: dansō no etoranze* (Tokyo, 2008).

[325] Sagara, *Akai yūhi no Masunogahara ni*, 255; Usui, "Chō Sakurin," 35; David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (New York, 1971), 227, 471. Bergamini interviewed Tanaka (R) for his book.

[326] Kolpakidi and Prokhorov, *KGB*, 199.

[327] Li Yiming, ed., *Chuandao Fangzi zhuan: yige wangshi gongzhu bianshen wei dongyang diehua de xinzhong licheng* (Changchun, 2010), 54–57.

[328] Lin, "Zhanfan Heben Dazuo de zuihou suiyue," 59.

Figure 2.9. Kawashima Yoshiko, Manchu princess and spy, 1933

the claim other than Kōmoto's "confession" published in China.[329] It is possible, however, that Kawashima did play a role that today's Chinese government does not allow to be revealed. After World War II, when Kawashima was tried by the KMT government on charges of treachery (see Chapter 4, p. 326), she claimed that she was in Tokyo when Zhang was murdered. Yet, when questioned, she did reveal some details about the murder: most importantly, that Kōmoto, supported by Tanaka Giichi, organized the assassination, but one of Japan's master conspirators, Doihara Kenji (see Chapter 3, p. 220), had nothing to do with it. The Chinese court handed down the death sentence for her crimes against the Chinese state, among which was listed her (unspecified) role in the Zhang murder.[330] Still, at least one Chinese historian claims that Kawashima had nothing to do with the murder.[331] In any case, Kōmoto and Kawashima clearly knew each other well; she even invited him to her wedding in November 1927.[332] As discussed in Chapter 4 (see p. 326), Kawashima may

[329] Ibid. Note, however, that Kōmoto's published confession does not include any discussion of Kawashima's role in the assassination.

[330] Niu Shanseng, comp., *Chuandao Fangzi de jingren miwen: Guomin zhengfu shenpan Jin Bihui mimi dang'an* (Hong Kong, 1994), 185, 256–57, 295, 424.

[331] Li Gang, *Chuandao Fangzi shenpan dang'an da jiemi* (Hong Kong, 2012), 26, where the author incorrectly claims that the sentence did not list Zhang's murder among her crimes.

[332] Birnbaum, *Manchu Princess*, 85.

have been a Soviet or CCP agent. If so, it would not be surprising to find that Kawashima had been involved in Kōmoto's intrigue in one capacity or another.

Tanaka (R) never disclosed his role in Zhang's murder. When asked at the IMTFE whether he knew Kōmoto personally, Tanaka (R) answered that they were on "very intimate" terms. He said that he had only learned about Kōmoto's central role in the assassination when he saw him in Manchuria in 1935.[333] In preliminary investigations, Tanaka (R) testified that Kōmoto had told him in person in 1935 about his scheme to assassinate Zhang in 1928. Tanaka (R) begged the prosecutors not to quote him because he did not want to betray Kōmoto's trust. Then, he changed his mind, saying that he would testify against Kōmoto and others for the sake of peace in the world, even at the cost of tremendous psychological pain. At the trial, he stated that he had personally read a top-secret report by the Tokyo military police about Kōmoto's scheme (which no one else knew about and was in all likelihood non-existent). Zhang's killing was "a plan of his [Kōmoto's] alone," Tanaka (R) declared to the court—a plan intended to make Manchuria "independent."[334] If Tanaka (R) indeed testified as instructed by Soviet prosecutors at the IMTFE, he did so brilliantly, clinching Kōmoto's guilt in his absence and preventing the court from scrutinizing further. At least two judges, however, did not trust Tanaka (R)'s testimony: Justice Henri Bernard of France[335] and Justice Radhabinod Pal of India. Pal doubted the veracity of Tanaka (R)'s testimony: His "services were freely requisitioned by the prosecution to fill in all possible gaps in its evidence. Here is a man who seems to have been very much attractive to every wrong doer of Japan who after having committed the act, somehow and sometime sought out this man and confided to him his evil doings."[336]

There is little doubt that Tanaka (R) was partner to Kōmoto's scheme. On 13 May 1928, he wrote home that he was extremely busy on various assignments, telling his family not to worry because his life was not in danger. On June 2, the day before Zhang left Beijing for Mukden, Tanaka (R) wrote again: "I've left everything in Kalgan and have returned to Beijing. I don't know what happened to my stuff in Kalgan. I'm lucky to be alive. Am very busy right now, so this is all." In Beijing, Tanaka (R) spied on Zhang and reported back to Kōmoto. Then, on July 6, after the dust had settled, he wrote home that he had returned to Kalgan on June 30: "Fighting in China has subsided. So I've returned to Kalgan."[337]

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[333] IMTFE transcripts, 1,953.

[334] Ibid., 1,948–50, 1,955; Awaya Kentarō, Adachi Hiroaki, and Kobayashi Motohiro, eds., *Tōkyō saiban shiryō: Tanaka Ryūkichi jinmon chōsho*, tr. Okada Ryōnosuke (Tokyo, 1994), 11–12, 78, 221, 228–29.

[335] Ōoka Yūichirō, *Tōkyō saiban: Furansujin hanji no muzairon* (Tokyo, 2012), 172.

[336] International Military Tribunal for the Far East, *Dissentient Judgment of Justice Pal* (Tokyo, 1999), 226.

[337] Tanaka and Tanaka, *Tanaka Ryūkichi chosaku shū*, 442–43, 447.

Kōmoto and a "stolen" document

Possibly the most significant of the circumstantial evidence of Kōmoto's connection with the Soviet secret service comes from the Soviet secret police archive itself. The Soviet Union submitted to the IMTFE a document titled "Materials for Military Operations against the USSR." It was a secret report written in 1927 by Kanda Masatane (神田正種, 1890–1983), a Russian specialist who worked in Harbin from 1925 to 1927.[338] Kanda sent the report to Kōmoto, who was an intelligence officer in the Kwantung Army at the time, and to Kasahara Yukio (笠原幸雄, 1889–1988), chief of the Russian Department of the Second (Intelligence) Section of the General Staff in Tokyo. At the trial in 1946, although Kanda was astonished to learn that his confidential report had fallen into Soviet hands, he confirmed its authenticity.[339] Yet, the copy of the report submitted to the IMTFE left no great mystery as to how the Soviets had gotten hold of it: It had the addressee's name, Kōmoto Daisaku, on the cover page (see Figure 2.10 on p. 151).[340] Kanda and Kōmoto had studied Soviet intelligence together, and that was clearly why Kanda had sent a copy of his report to Kōmoto.[341] Although there is no direct proof that Kōmoto provided the document to the Soviet side, it is difficult to imagine that this kind of document could have simply been stolen without his knowledge. Questioned by a Soviet interrogator in 1946 for the IMTFE, Kasahara acknowledged that "certainly a document of this sort could not have failed to arrive at the place to which it was addressed."[342] If so, Kasahara may have realized that Kōmoto was politically suspect. At the trial, the Soviet prosecutors used this seemingly damning document as proof of Tokyo's war plans against the Soviet Union, never mentioning that the addressee was Kōmoto. Kasahara correctly responded that the document was merely one person's opinion, which the General Staff in Tokyo had never seriously considered.[343] Moscow had inadvertently disclosed the most telling link between Kōmoto and Soviet intelligence.

As with all of Stalin's intelligence work, it is well-nigh impossible to draw

[338]Kanda Masatane, "Materials for Military Operations against the USSR," Evidentiary Document No. 2460A/B, Numerical Evidentiary Documents Assembled as Evidence by the Prosecution for Use before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, Records of Allied Operational and Occupation Headquarters, World War II, RG 331, National Archives of the United States, College Park, MD. This and many other evidentiary documents from the trial have been digitized and are available on the site of Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo. See https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10274735.

[339]Court Exhibit No. 3852, in ibid.

[340]The report was fifty pages long, but for unknown reason, only the first thirty pages are available. It is possible that the Soviet prosecutors blocked the release of the remaining twenty pages.

[341]After World War II, when Kōmoto was interrogated by the Chinese, he described his extensive study of Soviet intelligence: Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo*, 48.

[342]Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 51:336.

[343]Ibid., 51:339–42.

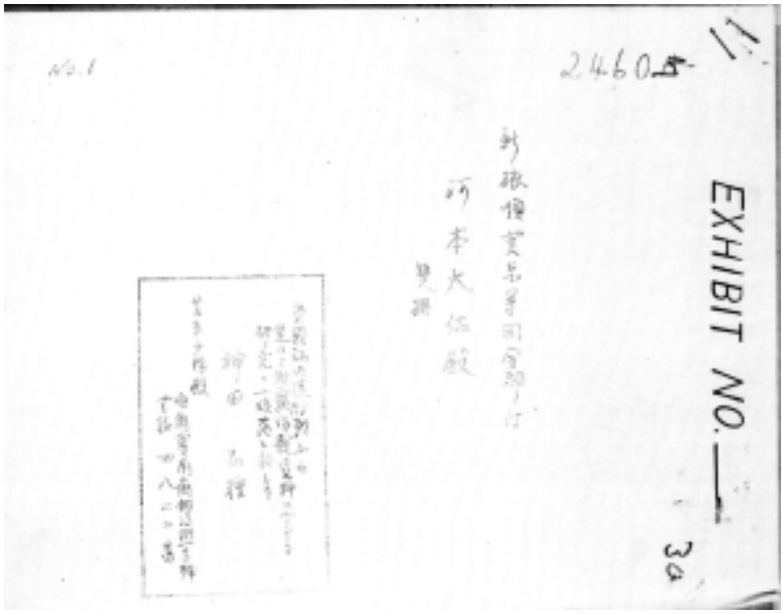

Figure 2.10. Cover page of Kanda Masatane's secret report to Kōmoto Daisaku, 1927. Moscow acquired the report, which Soviet prosecutors presented to the IMTFE in 1946 as evidence of Tokyo's war plans against the Soviet Union.

definitive conclusions. Yet, the available evidence leaves little doubt that Kōmoto worked with Soviet intelligence in Manchuria and schemed with them to assassinate Zhang. His role was to serve as a smokescreen. He was willing to take responsibility because he honestly believed that Zhang's death was in Japan's best interests. Kōmoto exemplified the shortsightedness that Stalin warned Gotō about at their meeting. At the trial in Tokyo, Moscow sought to clinch its argument concerning Tokyo's alleged war plans against the Soviet Union, but in doing so, it inadvertently disclosed Kōmoto's connections to the Soviet scheme. If this interpretation is correct, then Moscow successfully hid behind Kōmoto.

The Japanese government tacitly accepted that Kōmoto and his assistants were responsible for the murder, but never acknowledged their guilt publicly. (Incidentally, Tokyo's apparent unquestioning acceptance of Kōmoto's guilt surprised British intelligence officers, who suspected a Soviet hand in the murder.)[344] Tokyo instead quietly punished Kōmoto, who was suspended from his position and later placed in the army reserve. He returned to Manchuria, where he sat on the Board of Directors of the South Manchurian Railway Company. Subsequently, he was put in charge of state-run industrial enterprises, first in Manchuria and then in Shanxi. He was not, however, an idle bystander in

[344]Katō, *Nazo toki "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu jiken,"* 151.

Japanese military affairs: He played a major role in Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, as the following chapter will explore.

Meanwhile, the Tanaka cabinet slid into disarray. Tanaka had failed to disarm Zhang and had broken the Kuhara-Stalin "agreement" at the last minute. Tanaka now found himself in a quandary.

The mystery of Zhang Xueliang

Zhang Zuolin's assassination did not bring about the result the Japanese conspirators had envisioned: turning Manchuria into a puppet state of the Japanese Empire. Many people in China believed that Zhang's son Xueliang was determined to take revenge on the Japanese for his father's murder. He did take revenge in a singularly strategic and conspiratorial manner, as the remainder of this book will discuss. First, however, he maneuvered to end the war his father had fought; in December 1928, he joined forces with his father's enemy, the KMT and Chiang's Nanjing government—a realignment known as the change of banner (東北易幟). By replacing the Manchurian government's banners with the flag of the KMT government, Zhang Xueliang symbolically pledged allegiance to Chiang's authority. Zhang was proud to have caught the Japanese by surprise with his change of banner. Later, he ridiculed Japan's intelligence that failed to foresee his political realignment.[345]

Xueliang's account that his father had been assassinated by the Japanese, however, is open to question. In fact, hushed rumors circulated after the murder that it was perhaps patricide by Xueliang himself. Many years later, in 1990, Xueliang claimed that his decision to join the KMT had not been determined by the Japanese assassination of his father. Without the murder, he asserted, he would have done the same thing because he was interested above all in China's unification.[346] Indeed, Xueliang had been bitingly critical of his father's policy, which he considered ruinous to China. Although Xueliang repeatedly emphasized his strong emotional bond with his father, he nevertheless jumped ship to join his father's enemy, the KMT and Chiang Kai-shek. Xueliang's influence on this period can, for these reasons, not be overstated. His actions cast a far larger shadow than has traditionally been understood.

The evident discord between Xueliang and his father can be traced back at least to Guo Songling's rebellion against Zhang Zuolin in 1925 (see p. 98). Xueliang idolized Guo, his former teacher, and he had grown inseparably close to him.[347] Guo had supported the unification of China under the KMT, or at least so Xueliang believed. Xueliang was of the same opinion, and he faulted his

[345] Zhang Xueliang and Tang Degang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi* (Taipei, 2009), 217–18.

[346] NHK shuzaihan and Usui Katsumi, *Chō Gakuryō no Shōwashi saigo no shōgen* (Tokyo, 1991), 97–98.

[347] It was said among Zhang's armed forces that "Zhang Xueliang is Guo Songling, and Guo Songling is Zhang Xueliang." Guo Junsheng, *Zhang Xueliang shishi jianzheng* (Shenyang, 2010), 3.

father for having no sense of political strategy. Late in life, Xueliang admitted that he had long known Guo's intention to rebel against his father but had dissuaded him from undertaking such a risky adventure. Xueliang deplored that Guo had gone ahead and raised arms against him.[348]

Zhang Zuolin once compared himself to Emperor Gaozu (高祖, 566–635), who founded the Tang dynasty by overthrowing the Sui dynasty. He implied that Xueliang should take over his dream and accomplish his "great cause" (大业), just as Emperor Taizong (太宗, 598–649) had followed his father, Gaozu. Xueliang dismissed Zuolin's idea as both quixotic and anachronous, claiming that China should no longer have an emperor. In that case, Zuolin suggested, Xueliang should learn from the rule of Japan's Emperor Hirohito (裕仁, 1901–89), who was Xueliang's age. Xueliang responded that he had nothing to learn from Hirohito. What he wanted was to become a person useful to his country and his people.[349] Xueliang was familiar with Tang history and did not consider Emperor Taizong particularly distinguished. Taizong was, however, a good emperor, as Xueliang told his advisers in 1928 before his father was assassinated, because he listened to criticism and counsel and corrected his mistakes. Xueliang entreated his men to emulate Taizong's fearless advisers, such as Wei Zheng (魏徵, 580–643). Their courage, Xueliang added, could affect the fate of the country and the future of tens of millions of people.[350] Although Xueliang did not say so, he knew that Taizong had committed fratricide to become Emperor.[351]

When Guo rebelled against Zhang Zuolin in 1925, Zuolin was enraged by his son's apparent reluctance to take a firm stand against his former teacher. In the heat of argument, Zuolin declared that he would disown his son, who responded in kind.[352] Guo's rebellion failed. Xueliang plotted to help Guo escape, but before Guo was able to do so, a telegraph reached Xueliang that Guo and his wife had been killed by Yang Yuting, Guo's rival, at Zuolin's order.[353] At the news of Guo's killing, Xueliang muttered angrily: "Guo was innocent. He should not have been killed."[354] Later, Xueliang revised his statement to say that in fact he had wanted to have Guo tried at court and banished abroad.[355] Seeing treachery in his son's defense of Guo, Zuolin ordered his generals to fetch Xueliang, intending to execute him. When they protested, he threatened to kill them as well. His men finally managed to calm him down, but Zuolin declared

[348] Zhang Xueliang in a 1991 interview in *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Beijing, 1992), 2:1183, 1184; Da Feng, ed., *Zhang Xueliang de Dongbei suiyue* (Beijing, 1991), 306–7.

[349] Zhang Xueliang, quoted in Ding Xiaochun and Wei Xiangqian, eds., *Zhang Xueliang yu Dongbei daxue* (Shenyang, 2003), 76.

[350] Zhang Xueliang, quoted in Wang Yizhi, *Zhang Xueliang waiji* (Hong Kong, 1989), 119.

[351] When he had his right-hand man, Yan Yuting, killed in 1929, he likened it to Taizong's murder of his two brothers (see p. 162 later in this chapter).

[352] Guo Guanying, *Zhang Xueliang cexie* (Taipei, 2002), 227.

[353] Ibid., 234; Wang, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi*, 1:143.

[354] Sima Sangdun et al., *Zhang laoshi yu Zhang shaoshuai* (Taipei, 1984), 317.

[355] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)* (Beijing, 2014), 1:15–27, 87, 220; 2:512, 523, 606; 3:737; 6:1681, 1786, 1840, 1834–36.

that he would "deal with" his son.[356] When father and son next met, Zuolin let rip, took out a pistol, and attempted to kill Xueliang. Again, Zuolin's lieutenants intervened, begging for mercy and forgiveness for Xueliang. In the end, they prevailed. Zuolin dropped his pistol, and Xueliang was saved.[357]

Guo's killing traumatized Xueliang, who became addicted to opium as a result.[358] After the killing, Xueliang visited Guo's parents and apologized for his inability to protect their son.[359] Toward the end of his life, Xueliang was more open about his loyalty to Guo. He shared the sentiment of those who had joined Guo's rebellion in 1925: If Guo's rebellion against Zhang Zuolin had been successful, China's history would have been different, and Japan's occupation of Manchuria might never have happened.[360] Embracing this view was tantamount to declaring that his father should have been deposed as the ruler of Manchuria in 1925.

It was Xueliang who in 1928 persuaded his father to leave Beijing for Mukden. In late April 1928, they got into a heated argument about China's future. Xueliang insisted that whereas his father had failed to unite China, Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People" could succeed. Deeply offended, Zuolin retorted that his own "Four Principles of the People" was a superior manifesto. In the end, however, Xueliang persuaded Zuolin that China's civil war would only benefit the Japanese, and he agreed to abandon Beijing.[361]

Xueliang not only wanted his father to abandon Beijing, but he also wanted him disarmed. At 2 AM on May 18, the day Tanaka Giichi announced Tokyo's warning to disarm Zhang's and Chiang's forces, the Japanese military attaché in China, Tatekawa Yoshitsugu (建川美次, 1880–1945), went to see Xueliang and his lieutenant, Yang Yuting (see p. 122), in Baoding, some 150 km southwest of Beijing. He explained to them Japan's policy of disarming Zhang Zuolin's forces. To Tatekawa's surprise, they both readily accepted it. Xueliang intimated to Tatekawa that for now, he and Yang would stay in north China to fight against Chiang's forces, adding strictly confidentially, however, that they planned to lose the battle and then retreat to Manchuria, where Japan could disarm their forces as well. Yang told Tatekawa that they knew how to deal with Chiang's troops but that the problem was "internal" (i.e., Zhang Zuolin). This information was reported to Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi the following day from Beijing.[362] Apparently, Xueliang and Yang already knew Tokyo's policy before

[356] See an account by Wang Xianglin (王翔瞵) in *Huiyi Zhang Xueliang he Dongbeijun* (Beijing, 2017), 56–57; Wen Si, ed., *Wo suo zhidao de Zhang Xueliang* (Beijing, 2003), 90–92.

[357] Cao Dexuan, "Wo suo zhidao de Zhang Zuolin," *Zhuanji wenxue*, no. 5–6 (1964): 27.

[358] Wang Zhuoran, *Wang Zhuoran shiliao ji* (Shenyang, 1992), 157. Wang was Xueliang's close adviser.

[359] "Guo Songling sunzi huiyi Zhang Xueliang" (郭松龄孙子回忆张学良), *Beijing Youth Daily, Sina News*, http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2001-10-21/382501.html.

[360] Guo, *Zhang Xueliang cexie*, 243.

[361] Wang, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi*, 1:216–18. Zhang's "Four Principles" added "people's morality" (民德) to Sun's Three Principles.

[362] "Urgent, top-secret memorandum" from the Japanese ambassador in Beijing to Tanaka

it was announced. They made it clear that they desired China's unification. Xueliang encouraged Tanaka to risk disarming the Manchurian forces that far outnumbered Japan's Kwantung Army. It appears that Tanaka, sensing a trap, later backed down. Zhang Xueliang's provocation failed this time, but he would make a similar challenge to the Japanese in 1931 and succeed, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Xueliang's behavior after his father's death struck some of his aides as peculiar. When he heard the news, rather than refraining from cutting his hair for forty-nine days, as was the custom, Xueliang shaved his head, much to the surprise of his entourage. They observed him chatting and laughing in the company of Yang Yuting, although he wept and appeared anguished when not in Yang's company.[363] When Xueliang's personal secretary at the time, Liu Mingjiu (劉鳴九, 1900–97), was interviewed in 1992, he testified that everyone thought Xueliang's behavior after the murder was "strange."[364] Japanese intelligence knew in 1926–27 that Yang was in contact with the KMT, and just before Zhang Zuolin was murdered, British intelligence suspected that Yang and Zhang Xueliang were "in touch with the Southern leaders with a view to *eliminating* [emphasis added] Marshal Chang Tso-lin [Zhang Zuolin]."[365] In light of these reports, suspicion surrounding Zhang's murder only deepens: Yang Yuting, Zhang Xueliang, and certain leaders within the KMT may well have colluded with Soviet and Japanese conspirators in his murder. Even after the murder, Xueliang still kept his father's Japanese military advisers, including Machino Takema (see p. 110 in this chapter), Giga Seiya (儀我誠也, 1888–1938), and Araki Gorō (荒木五郎, 1854–1972), also known as Huang Mu (黃慕). In December 1928, when Giga returned to Japan, Xueliang replaced him with another Japanese adviser, Shibayama Kenshirō (柴山兼四郎, 1889–1956).[366] Both Zhang Xueliang and Shibayama testified to their good and close relationship.[367]

In addition to Xueliang's strange demeanor and behavior after the murder, what is also surprising is Xueliang's indifference toward the self-professed assassin himself, Kōmoto. At the time of Zhang Zuolin's murder, rumors circulated widely in Manchuria identifying Kōmoto as the ringleader. Even so, Kōmoto made no immediate move to leave Manchuria. In fact, he continued his frequent travels between Japan and China, taking part in the Mukden Incident

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Giichi, 19 May 1928, JACAR, B02031861600.

[363]Liu Mingjiu, "Wo suo zhidao de Yang Chang shijian (2)," *Liaoning wenshi ziliao*, no. 15 (1986): 70–71. Curiously, Liu's discussion of this incident was cut when his reminiscence was republished in *Huiyi Zhang Xueliang he Dongbeijun*, 150–55.

[364]NHK shuzaihan and Usui, *Chō Gakuryō*, 76.

[365]Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 440; Noguchi Yūki, "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu wa 'oyagoroshi'!?" *Seiron*, no. 8 (2012): 113.

[366]For Shibayama's testimony to the IMTFE, see https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10280657.

[367]*Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 1:82; Zhang and Tang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi*, 214; Shibayama Kenshirō, *Kyōdo no senkakusha: moto rikugun jikan Shibayama Kenshirō chūshō jijoden*, eds. Akagi Takehiko and Shiota Ryōichirō (Chikusei, Japan, 2010), 63, 77.

in 1931 (Japan's military invasion of Manchuria) and working as an industrialist in Manchuria and Shanxi (where he died in prison in 1955). Decades later, in 1991, when an interviewer asked him about Kōmoto, Zhang Xueliang—who had declared his determination to take revenge on the Japanese for his father's murder—ingeniously mistook Kōmoto's name, calling him Kōno (河野, or Heye in Chinese) instead of Kōmoto (河本, or Heben in Chinese). When asked, Zhang Xueliang said that he had no knowledge of Kōmoto's return to Manchuria or his continued work there and dismissed Kōmoto as merely an "executor," or functionary (一个执行者), a "figure" (一个角色) in the Kwantung Army. His interviewer had to correct him, pointing out that Kōmoto was "an important figure" (重要角色).[368] Zhang Xueliang seemed intent on covering something up. At the very least, he displayed no particular interest in his father's assassin. His reaction is all the more puzzling because he said he had been well apprised of the Japanese plot to kill him next after his father's murder.[369] In fact, Kōmoto, who was interviewed in Dalian in 1942, acknowledged that in an August 1928 conversation with Puyi (溥儀, 1906–67), the last emperor of the Qing dynasty, Puyi had proposed that Kōmoto kill Zhang Xueliang in the same way that he had killed Xueliang's father—and that Kōmoto had responded that he would do so "unbidden."[370]

Why did Xueliang dissemble his indifference in 1991? In fact, he was kept well informed about Kōmoto's central role in the murder of his father, as well as of his subsequent work in China. A year before the 1991 interview in which he feigned ignorance of Kōmoto's work in Manchuria after 1928, Zhang Xueliang had exhibited much knowledge about Kōmoto and spoken about him. He emphasized that Kōmoto and other Japanese military men lacked strategic thinking (日本的軍人是沒有策略、沒有「謀」): "They bombed and killed [my father], but [in doing so] they lost [the political game] instead."[371] The term *mou* (謀) means "strategy" but also implies plotting and scheming. The striking difference between Zhang Xueliang's remarks about Kōmoto in 1990 and 1991 suggests that he knew something about Kōmoto's plotting, quite possibly because Xueliang himself was a party to it. He was happy to conclude that Kōmoto's scheming had proven inferior to his own (which aimed at subverting Japan in China).

[368] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 1:200–201. In later interviews, Zhang correctly named Kōmoto or Heben and his military rank. Ibid., 4:1105. Kōmoto, for his part, was interrogated in 1953 under Chinese captivity and testified that after Zhang Zuolin's murder, "pro-American" people around his son Zhang Xueliang actively promoted the anti-Japanese movement in Manchuria. See Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilin sheng shehuikexueyuan, *"Jiuyiba" shibian*, 28. We have no way of knowing whether this statement reflected Kōmoto's actual belief or was invented by a Chinese interrogator.

[369] See Wang, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi*, 1:240.

[370] Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 270–71. Under Chinese captivity, Kōmoto told this episode to Chinese interrogators, but omitted that he would kill Zhang without being asked. See Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo*, 56.

[371] Zhang and Tang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi*, 210.

Nevertheless, we are left wondering about the exact nature of Zhang Xueliang's *mou*.

Equally puzzling is that a mere three months after his father's assassination, Zhang Xueliang met twice with Ōkawa Shūmei (on September 19 and 26), in spite of the rumor circulating in Manchuria that Ōkawa was a party to Kōmoto's conspiracy against his father. Indeed, Ōkawa was close to Kōmoto (see p. 142). During the meetings, Ōkawa and Zhang had an "intimate" conversation and, according to an account Ōkawa published shortly afterward, fully agreed on the need to establish an Asian polity based on Confucian ideals. Zhang told Okawa that Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People," the philosophy guiding the KMT, was merely a transitional ideology.[372] What, then, was Zhang's ideological goal, one might wonder? Confucianism? In fact, Zhang Xueliang was vehemently opposed to Confucianism, which he regarded as the doctrine of officialdom.[373] Communism, then? Zhang was critical of his father's 1927 murder of Li Dazhao (see p. 92), a co-founder of the CCP, on the grounds that Li was a "talented individual."[374] Zhang knew how deeply Communism had infiltrated the lives of the common people (老百姓), even members of his own army.[375] We know that in 1936, he felt himself to be a Communist, although he was denied CCP membership because of Moscow's opposition (see Chapter 4, p. 315). His trusted acolyte (心腹), Li Tiancai (黎天才, 1900–61), had been a close colleague of Li Dazhao's.[376] Unlike his father, Zhang Xueliang had once employed a Soviet adviser (an aviation teacher).[377] Following their meetings, Zhang and Ōkawa exchanged apparently cordial letters. Was Zhang merely feigning his support for this pro-Soviet, pan-Asianist, Japanese ideologue? Or was he secretly close to the Kōmoto-Ōkawa circle? Oddly, Zhang Xueliang's meetings with Ōkawa are not even mentioned in a detailed, 1,240-page Chinese chronicle of Zhang's life.[378]

Zhang Xueliang's account of his reaction to the news of his father's assassination is also oddly inconsistent. On the day of the murder, according to several accounts, Xueliang was in Beijing talking with a representative of the KMT, his father's enemy, and later that night, he left Beijing for Luanzhou, some 200 km from Beijing and closer to Qinhuangdao, where he conferred with

[372] Ōkawa Shūmei, *Ōkawa Shūmei zenshū* (Tokyo, 1962), 4:589–603.

[373] Guo, *Zhang Xueliang cexie*, 33; *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 2:536. Later, Zhang Xueliang became a Christian.

[374] Wang, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi*, 1:196. Elsewhere, Zhang Xueliang denied that he was critical of Li's execution. *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 5:1544.

[375] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 3:772–73; 6:1656–57.

[376] Zhang Zuolin arrested Li Tiancai as a Communist but kept him alive as a useful operative after he had ostensibly forsworn Communism. Li's renunciation, however, does not seem to have been genuine. See his autobiographical note in Zhang Youkun, *Zhang Xueliang shenbian de Gongchandang ren ji Xi'an shibian jishi* (Beijing, 2017), app. 2.

[377] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 3:702.

[378] Zhang Youkun, Qian Jin, and Li Xuequn, eds., *Zhang Xueliang nianpu* (Beijing, 2009), 220–22 (entries for 19 and 26 September 1928).

Zhang Zongchang (張宗昌, 1881–1932), one of his father's loyalists.[379] When interviewed in 1991, Xueliang dismissed this account as nonsense and became defensive. He insisted that on the day of his father's murder (June 4), he had been celebrating his birthday (June 3) in Beijing—and that he had not been told that his father had been murdered, only that his train had been bombed. Asked about his birthday celebration, Xueliang elaborated that he had not only been celebrating his birthday but had also been relaxing with his girlfriend (mistress), and he even volunteered to name her.[380] Yet, when the interviewer reminded Xueliang that, according to his aide-de-camp Zhu Haibei (朱海北, 1909–96), he had not been in Beijing but in Linminguan, in Hebei Province, some 400 km southwest of Beijing, he did not impugn Zhu's account.[381] Thus, we have no clear answer to such a basic question as to where Xueliang was on the morning of 4 June 1928.

Zhang Xueliang's widely accepted account of not having initially been told about his father's death is contradicted by the account of another of his aides-de-camp, Zhang Ruzhou (張汝舟, no relation). Ruzhou stated that on the day of the murder, Zhang was in Beijing and received a direct call to his personal telephone line from his father's "fifth wife" (concubine, 壽夫人) to the effect that Zuolin had been killed (被炸死). He further noted that Xueliang had ordered Ruzhou not to tell anyone or he (Ruzhou) would lose his head.[382]

There is another peculiarity in Zhang Xueliang's account. Xueliang repeatedly insisted that after his father's assassination, he returned to Mukden in disguise so as to avoid detection by the Japanese. According to Kōmoto, however, Xueliang was in communication with his late father's Japanese advisers, Giga and Matsui Shichio (松井七夫, 1880–1943), as well as Hata Shinji (秦真次, 1879–1950), the head of the Kwantung Army secret service (特務機関) in Mukden. It was with their assurance that Xueliang returned safely, albeit in disguise, to Mukden.[383]

Most importantly, Zhang Xueliang once unwittingly divulged his own secret impression about his father's assassination. Zhang Zhiyu (張之宇, no relation), who in the 1990s interviewed Xueliang over six years and got to know him well,[384] recorded a telling remark. One day, Zhiyu mentioned to him that some historians believed that his father, Zuolin, had refused to make actual concessions to the

[379] Du Lianqing, *Zhang Xueliang yu Dongbeijun* (Shenyang, 1991), 21, 523. See also Wang Haichen and Hu Yuhai, *Shiji qinghuai: Zhang Xueliang quanzhuan* (Beijing, 2011), 197–98.

[380] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 3:728–729.

[381] Ibid., 5:1512. Zhang Xueliang dismissed other accounts by Zhu as nonsense. Zhu's account is in Da, *Zhang Xueliang*, 130. Another witness also stated that Zhang Xueliang had been in Linminguan. Ibid., 127.

[382] See Ruzhou's account in Sima et al., *Zhang laoshi yu Zhang shaoshuai*, 318. On that day Xueliang told another aide that "the old general is no more" (老将不在了), implying that Zuolin was dead. See Wen, *Wo suo zhidao de Zhang Xueliang*, 214.

[383] Kōmoto, "Watashi ga Chō Sakurin o koroshita," 200; Furuno, *Chōke sandai no kōbō*, 107.

[384] In 2014, many of these interviews were transcribed from tapes held at Columbia University, New York, and published in seven volumes in Beijing as *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*.

Japanese and had subsequently been killed in Huanggutun. Xueliang responded that "Had it not been for the bombing, my dad would have been a traitor to the nation (國賊)." Zhiyu understood Xueliang to mean that his father's murder was "just in time." Shocked by Xueliang's remark, she took a moment before asking him what he would have done had it not been for the Huanggutun Incident. Apparently, Xueliang did not respond.[385] Xueliang's denunciatory outburst about his father was as good as an admission of collusion in his murder.

In an interview with Japanese journalists in 1990, Zhang Xueliang spoke angrily about how his life had been ruined by the Japanese. He told the journalists what Japan had done to China was "irrational" (不合理). He said that he had always rebelled against the irrational, "including his own father," and that "power, life, and property" meant nothing in the fight against irrational forces. That was who he was, he added.[386] It would appear that sometime in the spring of 1928, Xueliang had reached the determination that his father, unable to resist Japanese imperialism, was ruinous to China. Evidently, Xueliang felt bitter in the face of Japanese imperialism, which he believed had driven him to take part in the plot to kill his father. If so, it makes sense that Zhang was both laughing and crying at his father's death: politically happy to have achieved his goal but personally grieved to have lost his father.

Moscow was well informed about Xueliang's feud with Zuolin. A Soviet intelligence report from February 1928 noted a succession of conspiracies surrounding them.[387] Stalin undoubtedly took advantage of the situation to carry out his own conspiracy. Moscow had long been interested in Zhang Xueliang and his teacher, Guo Songling. In 1925, Moscow had a hand in Guo's rebellion (see p. 98). Zhang Zuolin correctly perceived Soviet influence in the rebellion, and there were Communist sympathizers among the rebels.[388] Moscow's cultivation of Xueliang as a political tool or ally is noteworthy. Lev Karakhan, the Soviet ambassador to China from 1923 to 1926, tried to develop friendly relations with Xueliang when they both took part in treaty negotiations. Eventually, they formed a good relationship, and Xueliang often visited Karakhan at the embassy.[389]

Xueliang's less-than-forthright accounts of his own conduct surrounding his father's assassination contrast sharply with the frankness with which he spoke about his sympathy for the CCP (see Chapter 4, p. 315). This contrast suggests

[385] Zhang Xueliang and Zhang Zhiyu, *Zayi suigan manlu: Zhang Xueliang zizhuanti yizhu* (Taipei, 2002), 6. The book was published in Taiwan, but when it was reissued in Beijing three years later, this part was omitted. See Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang yigao*, comp. Dou Yingtai (Beijing, 2005).

[386] NHK shuzaihan and Usui, *Chō Gakuryō*, 255. A portion of the video interview is available online, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PcsXs19EC0.

[387] *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. III*, 330.

[388] Guo, *Zhang Xueliang cexie*, 240.

[389] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 3:752. Karakhan's oblique account is in *Perepiska I.V. Stalina i G.V. Chicherina*, 88.

that his desire to be useful to the country and the people—the foundation of his bond with Guo—overrode his filial fealty. It is likely that just before his father's assassination, his entreaty to his aides to emulate the advisers of Emperor Taizong, who had committed fratricide (see p. 153), reflected his unsettled mind about committing patricide: He wanted them to affirm his plan to join the KMT and unify China. Even if Xueliang did not directly say so, this unification plan meant, by implication, that if Zuolin stood in the way, he would have to be removed by force. In 1929, Xueliang had two of his lieutenants, Yang Yuting and Chang Yinhuai (常蔭槐, 1876–1929), murdered on the alleged grounds that they had "colluded with" Communists (whose names were not made public) against China's unification.[390] Xueliang insisted that he had saved "tens of millions of lives" by killing Yang and Chang. Later, in 1936, when one of Xueliang's commanders, Dong Daoquan (董道泉, 1901–36), spoke carelessly of Xueliang's secret cooperation with the CCP, Xueliang immediately had him killed for fear of a leak. Xueliang's interviewer, Zhang Zhiyu, wondered whether Xueliang believed that "tens of millions of lives" had thereby been saved.[391] If she had asked him this question, Xueliang would almost certainly have answered yes. He had something in common with Stalin, Mao, Chiang, Kōmoto, Eitingon, and other Soviet, Japanese, and Chinese conspirators: the willingness to kill people for the sake of politics.

It is important to remember that Xueliang, a self-professed fanatic patriot (see Introduction, p. 20), repeatedly contended that traitors should be killed. He said that he had seen traitors with his own eyes and that they had "truly made his blood boil" (真使我五衷如焚). (When he spoke of traitors, Xueliang probably had in mind his father, Yang, and Chang, among others.) Shortly after Japan's invasion of Manchuria in September 1931, he declared to the Chinese people that if he committed a traitorous act, they should want to lop his head off.[392] When Xueliang's cousin Zhang Xuecheng (張學成, 1902–31) supported Japan's occupation of Manchuria by becoming the commander of the pro-Japanese Hebei Defense Army, Xueliang convened a family conference, which accepted his proposal: The traitor had to be punished. Following Xueliang's order, Xuecheng was promptly killed.[393] Late in life, Xueliang often joked that he had wanted to become a medical doctor to save people, but because his father had been opposed, he had instead become a soldier and learned to kill people. He was

[390] For an account by Gao Jiyi (高纪毅, 1890–1963), who carried out Zhang's order to kill Yang and Chang, see *Huiyi Zhang Xueliang he Dongbeijun*, 140–41. The formal accusation against Yang and Chnag was published in the press at the time. See *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Beijing, 1992), 1:160–62.

[391] Zhang Zhiyu, *Koushu lishi zhi wai: Zhang Xueliang shi zenyang yigeren* (Taipei, 2002), 46. Dong Daoquan is misspelled as Dong Daoyuan (董道原). On his killing, see Bi Wanwen, *Yingxiong bense: Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi jiemi* (Beijing, 2002), 272–76.

[392] Zhang Xueji, "Yifeng mixin jianzheng Zhang Xueliang de neixin shijie," *Bainian chao*, no. 3 (2008), 70; Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang wenji*, 1:496.

[393] Liu Changchun and Zhao Jie, *Zhang Xueliang* (Beijing, 2008), 80. See also *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 3:720; 4:1128; 6:1776.

proud, however, that as a soldier, he had influenced not only China but the world.[394] In this assessment, Xueliang was absolutely correct.

In any case, what is clear is that Zhang Xueliang was proud that he was a far better strategist and conspirator than Kōmoto and other Japanese and Chinese leaders ever were. He said that everyone, including Yang Yuting and the Japanese, had thought that he could be manipulated. Even Chiang Kai-shek had underestimated him as a conspirator, Xueliang noted gleefully in 1986: Chiang was simply unable to imagine that Xueliang would go so far as to conspire to detain him by force in 1936 (the Xi'an Incident) for the sake of China's unity (see Chapter 4, p. 310).[395] Historians, too, have underestimated or even ignored Zhang Xueliang as China's supreme conspirator in other events, including the murder of Zhang Zuolin. Perhaps only once did he explicitly drop hints about his role in his father's murder: "Had it not been for the bombing, my dad would have been a traitor to the nation" (see p. 159). Xueliang was reportedly proud that he did not falsify history or contradict himself.[396] If so, this hint was a deliberate record that he intended to leave for history.

Thus, it appears that Zhang Xueliang secretly collaborated with Soviet, Chinese, and Japanese conspirators. No evidence exists that Zhang was a Soviet agent in 1928. Like Japanese right-wing nationalists, he found political common ground with the Soviet Union in this instance. If so, the logistics for organizing the bombing of Zhang Zuolin's train from inside were relatively straightforward.

In this light, Zhang Xueliang's order to kill Yang Yuting and Chang Yinhuai in January 1929 appears to be an important postscript to Zhang Zuolin's murder. After the murder, some Japanese had hoped that one of Zhang Xueliang's lieutenants, Yang Yuting, might take over from Zhang Zuolin and accept Japan's hegemony in Manchuria. Their hopes were blighted, however: Zhang had Yang murdered in January 1929, as noted earlier. Curiously, when Kōmoto was in a Chinese prison after World War II, he told his Chinese interrogators that Hayashi Gonsuke (林権助, 1860–1939), a Japanese diplomat whom Tokyo had sent to Manchuria in August 1928, had urged Zhang Xueliang to kill Yang—and in making this statement, Kōmoto incriminated himself as having supported Yang against Xueliang.[397] Hayashi had, in fact, warned Xueliang obliquely that unless he accepted Tokyo's patronage, Yang might kill Xueliang and take over Manchuria.[398] Kōmoto knew what Hayashi actually told Xueliang.[399] If

[394] *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Beijing, 1992), 2:1181; *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 4:999.

[395] Zhang and Tang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi*, 221; Zhang Youkun, *Weida de aiguozhe: Zhang Xueliang* (Shenyang, 2006), 280. The Xi'an Incident is discussed later in Chapter 4, p. 310.

[396] Zhang and Zhang, *Zayi suigan manlu*, 173.

[397] Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo* 40–41.

[398] *Huiyi Zhang Xueliang he Dongbeijun*, 131–132; Li Cuilian, *Bainian jiazu. Zhang Xueliang* (Taipei, 2010), 138; Wang, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi*, 1:342–43.

[399] Kōmoto, "Watashi ga Chō Sakurin o koroshita," 200.

Kōmoto was, in fact, a Japanese nationalist who killed Zhang Zuolin, there is no reason why he should have presented Hayashi or any other Japanese officials as having urged Zhang to kill Yang, who was widely regarded as pro-Japanese. In other words, Kōmoto and the Chinese interrogators intentionally portrayed Hayashi wrongly as an instigator of the Yang murder. Their curious trick suggests that it was not Hayashi but Kōmoto himself who advised Xueliang to kill Yang. Moreover, Xueliang publicly accused Yang and Chang of having "colluded with" Communists against China's unification. He presented no evidence for the accusation. Zhang could have announced and easily persuaded the public that Yang and Chang had colluded with the Japanese, but he did not. Was he afraid of the Japanese? The answer is clearly no, if only because he had declared his allegiance to the KMT government in defiance of repeated threats from Japanese officials.

The published Chinese record of Kōmoto's "confession" suggests that Xueliang had Yang and Chang killed for some other reason, most likely because they knew the secret of Zhang Zuolin's assassination. Xueliang's accusation of their collusion with Communists was a smokescreen, or else Yang and Chang were Xueliang's secret conduits to links with Soviet, CCP, and possibly KMT conspirators. After Yang's murder, Xueliang sent a public letter to Yang's widow explaining that he had Yang killed not because of his personal feelings about him but in the interests of the Chinese state and the Chinese people: Zhang compared himself to Emperor Taizong of Tang, who had become Emperor by killing his brothers. He also published two poems on Yang and Chang justifying their murders as a matter of statecraft.[400] Zhang reasoned that it was a patriotic act to kill Yang and Chang. Kōmoto's "confession" suggests that he and Zhang acted in concert in the murders of Yang and Chang.

2.5 The Aftermath

After Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the League of Nations set up a special commission to examine the complicated issues between China and Japan, including Zhang Zuolin's assassination. The commission concluded: "The responsibility for this murder has never been established. The tragedy remains *shrouded in mystery* [emphasis added], but the suspicion of Japanese complicity to which it gave rise became an additional factor in the state of tension which Sino-Japanese relations had already reached by that time."[401] The League of Nations' failure to identify the murderer notwithstanding, the world of public opinion had long pointed its finger at Japan. By using Japanese and Chinese conspirators to carry out Zhang's assassination, Moscow had successfully presented Japan as guilty of the murder and thereby achieved its goal of isolating Japan internationally even more than before. Whereas Western powers grew

[400] *Zhang Xueliang wenji*, 1:167–70.

[401] *Appeal by the Chinese Government. Report of the Commission of Enquiry* (Geneva, 1932), 29.

increasingly receptive to China's nationalist demands, Japan stuck to a formal observance of the international treaties and failed to adapt to the new era of a united China. Against Japan's recalcitrance, the United States demonstrated flexible adaptation and presented itself as the protector of China. Two months after Zhang's murder, the English-language *China Weekly Review*, published in Shanghai but written and edited by Americans, dismissed the speculation about a secret Soviet-Japanese deal in Manchuria as "scarcely possible." More likely, the weekly review predicted, the USSR would stand on the side of United States and China. Britain might be sympathetic to Japan (a view that proved to be incorrect, as is discussed later), but the British dominions (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) would stand in opposition because they did not want a stronger Japan. The newspaper reported renewed talk of a war between Japan and the United States, referring in particular to Mikhail Borodin: "The former Soviet adviser to the radical Chinese Nationalists at Canton and Hankow was recently quoted by the *United Press* as forecasting an early war between Japan and America over the China question."[402]

The United States increased its influence in China using its "policy as soft as gypsum" (see p. 115), while Japan further antagonized China, including Manchuria, with saber rattling. Japan's difficulties in China pleased Moscow. Ivan Maiskii, for example, wrote in September 1928: "Japan has fallen into a pincer trap between American imperialism and the Chinese nationalist movement, so it has no desire to complicate its relations with us."[403] Karakhan noted gloatingly that Japan would get further bogged down in China, a situation that would only weaken its position on the Asian continent and "aggravate its relations with the United States."[404] A Polish diplomat in Harbin was surprised by how quickly Manchuria had changed. Writing in May 1929, he noted that just a few years earlier, there had been hardly any Chinese schools or sports organizations in Harbin. Yet, now the first sport event for Chinese students in Harbin, a four-day gala, had been organized. This nugatory event assumed political significance: it had become a "huge Chinese national manifestation" (*wielka manifestacja narodowa chińska*), demonstrating that "both the ruling circles and the Chinese people in Harbin and Manchuria were trying in the most distinct way and at every step to emphasize their nationalistic aspirations bordering on chauvinism." Officials in Mukden "spared neither authority nor money to make this event the most celebratory and impressive show."[405]

Meanwhile, seemingly out of despair, Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi of Japan explored a coordinated approach to the "China problem" with Britain, which appeared friendlier to Japan than did the United States. "Great Britain," the British Foreign Office noted in August 1928, was "at the moment being courted

[402] J B.P., "The Quadrangular Fight in Manchuria," *China Weekly Review*, 4 August 1928, 332–33.

[403] Maiskii, *Izbrannaia perepiska s rossiiskimi korrespondentami*, 243.

[404] Karakhan to Stalin, 18 December 1928m AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 308, d. 54625, l. 97.

[405] AAN, MSZ 2/322/0-10016, 1–3.

by China for support against Japan, and by Japan against China. We are in the interesting but delicate position of 'How happy could I be with either, were the other fair charmer away.' " Britain did not have much sympathy for Japan, even though it understood that "in the matter of Treaties, Japan is fighting our battle and should have our support." In London's view:

> Circumstances have been forcing Japan into an attitude of uncompromising hostility towards Nationalist China, while our own policy remains one of forbearance and benevolence. . . . We cannot "co-operate" with Japan in what in spite of protests and assurances is a policy of pressure and aggression against China. . . . It is difficult, therefore, to find a satisfactory basis of 'co-operation' with Japan.[406]

When Tanaka dispatched his special envoy to London in the autumn of 1928, London did not have much more to say to him other than to express its appreciation for Japan's frank communication.[407] Although we do not know whether Moscow was familiar with London's views of the situation, Moscow continued to suspect an Anglo-Japanese rapprochement and made every effort to divide these two imperialist powers.[408] In any case, in May 1929, Japan had no choice but to recognize Chiang's Nanjing government officially. Britain and the United States had recognized Chiang's government already in 1928.

Tanaka was beleaguered on all fronts. Vehemently opposed by the army, Tanaka decided not to bring Kōmoto and other self-confessed assassins to justice. When Tanaka reported to the emperor on 28 June 1929 that he had been unable to identify Zhang's murderers but that he had found no one in the Japanese army had been involved, the emperor informed him that his (Tanaka's) decision contradicted his own earlier pledge to punish the malefactors in the army. The emperor told his attendant that he didn't understand Tanaka and didn't wish to hear from him again.[409] Devastated by the emperor's reproof, Tanaka wept and resolved on the spot to fall on his sword. The cabinet tried to persuade him to stay on, but to no avail. Kuhara begged him to reconsider his resolve several times, but Tanaka yelled at him: "Keep quiet. Shut up!"[410] On July 2, he officially tendered his resignation, and the cabinet collapsed. Less than three months later, on 29 September 1928, Tanaka died. The official announcement was that he died of stenosis of the heart. However, according to contemporary Japanese observers, the most likely cause of his death was suicide by *harakiri*. Some reports stated that he had cut his neck.[411]

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[406] NA, FO 371/13171, F 4494/7/10, 3–4, 6 (14 August 1928).

[407] Ibid., F4876/7/10 (8 September 1928).

[408] Aiaks, "Anglo-iaponskoe soglashenie," *Novyi Vostok*, no. 25 (1929): 74–102.

[409] Harada Kumao, *Saionji kō to seikyoku* (Tokyo, 1950), 1:11.

[410] Hosokawa Ryūgen, *Tanaka Giichi* (Tokyo, 1976), 221.

[411] Nakajima Kamejirō, "Tanaka Giichi taishō no seppuku," *Bungei shunjū* 33, no. 16 (August 1955): 54–57. For a detailed discussion of the cause of Tanaka's death, see Tazaki, *Hyōden Tanaka Giichi*, 2:762–767. See also Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 36:43.

Failed insurrections in Inner Mongolia, 1928

Just as events in Manchuria did not turn out as Tokyo had planned, neither did they turn out as Moscow had planned. Zhang Xueliang swiftly and vigorously managed the emergency situation that his father's death created. Manchuria did not fall into chaos. Moscow rescinded whatever plans it had made for Communist insurgency in Manchuria. In Inner Mongolia, too, as discussed earlier, Moscow (through its Comintern representatives) had planned an insurrection and had promised its support. Given the uncertain conditions in Manchuria after Zhang's murder, however, Moscow decided to wait and see.[412] It appears that by August, having seen Zhang Xueliang gain full control of Manchuria, Moscow canceled its plans for an insurrection. No clear instruction on this decision reached Inner Mongolia in time, however, and the Mongolian revolutionaries proceeded to revolt. Without the promised aid from the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic, their insurrection was a miserable failure. A British diplomat reported from Harbin on 30 August 1928:

> With their few hundreds of adherents, the rebels raided the railway in several places and succeeded in holding up the traffic for a few days, as a demonstration of what they could do. . . . The Soviet Government had officially denied any participation in the outbreak. . . . For some reason or other the expected support was withheld at the last moment and the movement now seems doomed to failure.[413]

Inner Mongolian revolutionaries could not understand Moscow's change of heart. They protested that Moscow's emissary, Ivan P. Stepanov (1890–1959), had approved their plans, but they were informed that this approval was Stepanov's personal decision, not Moscow's.[414]

The Mongolians certainly did not know of the Stalin-Kuhara "agreement," nor did they see the link between the Soviet plot to have Zhang Zuolin disarmed or else killed and the preparations for insurrection in Inner Mongolia. The revolutionaries, including Mersé (Guo Daofu 郭道甫, 1894–ca. 1934), the leader of the People's Revolutionary Party of Inner Mongolia, became disillusioned with the Soviet Union. As a Russian historian has recently noted, Japan had nothing to do with the insurrection. And yet, Moscow disingenuously blamed Japan for the "provocation."[415] Soviet loyalists denounced Mersé as a "traitor."[416]

[412] A few days after the murder, when the world did not know whether Zhang Zuolin had died in the bombing, the Politburo discussed the situation in Manchuria, emphasizing that the Comintern had not made any firm decision about whether to proceed with the planned insurrection. See RGASPI, f. 17, op. 166, d. 262, ll. 4–5 (8 June 1928).

[413] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, 35:318.

[414] See the November 1928 discussion between Inner Mongolians and Soviet representatives: RGASPI, f. 514, op. 2, d. 14, ll. 15–40.

[415] See S.L. Kuz'min, "Barginskoe vosstanie 1928 g. Chast' II," *Vestnik Instituta vostokovedeniia RAN*, no. 2 (12) (2020): 260–61; Christopher P. Atwood, *Young Mongols and Vigilantes in Inner Mongolia's Interregnum Decades, 1911–1931* (Leiden, 2002), 2:854.

[416] RGASPI, f. 514, op. 2, d. 14, l. 31. After Japan's military invasion of Manchuria, Mersé was

The Sino-Soviet War, 1929

Zhang Xueliang turned out to be a hard nut to crack for Moscow. If he had joined the Soviet conspiracy to assassinate his father, he did so as a Chinese patriot. It appears that Moscow now turned on Xueliang. Two months after Zhang Zuolin's murder, according to a semi-official history of Soviet intelligence, Moscow obtained documents about a deal negotiated between Tokyo and Zhang Xueliang, a "Japanese henchman," for the creation of an "Independent Manchurian Republic" that would be a Japanese protectorate. The republic would function as an explicitly anti-Chinese (specifically, anti-KMT) and anti-Soviet buffer state that would include Outer and Inner Mongolia.[417] Xueliang was far from a Japanese minion. On the contrary, he was a fanatic patriot and would never have gone into such negotiations. In fact, no evidence exists that he held any such negotiations. Clearly, these documents were forgeries by Soviet intelligence.

The subsequent conflict between Xueliang and Moscow further highlights Stalin's revolutionary aims and collusion with Japanese politicians and conspirators. By joining the KMT, Xueliang helped Chiang unite much of China for the first time in more than two decades. As difficult as this proved to be for Japan, it also led to China becoming more assertive toward the Soviet Union. Intent on taking over the CER from Soviet control, Zhang resorted to massive dismissals and arrests of Soviet employees. Moscow retaliated by arresting Chinese people in the Soviet Union. In May 1929, Xueliang raided the Soviet consulate in Harbin, just as his father had raided the Soviet embassy in Beijing in 1927, and published the confiscated documents as evidence of Moscow's subversive activity in Manchuria. Some of these documents purported to demonstrate Soviet assassination campaigns against Chinese officials and Soviet plans to communize Manchuria. As in 1927, some of the confiscated documents were written in the old Russian, non-Soviet orthography and were most likely forgeries.[418] The raid thus produced little actual damage to the Soviet diplomatic mission in Manchuria.

As Chinese pressure against the Soviet Union intensified, so did Moscow's response. Tanaka's resignation and death did not seem to end the kind of coordination (or conspiracy) that had been going on between Japan and the Soviet

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lured into the Soviet consulate in Manchuli, where he was abducted to the Soviet Union. In 1934, he was sentenced to be shot as a Japanese spy. Although the sentence was later commuted to ten years of incarceration, his fate remains unknown. D. Ölziibaatar, *Iaagaad 1937 on . . . ?* (Ulaanbaatar, 2004), 144–45.

[417] *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi vneshnei razvedki* (Moscow, 1997), 3:215–16. See also Kolpakidi and Prokhorov, *KGB*, 196.

[418] See Zhang Xueliang's letter to Chiang kai-shek, undated, and a sample document, Academia Historica digital archive, docs. 001-060080-00001-003, 001-060080-00001-004, https://ahonline.drnh.gov.tw/; *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui Ri kangzhan shiqi. Xubian* (Taipei, 1981), 2:204–7. Japanese officials acknowledged them as likely forgeries: JACAR, B02030825700, 36.

Union. The new prime minister, Hamaguchi Osachi (濱口雄幸, 1870–1931), installed as foreign minister Shidehara Kijūrō, the old liberal who had previously sought some kind of understanding with Moscow (see p. 97). Japanese nationalist imperialists had by then given up on Xueliang,[419] and Japanese conspirators "incited" (嗾しかけて) Moscow against him while hinting to Moscow that Japan would not intervene in the Sino-Soviet conflict.[420] This testimony by Hashimoto Toranosuke (橋本虎之助, 1883–1952), a Soviet specialist and Japan's military attaché in Moscow from 1922 to 1924, clearly points to the existence of backstage tacit coordination between Soviet and Japanese schemers. Soon after Tanaka's resignation, Moscow began to use its military forces more resolutely than before. In July 1929, armed skirmishes erupted between China and the Soviet Union, and the two countries completely broke off diplomatic relations. China assumed that because the Soviet Union had accepted the Kellogg-Briand Pact (officially called the General Treaty for Renunciation of War as an Instrument of National Policy) in February 1929, it would not dare open fire on China—but that calculation proved wrong.[421] In August, Moscow created the Special Far Eastern Army (OKDVA), and Vasilii Bliukher was appointed as its commander. A major battle immediately ensued.

In launching a war against China, Moscow understood that Japan would not interfere: If China successfully appropriated the CER, then it would also take back possession of the South Manchurian Railway from Japan—and Japan would not tolerate that, so Tokyo would have no choice but to support Moscow.[422] According to Soviet diplomat Grigorii Besedovskii (in the forged Litvinov "memoir" that Besedovskii actually wrote), the "Japanese industrialist Suzuki" said that the Japanese would not interfere so long as Soviet troops "did not cross the meridian fifty kilometers east of Hailar."[423] The "Japanese industrialist Suzuki" was almost certainly Kuhara. For some reason (possibly out of fear of retribution for disclosing the identity of a valuable Soviet asset even two and half decades after the fact), Besedovskii chose not to mention Kuhara's name, using as an alias one of the most common Japanese names.

War between the Soviet Union and China began in Manchuria in September 1929, and by December, it ended resoundingly in favor of the Soviet Red Army, which had widely deployed airplanes and made short work of the poorly

[419] Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904–1932* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 367.

[420] Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 139, 332–33.

[421] Xue Xiantian, *Minguo shiqi Zhong-Su guanxi shi: 1917–1949* (Beijing, 2009), 1:224. The "Kellogg–Briand Pact" was a post–World War I international peace agreement whose signatories promised to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. Fifteen nations, including the United States, France, Britain, and Japan, signed the agreement in August 1928, and a total of sixty-three nations, including China and the Soviet Union, ultimately joined the pact.

[422] D.B. Slavinskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Kitai: istoriia diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii, 1917–1937 gg.* (Moscow, 2003), 186.

[423] Litvinov [Besedovskii], *Notes for a Journal*, 128. Besedovskii must have learned this information in Paris, where he worked after Tokyo. He soon defected to the West, however.

equipped Chinese forces. Moreover, Japan had helped the Soviet Union by refusing to let Zhang use the South Manchurian Railway to transport his troops.

Stalin did not miss the chance to export revolution to Manchuria. In a 7 October 1929 letter to Viacheslav Molotov, Stalin suggested that it was time to think about "*organizing* a revolutionary insurrection in Manchuria." He went on to explain the specific steps he wanted to take:

> Now we need to organize two regiment-brigades chiefly made up of Chinese, arm them with everything needed (artillery, machine guns, etc.), put Chinese at the head of the brigade and dispatch them to Manchuria, with the following tasks: to stir up an insurrection among the Manchurian troops, to recruit reliable soldiers from among them, letting others go home after removing the commanders, to form them into a division, take Harbin and, after gathering force, declare Zhang Xueliang overthrown, and establish a revolutionary power (crush the landlords, bring in the peasants, create Soviets in the cities and villages, and the like). This is necessary. This we can, and I think, should do. This doesn't violate any "international laws." Everyone will understand that we are against war with China, that our Red Army soldiers are only defending our borders and have no intention to cross into China. If an insurrection takes place within Manchuria, that's something perfectly understandable, given the conditions of the regime created by Zhang Xueliang. Think about it. It's important.[424]

The Soviet secret police carried out sabotage operations, as well as operations against the anti-Bolshevik Russian émigrés, killing everyone, including women and children in some settlements.[425] Simultaneously, the Red Army and the CCP deluged Manchuria with overwhelming amounts of Communist propaganda, following through on Stalin's plan to organize a "revolutionary insurrection." In November, Stalin chose to "cross into China," reversing his plan not to do so.[426]

Japan apparently issued a warning to the Soviet Union at one point. Many years later, Katakura Tadashi (片倉衷, 1898–1991), who was deeply involved in Manchurian affairs in the 1930s, testified that in 1929, when the massive invasion of Soviet troops began, Japan warned Moscow that it would oppose the incursion of Soviet troops into southern Manchuria.[427] This stance seems to be what Kuhara meant when he said that Japan would not interfere if Soviet troops "did not cross the meridian fifty kilometers east of Hailar." Shidehara, Japan's

[424] Stalin to Molotov, 7 October 1929, in *Pis'ma I.V. Stalina V.M. Molotovu*, 167–68.

[425] G.V. Melikhov, *Russkaia emigratsiia v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniiakh na Dal'nem Vostoke (1925–1932)* (Moscow, 2007), 166–67; Michael M. Walker, *The 1929 Sino-Soviet War: The War Nobody Knew* (Lawrence, KS, 2017), 233–35. For a Chinese account, see Sima et al., *Zhang laoshi yu Zhang shaoshuai*, 236–37.

[426] On these battles, see Walker, *1929 Sino-Soviet War*, 238–47.

[427] *Katakura Tadashi danwa sokkiroku (jō)* (Tokyo, 1982), 99; Katakura Tadashi, "Nakamura taii jiken to Kantōgun," *Maru* 11, no. 1 (123) (January 1958), 44.

foreign minister, also warned Moscow that when the Soviet troops proceeded to Hailar, Soviet actions in Manchuria would not help improve Soviet-Japanese relations.[428] Moscow apparently heeded these warnings, and the Soviet forces did not advance into southern Manchuria.

In this context, Vasilii Bliukher's suspicion that Stalin and Kuhara had some secret deal (see p. 113) makes sense. Bliukher spied a golden opportunity and made repeated requests to Moscow to let his forces advance and recover what Russia had lost in the Russo-Japanese War (i.e., the South Manchurian Railway and other Japanese possessions in Manchuria). Moscow refused every request he made. Bliukher had difficulty understanding why.[429] According to Besedovskii, as the Red Army approached Bukhedu, a railway station between Hailar and Qiqihar, Kliment E. Voroshilov (1881–1969), the people's commissar of military affairs, cabled Moscow that his forces could occupy Harbin in two days. Bukhedu was probably somewhere around the "meridian fifty kilometers east of Hailar," the location Kuhara had mentioned. Stalin, Besedovskii noted, "recalled Klim [Voroshilov] to Moscow by telegraph: 'We must get him away from there at once, otherwise he'll take it on himself to bring back as captives not only Chang Tso-lin [Zhang Zuolin, *sic*, a mistake for his son Xueliang] but also the Mikado from Tokyo.' "[430]

Stalin's refusal of Bliukher's request was a counsel of prudence. The Red Army had made preparations to implement Stalin's plan for sovietizing Manchuria: Bliukher would secure Manchuria's border regions, while the "revolutionary insurrection" would make Soviet power in Manchuria a fait accompli. Stalin believed that this plan would not violate any international laws or deals. In the course of the battle over Manchuria, however, it appears that Stalin ultimately decided against the sovietization of Manchuria. Most likely, the Soviet and Chinese preparations for the "revolutionary insurrection" were inadequate. Following Moscow's lead, the CCP had prepared for a revolutionary insurrection in Manchuria,[431] but as Chong-Sik Lee has noted, its pro-Soviet stance with respect to the CER incident "could not have endeared the party to the local Chinese masses."[432] Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀, 1879–1942), a co-founder of the CCP, was expelled from the party as a Trotskyite for opposing Moscow's war against China. (However, Trotskii himself supported Stalin's imperialist war.) Thus, Moscow seems to have fallen victim to its own efforts to stir up Chinese nationalism—the Soviet colonialist hypocrisy that Kopp had warned against (see p. 69). In that previously quoted 7 October 1929 letter to Molotov,

[428] Shidehara Kijūrō, *Gaikō gojūnen* (Tokyo, 1951), 118.

[429] Bliukher expressed his incomprehension to Troianovskii. See "Kuhara Fusanosuke jutsu," 466.

[430] Litvinov [Besedovskii], *Notes for a Journal*, 128–29.

[431] Liu Ding, who played a central role in converting Zhang Xueliang to the CCP side in 1936, took part in this preparation. See Chapter 4, p. 313.

[432] Chong-Sik Lee, *Revolutionary Struggle in Manchuria: Chinese Communism and Soviet Interest, 1922–1945* (Berkeley, CA, 1983), 103.

Stalin introduced his proposal for organizing a revolutionary insurrection with the word (*Kcmamu*) (incidentally), a word choice that suggests that it was an "incidental" plan to be carried out *if* the Manchurian situation turned out to be propitious for insurrection. Voroshilov and Bliukher were ready to occupy Manchuria, but Stalin played it safe so as not to face the angry Manchurian populace or risk military conflict with Japan. The time was not ripe for Stalin.

Although Japan's neutrality in the Sino-Soviet conflict over the CER was logical, it gave the world the impression that there was a secret deal of some kind between Japan and the Soviet Union. A Polish diplomat in Harbin noted that when the Soviet consulates were being shut down in Manchuria because of the war, three consular officials took refuge in a Japanese hotel. Their last act in Harbin was to enjoy the "imperialist privileges" that they had been fighting against from day one—even though in 1925, when the diplomatic corps had asked Karakhan whether he wanted the Soviet mission in China to be guarded, he had answered that the best guard was the red banner with a hammer and sickle. The Polish consul in Harbin, Stanisław Balicki, noted that the Sino-Soviet conflict was probably beneficial to Japan; even though there was no evidence, in light of the fact that Harbin's competent circles were convinced of a Soviet-Japanese secret deal, it was a "probability" (*prawdopodobieństwo*).[433] A Latvian political observer was one of those convinced that a secret deal existed between Moscow and Tokyo.[434]

Moscow and Tokyo certainly appeared to be in league together. Externally, Moscow presented such a picture.[435] Henry L. Stimson (1867–1950), the U.S. secretary of state, was deeply concerned about the armed conflict between China and the Soviet Union. (Moscow's position was that its use of force in China was fully justified as the right of self-defense and in no way violated the pact.) When Stimson proposed an international mediation,[436] Moscow denounced it as the old American scheme to internationalize the CER.[437] Japan did not support this U.S. initiative, and it failed in the end. In late November, Stimson invoked the Kellogg-Briand Pact to "prevent" a war that by then was already almost over. Moscow indignantly denounced Washington's second attempt to interfere: Washington did not recognize the Soviet government but had the audacity to turn to it with "advice and orders."[438] Moscow followed up with grateful notes about Japan's refusal to support Washington's attempted interference.[439] Here,

[433] AAN, MSZ 2/320/0-10016, 16–17, 19–20.

[434] Kriukov and Kriukov, *KVZhD 1929*, 401–2.

[435] Internally, Moscow certainly acknowledged Japan's "indirect support" in the conflict with China. See for example Karakhan to Troianovskii, 9 October 1929, AVP, f. 0146, op. 12, p. 138, d. 1, l. 84.

[436] United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929*, Volume II (Washington, DC, 1929), 242–44.

[437] "Imperialisty i KVZhD," *Izvestiia* 8 August 1929, 1.

[438] "Popytka vmeshatel'stva pravitel'stv Soed. shtatov, Frantsii i Anglii v peregovory SSSR s Mukdenom," *Pravda*, 4 December 1929, 1.

[439] "Pozitsiia Iaponii—ne prepiatstovat' razvitiiu neposredtsvennykh peregovorov," "Iaponiia

too, Moscow skillfully divided Japan and the United States. Meanwhile, Japan's pro-Soviet stance angered the Chinese.

Overwhelmed by the Red Army, Zhang Xueliang agreed to a ceasefire, and in December 1929, he concluded a peace treaty with Moscow (the "Khabarovsk Protocol") that largely restored Soviet claims to the CER and ended the fighting. Japan played a role in resolving the conflict: In his memoir, Shidehara claimed that he had brokered peace between China and the Soviet Union.[440] Soviet consulates in Manchuria and Chinese consulates in the Soviet Far East reopened as a preliminary step to the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries.[441] Numerous meetings were held to iron out the conflicting interests of China and the Soviet Union, to no avail. Consequently, full diplomatic relations did not resume until after Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931.

Stalin's modus operandi

Having survived civil war and foreign intervention, the Bolsheviks sought to export revolution abroad without jeopardizing the Soviet Union's international standing. The inherent tensions between these two goals gave Moscow all the more reason to camouflage its secret operations. When the Soviet effort to export revolution to Europe failed, Moscow turned its attention to Asia, where all the major imperialist powers were competing for a greater share of the spoils. Asia presented fertile ground for fomenting revolution and turning the imperialist powers against one another.

China had become key to Moscow's geopolitical strategy. The "China problem" had also led to Japan's international isolation in the wake of World War I. Moscow deftly exploited Tokyo's dilemma. Japanese liberals, such as Shidehara and Debuchi, were happy to use Moscow as a political lever against the Western imperialist powers (Britain and the United States in particular). Many Japanese nationalists were equally comfortable working with the Soviet Union, finding common ground with Soviet Communism's call for the overthrow of capitalism. China's nationalism, like nationalism in other countries, was bound to turn against the Western colonial powers, and Moscow saw this opportunity and the tension it would create between Japan and the United States, who had long been feuding over hegemony in the Pacific while Britain stood in between. By stirring up revolutionary nationalism in China, and taking advantage of his influence over Japanese political leaders, Stalin saw he could keep Japan and Britain from returning to some kind of alliance and further divide Japan and the United States. Moscow's actions contributed to Britain's epochal shift in colonial policy towards China in the 1920s, as well as Japan's failure to follow suit. Stalin, in his conversation with Gotō, saw Japan's striking geopolitical

otnositsia otritsatel'no k vmeshatel'stvu," "Iaponskaia pechat' privetstvuet otvet SSSR," *Pravda*, 5 December 1929, 5.

[440] Shidehara, *Gaikō gojūnen*, 117–19.

[441] Xue, *Minguo shiqi Zhong-Su guanxi shi*, 252–53.

inflexibility regarding China. It was Japan's very adherence to the established international laws and treaties[442] that made their actions appear as an attempt to perpetuate the exploitation of China. In other words, Japan may have tried to play the good international citizen, but the world in which it tried to operate had already changed. Tokyo failed to see a new world, or at least failed to adapt to it.

Moscow, in its own failure with the CCP in 1927, took advantage of this opportunity by exploiting several valuable Japanese political assets. Tanaka Giichi, with skeletons in his closet, was one. Kuhara, an industrialist with financial and political ambitions, was willing to work with China and the Soviet Union, as he had done before, to promote Japan's interests (as well as his own) at the cost of the Western imperialist powers. Kōmoto and Tanaka (R), both military intelligence officers, appear to have played a crucial role behind the scenes in Soviet operations in Asia. Stalin would exploit Tanaka Giichi's ghost even after he died in 1929, while the other three continued to play important roles in Japan's Manchurian saga, as the next chapter discusses.

Stalin used his Japanese and Chinese assets brilliantly. Zhang's murder was a Stalinist tour de force, superbly camouflaged. As we have seen, Stalin explicitly directed Karakhan to camouflage (замаскировать) Moscow's activity in China and employ every kind of "conspiracy" to that end (see p. 88). Zhang's murder was unlikely the only case of murder that the Soviets camouflaged to appear as the work of "anti-Soviet" assassins. For example, in July 1927, Soviet ambassador to Poland, Petr L. Voikov (1888–1927), who had been implicated in the Bolshevik murders of the Romanov family in 1918, was shot dead by Boris Koverda (1907–87), a Belarusan émigré from Vilnius. Koverda probably did not know that he was being used as a cat's-paw by the Soviet secret police. Voikov had compromised Soviet intelligence operations in Poland with his "womanizing" and was therefore recalled to Moscow. Rather than just allowing him to leave, Moscow appears to have chosen to stage an assassination by a "White terrorist," starring Voikov.[443]

In 1926, while working in China, Mikhail Borodin openly spelled out much of the Bolshevik modus operandi in international politics to the future Madame Chiang kai-shek, Song Meiling (Soong Mei-ling 宋美齡, 1898–2003), whose sister was Rosamond Song Qingling (Soong Ching-ling, 宋慶齡, 1893–1981), Madame Sun Yat-sen. Evidently, Borodin spoke frankly to Song Meiling because she was Sun Yat-sen's sister-in-law. Their conversations took place in English. Both had studied in the United States and were fluent speakers. In exile in Taiwan many years later, Song wrote a book based on her conversations with Borodin, writing from notes and memory. Therefore, the precise wording of the written

[442]This was the view of John Van Antwerp MacMurray, the U.S. ambassador to China from 1925 to 1929. See MacMurray, *How the Peace Was Lost*.

[443]Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Political Provocation as Stalin's Foreign Policy: The von Twardowskii Affair, 1932," in *Historia est testis temporum*, ed. Jan Malicki, Bibliotheca Europae Orientalis, vol. 47 (Warsaw, 2017), 106.

conversations, particularly Borodin's remarks, should not be taken as verbatim quotes. Nevertheless, his comments reveal an extraordinary frankness rarely seen elsewhere and disclose details that are consistent with what we know about Stalin's operations in Asia.

Borodin described the Bolshevik modus operandi as a "technique so deft in its vitiation that it is often imperceivable except to the practiced eye and mature judgement."[444] Borodin paraphrased Lenin: "As Lenin said, the true revolutionaries are those willing to use all sorts of strategems [*sic*, stratagems], artifices, illegal methods, evasions and subterfuges."[445] Zhang's murder seems to have been a brilliantly successful example of this imperceptible technique. The key to revolution, according to Borodin, is creating chaos: "Regrettable and paradoxical as it may seem, CHAOS is the key to revolution. For chaos brings purification and it is through chaos, the cleaning and rinsing processes, that Marxism-Leninism can bring order and sanity into society—a self-purification process."[446] He quoted the English poet John Milton (1608–1674): "Fortunately for our party, Communism thrives and grows best in the soil of capitalistic chaos—'chaos and old night' as the saying goes, and not in a controlled ideal climate."[447] Chaos is exactly what Borodin and the Bolsheviks sought in China in the 1920s and later. According to Borodin, the model for Bolshevik propaganda was the Catholic Church: "Through the technique of propaganda first used to great advantage by religions of the world, especially by the Catholic Church—the Congregation of Propaganda—from which came the best features we adopted eclectically for our use, we honed our own propaganda machinery accordingly."[448] Regarding liberals, they were to be used for the purpose of Communism:

> They are necessary forward troops attired in camouflage to achieving [*sic*] success in world revolution. They are all important, too, in (1) laying the ground work, and (2) clearing the mine fields, so to speak, and (3) generally softening-up resistance and prejudice against Communism. In the words of Lenin, Socialism is impossible without democracy. In other words, Liberalism must be made the spearhead for Communism.[449]

Moscow practiced its precept of camouflage, using not only liberals (such as Shidehara and Debuchi) but also leftists (such as Ozaki Hotsumi) and rightists (such as Kōmoto and Ōkawa) alike.

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[444]Madame Chiang, *Conversations*, 2. This English-Chinese bilingual book also appears in Chinese only in *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui Ri kangzhan shiqi. Xubian*, 2:64–118.

[445]Madame Chiang, *Conversations*, 27.

[446]Ibid., 46.

[447]Ibid., 84. "Chaos and old night" is a phrase in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), meaning a descent into confusion and disorder.

[448]Ibid., 51.

[449]Ibid., 44–45.

CHAPTER 3

Japan's Manchurian Saga (1929–1934)

It is in the nature of conspiracy to transcend political boundaries; conspirators conspire even with their enemies. This perspective is crucial to making sense of and even detecting Stalin's elaborate conspiratorial work. While his footprints are everywhere in the history of the twentieth century, they have been, in most cases, obscured. One can say the same of those intelligence workers, across multiple nations, who contributed to his secret operations. The murder of Zhang Zuolin is probably one of the best-executed (and therefore least-known) examples of such an operation. The sheer absence of discussion of the murder in accessible Russian archival documents is particularly telling. Yet, it is far from the only example. In dealing with capitalist countries, which he never trusted, Stalin was always inclined to conspiratorial operations. As some of these highly successful conspiracies are uncovered, we begin to get a different picture of major geopolitical developments in the last century. Japan's is a bellwether case, for so little of Stalin's true intentions with regard to Japan have been properly analyzed.

One can observe a difference in Stalin's treatment of Japan even when compared to other capitalist countries. In most cases, the Soviet government, including the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, was familiar with Stalin's policy orientation (and changes therein). Otherwise, it would have been difficult for the government and its diplomats to carry out their duties. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, Japan was handled differently. With Japan, conspiracy was not merely a tool but the dominant guide for Soviet diplomacy. The previous chapter discussed (see p. 106) how in June 1928, Maiskii, a Soviet diplomat in Tokyo, complained to Moscow about not being kept informed of the policy toward Japan. The Soviet ambassador to Japan, Aleksandr Troianovskii, was so frustrated by the lack of clear guidance that in December 1928, he found himself compelled to write to Stalin personally. His "top secret, personal" missive was written when Japan's Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi, out of despair in the wake of the Zhang murder, approached Britain for closer relations. How much Troianovskii knew about the unbridgeable distance between the two countries is not known. Evidently, he had fears of their rapprochement. Writing to Stalin, Troianovskii noted, first, that war between Japan and the United States was likely and that Britain would stand on Japan's side. If that happened, he asked Stalin, what would Moscow's position be? Unless Moscow promised unconditional neutrality, Japan would take Sakhalin, the Soviet Maritime Province, and Kamchatka. Then, the Soviet Union would have to fight. Troianovskii begged Stalin

Figure 3.1. Ambassador Aleksandr Troianovskii with Japan's ambassador to the Soviet Union, Tanaka Tokichi (田中都吉, 1871–1961) in Tokyo, 1928

to issue appropriate instructions. Secondly, Troianovskii asked how he should deal with the situation that would arise if the Soviet Union and the United States, which had not even recognized the Soviet Union, were to fight against their common enemy, Japan (and probably Britain). Troianovskii appealed to Stalin for clear instructions on this matter. Thirdly, Troianovskii told Stalin that Japan (particularly its navy) had been asking him what position Moscow would take in the event of Japan's war with the United States. He told Stalin that Moscow's answers had always been to dismiss any question like that as a "provocation," but it was a serious question with which Moscow had to deal. Should they hide their hand (which might turn Japan into their enemy) or should they "camouflage" (маскировать) their intentions by all (even "perfidious" [коварные]) methods, pretending to be Japan's friend? Troianovskii added that this was not just a question related to Japan but to Soviet foreign policy as a whole.[1] There is no evidence that he received any answer from Stalin.

Stalin kept his thoughts to himself and the narrowest circle around him. Often, even the people's commissar of foreign affairs did not know what guided Stalin's policy, as will be discussed in this chapter. All indications suggest that Stalin conspired to induce Japan into Manchuria, where it would bog down under its own weight. Instead of attempting to sovietize Manchuria, he now left the Chinese to deal with Japan, thereby draining Japan of resources with which to fend off the Soviet Union. In the end, Stalin's gambit worked remarkably well.

Timeline: *1929*: Tanaka Giichi's death (Japan); Sino-Soviet War; Appearance of Tanaka Memorial ‖ *1930*: End of Warlord Era (China) ‖ *1931*: Mukden Incident (China and Japan) ‖ *1932*: Founding of Manzhouguo; Soviet-Polish Pact of Non-

[1] *Moskva–Tokio. Politika i diplomatiia Kremlia 1921–1931. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moscow, 2007), 2:266–72.

aggression; Mass rebellions in MPR; Resumption of Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations ‖ *1932–33*: Great Famine (USSR) ‖ *1933*: Hitler's ascension to power (Germany); Japan's departure from the League of Nations; Opening of USA-USSR diplomatic relations.

3.1 The Tanaka Memorial

Coinciding with Tanaka's death in September 1929, pamphlets began to circulate in Manchuria concerning a memorial Tanaka had putatively presented to Japan's Emperor Hirohito in July 1927. (It is unknown whether this news reached Tanaka before he died. If so, it may well have accelerated his death. In any case, he was already a spent force for Moscow.) Then, in the autumn of 1929, an English translation ("Memorials of Premier Tanaka," translated by "L.T. Chen," 1929) was prepared for "private circulation among Chinese and other members of the Institute for Pacific Relations" attending the Institute conference to be held in Kyoto in October and November 1929.[2] (The Institute, founded in 1925 in Honolulu, was a liberal internationalist organization sympathetic to the Soviet Union and exploited by it. It published an organ, *Pacific Affairs*.)[3] Zhang Xueliang, Zhang Zuolin's son, entrusted Yan Baohang, a Christian pastor and a Communist sympathizer fluent in English and subsequently a celebrated CCP spy ("China's Sorge"), with translating the Japanese document into English for the Kyoto conference.[4] Whether Yan translated it at all is doubtful, given that neither Yan nor another leading delegate, Wang Zhuoran (王卓然, 1893–1975), Zhang Xueliang's close adviser, knew the Japanese language.[5] At the Kyoto conference, the Japanese government took strong issue, contending it was a forgery, and the Chinese delegates withdrew the English pamphlet.[6] The withdrawal did not end the dispute, however. Soon, the memorandum was picked up by the Chinese press, most notably by the December 1929 issue of the Nanjing

[2]A copy exists in Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, box 251.

[3]See John N. Thomas, *The Institute of Pacific Relations: Asian Scholars and American Politics* (Seattle, WA, 1974). Its American leader, Edward Clark Carter (1878–1954), accepted Stalin's show trials at face value (14).

[4]Wang Lianjie, *Yingxiong wuming: Yan Baohang* (Beijing, 2018), 2, 69–70. In 1927, Yan wanted to join the CCP, but his sponsor was arrested, and Yan's request was not met at the time. See Jin He, *Yan Baohang zhuan* (Shenyang, 2008), 129; an account by Yan himself: *Yan Baohang jinian wenji* (Shenyang, 1995), 397. In 1937, Yan secretly joined the CCP and became an all-important Communist spy planted deep inside the KMT political and military establishment (see Chapter 5, p. 404).

[5]Wang's autobiography does not mention the Tanaka Memorial scandal caused at the conference, even though its editors emphasize Wang's role in the event. This may mean that Wang himself doubted the memorial's authenticity. *Wang Zhuoran shiliao ji* (Shenyang, 1992), 13, 21–70, 72, 264.

[6]See Hatttori Ryūji, *NiTchū rekishi ninshiki: Tanaka jōsōbun o meguru sōkoku 1927–2010* (Tokyo, 2010), 48–52. Yan's account of this event is Yan Baohang, "Liuwang guannei Dongbei minzhong de kang-Ri futu douzheng," *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* (Beijing), no. 6 (1960): 87–88.

monthly *Shishi yuebao* under the heading "Disturbing Active Policy of Japan toward China and Mongolia: Tanaka Giiichi's Memorial Presented to the Japanese Emperor."[7]

The most likely Chinese source of the memorial was Wang Jiazhen (王家楨, 1899–1984), who, after studying in Japan, became a diplomat first under Zhang Zuolin and then under Zhang Xueliang. It now seems that Wang Jiazhen, on the basis of disinformation from the Soviets, linked Tanaka to an alleged Japanese plot for world conquest. After Zhang Zuolin's murder, Wang Jiazhen traveled to Nanjing to see his "old friend" Gong Debo (龔德柏, 1891–1980), a prominent journalist who had also studied in Japan. Wang commissioned Gong to write a book on the Zhang Zuolin murder case. Gong published *Ribenren mousha Zhang Zuolin an* (日本人謀殺張作霖案, The Case of the Japanese Murder of Zhang Zuolin) in May 1929 in Shanghai. Gong's account explicitly held Tanaka accountable for the Zhang assassination, provoking Japan to lodge not one but three formal protests. The impact of the book on China and the world at large was incalculable.[8] Armed with the book, Wang proceeded to implicate Tanaka, already dead by then, in a vast conspiracy he called the Tanaka Memorial. Claiming to have received the Japanese original from a "Chinese patriot in Tokyo," Wang printed two hundred copies and sent four to the Nanjing government. This was the memorial published in the *Shishi yuebao* monthly in December 1929 following the Kyoto conference.[9] Asked in 1983 by a Chinese scholar about the memorial's original, Wang said that he had "lost" it during the Cultural Revolution. At any rate, in 1929, five thousand copies of Wang Jiazhen's Tanaka Memorial were printed hurriedly and sent to schools and universities across the country.[10]

Wang Zhengting (C.T. Wang), China's foreign minister, however, told a different story. In his memoirs written after World War II, Wang Zhengting stated that it was he who had "succeeded in getting a copy [of the Tanaka Memorial]

[7] "Jingxin dongpo zhi Riben Man-Meng jiji zhengce: Tianzhong Yiyi shang Rihuang zhi zouzhang," *Shishi yuebao* (Nanjing) 1, no. 2 (December 1929): 1–20.

[8] See Shenyang shi dang'anguan, *Huanggutun shijian dang'an ziliao tuji* (Shenyang, 2018), 161–65; Hu Yuhai, " 'Ribenren mousha Zhang Zuolin an' de chuban yu yingxiang," *Shuaifu yuan*, no. 1 (2018): 21–22; Guo Junsheng, ed., *Zhang Zuolin yu Riben guanxi* (Shenyang, 2008), 158–61. Gong later stated that after his book's publication, Zhang Xueliang sent Wang to him to buy five thousand copies. Allowing Wang and Zhang to reprint the book in Manchuria, he made no fortune from the book. (In August 1929, it was reprinted in Mukden. See Shenyang shi dang'anguan, *Huanggutun shijian*, 160.) According to Wang, however, Gong was munificently rewarded for his book. Gong originally wanted to title his book "The Murder Case of Zhang Zuolin by the Japanese Government," but the press feared political repercussion, and in the end, the book was published as, literally translated, "The Murder Case of Zhang Zuolin by Ribenren [Japanese person(s)]." See *Gong Debo huiyi lu: tiebilunzhengshu shengse* (Taipei, 2001), 218–19. Gong's 1929 book was reissued in Beijing in 2007 and 2012.

[9] See Gao Dianfang, ed., *Aiguo renshi Wang Jiazhen: "Tianzhong zouzhe" de lishi jianzhengren* (Beijing, 1997), 5–6, 32–33, 74, 79–80. After the CCP's victory in 1949, Wang chose to stay in Communist China.

[10] Ibid., 80–81.

Figure 3.2. Wang Jiazhen, a Chinese diplomat who claimed to have obtained the Tanaka Memorial

and [had] had it translated into several languages in order to give due warning to the chancelleries of the important countries." It was, he insisted, "the blueprint of Japan's plan for world domination."[11] Oddly, he did not mention the language in which the copy was written. He also neglected to say that in 1930, the Chinese government had all but admitted that it was a forgery. Wang Zhengting contradicted himself many times on the matter of the memorial. In November 1931, for instance, when Japan lodged a protest against the Chinese use of the Tanaka Memorial in propaganda, Wang responded that he had never seen such a memorial, that he understood Japan's point of view, and that he would crack down on the circulation of the memorial in China.[12]

Now, most scholars in the world (with the exception of many in Russia and some in China) believe that the Tanaka Memorial was a forgery. No Japanese original has ever been found, and the many factual, historical, and other serious errors in the document were apparent from the very beginning. It did, however, contain matters known only to those intimately familiar with the Japanese government. This suggests that there must have been Japanese collaborators in the forgery. Already, in October 1929, Joseph W. Ballantine, a Japan specialist in the U.S. State Department, concluded that it contained so many obvious factual errors as to be "an obvious hoax": "The document contains many other

[11] Chengting Thomas Wang, *Ō Seitei kaikoroku: Looking Back and Looking Forward* (Tokyo, 2008), 132.

[12] See JACAR, B02030426900, 1–5.

Figure 3.3. Wang Zhengting, China's foreign minister (1928–31)

absurdities."[13] Half a year later, in response to Japan's protest against the publication of the memorial in the Chinese press, the Chinese government begrudgingly admitted that "according to those who advocate Sino-Japanese friendship," "this particularly chilling document" is a "forgery" (*yanding* [贋鼎]).[14]

The Soviet origins of the memorial

None of the discussion on the memorial pointed to the fact that the reason Wang Zhengting was silent about the original language was that the original was written in Russian. In 1940, Trotskii published an essay, "The 'Tanaka Memorial,' " in which he asserted that it was not a forgery. He claimed to have read it in 1925 (that is, before Tanaka became prime minister). According to him, the then Soviet secret police chief, Feliks E. Dzerzhinskii (1877–1926), obtained a photocopy directly from an agent in Tokyo, and Dzerzhinskii claimed it was "the program of the ruling circles, approved by the Mikado himself; it embraces the seizure of China, the destruction of the United States, world domination."[15] The fact that Trotskii claimed to have seen a copy in 1925 suggests that Moscow had already been at work forging such a memorial for several years (at least since 1925) and had only decided to release the Tanaka Memorial in 1929 upon Tanaka's death.[16] Indeed, it was the Soviet government that sanctioned its publication

[13]Joseph W. Ballantine to Stanley Hornbeck, 22 October 1929, Hornbeck Papers, box 251.

[14]"Tianzhong mizou zhi zhenwei wenti," *Zhongyang ribao*, 12 April 1930, 2.

[15]Leon Trotsky, "The 'Tanaka Memorial' " *Fourth International* 2, no. 5 (June 1941): 131–35. Trotskii said that the "original" was translated into English and sent to New York to hide the origin of the source. So, the copy Wang Zhengting obtained was likely in English.

[16]Trotskii's admission constitutes evidence at one remove that it was a Soviet forgery. See Herbert Romerstein and Eric Breindel, *The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America's*

in Chinese.[17] This fact certainly suggests that at least at some point, the Soviet government had the "original" and had allowed it to be released in Chinese translation. Why would it have been released at this point in time? In 1929, amid the Sino-Soviet War over the CER, Moscow used the release of the memorial to turn growing anti-foreign sentiment in China away from the Soviet Union and toward Japan. It worked: In the middle of the Sino-Soviet War in 1929, Zhang Xueliang began insisting that the main threat to China was not the Soviet Union but Japan. It was Yan Baohang and another Communist sympathizer and member of Zhang's entourage, Du Zhongyuan (杜重遠, 1897–1943), who helped to direct Zhang's attack against Japan. Soon, Zhang had assembled more than twenty Japanese-speaking intelligence specialists.[18]

There is more. In Wang Zhengting's account, the "Chinese patriot" from whom he insisted he acquired the memorandum was Cai Zhikan (蔡智堪, 1888–1955). Cai's account of how he obtained the memorandum mentions that there were reports that "Soviet Russia" had bought a copy from a high-ranking official of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that Wang had sought to buy the copy from the Russians. According to Cai, however, "Russia" had not gotten hold of the memorandum until June 1928, the month when Zhang Zuolin was assassinated. It was he himself, Cai stated, who secretly copied the original in the Imperial Palace depository in Tokyo.[19] Although Cai's account is too tall a tale to be believable, it is noteworthy that he inadvertently let slip the Russian connection.

Some intelligence specialists in Moscow have privately suggested that the original was written by the secret police disinformation service, particularly its agent and interpreter Roman N. Kim (1899–1967), who studied in Japan before the Russian Revolution and engaged in extensive intelligence against the Japanese in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.[20] Later, Kim testified that

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Traitors (Washington, DC, 2000), 520–21. The memorial was supposedly based on a discussion at the Eastern Conference held in Tokyo in 1927 (see p. 183 in this chapter), two years after Trotskii's first reading of the memorial.

[17] Anatolii Koshkin, *Iaponskii front marshala Stalina. Rossiia i Iaponiia: ten' Tsushimy dlinoiu v vek* (Moscow, 2004), 62. Viktor Usov says that the memorial was published in China in 1929 "with the help of the Russian special service." Usov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Kitae: 20-e gody XX veka* (Moscow, 2002), 143.

[18] See Jin, *Yan Baohang zhuan*, 130–40, 146, 155, 157. On his way back from Britain in 1929, the Christian pastor Yan stopped in the Soviet Union and realized his long-held dream of observing the first socialist state in the world (136). The fact that Yan had a Russian code name, Pavel (see Introduction, p. 22), may mean that his contact with the Soviets began at this time.

[19] Cai Zhikan, "Wo zenyang qude Tianzhong zouzhang," *Liaoning wenshi ziliao*, no. 1 (22) (1988), 154. Cai's account was originally published in the Hong Kong journal *Ziyouren* [自由人], 28 August 1954, 2.

[20] On Roman Kim, see I.V. Prosvetov, *"Krestnyi otets" Shtirlitsa* (Moscow, 2015); Aleksandr Kulanov, *Roman Kim* (Moscow, 2016); *Materialy mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi izvestnomu issledovateliu problem Vostochnoi Azii Romanu Nikolaevichu Kimu* (Moscow, 2017). A.A. Kirichenko, "Iz istorii rossiisko-iaponskikh otnoshenii," *Iaponiia bez predvziatostei* (Moscow, 2003), 301, suggests fabrication by OGPU. See also K.E. Cherevko and A.A. Kirichenko, *Sovetsko-*

from 1927–28 onward, he had taken part in the "especially secret operations" of the Soviet secret police against Japan.[21] These operations likely included preparations for the release of the memorial (as well as "honey traps" set for unsuspecting Japanese officials and journalists). When Stalin received the Tanaka Memorial, he is said to have proclaimed that it was a "splendid forgery."[22] In an effort to obfuscate the provenance of the memorial, Moscow even now adheres to various, elaborate stories of how its intelligence operatives stole this "secret Japanese document," a hoax that continues to trip up even Western specialists of Soviet intelligence.[23]

What lent the Tanaka Memorial credence was Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Moscow's internationally coordinated effort to present Japan's aggression against China as proof of the memorial's authenticity began just before the Mukden incident (or Jiuyiba/Liutiaohu shibian) on 18 September 1931, an incident that marked the beginning of Japan's military invasion of Manchuria. The *day before* the incident, the *China Critic*, a Chinese-owned English-language weekly published in Shanghai, carried an editorial on the memorial: "The aim of this memorial is to show that 'in order to conquer China, we must first of all conquer Manchuria and Mongolia; and in order to conquer the world, we must first of all conquer China.' " The journal called for urgent attention: "It is our fervent hope that every Chinese should read it, in order to wake up to the malicious intentions towards China entertained by the typical Japanese Chauvinists, of whom the late Tanaka is a true representative."[24] The exact date of publication cannot be confirmed; possibly it was published a few days before or after the stated publication date. Still, the idea that this was a coincidence beggars belief. A week later, on September 24, the journal carried the entire memorial,[25] followed by the publication of highlights and a commentary.[26] Similar publications appeared in other countries and in other languages. The Comintern journal, *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional*, published a Russian "translation" in its 10 December 1931 issue,[27] although this "translation" was almost certainly the original. In the course of dissemination, the memorial underwent various minor modifications, and it is difficult to determine which version is "authentic." In

iaponskaia voina. 9 avgusta–2 sentiabria 1945. Rassekrechennye arkhivy (Moscow, 2006), 19.

[21] Roman Kim's file: TsA FSB, f.-23731, l. 27.

[22] Aleksei Kirichenko, *Shirarezaru NichiRo no nihyakunen*, tr. Kawamura Suguru and Nagochi Yōko (Tokyo, 2013), 71. This remark by Stalin circulated among the Soviet intelligence community, from which Kirichenko hailed.

[23] See for example Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York, 1999), 37.

[24] "The Tanaka Memorial," *China Critic*, 17 September 1931, 889–890.

[25] "Tanaka Memorial," *China Critic*, 24 September 1931, 923–34.

[26] "Tantrums of Tanaka," *China Critic*, 15 October 1931, 1,008–9; "Tanaka the Prophet," 12 November 1929, 1,098–1,101.

[27] "K memorandumu Tanaka," *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional*, nos. 33–34 (1931): 10–14; "Memorandum o pozitivnoi politike v Manchzhurii, predstavlennyi 25 iiulia 1927 g. prem'erom Tanaka," ibid., 47–62.

this book, the first English version published in the *China Critic* will be treated as the "original."

The editors of the *China Critic* refused at the time to disclose the source of the memorial, stating that "Provided the gravity of its character is recognized, we do not consider it necessary to disclose the source of this document." In any case, they declared "we have proved conclusively that recent actions of the Japanese tally exactly with the plots and plans outlined in Tanaka's Memorial. The Japanese have been and are carrying out the policy of Tanaka both in letter and in spirit." Yet, they admitted that the memorial was "a document of a preposterously outrageous character." They quote the memorial as saying, for instance: "If we want to control China, we must first crush the United States."[28]

If one reads the memorial carefully, its Soviet provenance becomes clear. Under "General Considerations" is declared: "For the sake of self-protection as well as the protection of others, Japan cannot remove the difficulties in Eastern Asia unless she adopts a policy of 'Blood and Iron.' But in carrying out this policy we have to face the United States which has been turned against us by China's policy of fighting poison with poison. In the future if we want to control China, we must first crush the United States just as in the past we had to fight in the Russo-Japanese War."[29] This was without doubt the most preposterous of its propositions, considering that at the time, the U.S. economy was at least ten times the size of the Japanese economy! Although many Japanese politicians were hostile to the United States, they were not so benighted or reckless as to fancy that they could "crush" such a mighty Goliath. This passage, intended for American consumption, reflected Moscow's consistent policy of turning Japan and the United States against each other. Equally antic is the following statement: "Having China's entire resources at our disposal we shall proceed to conquer India, the Archi pelago [*sic*], Asia Minor, Central Asia, and even *Europe* [emphasis added]."[30] Further, it notes: "In our struggle against the political and economic influence of Soviet Russia, we should drive China before us and direct the events from behind. Meanwhile, we should still secretly befriend Russia in order to hamper the growth of Chinese influence. It was largely with this purpose in view, that Baron Goto [Gotō Shinpei] of Kato's cabinet invited Joffe [Adolf Ioffe] to our country and advocated the resumption of diplomatic relations with Russia. . . . That we should draw swords with Russia again in the fields of Mongolia in order to gain the wealth of North Manchuria seems a necessary step in our program of national aggrandizement."[31] Again, Moscow's modus operandi, camouflage and deception, are ubiquitous in the memorial. Needless to say, Japan, too, practiced camouflage and deception. Yet, no politician would have written about it in an official document presented to the emperor.

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[28]"The Genuineness of Baron Tanaka's Memorial," *China Critic*, 12 November 1931, 1,111–12.

[29]"Tanaka Memorial," *China Critic*, 24 September 1931, 923.

[30]Ibid., 924.

[31]Ibid., 926, 927. Kato refers to Katō Kanji (see p. 221).

There is also a subtle connection between this memorial and the Zhang murder. The memorial was supposedly based on a discussion at the Eastern Conference (東方会議), held in Tokyo from 27 June to 7 July 1927, a few months after Tanaka Giichi had formed a cabinet and two years before the Kyoto conference of 1929. The Eastern Conference discussed a new ("active") policy toward China (in contrast to Shidehara's "passive" one). It indeed resolved to take a more active stance toward defending Japan's interests in China, including the use of force, if necessary.[32] Yet, that was exactly what other powers, including Britain and the United States, were doing at the time but what Japan (Shidehara) refused to do. The conclusion of the conference had very little in common with the detailed conquest plan laid out in the memorial. However, it is noteworthy that Kōmoto Daisaku, the self-acknowledged mastermind of the Zhang assassination plot in 1928, took part in the conference. In fact, it was Kōmoto who had urged Mori Kaku, the vice foreign minister under Tanaka, to hold the Eastern Conference.[33] Kōmoto likely wanted such a conference to serve as the apparent basis for the memorial. He then apparently provided to the Soviets the most extreme Japanese nationalist delusions about conquering the world by "crushing" the United States. His active participation in the conference cannot have been coincidental. Questioned in 1953 under Chinese captivity, Kōmoto denied that the Tanaka Memorial had had anything to do with the Eastern Conference.[34] Even if his confessions were genuine, Kōmoto clearly wanted to distance himself from the Eastern Conference: He said that in any case, he was not allowed to attend important sessions.[35] Kōmoto considered it expedient not to admit to the Chinese interrogators that the memorial was a forgery.

Today, it is difficult to take the Tanaka Memorial seriously, although at the time, it was certainly taken seriously in China, the Soviet Union, and the United States, the countries for which it was written. Thomas Rid, an American expert of disinformation, recently observed that the "potent psychological resonance made the Tanaka Memorial one of the most spectacular of all active measures of the past century."[36] The Soviet government had followed the infamous Russian forgery early in the twentieth century of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," purportedly a Jewish scheme for global domination. In the case of the Tanaka Memorial, Moscow hid its hand so adroitly that even Rid rules out its Soviet provenance and ascribes it to the Chinese. Moscow used Japan's demonstrated propensity for aggression as the best proof of the memorial's authenticity. After

[32] See Iboshi Hideru, "Chō Sakurin bakusatsu jiken no shinsō," *Geirin* 31, no. 2 (1982): 29–62; Yamaura Kan-ichi, ed., *Mori Kaku* (Tokyo, 1940), 581–94.

[33] As admitted by Kōmoto himself: Mori Katsumi, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi* (Tokyo, 1976), 264.

[34] Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, comps., *"Jiuyiba" shibian* (Beijing, 1988), 30.

[35] Ibid., 31.

[36] Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare* (New York, 2020), 45.

1931, Troianovskii, the Soviet ambassador to Japan who earlier had believed that the memorial was a forgery, came to believe that it was genuine.[37] In the United States, on 15 May 1932, the *New York Times* carried a long article about the memorial, which "has been circulating widely in this country in pamphlet form."[38] Although no determination was made as to authenticity, the article reflected the intense American interest in the memorial. Certainly, President Franklin Roosevelt was familiar with it. In 1935, he spoke of an "experience with an aristocratic Japanese classmate at Harvard, who talked freely about the time when Japan would become a conquering nation. The President felt this was in the blood of the Japanese leaders."[39] Even today, the memorial fools some specialists. Recently, a Polish specialist of Soviet disinformation has claimed the Tanaka Memorial's authenticity.[40]

By releasing the Tanaka Memorial in 1929 to the Chinese, Moscow pursued a clear political objective: to present Japan as the aggressor against China. In the two-three years since 1926–27, the political situation in China had changed significantly. China was by then nominally united under the KMT; the Soviet Union and China had severed diplomatic relations, and, most significantly, Japan was changing, too. In 1926–27, Foreign Minister Shidehara of Japan, worked with Moscow behind the scenes to adopt a "passive" (non-interference) policy toward China. This, as discussed earlier, led to tension between Britain and Japan, which was what Moscow desired. When Tanaka took over in the spring of 1927, he pursued an "active" policy and had military forces sent to China, which changed the dynamic of Chinese nationalism from anti-British to anti-Japanese. Meanwhile, Tanaka, plagued by skeletons in his own cupboard and fearing exposure, sought a secret understanding with Stalin through Kuhara Fusanosuke. Moscow took advantage of Tanaka's vulnerability and directly and indirectly influenced his aggressive policy toward China. When Tanaka backpedaled on his plan to disarm Zhang Zuolin's forces, Moscow staged the assassination of Zhang using Japanese collaborators, thus successfully shifting the blame to the Japanese. The murder was matched by the further growth of China's anti-Japanese nationalist movement. When Tanaka's cabinet fell in July 1929, the previous foreign minister, Shidehara, staged a comeback amid the growing tension between China and the Soviet Union over the CER. Shidehara

[37] See Takeshi Tomita, "Fal'sifitsirovannyi dokument o politike iaponskogo imperializma ("Meorandum Tanaka")," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 3 (2010): 174–75. Troianovskii borrowed a copy from the chair of the American delegation to the Institute for Pacific Relations conference in Kyoto, copied and read it, and concluded that it was "dubious." He forwarded the copy to Moscow, in any case. See AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 305, d. 54547, l. 1.

[38] 'Premier Tanaka's Memorial': Document and Dispute," *New York Times*, 15 May 1932, 3–4.

[39] Clarence E. Pickett, *For More than Bread* (Boston, 1953), 393. See also *Closest Companion: The Unknown Story of the Intimate Friendship between Franklin Roosevelt and Margaret Suckley* (Boston, 1995), 10.

[40] Marek Świerczek, *Jak Sowieci przetrwali dzięki oszustwu: sowiecka decepja strategiczna* (Warsaw, 2021), 376; *Krucjata 1935: wojna, której nigdy nie było* (Warsaw, 2021), 50–51.

refused again to take steps in line with the Western powers, which the Chinese government took as a slap in the face. This was again exactly what Moscow wanted. Shidehara went on to broker sub rosa negotiations between China and the Soviet Union (see Chapter 2, p. 171).

Ultimately, Shidehara followed in the steps of the Western powers in abolishing unequal treaties with China. Japan's new ambassador to China, Shidehara's protégé Saburi Sadao (佐分利貞男, 1879–1929), was trusted by the Chinese, including Chiang Kai-shek, with whom he had been acquainted since 1927. Saburi was eager to improve Japan's relations with China, and the Chinese, for their part, placed their hopes in him for an improved Sino-Japanese relationship. A Chinese writer declared that this was the "most precious page in the history of one hundred years of Sino-Japanese relations."[41] On 15 November 1929 (in the midst of the Sino-Soviet war), on his way back to Tokyo, Saburi visited Zhang Xueliang in Mukden, who got on well with Saburi and agreed with him on many issues regarding China and Japan.[42] Oddly, the Chinese record of Zhang Xueliang's life published in Beijing in 1996 (and reissued in 2009) states that they did not discuss politics.[43]

Then, on November 29, after he returned to Tokyo for consultation, Saburi supposedly committed "suicide," shooting himself in the head. The first autopsy concluded that his death was a murder, but a second declared a suicide. Saburi died in mysterious fashion, strikingly similar to the 1941 death of the famous Soviet defector, Walter Krivitsky (1899–1941), in Washington, DC. Many suspected that both cases were homicides disguised as suicides. Later in life, regarding Saburi's death in 1929, Zhang Xueliang stated that he suspected murder, not suicide.[44] One wonders why the 1996/2009 Beijing book on Zhang Xueliang's life goes out of its way to note that Zhang and Saburi did not discuss political issues. What was the source? At any rate, it was immediately after Saburi's untimely death that the Tanaka Memorial was published in *Shishi yuebao* in Nanjing. Had Saburi learned of the secret origin of the memorial and been murdered as a result? It is quite possible that someone wanted to close the "most precious page in the history of one hundred years of Sino-Soviet relations," for good.

Suspicious connections with the Soviet Union followed Saburi in the years preceding his death. In January 1928, when he returned to Tokyo from London on the Trans-Siberian Railway, Troianovskii happened to be traveling in the same train as Saburi. Although Troianovskii's compartment was next to his, Saburi avoided any conversation with him.[45] In spring 1929, Saburi was recalled

[41]Gao Yang (高陽, 1922–92) in Sima Sangdun et al., *Zhang laoshi yu Zhang shaoshuai* (Taipei, 1984), 195.

[42]Zhang's testimony in NHK shuzaihan and Usui Katsumi, *Chō Gakuryō no Shōwashi saigo no shōgen* (Tokyo, 1991), 111–13.

[43]Zhang Youkun, Qian Jin, and Li Xuequn, eds., *Zhang Xueliang nianpu* (Beijing, 2009), 294 (412 in the 1996 version).

[44]NHK shuzaihan and Usui, *Chō Gakuryō*, 114–15.

[45]E.I. Krutitskaia and L.S. Mitrofanova, *Polpred Aleksandr Troianovskii* (Moscow, 1975), 60.

from London to be appointed as Japan's ambassador to the Soviet Union.[46] In June 1929, just before Premier Tanaka Giichi resigned, he dispatched Saburi to Sakhalin and Kamchatka for two months of "economic research" on a military boat.[47] The Soviet Politburo discussed the Saburi trip and decided to send a "commission" to Sakhalin and Kamchatka to deal with the matter. The Politburo regarded this subject as particularly important and placed its resolution in a special file.[48] It is unclear whether Saburi actually went on the Soviet trip. Tanaka resigned on 2 July 1929, and the new cabinet soon appointed Saburi as the ambassador to China.

One must question whether Saburi, like Komatsubara, had been compromised and was being blackmailed by the Soviet secret service. (There were opportunities aplenty to compromise him: in China, in Britain, in the Soviet Union, and on numerous trips between Europe and Japan on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Saburi also did not marry after his wife's death in 1925, leaving him vulnerable to manipulation in a honeypot scheme.) Clearly, Moscow found him an excellent subject for recruitment: He had once served as a French tutor to Emperor Hirohito and was close to the Imperial Court. Moscow's interest in Saburi may explain his wariness of Troianovskii—odd behavior for a diplomat finding himself in proximity to such a significant Soviet counterpart. Moscow likely pressed Tanaka to appoint Saburi as the ambassador to Moscow. What else explains Moscow's extraordinary interest in and the secrecy surrounding Saburi's trip to Sakhalin and Kamchatka? As soon as Tanaka's cabinet collapsed, Saburi must have requested a new posting.

It appears that Saburi's appointment as the ambassador to China scotched Moscow's scheme to exploit him. After Saburi's death, a letter allegedly written by Saburi reached Wang Zhengting. In the letter, Saburi accused China of leading both China and Japan to perdition by its anti-Japanese policy. It was a forgery.[49] Almost simultaneously, on 12 December 1929, Mukden authorities issued an intelligence report, stating that Saburi had convened a meeting of Japanese officials at the Japanese consulate at nine in the evening on November 15, on the day when Saburi met Zhang Xueliang. In the meeting, Saburi allegedly presented Japan's secret plan to invade Manchuria. Saburi was said to have alerted the fifty or so attendees to the accusations hurled against Japan by the Chinese delegates at the recent conference of the Institute for Pacific Relations in Kyoto,

[46] Saburi stopped in Moscow and energetically consulted numerous foreign diplomats. Initially very skeptical, he recognized the importance of Soviet economic planning to capitalist countries and deplored Japan's lack of understanding of the Soviet Union. He stated that it was the root cause of the "failure of Japan's policy toward the Soviet Union." See Fuse Katsuji, "TaiSo ninshiki zesei no ki," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 776 (1 April 1937): 108.

[47] See https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/das/meta/M0000000000003076098.html (accessed 27 December 2016).

[48] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 7, l. 92.

[49] See Shigemitsi Mamoru, "Saburi kōshi no shi," *Chūgoku kenkyū geppō* 42, no. 11 (1988): 37–38. Some Chinese historians still insist that this letter was genuine. See for example Li Enhan, *Jindai Zhongguo waijiao shishi xinyan* (Taipei, 2004), 326.

an obvious reference to the Tanaka Memorial.[50] Saburi would not have spoken in support of Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Clearly, it was disinformation intended to defame Saburi posthumously. Even though it cannot be determined whether he killed himself or was murdered, one thing seems clear in light of available information: Saburi fell victim to some kind of intrigue, most likely hatched by Soviet intelligence.

A few days after his death, Saburi's Chinese counterpart, Wang Zhengting, expressed deep dismay at Tokyo: Japan had not condemned the Soviet Union for military aggression against China. Wang added that Saburi's death at this particular moment was especially "bizarre" (離奇).[51] Had Saburi's death been in some way related to the publication of the Tanaka Memorial in China, Wang's remark itself would have been very odd. It suggests that Wang knew the truth of Saburi's death and sought to keep it hidden. It was Wang, after all, who testified that he had obtained a copy of the memorial and had had it translated into several languages.

The story of the memorial does not end here. Japan's invasion of Manchuria was widely accepted as unmistakable evidence of Japan's plans to conquer the world. As such, it would have made a superb document to use against Japan at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial. Incredibly, the prosecution chose not to present it as evidence. The original could not be found, nor was the prosecution confident that the memorial was genuine. Most importantly, the Soviet prosecutors feared exposure of the forgery at the trial. No mention was made of it in their arguments.[52] The memorial by then had already rendered invaluable service to Moscow, however.

In light of its murky past, the Tanaka Memorial emerges as a document vital to Stalin as he prepared the ground for entrapping Japan first in Manchuria and then in China as a whole; simultaneously, he was planting seeds of discord between Japan and the United States. However, hardly any Japanese or Chinese works on the memorial mention its Soviet origin. It should be remembered that Stalin had explicitly instructed Karakhan to employ every kind of conspiracy for camouflage purposes (see Chapter 2, p. 88). Like the Zhang murder, the Tanaka Memorial was another brilliant case of Soviet camouflage and disinformation.[53]

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[50] Liaoningsheng dang'anguang, *"Jiuyiba" shibian dang'an shiliao jingbian* (Shenyang, 1991), 41–43.

[51] "Riben taidu shenkan chayi," *Zhongyang ribao*, 7 December 1929, 1. The Chinese press in general expressed much dismay at Saburi's death and remained suspicious of the official account of suicide. See for example *Da gongbao*, 30 November 1929, 1; 1 December 1929, 1; 3 December 1929, 4.

[52] See Aleksei Kirichenko, "Behind the Scenes at the Tokyo Tribunal, 3 May 1946–12 November 1948," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 22, no. 2 (2009): 275–76. K.E. Cherevko, a Russian historian, also states that the Memorial was a forgery. See Cherevko, *Serp i molot protiv samuraiskogo mecha* (Moscow, 2003), 25–29.

[53] The CCP faithfully emulated the Soviets in this regard. For example, in April 1934, in its efforts to create a national anti-Japanese resistance movement, the CCP circulated a secret directive, to be transmitted only orally, in which the CCP center directed the party organizations to

3.2 Lull before the Storm

By 1929, Stalin had carefully re-examined his East Asian strategy. He understood that if Moscow continued to run the CER with China, its troubles would never end. It was at this point, at the end of the brief Sino-Soviet war, that Stalin changed his policy fundamentally. Sanctioning the publication of the Tanaka Memorial signaled the beginning of the new policy, one that presented Japan, not the Soviet Union, as the true aggressor in China. Every Soviet diplomat in Japan had warned Stalin that Japan would never give up Manchuria. If so, letting Japan deal with the troublesome Chinese would be politically beneficial: Chinese nationalism, he believed, would overwhelm Japanese imperialism. But Moscow also wanted to benefit financially, and it understood that China would never indemnify the Soviet Union to reclaim the CER. Japan, however, would. As Stalin reportedly told Besedovskii in 1927, even if Moscow were to relinquish rights to the CER, a revolutionary government in Beijing would have no trouble linking up with a revolutionary government in northern Manchuria. Moreover, selling the CER to the Japanese, according to Stalin, would more than make up for the profits the CER had brought to the Soviet Union.[54] The Chinese, however, would never allow Moscow to sell the CER to Tokyo. Japan would already have to be in possession of Manchuria for Moscow to make the sale. Then, not only would Moscow benefit financially, but the CER would also become the symbol of Japan's imperialism in China, pouring oil over the flames of Chinese nationalism. Clearly, Stalin came to the conclusion that abandoning for now the CER, which he had seen as a track for revolution or China's "Red road" (see Chapter 2, p. 119), would be far more consequential than clinging to it.

Aleksandr Svechin and Stalin's new strategic thinking

Apart from geopolitical issues, Stalin and his men had purely military issues to ponder as well. The Russo-Japanese War, fought in Manchuria, was the first lesson to be re-examined. With new research, particularly that of Aleksandr A. Svechin (1878–1938), new strategic thinking emerged. The Soviet Union's vast size (its land and its human and material resources) would have to be mobilized to its fullest extent. In 1812, it was Russia's vast hinterland that had provided a place to retreat and helped best Napoleon. Without the vastness of "Russia"

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mobilize all kinds of famous scholars, journalists, and other individuals with some social standing to publish appeals for national resistance but to avoid people with clear political orientations (referring clearly to Communist sympathizers) and find "gray" (to wit, neither "red" nor "white") or even "reactionary people," as long as they support the appeal. Only after the publication and dissemination of the appeals was the party to republish them in party newspapers and journals. Only then was the party to endorse the appeals. In other words, this maneuver was meant to hide the hands of the CCP. See "Zhongyang zhi ge shengwei, xianwei, shiwei de yifeng mimi zhishixin," *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji. Di-jiu ce (1934–1935)* (Beijing, 1986), 229.

[54] Grigorii Besedovskii, *Na putiakh k termidoru* (Moscow, 1997), 250.

(which included Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, and the Caucasus), the Soviet government would not have survived the German attack in the spring of 1918, when it concluded the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, renouncing Ukraine and the Baltic States. (Such a temporary compromise would be impossible for smaller countries like Hungary and Germany, where their revolutions were crushed in 1919.) How could Japan be a serious danger to the Soviet Union? Russia lost the war in 1905 because of complacency in the face of such a Lilliputian country.[55] Had the battle continued and extended to northern Manchuria, the Maritime Province, and Siberia, Japan would not have stood a chance. (Japan's military intervention in the Russian Civil War that followed the Bolshevik Revolution confirmed this view in Moscow: Although Japan may have controlled certain population centers in Siberia, it had overextended itself and eventually was overwhelmed by partisans.) Moreover, during the Russo-Japanese War, Japan vastly underestimated Russia's military strength and capacity.[56] Japan had been lucky because Russia had concerns about its home front, which had become unruly, and could not be depended upon to mobilize enough forces to the Far East to beat Japan.

True, the new research argued, in 1904–5, Japan had fought splendidly and had achieved its goals by annihilating Russia's navy and expelling Russia from southern Manchuria. Yet, it was Japan's strategic subversion inside Russia (its support of revolutionary groups and anti-Russian forces among the ethnic minorities) that had made it difficult to engage the Japanese fully.[57] Likewise, Russia's lack of interest in the Manchurian economy had made it difficult to use local resources in the war. Russia's prejudice and ignorance had led to transporting everything (including victuals) from its western regions to Manchuria to fight the war. Russia scarcely utilized even the resources of Siberia, regarding it to be a "land of hunger and ice." This exacerbated the hobbled capacity of the one-track Trans-Siberian Railway for transporting soldiers and essential war matériel from the west to the east.[58]

In short, the conclusion drawn at the time was that Japan's advance into Manchuria should not be feared. With proper preparations, the Soviet Union could stem Japan's further expansion into Soviet territory. These preparations

[55] See Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Postizhenie voennogo iskusstva: ideinoe nasledie A. Svechina*, 2nd. ed. (Moscow, 2000), 256–57. This discussion draws on Karl Radek's views and was published in 1924.

[56] Aleksandr Svechin, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.* (Oranienbaum, 1910), 36–37; his contribution, "Voennyia deistviia v Man'chzhurii v 1904–1905 gg.," in *Istoriia russkoi armii i flota*, vyp. 14 (Moscow, 1912), 63.

[57] This is a complaint by Count Aleksei N. Kuropatkin (1848–1925), the supreme commander of the Russian forces in the war: *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, trans. A.B. Lindsay, 2 vols. (New York, 1909). See also Svechin, *Predrassudki i boevaia deistvitel'nost'* (Moscow, 2003), 132–33.

[58] Svechin, *Postizhenie voennogo iskusstva*, 321–22 (this discussion was published in 1926). The capacity of the railway was, in fact, far greater than the Japanese had reckoned at the time of the war.

included (1) military buildup in the Soviet Far East; (2) the prevention of Japan's political subversion within the Soviet Union; (3) the export of Soviet political subversion to Japan and China; and (4) the full utilization of Chinese (particularly Manchurian) human and material resources to beat the Japanese on Chinese soil. This was exactly what Stalin did, and in 1945, he routed Japan.

Kōmoto Daisaku and Ishiwara Kanji

If the third element of Stalin's plan—to export Soviet political subversion to Japan and China—was to work, Stalin would have to depend on conspiratorial help from his enemies. In Kōmoto Daisaku, Stalin had already found one useful source. Having conspired with the Soviet Union to assassinate Zhang Zuolin, Kōmoto was an ideal person for developing Stalin's plans. In the events leading up to Japan's military conquest of Manchuria in 1931–32, Kōmoto played a role that was cryptic yet critical, suggesting once again that he was doing Moscow's bidding surreptitiously. Kōmoto had proudly taken responsibility for the Zhang murder, but the Japanese Army was reluctant to punish him. In 1929, he was merely suspended and later, in 1930, seconded to the army reserve. He did not, however, recede into oblivion. Even though rumors circulated widely that Kōmoto was the mastermind of the Zhang murder, he did not seem to face any danger in Manchuria. More than a year after the incident, in July 1929, he finally left Manchuria but returned frequently. Later, in 1932, he became a board member of the South Manchurian Railway Company. This in itself is rather surprising.

Soon after Zhang's murder in 1928, Kōmoto and like-minded Japanese firebrands were actively at work on the "conquest" of Manchuria. The most influential figure among them was Ishiwara Kanji, a close, personal associate of Kōmoto. The mastermind of the Kwantung Army's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Ishiwara was a "military historian, staff officer, thinker, plotter, and Pan-Asianist."[59] Ishiwara was interested in Marxist dialectic and considered Lenin one of the greatest men in history. In 1948, he even penned an essay "How to Save Marxism."[60] He had a sharp intellect. Sent by the army to Germany in the early 1920s, he studied military strategy and history intensely for three years. Returning to Tokyo in 1925, he lectured at the Army Staff College (陸軍大学). Ishiwara disliked the right and respected the Japanese left for the strength of their beliefs, for which they were willing to sit in jail. He considered the post–World War I era a revolutionary period during which the liberal-democratic order was giving way to "totalitarianism," represented by the rise of Communism and fascism. Ishiwara understood that Japan would conquer Western liberalism, individualism, and utilitarianism for the sake of "totalitarianism," "statism" (the

[59] Mark R. Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), vii.

[60] "Ikani shite marukusu shū o kyūsai suruka," *Ishiwara Kanji zenshū* (Funabashi, Japan, 1977), 7:422–23.

Figure 3.4. Ishiwara Kanji, architect of Japan's invasion of Manchuria

doctrine of state control or 統制主義), and Japan's National Polity (国体主義). For this reason, Japan was bound to confront the liberal world order and its representatives—particularly its strongest champion, the United States, which would not tolerate Japan's hegemony in China and the Pacific.[61] This war would be a war to end all wars, a dialectical process of history. He called it the "Final War."[62]

Yet, Ishiwara was keenly aware of Japan's existential crisis. A small country with few natural resources, Japan had become isolated internationally after World War I. Could Japan fight successfully against a Goliath like the United States? Like most Japanese imperialists, Ishiwara considered Manchuria Japan's lifeline in the competitive world order of the day. The "China problem," in Ishiwara's view, was nothing but the "America problem" for Japan, in the sense that the United States posed the most serious impediment to Japan's ambitions in China. In the worst case, Japan would have to fight Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China at the same time. Even with all the resources of Manchuria, Japan would not have the means to fight the "Final War" successfully. Ishiwara

[61]Ishiwara contended at the same time that even the United States was transitioning to "statism" by way of its New Deal.

[62]There is a vast literature on Ishiwara. In addition to Peattie's English biography and *Ishiwara Kanji zenshū* previously cited, see Abe Hiroyuki, *Ishiwara Kanji: shōgai to sono jidai* 2 vols. (Tokyo, 2005); Nomura Otojirō, *Kizentaru kodoku: Ishiwara Kanji no shōzō* (Tokyo, 2012). On Ishiwara's major works, see Tsunoda Jun, ed., *Ishiwara Kanji shiryō: kokubō ronsakuhen zōho ban* (Tokyo, 1971); *Ishiwara Kanji senshū 3: saishū sensō ron/sensō shi taikan* (Tokyo, 1986).

believed that the chance of victory was slim but that under certain conditions, Japan could win. If Japan had no chance, it would be better to disband its military forces and surrender. In Ishiwara's view, it was unlikely that Japan could repeat the miracle of the Russo-Japanese War. Japan's victory against Russia, believed Ishiwara, had been nothing but fortuitous: Had Japan not received U.S. financial succor or had the war lasted longer, Japan's victory would have been far from certain.

Ishiwara did find an example to emulate, however, which was the Russian Civil War. The Bolshevik government would have collapsed, Ishiwara argued, had it not been for foreign intervention, which had united the Russian people in resistance. The Russian Revolution was an excellent case of a single decisive battle, and the civil war that ensued was an example of a protracted war. Even though nearly all the imperialist powers had intervened, the Bolsheviks survived. Japan should emulate them: Foreign intervention might consolidate the Asians against the "white race" just as foreign intervention had united the Russian people. Lenin, whom Ishiwara called a genius, had deployed clever and skillful diplomacy by taking advantage of the tensions among the imperialist powers. War would force the "renovation" of the state in response to the demands of the times, just as had been the case in Bolshevik Russia.[63] Although often accused by his critics of being "Red" for his position on the Bolshevik victory in the Russian civil war, he was not.[64] Ishiwara, like many other Japanese, was convinced that absent some kind of accommodation with the Soviet Union, Japan, even with all the resources of Manchuria, would never be safe or peaceful. He was against Communism, but also felt drawn to it: a political system unfettered by a dysfunctional parliamentary democracy. The Soviet regime survived foreign intervention against all odds and now was developing rapidly under a planned economy in sharp contrast to the capitalist world suffering from the Great Depression. It is not surprising that Ozaki Hotsumi, who spied for Moscow, was interested in Ishiwara's political analysis.[65]

Ishiwara's view of a united Asia against the "white race" was, by any measure, unrealistic. First and foremost, it is difficult to imagine that China would have united with Japan against the "white race" when Chinese nationalism against Japan was on the rise. Moreover, this—namely, the creation of a united Asia where Japan and China would work together—was precisely what the Soviet Union strove to stymie. Although Ishiwara's delusion might be explained in part by his self-declared devotion to a Buddhist belief in a brighter future, Russia was (and still is) the biggest country in the world, with almost inexhaustible resources. Even with Manchuria, Japan was no match. Ishiwara knew all of this, yet, like Lenin, he seems to have been guided by the conviction: Unless you seek to realize

[63] Nomura Otojirō, "Ishiwara Kanji no Manshū jihen: Manshū jihen no moderu wa mushiro Roshia kakumei de atta," *Gunji shigaku*, nos. 146–147 (2001): 58–70.

[64] He praised the Soviet nationality policy and criticized Hitler's racism. See Nashimoto Yūhei, *Chūgoku no nakano Nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1969), 356.

[65] *Gendaishi shiryō (2): Zoruge jiken (2)* (Tokyo, 1962), 7–8, 33.

the impossible, what kind of a revolutionary are you? Ishiwara believed that once Manchuria was pacified, it would thrive, and the rest of China would follow suit. Ishiwara even hoped that once Manchuria was stabilized, it would attract American capital.[66] Perhaps most significantly, Ishiwara believed that the Soviet Union might well fail from within: Its draconian drive for industrialization might lead to popular rebellion. At least for a time, Ishiwara believed that the Soviet Union was too preoccupied with internal affairs to dare to intervene in Manchuria. Even if it did, cutting the CER connection to Vladivostok would, for all practical purposes, disable Soviet ability to deploy large forces in Manchuria. Decisive action by Japan at the initial stage of hostilities would forestall Soviet ambition, and eventually, Japan could force the Soviet union to "ditch" the Far East and divert its attention to the Near East, India, and Xinjiang. Moreover, skillful diplomacy could forge a temporary alliance with the Soviet Union against the other imperialist states. However, Japan did not have much diplomatic muscle to flex, and, Ishiwara admitted, Japan was poor at diplomacy, in any case. After taking Manchuria, Ishiwara proposed that Japan devote its resources to making it into a paradise, and defer any military engagement for at least ten years.

However flawed his arguments, what is most striking is his wide-eyed naivety concerning the Soviet Union. Ishiwara even went so far as to state that Soviet military forces were not intended for use against foreign countries but rather for "internal enemies." At that point in time, 1930–31, he saw no special need to pay attention to the Soviet Union, which he saw as incapable of taking serious military action.[67] Ishiwara made these statements *after* Japanese observers had noted the remarkable fighting capacity and discipline the Red Army demonstrated in 1929 in the short war with the Chinese. Its air force also made a deep impression on Japanese military observers.[68] Ishiwara's reasoning makes little sense.

It would be reasonable, however, if he were fed disinformation or had some kind of secret, tacit agreement with the Soviet Union. Both are quite possible, even probable. His plan to conquer Manchuria in 1931 was based on his understanding that Moscow would not interfere, and in this, he was proven correct. This was Stalin's ruse. Ishiwara once told a confidant that if Japan had advanced into the Soviet Union in 1931 and 1932, Moscow would have given up its territory in the east of the Baikal.[69] This, we may recall, was exactly what Stalin told Besedovskii in 1926 (see Chapter 2, p. 112). It is also reflected in the "agreement" Stalin and Kuhara/Tanaka appear to have struck in 1927 (see Chapter 2, p. 109). No doubt, Ishiwara received confidential information from Kōmoto and

[66]This is expressed clearly in Ishiwara's unpublished essay: "Kōkoku no manmō shinshutsu o meguru kokusai jōsei," (ca. 1931), Kokkai Toshokan Kensei shiryō shitsu, Ishiwara Kanji kankei bunsho, no. 96.

[67]Ibid.

[68]See Soyama Susumu, "Tōshi tetsudō o meguru RoShi ryōkoku no kattō," *Kaikōsha kiji*, no. 3 (606) (1930): 249–58; "RoShi kōsō ni okeru Roki no katsuyaku," *Kaikōsha kiji*, no. 5 (668) (1930): 105–110.

[69]Takagi Kiyohisa and Takagi Junko, *TōA no chichi Ishiwara Kanji* (Tokyo, 1954), 118.

Kuhara. As one investigates deeper, Moscow's secret intelligence work during this time points increasingly to the presence of both disinformation and secret, tacit agreements.

It is unclear when the acquaintance of Kōmoto and Ishiwara began, but Kōmoto did come to his rescue, when, in October 1928, after Zhang's murder, Ishiwara offended powerful men in the army, as well as his superiors at the Army Staff College, with his outspoken criticism.[70] Clearly, the two shared similar ideas about Japan, China, and the world order. Although there was concern that the two men, both strong personalities, would end up at odds, they continued to treat each other with comity and maintained a close relationship.[71] Ishiwara was clearly influenced by Kōmoto's plans for forcing the Soviet Union to "abandon" the Far East.[72]

Kōmoto was likely the middleman between the Soviets and Ishiwara. Although Ishiwara and his colleague in the Kwantung Army Itagaki Seishirō are almost universally acknowledged as the masterminds of the Mukden Incident and the conquest of Manchuria, those who knew the Japanese conspirators have testified that it was Kōmoto who engineered the incident from behind the scenes in 1931.[73] If so, Kōmoto must have provided critical information to Ishiwara. If there was some kind of mutual agreement between the Ishiwara group and the Soviet Union, Kōmoto was the go-between. Kōmoto himself later acknowledged cryptically that only he, Ishiwara, and Itagaki knew the truth about the Mukden Incident.[74]

There is more to the story of Ishiwara's delusions concerning the Soviet Union. Disinformation also came directly from Moscow. Komatsubara Michitarō (see Introduction, p. 3), Japan's military attaché in Moscow from 1927 to 1930, fell victim to a "honey trap" and was compromised sometime in 1927 or 1928. Roman Kim (see p. 180 earlier in this chapter) was most likely one of the masterminds of the operation against Komatsubara.[75] During 1927–28, as has become known recently, Kim established an "organizational contact" with

[70] Yamaguchi Jūji, *Ishiwara Kanji: higeki no shōgun* (Tokyo, 1952), 87; Sakuma Ryōzō, "Ishiwara shōgun to Manshū jihen zenshi," BBK, Manshūjihen 387, 57.

[71] In addition, it should be noted that Ishiwara and Tōmiya, who executed on the ground Kōmoto's order to bomb Zhang in 1928, knew each other well. When Tōmiya was killed in China in 1937, Ishiwara wrote a eulogy, praising him as "one of the greatest men in the Taishō and Shōwa eras." See *Denki Tōmiya Kaneo: Tōmiya Kaneo den* (Tokyo, 1997), 3.

[72] See Kuwata Fumiko, "Kōmoto Daisaku," *Reksihi dokuhon* 54, no. 9 (2009): 125–26.

[73] See the testimony of Tanaka Ryūkichi in Awaya Kentarō, Adachi Hiroaki, and Kobayashi Motohiro, eds., *Tōkyō saiban shiryō: Tanaka Ryūkichi jinmon chōsho*, trans. Okada Ryōnosuke (Tokyo, 1994), 221; a testimony by Ushiroku Jun (後宮淳, 1884–1973), in Sakuma Ryōzō, "Manshū no omoide, Chō Sakurin bakushi jiken," BBK, Bunko itaku no. 245, 47.

[74] Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 273. Asked in 1942 about the 1931 incident, Amakasu Masahiko (see Chapter 2, p. 143, footnote 300), one of the most mysterious conspirators in Manchuria, responded: "History is a lie. Those who know the truth won't speak." Ibid., 379.

[75] Another direct participant was Boris I. Gudz' (1902–2006), who in his old years privately told Teodor K. Gladkov about this secret operation. Gladkov in discussion with the author, 26 May 2011, in Moscow.

the Japanese military attaché's office through Komatsubara.[76] In 1929, Moscow used Komatsubara to initiate an elaborate disinformation operation ("Operatsiia 'General' ") against Japan. (In 1927, Komatsubara had received a writ from Tokyo to collect and provide information on people in the Soviet Union who could be used for intelligence, propaganda, and conspiracies.)[77] The Soviet secret police attached to Komatsubara a former tsarist army officer ("Polonskii") who, according to the officer's account, had initially accepted the Bolshevik government but then became disillusioned with it. Equal in rank to "general" in the armies of other countries (there were no military ranks in the Soviet Union at the time), "Polonskii" professed his willingness to purvey confidential information to Japan for a large sum of money. He was, of course, a secret police agent.

Komatsubara was probably a broken man already. He had become derelict in his duties, doing little more than dispatch to Tokyo the information he received from Polonskii. After Komatsubara left Moscow, his successors continued to buy what they thought was secret military information from Polonskii. Some in Tokyo expressed doubt about the Polonskii data. When they consulted with Poland's intelligence, with which Tokyo maintained close contact,[78] Poland warned that Polonskii's data were not in concord with its own and that they were Soviet disinformation. Nevertheless, Tokyo continued to accept the Polonskii data as more or less accurate. This operation continued until 1938, when Polonskii was arrested and executed by Nikoai I. Ezhov (1895–1940), Stalin's executioner.[79] As is analyzed later in this chapter (p. 239), some of the crucial disinformation transmitted by Komatsubara and Polonskii was data that actually

[76]O.B. Mozokhin, *Protivoborstvo. Spetssluzhby SSSR i Iaponii (1918–1945)* (Moscow, 2012), 337. In addition to Komatsubara, at least two Japanese officers, Adachi Hisashi (安達久, 1899–1974) and Mizuno Keizō (水野桂三, 1890–1960), were recruited in Moscow by Kim to serve Soviet intelligence in 1936–37. See Prosvetov, *"Krestnyi otets" Shtirlitsa*, 100–103. Adachi had a son with his Soviet mistress. (See Svetlana Tsygankova, "Byloe ostaetsia s nami: Karel'skii syn iaponskogo generala," *Trud*, 21 November 2001, 6.) Mizuno also worked with Polish intelligence. (See Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska and Andrzej T. Romer, *Historia stosunków polsko-japońskich 1904–1945* [Warsaw, 2009], 194–95, 239, 247.) Both achieved a distinguished military career after their return to Japan. Yamaoka Michitake (山岡道武, 1897–1959), too, may have been compromised by Kim, who had a life-long interest in him. In 1937, the Soviet prosecutors accused Kim of having been recruited by Yamaoka. The truth was almost certainly the other way around. Yamaoka had a Soviet mistress while working in Moscow as an assistant military attaché in 1930–32. (See Prosvetov, *"Krestnyi otets"*, 99.) Like Tominaga Kyōji (see Chapter 4, p. 330), he left behind many dishonorable professional episodes. After World War II, he is said to have turned "Red." See *Iwakuro Hideo shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1976), 31.

[77]See https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10279005 (accessed 30 July 2019). This document, either intercepted by Soviet intelligence or provided by Komatsubara to the Soviet side, was submitted by the Soviet prosecutors to the Tokyo War Crimes Trial as Court Exhibit no. 327.

[78]On this contact, see Hiroaki Kuromiya and Andrzej Pepłoński *Między Warszawą a Tokio. Polsko-japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904–1944* (Toruń, Poland, 2009).

[79]Aleksei Kirichenko, *Iaponskaia razvedka protiv SSSR* (Moscow, 2016), 55–60; " 'Duel' razvedok: Rossiia—Iaponiia. Chast' 2," broadcast by Rosteleradio on 2 March 2005. Simultaneously, Moscow fed similar disinformation to the Japanese in the Far East as well. See for example S. Nikolaev, *"Maki-Mirazh". Iz istorii otechestvennykh spetssluzhb* (Khabarovsk, 2000).

understated the Soviet military forces in the Far East. This form of disinformation is particularly telling—the Soviet Union had the express intention of presenting their military presence as benign. They would have known that it would lead militarists such as Ishiwara to believe that the Soviet forces in the Far East were inadequate to present any threat to Japanese actions in Manchuria.

In this respect, Komatsubara was almost certainly an important source of the disinformation for advancing Ishiwara's plans. However, Moscow's disinformation could not have been the only source of Soviet influence. As discussed earlier, Ishiwara's lack of concern over the possibility of Soviet military intervention proved to be atypically accurate. The challenges that Manchuria posed made an invasion outrageous, even with Moscow's implicit assurance of neutrality. To see why, one must consider the military absurdity of the invasion. It is difficult to argue that the Ishiwara group believed that with the merely ten thousand or so soldiers present in Manchuria, Japan could conquer Manchuria, an area larger than France and Germany combined. The Chinese had fifteen to twenty times more soldiers in Manchuria, and the Soviet Union about five to six times more than Japan's Kwantung Army based in Manchuria. The "Kwantung Army," which had only one division, was too small to be called an "army" by Western standards; before 1931–32, it was an "army" in name only. In the all-important Mukden region, the "Kwantung Army had only about 1,500 infantrymen and railway guards at the outset of operations in 1931."[80] The Japanese conspirators' plan was to mobilize forces stationed in Korea. Yet, this would have required the approval of the emperor, which they knew they could not expect to receive easily. In any case, a formal request would have been impossible without disclosing their conspiracy. Even the Korean Army had only two divisions, around twenty-four thousand soldiers, at that time.

Moreover, Japan, like all capitalist countries, was hard hit by the Great Depression of 1929. The Japanese government was keen to cut down on military spending, and in April 1930, Japan signed the London Naval Treaty that limited the navy of signatory countries (Japan, Britain, and the United States in particular) along the lines of the Washington Conference of 1921–22. This was at a time when the Soviet Union was sharply increasing its military expenditure. After much acrimonious debate, Japan ratified the treaty in October 1930. (The following month, Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi was shot by a radical right-wing nationalist angry with the ratification. Hamaguchi died in 1931 from complications of the wound he sustained.) There were, in other words, few signs within Japan that would have given Ishiwara's group confidence in their plan. If Ishiwara had reason for his confidence, it clearly came from elsewhere.

The Ishiwara-Kōmoto circle operated in a manner that, when one attempts to bring reason to it, points most convincingly to a tacit agreement with the Soviet Union. Indeed, the probable existence of such a deal was, after Japan's invasion, the subject of much international speculation. Indicative of broader

[80] Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan against Russia, 1939* (Stanford, CA, 1985), 27, 1075.

Soviet-Japanese military rapport, in March 1930, Tokyo and Moscow opened an officer exchange program that attached officers to appropriate military units in Japan and the Soviet Union, respectively.[81] This program continued at least until 1936.

Meanwhile, Moscow's dissemination of disinformation never stopped. By staging fake trials of "anti-Soviet conspirators" allegedly working to overthrow the Soviet government in collusion with capitalist countries, Moscow was able to tighten the screws inside the country. (There were at least three major sensational show trials in 1930 and 1931: "The Union for the Liberation of Ukraine" [spring 1930], "The Industrial Party" [late 1930], and "The Union Bureau of Mensheviks" [spring 1931]). Knowing full well that no capitalist country was seriously planning any military intervention in the Soviet Union, Moscow propagated the myth of internal enemies scheming with the imperialists against the Soviet government. Moscow's disinformation was meant to encourage anti-Soviet radical circles abroad to call for actions against the Soviet Union, which Moscow then used as justification for more political terror inside the country. In late 1930 and early 1931, when the international situation was relatively calm, Moscow made its move. It re-examined its military doctrine of numerical parity and replaced it with one of military dominance over the combined forces of its neighboring nations.[82]

Finally, a careful look at the actions of Ishiwara's group points to Soviet involvement and influence. Already, in May 1929, the intelligence conference of the Kwantung Army resolved that the fundamental solution of the Manchurian-Mongolian question was impossible without occupying Manchuria and Inner Mongolia and annexing both to Japan.[83] In July 1929, in the midst of heightening tensions between China and the Soviet Union, Ishiwara, Itagaki, and other staff and intelligence members took a two-week trip around Manchuria and Inner Mongolia to inspect sites for possible military actions with no attempt to conceal their positions. Although his bold, reckless trip deep into troubled regions disquieted the Kwantung Army, Ishiwara was not worried. (This further suggests some kind of agreement with the Soviet side and perhaps even with Zhang Xueliang as well.) Simultaneously, Ishiwara ordered his subordinate Sakuma Ryōzō (佐久間亮三 , 1894–1969) to begin planning for the occupation of Manchuria. This was completed in December 1930, leading Ishiwara to think he was ready for action. Sakuma cautioned him, however, that his study showed that even with Manchuria's resources, Japan would not be strong enough to fight other major powers. Ishiwara agreed, but he also believed, quite unrealistically, that the occupation of Manchuria would stabilize East Asia politically, allowing Japan to thrive. It would improve the "thought problem" (i.e., occlude the

[81] See the agreement in JACAR, B13081314100.

[82] See O.N. Ken, *Mobilizatsionnoe planirovanie i politicheskie resheniia (konets 1920-kh–seredina 1930-kh gg.)*, 2-e izd., pererab. (Moscow, 2008), 460–61.

[83] Ishiwara's recollection in Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 309.

spread of Communism in Asia). This was the only national defense plan Japan could realistically implement. All other issues were trifles, Ishiwara insisted. For this reason, Japan should not wage war for fifty years. Manchuria existed not for Japan but for the Manchus. Ultimately, it would be returned to them, along with all Japanese possessions.[84] He and his group had plans to control the invasion of Japanese capitalists into Manchuria after its occupation. Their enmity toward the capitalists had branded them as "Red."

In the conception of Ishiwara and other Soviet-inspired conspirators, Manchuria was not supposed to become Japan's puppet state. It was designed as an Asian Arcadia (王道楽土), with the proclaimed principle of five (Manchurian, Han, Mongolian, Korean, and Japanese) races under one union (五族協和). Although one might argue that this was a mere cover for their conspiratorial schemes, it is also true that the Ishiwara circle sought to solve the foreseeable ills of liberal capitalism in a new Manchuria. The conspirators intended to hobble the Western capitalist powers from taking over Manchuria and emulate Soviet economic planning in the development of the Manchurian economy. While they maintained a sense of national superiority over the Chinese (who had failed to unite and stand up to Western imperialism), they were neither simple imperialists nor anti-Chinese bigots. Instead, the conspirators sought to overcome Western capitalism and make Manchuria into a model for a new Asia to be created under Japanese hegemony.[85] However, China rejected their plan as a self-serving imperialist scheme. By 1933, Ishiwara, Itagaki, and other conspirators had been removed by Tokyo from Manchuria, which became Japan's puppet government in reality. Even so, Manzhouguo did represent new, "modern" conceptions of state-building, identity, and the economy by combining utopian and imperialist ideals.[86]

It is unknown whether Ishiwara actually believed that such an unrealistically optimistic plan could work. Clearly, Ishiwara the soldier could see no alternative for an internationally isolated Japan to survive in the competitive world order of the day. What he carried out in the end in 1931 was nothing but an adventurist scheme, but it was one that Moscow secretly encouraged through disinformation (and possibly, a secret agreement).

It is noteworthy, in this regard, what others in the Ishiwara-Kōmoto circle did in the years leading up to the 1931 invasion of Manchuria. Mori Kaku, a former businessman who became the vice foreign minister under Tanaka Giichi and was said to have been the architect of Tanaka's "active diplomacy," was a key

[84] Sakuma, "Manshū jihen zenshsi," 128–29, 245–49.

[85] Imada Shintarō, who took part in the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 (see p. 212 later in this chapter), was versed in classical Chinese learning and, like Ishiwara, vehemently opposed Japan's war with China in 1937. He was also close to Asahara Kenzō (see p. 237 later in this chapter), a leftist labor activist. See Tamura Shinsaku, *Myōhin kōsaku* (Tokyo, 1953), 25–26; Mishina Takayuki, *Gakan Ishiwara Kanji: sekai zettai heiwa to minzoku kyōwa no rinen* (Tokyo, 1984), 167.

[86] See Pansejit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD, 2003).

figure in the circle. Mori worked closely and freely with both the political left and right. In 1927, he went to see the Soviet advisers Borodin and Bliukher in China with an introduction from the Soviet ambassador in Tokyo. He had his son study the Russian language.[87] Mori assisted Kōmoto with a considerable sum of money when Kōmoto was suspended from the Army in the wake of the Zhang murder.[88] Mori and another businessman, Sogō Shinji (see Chapter 2, p. 143), a South Manchurian Railway executive who later became known as the father of Japan's bullet train, as well as Suzuki Teiichi (see Introduction, p. 3), formed a close circle. In July and August 1931—that is, just weeks before the Mukden Incident—Mori traveled to Manchuria and "consulted" with the conspirators in Manchuria. Kōmoto acted as the link among Mori, Ishiwara, Itagaki, and Sogō. Mori's biographer notes that the "team work" among them was flawless at the time.[89]

After returning to Tokyo, a fortnight before the Mukden Incident, Mori made a curious remark about the Communist threat. Mori had long criticized the soft diplomacy Shidehara promoted (until he was replaced by Tanaka Giichi in 1927) for failing to see the danger of Communism in China. (As discussed earlier [see Chapter 2, p. 96], Shidehara indeed deliberately downplayed it in order to take common steps with Moscow toward China.)

In 1931, however, Mori publicly declared that he did not see much Soviet Communist propaganda in Manchuria![90] What were his intentions? It appears that Moscow had, in fact, actively toned down its political propaganda in Manchuria. Mori may have been wrong-footed into thinking there was less support for Communism in Manchuria; yet, his proximity to other Soviet collaborators, and his sudden lack of concern for Communist propaganda, also points to his own possible engagement with Soviet intelligence. Either way, Moscow did not simply tone down its propaganda; it also maintained an unusual silence about any Japanese threat in the few months prior to Japan's invasion of Manchuria. The apparent silence toward Japan in the months leading up to the Manchurian Incident has struck some Russian historians as odd.[91] This is, of course, unsurprising. Here, as with many moments throughout this period, the accepted understanding of the Soviet Union's intentions in Manchuria makes some of its behavior and actions appear confusing, even incoherent. It is only when one considers in detail Stalin's secret intelligence that a more coherent picture can be formed. Moscow's silence aligns precisely with its secret agenda: to induce Japan into Manchuria actively. This agenda also explains Mori's un-

[87] Yamaura, ed., *Mori Kaku*, 538, 1088; Yamaura Kan-ichi, *Mori Kaku wa ikite iru* (Tokyo, 1941), 13–14, 34.

[88] Hirano Reiji, *Manshū no inbō sha: Kōmoto Daisaku no unmei teki na ashiato* (Tokyo, 1961), 99–100; Hatakeyama Takeshi, *Shōwashi no kaibutsu tachi* (Tokyo, 2003), 37–38.

[89] Yamaura, *Mori Kaku*, 14, 694–700, 712; Yamaura, *Mori Kaku wa ikite iru*, 73.

[90] See "ManMō to waga tokushu ken-eki zadankai," *Bungei shunjū* 9, no. 10 (October 1931): 149. This remark was made on 4 September 1931, exactly two weeks before the incident.

[91] Ken, *Mobizatsionnoe planirovanie*, 268–69.

characteristically sanguine observations about the lack of Communist activity in Manchuria just prior to the incident.

By way of contrast, during the few months before the Mukden Incident, the Chinese press carried innumerable articles about Japan's overweening ambitions to invade, occupy, and colonize Manchuria, which were sedulously collected by Japanese diplomats in China and reported to Tokyo.[92]

Moscow continued to operate as if, or because, it was very well aware of Japan's imminent invasion of Manchuria. The Politburo ordered Voroshilov, the people's commissar of military affairs, to travel from Moscow to the Far East from 11 July to 20 September 1931. He visited Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk, Verkhneudinsk, Chita, Irkutsk, Krasnoiarsk, Novosibirsk, and elsewhere.[93] Was the timing of Voroshilov's trip to the Far East merely a coincidence?

One of Kōmoto's collaborators in the Zhang Zuolin case, Tanaka Ryūkichi, who was subsequently identified as a Soviet agent, also participated in the Ishiwara scheme. In 1929, Tanaka was dispatched to the strategically critical region of Daxing'anling (Da Hinggan Ling) in northern Inner Mongolia. Instead of investigating the region, Tanaka simply skirted his assignment and enjoyed the hot springs farther west near the Mongolian borders. Upon returning from the trip, he failed to submit adequate reports. He appeared to show no interest in aiding Japan's strategic planning. Ishiwara knew Tanaka's faineancy and mendacity,[94] yet incomprehensibly trusted Tanaka all the same. In June 1930, he met Tanaka in Lüshun, and asked him for help in his Manchurian scheme.[95] Tanaka would later play a critical role in spreading Japan's aggression to Shanghai in 1932, against the will of Ishiwara, as will be discussed.

Soviet diplomats in Tokyo

Meanwhile, Soviet diplomats in Tokyo were kept in the dark regarding shifts in Soviet policy toward Japan. In 1928, as discussed earlier, both Maiskii and Troianovskii complained about the lack of Moscow's clear guidance on Japan. Moscow could not give clear guidance, because its policy toward Japan was conspiratorial in essence. This situation had not changed. Writing in April 1930, Troianovskii complained to Karakhan: Japan's defeat at the London Naval Conference would only heighten the tension between Japan and the United States. Having humiliated Japan with its immigration law previously, Washington now added insult to injury. This was the perfect moment for improving Soviet-Japanese relations. If Moscow showed enough sympathy, Tokyo would be more than happy to forge ties with Moscow. It was unclear to him, Troianovskii

[92] See for example JACAR, B09040475900, B09040478500, B09040472900.

[93] *Sovetskoe rukovodstvo. Perepsika 1928–1941* (Moscow, 1999), 156, 161. See also V. Kardashov, *Voroshilov* (Moscow, 1976), 255–56.

[94] Sakuma, "Ishiwara shōgun to Manshū jihen zenshi," 108–110.

[95] Fukuda Kazuya, *Chi hiraku: Ishiwara Kanji to Shōwa no yume* (Tokyo, 2004), 1:368.

complained, whether Moscow wanted to improve or to strain relations with Tokyo. He emphasized that Japan had not joined the Euro-American chorus of tirade against the Soviet Union in 1929 at the time of the conflict with China over the CER. He feared that either Moscow was uncertain about what to do or Moscow had a new policy of which he was ignorant. Troianovskii asked Karakhan whether Moscow feared the peculiar "craftiness" (коварство) of the Japanese and of their unusually adroit diplomacy. Troianovskii assured Karakhan that there was nothing exceptional about the character, behavior, politics, or diplomacy of the Japanese: There was no special Asiatic secretiveness, wisdom, or cunning. They were the same people as the Europeans and Americans, following the same physical, psychological, economic, and social laws. In spite of Japan's rapid growth, it was quite possible that it was not sufficiently cooked in the capitalist cauldron yet and therefore might possess certain peculiarities. Hardly enough, however, to be of any special significance, Troianovskii argued.[96]

Responding to Troianovskii, Karakhan wrote in June 1930 that it was incorrect to believe that Tokyo would be happy to forge a friendship with Moscow: Tokyo sought in the Far East what Moscow could not give up.[97] Two months later, Troianovskii complained again to Karakhan with a new sense of urgency. Disillusioned by Moscow's reluctance to come to an understanding, Japan was turning back to the United States. Troianovskii wrote that he simply did not know whether Moscow's silence in the face of Japan's repeated proposals was a flat refusal or whether Moscow was waiting, hoping for things to change. "At the very least," he wrote, "however strange it may seem, I have received neither a positive nor negative answer" from Moscow regarding this matter. Meanwhile, Shidehara continued his policy of securing an understanding with Moscow. Yet, now distrust of Shidehara was mounting in Japan: If only Japan had not gone along with the Soviet Union at the time of the Sino-Soviet war in 1929, Japan might have been in a far better position politically.[98] Finally, on 14 September 1930, Karakhan wrote a "strictly confidential" note to Troianovskii in Tokyo that he must understand that Soviet-Japanese relations had entered a tense period. This must have been a surprise for Troianovskii, who had been working hard to nurture friendly relations with Japan. Without going into detail, Karakhan wrote that an authoritative commission had worked out the whole complex of problems between the Soviet Union and Japan, which would be reviewed by his office.[99] What decisions, if any, were taken by Karakhan's office is unknown. Nonetheless, whatever approach his office might have chosen would have been decided in ignorance of the direction Stalin was pursuing behind the scenes. This became clear soon after Japan's invasion of Manchuria, as will be discussed.

[96] AVP, f. 04, op. 49, p. 305, d. 54547, ll. 132–33, 136–39.
[97] Ibid., f. 08, op. 13, p. 115, d. 280, l. 42.
[98] Ibid., f. 08, op. 13, p. 115, d. 281, l. 199.
[99] Ibid., f. 08, op. 13, p. 115, d. 280, l. 64.

Even though Troianovskii assured Moscow that Shidehara was still in step with Moscow, Moscow was worried about the effects of Shidehara's policy toward China. In 1930, following other Western powers, Japan approved China's tariff autonomy, marking the beginning of the end of unequal treaties between the two countries. Moscow, the enemy of unequal treaties, had no good reason to complain about it. In general, Shidehara improved Sino-Japanese relations in the course of 1930. For this and other reasons (including Japan's ratification of the London Naval Treaty), Japanese-American relations, too, had improved. This was not what Moscow wanted. In December 1931—that is, after Japan's invasion of Manchuria—William C. Forbes (1870–1959), the U.S. ambassador to Tokyo, wrote in defense of Shidehara that he was a "warm personal friend of mine" and that he was a "very suave gentleman and seems to talk our language more than in the linguistic sense."[100] Apparently, Shidehara was no longer useful to Moscow.

By mid-1931, Troianovskii had clearly received some cues from Moscow. The tone of his reports to Karakhan became more certain and confident, no longer speaking of a possible agreement with Japan. In April 1931, Troianovskii wrote to Karakhan that no compromise would be possible between China and Japan. To defend its interests, Japan would not flinch from war with China. In this regard, Troianovskii emphasized, "we," the Soviet Union, would play the "decisive role."[101] Two months later, Troianovskii wrote about the rise in political tension in Japan. On the one hand, Japanese proclivity toward war with the Soviet Union existed. On the other hand, Japan was undergoing a substantive shift in favor of the Soviet Union. Troianovskii noted that Prince Konoe Fumimaro, the president of the House of Peers, had recently stated that political parties based on capitalism and property were doomed to failure, and only proletarian parties had a future.[102]

Japan's impatience

Despite the machinations of Mori, Tanaka Ryūkichi, Ishiwara, and others, the Japanese government was positioning itself cautiously. After the departure of Tanaka Giichi in 1929, it adopted a position of adhering to international cooperation and peace. To a certain extent, however, the government's position was immaterial; the growing impatience of the Japanese people was throwing the government into chaos and making Japan more politically vulnerable to manipulation than ever.

The Great Depression that began in 1929 hit Japan, as other countries, very hard, squeezing its economy severely. Troianovskii was wrong about Japan's proclivity for war against the Soviet Union, but he was right about the rise of radicals who sought an imperialist solution to Japan's problem in Manchuria.

[100] William Cameron Forbes Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fMS Am 1365, vol. 8, 545, 546.

[101] AVP, f. 08, op. 14, p. 133, d. 191, l. 42.

[102] Ibid., f. 08, op. 14, p. 133, d. 191, ll. 55, 84.

Although there were those who favored war against the Soviet Union (some argued that the sooner the better, because with the completion of the Five-Year Plan, the Soviet Union would be more difficult to beat), neither the Japanese government nor the army seriously considered war at all. They were too busy looking for a solution to the economic crisis to plan a war against the Soviet Union. It was simply not on the agenda. Radical groups within the army took the lead in search of a breakthrough via the conquest of Manchuria.

There were many cliques within the Japanese army and navy, conspiring with or against one another. Under such conditions, military discipline was weak, and the command hierarchy openly flouted with impunity. The rationale for insubordination was that the top was corrupt, inept, and indecisive, and only the uncorrupted rank and file could straighten out the mess. This sentiment was justified by invoking a concept from the medieval period, *gekokujō* (下克上), literally "the low overturns the high." It was very popular with the lower- and middle-rank officers and the rank and file, many of whom hailed from the impoverished countryside.[103] Disobedience and rebellion became the norm in the course of the 1930s. This was a glaring weakness, which Moscow exploited secretly and skillfully.

Radical groups within the Japanese army schemed for the opportunity to act on the "Manchurian question." Opinions differed on many issues, including whether the Japanese body politic should be changed ("renovated") first (this meant a coup d'état, if necessary) or whether a new political situation such as Japan's external expansion (conquest of Manchuria) would force a change on Japanese politics. A coup d'état was indeed hatched by radical military officers (including Kōmoto and Suzuki Teiichi) for March 1931. In fact, this was a coup d'état plan worked out with both right-wing ideologues such as Ōkawa Shūmei, who embodied the anti-Western amalgam of "Pan-Asianism" and "national Bolshevism" (see Introduction, p. 14), and left-wing politicians such as Kamei Kan-ichirō and Akamatsu Katsumaro (赤松克麿, 1894–1955), who were anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. (Akamatsu was a former Communist who later became a national socialist.) Accordingly, Kamei and Akamatsu, assisted by Mori Kaku, were to mobilize people to surround the Diet, Japan's parliament, force the cabinet to resign, and then install a new cabinet underpinned by the military, with Ugaki Kazushige (宇垣一成, 1868–1956), the army minister in March 1931, as prime minister. The new cabinet would abolish the noble classes, limit private property, narrow the chasm between the rich and the poor, disband the zaibatsu (financial-industrial conglomerates), and nationalize large enterprises. Tokugawa Yoshichika (徳川義親, 1886–1976), a noble from the former shogunate clan who supported the socialists, provided the financial means for the coup.[104] The plan

[103] See Daniel Orbach, *Curse on This Country: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan* (Ithaca, NY, 2017).

[104] See Nakano Masao, *Kakumei wa geijutsu nari* (Tokyo, 1977), 94–99. After World War II, Tokugawa worked to improve the friendship between Japan and the Soviet Union.

was shoddily drafted, and Ugaki, sensing failure, backed out at the last moment. The coup was aborted before it began.[105]

The political instability of the time reflected the same tenuous and confusing distinctions between the left and right that had rendered Japan so vulnerable geopolitically. Both sides welcomed assistance from the anti-imperialist power, the Soviet Union, and Moscow would have been only too willing to exploit the situation. Consequently, the Soviet Union was not only working with right wingers such as Kōmoto, but, as already discussed earlier in the Introduction (see p. 18), was also exploiting Kamei, who, as an anti-imperialist socialist parliamentarian working for the army's intelligence department, collaborated with the political right. Kamei maintained close contacts with Soviet officials during the 1930s, and it is difficult to determine for whom he was actually working. He was an ideal target for Moscow in its search for a political influencer. Furthermore, Kamei may have been Tokyo's back-stage channel of communication with the Soviet Union. Many years later, in 1969, Kamei acknowledged that he had carried out special assignments for Shidehara, a political moderate and member of a different party entirely, "as a ninja." In February 1931, when Kamei was injured at a meeting condemning the cabinet, Shidehara, the acting prime minister for Hamaguchi (who was shot by an assassin), even called on him in the hospital.[106] Political differences aside, they shared a (misplaced) trust in their operations with the Soviet Union.

After the failure of the March 1931 coup plan, the attention of the firebrands (including Kōmoto) turned to Manchuria. They sought to use an incident that took place in Manchuria in the summer of 1931 as a pretext for military action. In June 1931, Captain Nakamura Shintarō (中村震太郎, 1897–1931) and three others were killed by the Chinese in Daxing'anling. Nakamura had claimed to be an agronomist, but was actually a Kwantung Army military officer sent to Daxing'anling to gather intelligence. Ishiwara considered the area to be decisive for any battle with the Soviet forces. (Ishiwara did not think, however, that the Japanese forces would pursue the enemy much farther to the west; at least, they would not move beyond Hailar [Hulunbuir] in the west of Daxing'anling.)[107] It is unknown whether the Chinese knew Nakamura's real mission or whether they meant to rob his party. Given the location and the importance of the area for military operations, it would not have been surprising had Soviet intelligence been involved in this incident. (Earlier in 1929, Tanaka Ryūkichi had been sent to Daxing'anling in 1929 for the same purpose, only to ignore his assignment

[105] The most concise account and a detailed bibliography on this incident are provided by Tanaka Azusa, "Iwayuru sangatsu jiken ni tsuite," *Sankō shoshi kenkyū*, no. 16 (June 1978): 1–18.

[106] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1969), 105; Takahashi Masanori, "Aru 'shakaishugi sha' to gunbu to no kankei," Nakamura Kikuo sensei tsuitō ronbunshū kankōkai, *Gendai shakaishugi ron* (Tokyo, 1978), 162.

[107] It is easy to understand why Ishiwara thought so: Daxing'anling was a relatively high mountain range, which provided a degree of natural defense to the Manchurian heartland. See Figure 3.5 on p. 206.

[see p. 200].) At any rate, this incident greatly stirred up the Japanese public. In Manchuria, according to one witness, the "thirst for blood" was ubiquitous.[108] The Ishiwara group proposed to Tokyo that military forces be used to deal with the situation: It would be the "first step" toward solving the "Manchuria-Mongolian" problem. Tokyo refused.[109] Yet, Katakura Tadashi, a disciple of Ishiwara who investigated the Nakamura murder, later recalled that it created a "national consensus" for military action.[110]

Indeed, in a poll of students at Tokyo Imperial University, Japan's top university, taken in July 1931, 751 out of 854 students, or 88 percent, considered it justifiable to use force in Manchuria and Mongolia, and only 103, or 12 percent, did not. Of the 751 who favored the use of force, 444, or 59 percent, favored an immediate use of force, while 307, or 41 percent, answered that force should be used only after diplomatic means were exhausted.[111] A shift in public sentiment in favor of military action had begun. Regardless of the government's position, the radical militants had popular support.

In July 1931, as in July 1929, Ishiwara, Itagaki, and a few others made another inspection tour of northern Manchuria and northern Inner Mongolia.[112] Unlike Nakamura, they returned safely to Lüshun. Thus, final preparations were made.

It was Kōmoto who secured the finances for the Mukden Incident. The money came from Fujita Isamu (藤田勇, 1887–1961), who made his money running a major newspaper and dealing in drugs. Fujita had been deeply affected by the Russian Revolution in his student days and later became the "first activist of Japan's labor movement." In 1923, Fujita helped Gotō invite Ioffe to Japan (see Chapter 2, p. 82). Fujita accompanied Ioffe, who was ill, all the way back to Moscow. Apparently, he was treated extremely well in Moscow. On his way home, he stopped in Vladivostok, where he offered to buy a boat (full of opium) impounded by the Soviets and belonging to the Japanese trading company Takada Shōkai. The head of the Vladivostok secret police ("Karpenko") could not decide the matter on the spot. A day later (probably after consultation with Moscow), he offered it for 50,000 yen. To avoid suspicion, the opium was loaded onto a Russian battleship, and then at night on the open sea, it was off-loaded onto a different boat brought from Japan. After this transaction, the impounded boat was turned over to the Japanese. Takada sold the opium in Shanghai for 8 million yen (in today's value, 40 million U.S. dollars or so), of which Fujita received 1.5 million yen.[113]

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[108]Tanaka Shin-ichi, "Ishiwara Kanji no sekai kan," *Bungei shunjū* 43, no. 2 (February 1965): 199.

[109]See Tsunoda, *Ishiwara Kanji shiryō*, 82–83.

[110]Katakura Tadashi, "Manshū jihen to Kantōgun," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 990 (September 1961): 45.

[111]Quoted in Daigaku shinbun renmei, *Gendai gakusei no jittai* (Tokyo, 1948), 59.

[112]Sanbō Honbu, *Manshū jihen sakusen keika no gaiyō. Manshū jihen shi* (Tokyo, 1972), 51–52.

[113]See Nakano Masao, *San nin no hōkasha* (Tokyo, 1956), 21–23. For a concise biography of Fujita, see Nakamura Kamezō, "Gekirō chū no Buzen jin: Fujita Isamu no shōgai," *Gappon miyako bunka*, no. 1 (1971): 262–68.

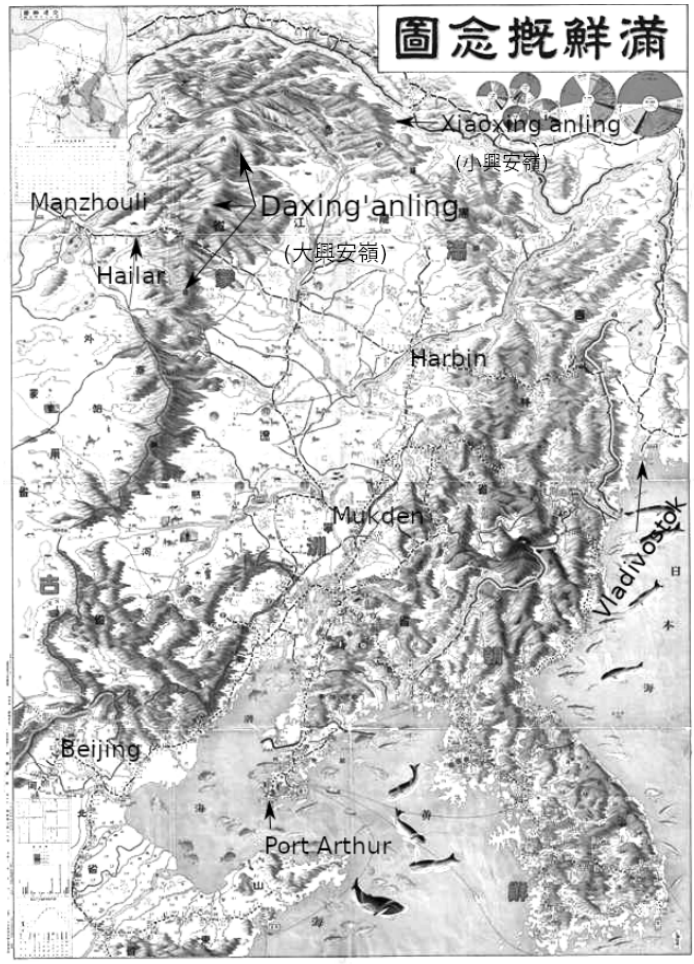

Figure 3.5. Manchuria in 1930: Daxing'anling provided a degree of natural defense to the Manchurian heartland, which explains why Ishiwara believed it possible to keep the Soviet forces at bay in the Hailar area.

Fujita, a left-wing wheeler-dealer, was happy to help bring about a breakthrough for Japan. In early September 1931, through his friend Shigetō Chiaki (重藤千秋, 1885–1942), a cousin of Fujita's who was head of the General Staff's China Department in Tokyo, Kōmoto received 70,000 yen (in today's value, 600,000 U.S. dollars or so) for his operation on the condition that China's sovereignty not be violated. (At the time, the Kwantung Army's budget for "secret operations" was much smaller—only 10,000 yen.)[114]

[114]Nakano, *San nin no hōkasha*, 16, 23–44; Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 273. In 1950, while

Eugene Chen's political machination

Moscow had, by this point, set up secret negotiations with the Japanese conspirators. The Japanese government, however, was still a potential obstacle to the sort of reckless advance into Manchuria that could entrap Japan in a geopolitical nightmare. In dealing with this uncertainty, Moscow took an incredible, extra measure. Stalin's major concern would have been Shidehara, whose positive effect on Sino-Japanese relations was particularly obstructive. Shidehara advanced his policy of treating China as a unified state, a policy that aimed at weaning Japan from its obsession with Manchuria. This policy did not suit Stalin's strategy toward Japan. Stalin now schemed to discredit Shidehara. For this purpose, Moscow used Eugene (Youren) Chen (陳友仁, 1878–1944), who had appeared in an article in the *New York Times Magazine* in 1927. The article said: "Borodin is Canton's man of action; Eugene Chen his mouthpiece, his trumpeter, his prophet indeed" and "Borodin provides the steely ideas and Chen hammers them to a white heat on his anvil. Borodin, to change the figure, is the central fire of the volcano; Chen is the all-consuming lava flood."[115] Born to a Chinese immigrant family in Trinidad and Tobago, Chen was fluent in English. He eventually joined Sun Yat-sen and worked as a diplomat for China. An ebullient supporter of the Soviet Union,[116] he was enchanted with Mikhail Borodin, the Bolshevik adviser to the KMT who was later expelled by Chiang Kai-shek. One historian wrote: Chen "cast his lot with Borodin—he cut his hair and moustache like Borodin's and wore similar clothes." When Borodin was expelled, Chen and Madam Sun (Soong Ching-ling) followed him to Moscow.[117] He later claimed to have been disappointed by Soviet plays (such as *The Red Poppy*), which he claimed caricatured the Chinese, and so he left Moscow.[118]

Chen returned to China in March 1931 and seems to have been accepted by the Nanjing government. Soon, however, he joined the anti-Chiang Canton/Guangdong government created in May 1931 by Chen Jitang (陳濟棠, 1890–1954), Hu Hanmin (胡漢民, 1879–1936), Wang Jingwei (汪精衛, 1883–1944), Sun Ke (or Sun Fe, 孫科, 1891–1973), and others, becoming its foreign minister. Given Chen's pro-Soviet political trajectory, his joining the anti-Chiang government is not altogether surprising. Japanese diplomats in China kept Shidehara informed of Chen's colorful political moves.[119] A British military analyst who talked to

under Chinese captivity, Kōmoto stated that he received 50,000 yen. See Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *"Jiuyiba" shibian*, 98.

[115] H.H. Brayton Barf, "Eugene Chen: China's Scorching Tongue; The Cantonese Foreign Minister Turns Into Blasting Rhetoric the Cold Ideas of the Russian Borodin," *New York Times Magazine*, 10 April 1927, Section SM, 20.

[116] See Qian Yuli, *Geming waijiaojia Chen Youren* (Fuzhou, 2015), 162.

[117] Dan J. Jacobs, *Borodin: Stalin's Man in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 274.

[118] Ibid., 302–3. Yet, his daughter, Silan Chen (1905–96) who studied dance at the Bolshoi Theatre, rather liked it. Si-lan Chen Leyda, *Footnote to History* (New York, 1984), 99–100.

[119] See JACAR, B02030147700.

Figure 3.6. Eugene Chen or Chen Youren, a Chinese diplomat and admirer of Mikhail Borodin

Chen in Tokyo in 1931 described him as an "unscrupulous intriguer."[120] As the Canton government's foreign minister, Chen engaged in a strange conspiracy against Shidehara.

In July 1931, Chen reached out to the Japanese government regarding Manchuria. Shidehara, the foreign minister under the new cabinet of Wakatsuki Reijirō, responded that he could not officially meet someone from a government not recognized by Tokyo but that he would meet him unofficially. Chen arrived in Tokyo on July 26 and met Shidehara three times, on July 28 and 31 and August 3, without the presence of any other person. A Shanghai newspaper reported on his trip to Tokyo, calling it a scheme to sell Manchuria to Japan. Such schemes had been around since the time of Sun Yat-sen, and perhaps for that reason, this did not seem to raise much of a storm in China. It is odd, however, that Chen, an admirer of Borodin and the Soviet Union, should have entertained such a scheme. Equally perplexing is the fact that the Japanese press did not report on Chen's visit to Tokyo.

Chen proposed that Tokyo recognize the Canton government and China's sovereignty over Manchuria in return for China's recognition of Japan's vested interests in Manchuria. Chen further proposed that China and Japan conclude an "offense-defense alliance" against Communism. Chen stated that he was disappointed by the Communists, even though he had worked with them in the past. Shidehara responded that if such an alliance were to be directed against the Soviet Union, he could not agree, because it would create an "unpleasant" backlash from Moscow. Chen insisted that the Soviet Union was imperialist

[120] Malcolm D. Kennedy, *The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917–35* (Berkeley, CA, 1969), 169.

and that nothing had changed since the tsarist period. Shidehara conceded that the Soviet Union controlled Outer Mongolia tightly, refusing Japanese diplomats permission to visit. Chen responded that once China came together, it could drive out Russia from Mongolia. In the end, they agreed to end the existing conditions of "semi-hostility," resolve all pending issues between the two countries, and to conclude a non-aggression pact. Further, they agreed that Japan would recognize China's sovereignty over Manchuria and declare that Japan had no intention to invade Manchuria. In return, China would recognize Japan's vested interests in Manchuria. Shidehara made sure that China would acknowledge that Japan had acquired its interests in Manchuria through a war against Russia, which had almost succeeded in colonizing Manchuria through the Li-Lobanov secret treaty (see Chapter 1, p. 30). He also emphasized that in order for the agreement to take effect, the Canton government had to be recognized first by the Chinese themselves. Chen assured him that the KMT would approve. They exchanged a memorandum to this effect written in English.[121]

The potential consequences of this agreement demand emphasis. While Chen's agreement may seem like a beneficent one for China, the recognition of Japan's vested interests in Manchuria was, to the Chinese, operatively indistinguishable from simply giving Manchuria to Japan. For the Chinese population, which had grown increasingly hostile to Japan's presence, a resolution of hostility that resulted in Japan taking control of Manchuria would have been an outrage. The very fact that Shidehara had made such an agreement would immediately have transformed him in the Chinese people's eyes into the very same sort of radicals who were, at that very moment, planning the actual invasion of Manchuria. The agreement went further: In Chen's conception, Japan was to appoint a "high commissioner" to Manchuria in recognition of its vested interests. While this was not in the written memorandum, the two sides seem to have agreed on this matter.[122] In Canton, Wang Jingwei approved of the memorandum. Hu Hanmin saw it as tantamount to ceding Manchuria to Japan and became extremely nervous. Needless to say, opposition rose within the Canton government. Following a proposal by Suma Yakichirō (須磨弥吉郎, 1892–1970), the Japanese consul in Canton, Shidehara included a Sino-Japanese alliance into the agreement. Suma saw to it that the memorandum, presumably with a clause on the alliance, was approved by the Canton government. This happened on 17 September 1931,[123] the day before the Ishiwara group started military actions in Manchuria.

One would be hard pressed to call such timing coincidental. By assuring this approval went through before the invasion, Chen indubitably implicated the Japanese government, if not in action then at least in spirit, in the decision to

[121] See Gaimushō, comp., *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabini shuyō bunsho* (Tokyo, 1966), 2:172–80.

[122] See Shidehara's memorandum written in 1943, reproduced in Suma Michiaki, ed., *Suma Yakichirō gaikō hiroku* (Tokyo, 1988), 222–32.

[123] Ibid., 234–35.

expand their control over Manchuria. At this point, unsurprisingly, an examination of Chen's history increasingly points to him acting as a Soviet agent. When he returned to China in 1931, he distanced himself from his Soviet connections. Yet, this was only a cover. Chiang Kai-shek's dictatorial behavior after his victory in the Central Plains War in November 1930, which ended the era of the warlords, was the reason why the anti-Chiang Canton government was created in the first place. Chiang's grasp over China, strengthened by Zhang Xueliang's allegiance with the Nanjing government, was firmer than ever. This would not have pleased Moscow. Chen's decision to join the Canton government accurately reflects Moscow's political maneuvers. Chen would have to have known that the Canton government had almost no chance of replacing the Nanjing government. Indeed, soon after Japan's invasion of Manchuria, the Canton government dissolved itself and merged with the Nanjing government.

Chen's "secret" deal with Shidehara was also widely known in China. When the Mukden Incident took place in September, Zhang Xueliang asked his aide whether he thought it was a result of Chen's secret deal with Shidehara—the "selling" Manchuria to Japan.[124] Chen, in fact, subtly encouraged Japan to invade Manchuria by telling Shidehara that everything would be fine in Manchuria if Zhang Xueliang was booted out of there.[125] What else can be concluded from such details, but that Chen's proposal to Shidehara for an anti-Communist treaty was in reality a Soviet provocation? As always, the penumbral shadows of history repel any attempt at definitive conclusions; yet, as has often been the case throughout this period, long accepted views do little to shed light on the realities of the events. The bizarre case of Eugene Chen looks exactly, upon analysis, like any number of other examples of Moscow's secret intelligence work on display, even as it remains disguised. And while Shidehara did not fall into the trap, he did go so far as to sign a memorandum with the representative of a government Tokyo did not recognize. Chen's extremely odd response to the Mukden Incident and Shidehara's equally odd rewriting of this episode in his memoirs (see pp. 234–235 in this chapter) support the interpretation that this proposal originated in Moscow.

Another circumstance sheds light on Chen's connection to Moscow's secret political operations. His son, Percy Chen (1901–89), accompanied Borodin to Moscow in 1927, along with CCP members who were then trained there for intelligence operations (see Chapter 2, p. 94). Percy Chen lived a very privileged life in the Soviet Union: He divorced his wife and married a Russian, drove foreign (American and German) cars, and traveled abroad many times with his new wife. He also worked as an adviser to the General Motors Corporation in the Soviet Union. In 1935, he returned to China on a mission for his father to create a KMT-CCP united front. In 1936, he was in touch with Pavel A. Mif (1901–39), an old China hand who was assistant to the Comintern head, Georgi

[124] Sima et al., *Zhang laoshi yu Zhang shaoshuai*, 274.
[125] Suma, *Suma Yakichirō*, 233.

Dimitrov (1882–1949).[126] *Who's Who in China*, 1936 edition, carried an entry on him that stated that he believed "Sino-Soviet friendship should be one of the corner stones of Chinese political policy" and that he was "working to further that policy."[127] He was given to rodomontade about his clout in the Kremlin, boasting that he "knew how to reach him [Stalin] if I [Percy Chen] wanted to" and speaking of Marshal Voroshilov as his "old friend."[128] Although Percy Chen may have overstated his clout, there is no doubt, in light of the privileges he enjoyed in the Soviet Union, that he was used by Moscow as an agent. It could not have been otherwise at the time. If he had wanted, Stalin could have easily taken Percy Chen as hostage to force his father to carry out Moscow's operation, as Stalin did with Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國, 1910–88). Chiang Ching-kuo went to study in the Soviet Union in 1925 and was not allowed to return home until 1937, when Stalin sent him back to force his father to accept a united front with the CCP.

Six years later, Stalin still remembered Eugene Chen. In a conversation with Chinese delegates in November 1937, Stalin asked them what had become of Eugene Chen, a "hollow man" (пустой человек).[129] In 1931, Moscow sacrificed him and left him to be branded as a traitor to China for selling Manchuria to Japan. Chen's political utility had expired.

Moscow's final preparations

Another curious event points to Moscow's attempt to encourage Japan's invasion of Manchuria. In April 1931, five months before Japan's invasion, as suggested earlier (see p. 188), Moscow prepared a plan to sell the CER to China, with which Moscow had severed diplomatic relations.[130] This made little sense. China had long demanded its complete retrocession. Moscow knew that China would not purchase the CER—or at least that China could not offer the kind of money that Moscow desired. If Japan took over Manchuria, however, Moscow would have a convenient excuse not to sell to China, despite its original intentions. Indeed, as soon as Japan took Manchuria, Moscow proposed to sell the CER to Japan (see p. 226). In December 1931, however, the Soviet newspaper denied foreign press reports about the sale plan.[131]

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[126] See *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. IV. VKP(b), Komintern i sovetskoe dvizhenie v Kitae. 1931–1937*, part 2 (Moscow, 2003), 960–62.

[127] *Who's Who in China: Biographies of Chinese Leaders*, 5th ed. (Shanghai, 1936), 31.

[128] Percy Chen, *China Called Me: My Life Inside the Chinese Revolution* (Boston, MA, 1979), 245, 271, 298.

[129] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV: Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia. 1937–1945 gg. Kn. 1: 1937–1944 gg.* (Moscow, 2000), 154. After the incident with Shidehara, Eugene Chen supported a reconciliation with the CCP and took part in the Fujian Rebellion against the Nanjing government in late 1933 and early 1934. The rebellion failed.

[130] See *VKP(b), Komintern i Iaponiia. 1917–1941* (Moscow, 2001), 62–63.

[131] "Oproverzhenie TASS," *Izvestiia*, 24 December 1931, 1.

Moscow employed additional forms of disinformation to entice Japan into Manchuria. On 17 June 1931, three months before the Mukden Incident, the *New York Times* carried an article reporting that "The early part of July is likely to see official announcements from Nanking and Moscow of the sale to China of Russia's half interest in the Chinese Eastern Railway for a figure approximating 400,000,000 gold rubles [about 200 million U.S. dollars]." The sale was to involve no cash transaction but was to be paid "in remitted duties on Russian manufactures sent to China." This would allow Moscow to avoid accusations of dumping. The newspaper added that "Japan would be hardest hit if the deal were consummated, but every foreign concern importing into Manchuria and North China would also be desperately hit."[132] This report was picked up by both the Japanese and Chinese press.[133] The report was patently false, however. As Moscow complained on the eve of the Mukden Incident, not a single problem of the CER had been solved, despite months of negotiations between China and the Soviet Union.[134]

Finally, one last subtle clue exists that shows that before the Mukden Incident, Stalin was prepared for Japan's action in the east. On August 30, shortly before the incident, Stalin attacked the "anti-Polonist" epidemic of "so-called" public opinion in the Soviet Union, emphasizing that a non-aggression pact with Poland would be "decisive" for peace in the next two-three years.[135] Although Moscow did not succeed in concluding a pact with Poland until the summer of 1932, Stalin's sense of the urgency of peace in the West in August 1931 suggests that he was expecting something in the East.

By September 1931, Moscow had set the stage for Japan's military invasion of Manchuria.

3.3 Invasion and Trap

As with the Huanggutun Incident (Zhang Zuolin's murder) in 1928, the Japanese plotters of the Mukden Incident readily acknowledged that they had planned and executed their plot on 18 September 1931. This marked the beginning of what is often called Japan's "Fifteen-Year War" with China. Unlike the 1928 incident, however, there are no detailed confessions from those who actually planted the explosives. Kōmoto Suemori (河本末守, 1896–1943), a relative of Kōmoto Daisaku, and Imada Shintarō (今田新太郎, 1896–1949), an assistant for Zhang

[132] "Russia Likely Trade Her Share of Railway in China for a Free Market for Her Goods," *New York Times*, 17 June 1931, 1.

[133] "Tōshi tetsudō kaimodoshi, RoShi kōshō seiritsusetsu," *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun*, 19 June 1931, 6; JACAR, B10074588400 ("Nanking May Buy Eastern Railway: Sale of C.E.R. Looms as Moscow Parley Progresses," *Shanghai Evening Post*, 23 June 1931, based on "United Press"). See also Bruce A. Elleman, *International Competition in China, 1899–1991: The Rise, Fall, and Restoration of the Open Door Policy* (London, 2018), 124.

[134] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1968), 14:492.

[135] *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska. 1931–1936 gg.* (Moscow, 2001), 71.

Xueliang's Japanese military adviser Shibayama Kenshirō (see Chapter 2, p. 155), claimed responsibility for the sabotage. The explosives were placed on the tracks of the South Manchurian Railway in Liutiaohu near Mukden. When they were detonated, they caused little damage: A train that came along shortly afterward ran along the track without incident. In the skirmish that followed, Imada killed one Chinese soldier who had already surrendered. Imada subsequently suffered a mental breakdown and was soon sent back home.[136]

As for Ishiwara, the chief architect of the incident, it seems odd, given his role behind the scenes, that he would privately confess to his family that the Mukden Incident was an "eternal mystery" to him.[137] When interrogated after World War II by prosecutors for the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, he claimed that it had always been his impression that "the Chinese blew up the railroad [on] September 18, 1931" and that Captain Imada had had nothing to do with it.[138] Interrogated later again, Ishiwara maintained that it was the Chinese forces (500 to 600 strong) that destroyed the railway tracks and first attacked the Japanese.[139] Ishiwara prevaricated. Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the possibility that other forces unknown to Ishiwara may have been involved. And, as has been suggested, there would seem to have been a tacit agreement between Ishiwara, Kōmoto, and Itagaki and the Soviet side as well. After all, Ishiwara considered himself a revolutionary. Knowing what the Russian Revolution had led to, he was keenly aware of the extraordinary difficulties that could arise.[140] Might it not have been possible that Moscow secretly abetted him in planning a "revolution" of his own?

The commander-in-chief of the Kwantung Army and a former military adviser to Zhang Zuolin, Honjō Shigeru (本庄繁, 1876–1945), appointed just a few weeks earlier, in August, seems to have been blindsided by the Ishiwara-Kōmoto-Itagaki plot, as was the Wakatsuki cabinet, including the minister of the army, Minami Jirō (南次郎, 1874–1955). At the news of the rail bombing near Mukden and the Kwantung Army's military response, the cabinet quickly declared its policy of "non-expansion" of military action. Meanwhile, Zhang Xueliang, who happened to be in Beijing,[141] for medical treatment (he had contracted typhoid fever in June), gave an order on the following day (September 19) to his forces *not* to put up resistance, as did Chiang Kai-shek, who was preoccupied with fighting against the CCP. Chiang's slogan "Repel External Threats with Internal Peace"

[136] See Miyatake Gō, *Shōgun no yuigon. Endō Saburō nikki* (Tokyo, 1986), 50.

[137] Sanbō Honbu, *Manshū jihen sakusen keika no gaiyō*, 79.

[138] Awaya Kentarō and Yoshida Hiroshi, eds., *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho* (Tokyo, 1993), 34:73–74.

[139] See his depositions taken in Sakata, Japan on 1 and 2 May 1947: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10279315 (26–27).

[140] See Tanaka Shin-ichi, "Ishiwara Kanji," 200–201.

[141] From June 1928, when Nanjing became China's official capital, to 1937, when the Japanese forces occupied it, Beijing was called Beiping (北平). Here and hereafter, it is, in general, referred to as Beijing to avoid confusion.

([安內攘外]) gave priority to the struggle against the CCP. Zhang declared that Japan's violation of international laws should be judged by the international community. Until his death, Zhang believed in his decision "not to resist" Japan's actions. He admitted, however, that he was wrong to assume that Japan would not dare to occupy all of Manchuria: He thought at the time it was a provocation that could better be coped with by not responding in kind. Zhang could not imagine that such an irrational act would be of any benefit to Japan. Ultimately, Zhang added, two atomic bombs forced Japan to pay the piper.[142]

As suggested earlier (on p. 197), a secret deal between Zhang Xueliang and Ishiwara, Kōmoto, and other Japanese schemers (as well as Moscow) may well have existed. If so, the "non-resistance" of a fanatic patriot, which still baffles some Chinese historians, was a sugar-coated poison pill. It is to be remembered that Zhang preened himself on being a far better conspirator than his Japanese counterparts (see Chapter 2, p. 156). He also did not think much of Japan's intelligence operations. In light of this, Zhang's defense of his inaction in 1931 appears particularly lame: It is difficult to imagine that he was unfamiliar with the plans of the Japanese conspirators. Before the Mukden Incident, Zhang's subordinates had been pressing him to return to Mukden in view of the tense situation in Manchuria. Zhang knew of rumors circulating in Manchuria of Japan's possible military aggression there. Interviewed in 1992, Zhang Xueliang acknowledged that he had known about Japan's military plans in Manchuria and, even before the Mukden Incident actually took place, had ordered his forces *not* to resist Japan.[143] He did not return to Manchuria, in any case, insisting that he would wait until he had fully recovered from typhoid fever. When Japan's military aggression actually befell Manchuria, Zhang does not seem to have been unsettled by it. His Japanese military adviser, Shibayama (see Chapter 2, p. 155), hurried to see Zhang after the Mukden Incident and was "awed" by Zhang's Olympian equanimity. He was even smiling.[144]

Zhang followed the same, far-sighted strategic rationale that guided Stalin regarding Japan's aggression in China. Zhang swallowed his pride and stomached the dishonor of being called the "non-resistance general." Far from acquiescing in Japan's occupation, he waited in the wings for the last laugh. Still, Zhang was concerned about how long he would have to suffer the public opprobrium,

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[142] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)* (Beijing, 2014), 1:251–53; 5:1,639–40. One of Zhang's younger brothers, Zhang Xuesi (張學思, 1916–70), "cried and remonstrated" (哭諫) with him against his non-resistance. Having failed to change Xueliang's mind, Xuesi joined the CCP in 1933. See *Lu Guangji shengping* (Shenyang, 1992), 14; Liu Yonglu, Wu Guoliang, and Hu Xuwen, *Zhang Xuesi jiangjun* (Beijing, 1985), 46–49, 64.

[143] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 1:253. Already, in July, he had resolved not to resist, which suggests he knew what was going to happen. See Tsuchida Akio, "Zhang Xueliang yu budikang zhengce," in *Zhang Xueliang shengya lunji: haineiwai zhuanjia lunwen jingxuan*, ed. Mo Doi (Beijing, 1992), 62–63; Sima Sangdun, *Zhang Xueliang pingzhuan* (Taipei, 1989), 157, 344. See also *Huiyi Zhang Xueliang he Dongbeijun* (Beijin, 2017), 199–200.

[144] Shibayama Kenshirō, *Kyōdo no senkakusha: moto rikugun jikan Shibayama Kenshirō chūshō jijoden*, eds. Akagi Takehiko and Shiota Ryōichirō (Chikusei, Japan, 2010), 77.

sometimes fulminating against his friends, who could not understand him. At one point, Wu Mai (吳邁, 1885–1937), a lawyer who became known for his role in anti-Japanese resistance, reminded Zhang of the infamous story of King Fuchai (夫差), who reigned the Wu dynasty from 495 to 473 BCE. Fuchai missed his chance to conquer his enemy; as a result, he lost his kingdom to the Yue. "Fuchai," Wu Mai remarked, "have you forgotten that the King of Yue killed your father?" (夫差尔忘超王杀父尔乎). This remark, which must have been extraordinarily offensive to Zhang, did not even anger him at the time. Instead, he shook hands with Wu and thanked him.[145]

Clearly, there were those who understood that Zhang's ultimate goal was to outwit Japan. In holding to his position of non-resistance, Zhang was comforted by a saying often attributed (wrongly) to the U.S. President Abraham Lincoln (1809–65): "You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time."[146] Zhang knew that he was fooling the people but only for a time. In other words, he was willing to endure the ignominy of the label "non-resistance general" for the sake of China's ultimate victory. Advocating non-resistance, Zhang sent his representatives to Khabarovsk to ask the Soviet Union for material help. He received weapons.[147] Later, in 1936, when Zhang and Yang Hucheng (see Chapter 4, p. 310) conferred to devise a strategy for national unity against Japan, Zhang explained to Yang (who, unlike Zhang, called at the time for open resistance to Japan) that his non-resistance stance had been dictated by Chiang Kai-shek. He became lachrymose as he spoke.[148] Certainly, Zhang did not tell Yang the whole story. Later in his life, Zhang admitted that the non-resistance policy was his own and not dictated by Chiang.[149]

When Japan was defeated and China liberated in 1945, the tone of self-reproach suddenly evanesced from Zhang's account of the Mukden Incident. He felt vindicated, noting that it had jolted the Chinese people out of inertia and stupor.[150] More than half a century later, in 1986, in a secret conversation with a visitor from Communist China, he confessed that he took it on the chin, because he was convinced all along that in 1931, he had acted as he had for the sake of China's destiny. Now, in 1986, he claimed to be gratified that China was doing well.[151] It appears that Zhang meant to sacrifice Manchuria (or at least a

[145] See *Lu Guangji shengping*, 118. Fuchai was bribed by King Goujian (勾踐, 496–465 BCE) of Yue and did not conquer Yue when he could have. Later, Goujian turned against Fuchai and conquered Wu. Fuchai was driven to suicide.

[146] Wang, *Wang Zhuoran shiliao ji*, 143–44. No evidence exists that it was Lincoln's saying. It can be attributed to Jacques Abbadie (1654–1727), a French Protestant writer.

[147] See *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. III*, 809.

[148] See Mi Zanchen, *Yang Hucheng jiangjun zhuan* (Beijing, 1986), 98–99.

[149] Zhang Xueliang and Tang Degang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi* (Taipei, 2009), 278–79; Wang Shujun, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi* (Jinan, 2002), 1:434.

[150] Zhang Zhiyu, *Koushu lishi zhi wai: Zhang Xueliang shi zenyang yigeren* (Taipei, 2002), 156–57; Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang yigao*, comp. Dou Yingtai (Beijing, 2005), 314–15.

[151] See Zhang Youkun, *Weida de aiguozhe: Zhang Xueliang* (Shenyang, 2006), 280.

part of it) for a time as a last resort in the fight to unite China against Japan. In addressing the Chinese patriots in Beijing shortly after the Mukden Incident, he declared that had China been united, it would never have happened.[152] Shortly thereafter, he repeated in a private letter that were China of one mind from top to bottom, it could defend itself against enemies from the outside.[153]

Later in his life, Zhang Xueliang sought to dispel suspicions about his actions during the incident, repeatedly claiming that he had been misunderstood. All the same, even sixty years after the incident, he could not hide his pleasure at Japan's actions in September 1931: With the Mukden Incident, Japan had "swallowed a bomb."[154] Although Zhang attributed this phrase to the last of Japan's elder statesmen, Prince Saionji (see Chapter 2, p. 133), this attribution cannot be confirmed.[155] The expression, "swallowed a bomb," in reference to Japan, accurately reflected Zhang's own sentiment. His strategy was the same as Stalin's—that is, to induce, entrap, and destroy Japan in China.

Indeed, once Japan had become embroiled in Manchuria, Zhang started actions against Japan. He received weapons from the Soviet Union. He underpinned the anti-Japanese resistance financially and organizationally.[156] When his cousin Zhang Xuecheng joined the Japanese occupiers, Xueliang had him killed (see Chapter 2, p. 160). In 1933, Xueliang led the Battle of Rehe against the Japanese, which he lost, however. By then, in any case, he had already begun scheming with Hu Hanmin and others against Chiang Kai-shek for his "appeasement" of Japan, while outwardly remaining loyal to Chiang.[157] Simultaneously, Zhang sought out contact with the CCP through his entourage (such as Li Tiancai [see Chapter 2, p. 157]).[158]

If Zhang Xueliang were, in fact, colluding with Japanese and Soviet conspirators, his politics would appear sinister but believable. He played a role in the murder of his own father in the interests of a unified China. He then turned his back on the Soviet conspirators and fought against the Soviet Union. Having lost that war, he again found common ground with Soviet and Japanese conspirators and played an active role in Stalin's Manchurian game for the sake of his

[152] At the time, Chinese nationalism was still relatively inchoate and inarticulate in Manchuria. (See Rana Mitter, *The Manchurian Myth: Nationalism, Resistance and Collaboration in Modern China* [Berkeley, CA, 2000]). It appears that Zhang's lament on the lack of unity in China referred not only to the CCP-KMT and other divisions but also to Manchuria's political conditions.

[153] Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Beijing, 1992), 1:496; Zhang Xueji, "Yifeng mixin jianzheng Zhang Xueliang de neixin shijie," *Bainian chao*, no. 3 (2008): 70.

[154] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 1:80, 252.

[155] The closest phrase one can find is a remark made in 1933 by Tani Masayuki (谷正之, 1889–1962), the head of the Asia Department of the Japanese Foreign Ministry: If Japan swallows Manchuria as it did Korea, it will ultimately lead to the downfall not only of Manchuria but also of Japan. See Harada Kumao, *Saionji kō to seikyoku* (Tokyo, 1951), 3:109.

[156] There are numerous testimonies. See, for example, *Lu Guangji shengping*, 85, 87–89, 132; Liu Changchun and Zhao Jie, *Zhang Xueliang* (Beijing, 2008), 76–81.

[157] Yang Tianshi, *Haiwai fang shi lu* (Beijing, 1998), 335–43.

[158] Zhang, *Weida de aiguozhe*, 157.

ultimate goal of unifying China against Japan. Given what we know now, this account makes perfect sense. As will be discussed in the following chapter (see Chapter 4, p. 311), Zhang's pro-Soviet orientation began toward the close of the 1929 Sino-Soviet War, with his decision to use the Tanaka Memorial, supplied by Moscow, for this purpose.

Japan's conquest of Manchuria, 1931–1932

Without much resistance from the Chinese forces, Japan's military conquest of Manchuria proved remarkably quick and deceptively effective. According to Ishiwara, the Kwantung Army was fleet of foot, well trained, and well prepared. He maintained that owing to the rise of Chinese nationalist sentiments in Manchuria, the "relations between the two [Chinese and Japanese] forces were on the verge of explosion as if sitting on top of a volcano." The Kwantung Army, however, was far outnumbered by Zhang Xueliang's army, which was also better equipped with tanks and airplanes. This forced the Japanese to be better trained in order to be prepared for any eventuality. Ishiwara boasted that against Zhang's army of 200,000–250,000, he had not needed to use even half of his meager forces of about 10,000.[159] The Japanese plotters planned to take over much of Manchuria without delay. They persuaded Honjō to dispatch the Kwantung Army outside of its jurisdiction—to Jilin and beyond. On September 19, Tatekawa Yoshitsugu arrived from Tokyo and was sent by the Army General Staff to dissuade the plotters from reckless adventures in Manchuria. He got in a "fiery discussion" with Ishiwara and his plotters. To Tatekawa, who was concerned about a possible military advance of the Soviet forces, Ishiwara argued back that under no circumstances would the Soviet Union move against Japan. His conviction reflected once again the hidden Soviet presence in the scheme. In the end, Tatekawa threw caution to the wind and acquiesced. Following further discussion among the Kwantung Army staff, Honjō finally issued the green light, and on September 21, he dispatched forces to Jilin.[160] To guard Mukden, the South Manchurian Railway, and other vital areas, the Kwantung Army asked the Korean Army for backup. Although the move of armed forces into a foreign country without the emperor's express permission was illegal, it was done all the same, and the Tokyo government was presented with a fait accompli. The cabinet reluctantly acknowledged it, fearing that otherwise, the Kwantung Army would be quickly overwhelmed and destroyed by the Chinese. The emperor did likewise, ex post facto.

In October, in spite of Shidehara's assurance to the international community that the military operations would not be allowed to spread farther, the Kwantung Army ignored Tokyo's orders and extended its operations, bombing

[159] Ishiwara's depositions taken in Sakata, Japan, on 1 and 2 May 1947: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10279315 (18, 78, 135).

[160] The first-person account by Katakura Tadashi, "9.19 yoru Manshū Shin-yō kan no gekiron," *Maru* 18, no. 5 (8 May 1965): 90–93.

Jinzhou from the air, and advancing southwest of Mukden and close to Shanhaiguan, the gateway to Beijing. Ishiwara and Itagaki operated a secret "General Staff" within the army in Tokyo, which used its own secret codes to communicate with the Kwantung Army. In coordination with the plotters in Manchuria, this group, based in the Russian Section of the General Staff Second (Intelligence) Department, hatched a scheme for a coup d'état to be carried out in October in Tokyo (the so-called October Incident [十月事件]). The money for this plot was taken to Tokyo by none other than Kōmoto Daisaku from the newly overthrown Mukden government.[161] Fujita Isamu, too, contributed a substantial amount to this plot, as he had previously to the Mukden Incident. Uncovered just before execution, however, the plotters were arrested, including Hashimoto Kingorō (橋本欣五郎, 1890–1957), head of the Russian Section of the General Staff Second Department. Hashimoto had served as a military attaché in Turkey from 1927 to 1930 and admired Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938). Lachrymose about the plight of the destitute, he pummeled the "capitalists." As head of the Russian Section, Hashimoto told Ikeda Shigeaki (池田成彬, 1867–1950) of the Mitsui zaibatsu that he and his comrades would never turn their weapons against the masses.[162] Like many radical nationalists, Hashimoto was passionately anti-Communist and anti-liberal but was pro-Soviet. In the summer of 1939, during the Battle of Nomonhan, Japan's military clash with the Soviet Union, he deplored that London had fooled Moscow into attacking Japan. Were Lenin alive, Hashimoto contended, he would shed tears over the "degeneration" of Soviet Communism. Hashimoto was optimistic, however, that Japan's skillful diplomacy could turn the Soviet Union around against Britain.[163] Of course, his views were preposterous.

It is easy to see that Moscow sought to exploit people like Hashimoto. Indeed, here, too, existed Soviet connections via Kōmoto Daisaku, who, together with the pro-Soviet firebrand nationalist Ōkawa Shūmei, played a central role in the planning, organization, and implementation of the coup. The prosecutor who investigated this incident called Kōmoto a "great historical presence [偉大ナル歴史的存在]."[164] Moscow would have been more than happy to see Tokyo fall into chaos, whatever the outcome of the coup. When the coup failed, the Kwantung Army dispatched a coded message to Tokyo, threatening to become independent of Tokyo. (Hashimoto and Kōmoto had made arrangements for this message to be sent to Tokyo on the day of the coup to create confusion in Tokyo.) The army command in Tokyo was so disturbed by the message that it promised to honor the Kwantung Army's actions in Manchuria. The plotters

[161]Nakano Masao, *Manshū jihen to jūgatsu jiken: Shōwashi no genten* (Tokyo, 1973), 181.

[162]Nakano Masao, *Hashimoto taisa no shuki* (Tokyo, 1963), 162; Yanagisawa Ken, *Kojin konjin* (Tokyo, 1949), 19.

[163]Hashimoto Kingorō, "TaiSo kankei shiken," *Gekkan Roshiya*, August 1939, 72–74.

[164]Furuya Tetsuo, "NiTchū sensō ni itaru tai Chūgoku seisaku no tenkai to sono kōzō," in Furuya Tetsuo, ed., *NiTchū sensō shi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1984), 115.

were soon released unpunished. Kōmoto was never arrested.[165]

Tokyo was losing control of the Kwantung Army. As expected, there was considerable public support for the Manchurian military actions. Even anti-imperialist socialists such as Kamei Kan-ichirō supported it. Kamei denounced the methods used by the Kwantung Army but accepted Manchuria as a "Sino-Japanese condominium."[166] After World War II, Kamei stated to the Americans that he supported the Manchurian Incident, "knowing very well the inefficiency of the Chinese Administration in Manchuria to check the communistic invasion into the region."[167] As discussed earlier, it is difficult to pin down where his political allegiance lay. In light of Kamei's work before and after the Mukden Incident, however, the possibility that Kamei was, wittingly or not, promoting the Soviet line of policy should not be excluded. At any rate, backed by stalwart, demotic support at home, the Kwantung Army continued to advance. In November, the Kwantung Army sent forces to Qiqihar, a town in the northwest of Harbin and in the north of the CER, an area that Moscow and Tokyo implicitly considered as belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence. The move was directed against Ma Zhanshan (馬占山, 1885–1950), the Muslim governor of the Heilongjiang Province who resisted Japan's military advance. Ōhashi Chūichi (大橋忠一, 1893–1975), the Japanese consul in Harbin, warned Ishiwara and Itagaki of the possibility of Soviet intervention. He told them that the Soviet Union supported Ma and had Soviet troops camouflaged as Chinese. Ishiwara and Itagaki responded that they had no choice but to proceed. Later, Ōhashi learned that they had contingency plans in case of Soviet military moves.[168] Still, Ishiwara seemed to believe that Moscow would not intervene in Japan's advance to Qiqihar. In fact, Ishiwara sent a messenger to the Soviet consulate to obtain its "understanding" (了解).[169] Japan conquered Qiqihar.

In this case, clear evidence shows that an "understanding" did exist. Shortly after the Mukden Incident, for example, Fujita Isamu, a left-wing financier who had cultivated links with the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo and Ambassador Troianovskii and financed both the Mukden Incident and the October plot, flew to Chita in Russia via Harbin. He reassured Soviet authorities there that he would not allow the Kwantung Army to cross into Soviet territory.[170]

The fact that the Soviet Union did not intervene when Japan advanced to Qiqihar emboldened the Japanese radicals and deepened their delusion of success. They regarded the Qiqihar operation as a litmus test of Moscow's intentions. Katakura later stated that this was a major turning point for Japan's

[165] Nakano, *Manshū jihen to jūgatsu jiken*, 228, 266. On the March and October Incidents, see also Orbach, *Curse on This Country*, chap. 9.

[166] Takahashi Masanori, *Kaisō no Kamei Kan-ichirō* (Tokyo, 2000), 241.

[167] Kamei Kan-ichirō, "Personal History Statement Draft 1," 3, in Kamei Kan-ichirō kankei bunsho, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo, no. 333.

[168] *Ōhashi Chūichi kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 2014), 482–83.

[169] As told by Itagaki in 1944, quoted in Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 307.

[170] See *Kido Kōichi kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 1966), 247.

ambition to conquer Manchuria and northern Inner Mongolia.[171] A Japanese commentator wrote, almost with surprise, that there must be some reason for Moscow's inaction—namely that Moscow was neither confident nor ready to stand up against the Japanese forces.[172] He was dead wrong, as will be discussed shortly. In 1932, Kawabe Torashirō (河辺虎四郎, 1890–1960), Japan's military attaché, reported from Moscow: "It is possible to believe that the Soviet Union has already abandoned the idea of spreading its political influence to Northern Manchuria."[173] Stalin must have been delighted to read Kawabe's dispatch.

Undisturbed by Tokyo's lukewarm criticism, the Kwantung Army continued its conquest of Manchuria. It recruited acquiescent local Chinese military and political figures and set up local puppet governments here and there. It then proceeded further. It did not always succeed, facing some armed resistance. In January 1932, it captured Jinzhou after the Chinese forces retreated. Shanhaiguan fell the following day. Turning back to the north, on 4 February 1932, the Kwantung Army subdued Harbin after a brief fight. A past master of conspiracy, Doihara Kenji (土肥原賢二, 1883–1943), often referred to as the Lawrence of Manchuria after Lawrence of Arabia (T.E. Lawrence, 1888–1935), bribed Ma Zhanshan and other holdouts into serving the new master of Manchuria. A fortnight later, Japan's puppet government Manzhouguo was proclaimed a republic with Puyi (the "Last Emperor") as the head of state and the city of Changchun, renamed Xinjing ("New Capital"), as its capital. Two years later, the new state was transformed into an "empire," with Puyi as its emperor. Ma, appointed the defense minister of this new state, soon rebelled against it. In December 1932, he and his troops were forced out of Manchuria and into Soviet territory. He returned to China in 1933 and continued his fight against the Japanese.

Political assassinations in Japan

Although the conquest of Manchuria may have been seen by some as a thumping success story for Japan, Japan was thrust into political mayhem. The radical rightists grew increasingly frustrated with the political inertia and passivity of the Tokyo government. A group ("Ketsumeidan") headed by the Buddhist priest Inoue Nisshō (井上日召, 1886–1967) resorted to outright terrorism. They targeted for assassination important politicians, including Shidehara, Ikeda, Wakatsuki, Saionji, and others. On 2 February 1932, they killed Inoue Jun-nosuke (井上準之助, 1869–1932), the minister of finance under Hamaguchi, whom they held responsible for Japan's economic difficulties and the budget cuts for the navy. A month later, they shot and killed Dan Takuma (團琢磨, 1858–1932), a graduate of MIT who headed the Mitsui zaibatsu. On 15 May 1932, the remainder of the group who had escaped arrest, along with a group of young naval

[171] Katakura Tadashi, "Manshū jihen to Kantōgun," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 990 (September 1961): 49.

[172] Satō Masami, "Souēto renpō no chinmoku," *Manshū hyōron* 2, no. 1 (2 January 1932): 26.

[173] Moscow intercepted this telegram, cited in E.A. Gorbunov, *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom. Tainaia voina na Dal'nem Vostoke* (Moscow, 2002), 110.

officers, staged a coup by assassination with the goal of carrying out national reconstruction ("Shōwa restoration") under martial law. Their ideology was akin to fascism and "National Bolshevism." Their goal was a radical transmutation of the Japanese body politic into a quasi-socialist dictatorship under the emperor. Ōkawa Shūmei, a pro-Russian radical ideologue, financed the coup. Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi (犬養毅, 1855-1932), who had taken over from Wakatsuki in December 1931, was assassinated. Other assassination attempts were foiled, however, as was the coup itself.[174] These events ushered in an era known as "government by assassination," an era of political terrorism in Japan.[175]

Moscow's cultivation of Japan's elite

No doubt, Moscow welcomed these disturbances, and, although there is no direct evidence that Moscow stood behind them, it certainly influenced them. While in Moscow in 1931, Troianovskii received instruction from Stalin that he should broaden his contact with the Japanese rightists and even reactionaries![176] Troianovskii wrote to Moscow on 31 March 1932, after the assassinations of Inoue and Dan, that Japan's "military fascist" groups were a confusing alphabet soup but that many of them were "*among our friends* [emphasis added]" who were impressed by Soviet economic development. He wrote to Karakhan that he had carried out instructions to "*widen contacts with the rightist elements* [emphasis added]," including "Prince Tokugawa" [Yoshichika], Kuhara Fusanosuke, and "Katō" (Katō Kanji [加藤寛治, 1870–1939]), who strongly opposed the London Naval Treaty in 1930. In April, Troianovskii informed Moscow that he had had contact with the "social fascists" (i.e., Social Democrats, most likely people like Kamei) for some time and was endeavoring to establish contact with more rightists.[177] Troianovskii's report of 31 March 1932 was published in Moscow in 1969, omitting without notice all references to the rightists just quoted.[178]

Troianovskii also cultivated extensive contacts with Japanese military officials and the Imperial Court. They included both the army chief of staff, Prince (Kan-in no miya) Kotohito (閑院宮載仁, 1865–1945), and the president of the naval general staff, Prince (Fushimi no miya) Hiroyasu (伏見宮博恭, 1875–1946).[179] Araki Sadao (see Chapter 1, p. 66), then minister of the army and often regarded as the most radical right-winger, Koiso Kuniaki (小磯國昭, 1880–1950), the vice minister

[174] The classic work is Hata Ikuhiko, *Gun fashizumu undō shi: sangatsu jiken kara 2.26 go made* (Tokyo, 1963).

[175] Hugh Byas, *Government by Assassination* (New York, 1942).

[176] Oleg Troianovskii, *Cherez gody i rasstoianiia. Istoriia odnoi sem'i* (Moscow, 1997), 51. This was likely to be on 2 November 1931. See *Na prieme u Stalina. Tetradi (zhurnaly) zapisei lits, priniatykh I.V. Stalinym (1924–1953 gg.). Spravochnik* (Moscow, 2008). 50.

[177] AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, ll. 20, 24, 37.

[178] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1969), 15:214–17.

[179] Krutitskaia and Mitrofanova, *Polpred Alekdandr Troianovskii*, 122, 125. Prince Kotohito visited Russia in 1916 and served as president of the Japanese-Russian Society (*NichiRo kyōkai*) in Tokyo.

Figure 3.7. Manzhouguo, 1932. Rehe (Jehol) was annexed to Manzhouguo in 1933

of the army under Araki; Katō Kanji; and Ōsumi Mineo (大角岑生, 1876–1941), the minister of the navy, were also among Troianovskii's close contacts. The numerous conversations and meetings over breakfast with Japanese press leaders were equally productive, wrote Troianovskii to Moscow in May 1932, so much so that he could easily say that he had managed to turn Japanese policy in favor of "friendship" with the Soviet Union. He went on to say that his "friendship" with Prime Minister Saitō Makoto (斎藤実, 1858–1936), a naval admiral who took over from the assassinated Inukai, was also a political achievement.[180] Troianovskii's time in Japan, according to his son, was the most successful in his professional life: In Japan, it was enough for him to establish contact with key figures to "get

[180] AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, l. 70.

to know everyone who decided the country's foreign policy," whereas in the United States (to which he was assigned after Japan), so many different trends were at work that it resembled a vast ocean.[181] In other words, in spite of frequent changes of hands, the Japanese government was controlled by a relatively small number of powerful men. If these men were adeptly manipulated, it was easy to influence them. Moscow exercised "reflexive control" by guiding Japan into "making objective decisions" that would lead to its destruction (see Introduction, p. 23). Moscow thus destabilized Japan politically by focusing its aggression on Manchuria.

There is another hint that Moscow sought to capitalize on the May 1932 coup attempt. Karl Radek intimated it. In September 1933, Radek published an article "Dynamite in the Far East," which reviewed the trials of the defendants who staged the abortive May 15 coup.[182] In it, Radek stated with emphasis that the Japanese conspirators had plotted to assassinate the U.S. ambassador, Joseph C. Grew (1880–1965), and the General Consul Grace in order to accelerate a Japanese-American war. This made little sense, because Grew did not arrive in Japan until June, long after the coup attempt: He heard the story of the May 15 coup in Chicago on his long way to Japan by land and sea. The conspirators did state that they entertained the idea of killing the British actor and filmmaker Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977), who was visiting Japan at that time, in order to aggravate "Japanese-American" relations. (They may not have known that Chaplin was not an American.) They did not know, however, where and when the welcoming party for Chaplin was to take place, so they quickly abandoned the idea. Their gravamen was against Japanese politicians who, they alleged, surrendered to the Anglo-Saxons, particularly American capitalists. They viewed the London conference (1930) in this light as the most humiliating event in recent years.[183]

Did Radek make up the assassination plots to provoke the United States against Japan? Given that the conspirators' goal was to create a new, assertive cabinet, it seems improbable that they seriously entertained the idea of assassinating Americans. It is possible, however, that they fantasized about taking such actions, and the Japanese authorities censored any report of them for diplomatic reasons. If so, how did the information reach Radek in Moscow? Or did Radek know something unbeknown to the Japanese authorities and inadvertently divulge it? Could it be that Soviet operatives in Japan sought, unsuccessfully, to direct the plotters against the Americans? Radek's main point was that these military "fascist" groups sought to take power by terror and unleash war to grab the Asian continent. (What Radek chose not to reveal, however, was that many

[181] Troianovskii, *Cherez gody i rasstoianiia*, 56.

[182] "Dinamit na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Izvestiia*, 26 September 1933, 2. This is also in *Iaponiia. Sbornik statei i materialov* (Moscow, 1934), 25–32 (where it is erroneously noted that it was published in *Izvestiia* on 25 October 1933).

[183] See *Chi de egaita gocihigo jiken no shinsō. Rikukaigun dai kōhan to Ketsumeidan kōhan no kaisetsu* (Tokyo, 1933).

conspirators, in fact, disowned fascism as being foreign to Japan, and some were even influenced by Marxism.)[184] Radek's account of these assassination schemes is eerily similar to an actual assassination attempt organized by Moscow against the German ambassador to the Soviet Union, Herbert von Dirksen (1882–1955), in March 1932. Assassins shot and wounded not von Dirksen but Fritz von Twardowski (1890–1970), a counselor at the embassy. The Soviet authorities arrested two "assassins," who confessed that they had wanted to kill the German diplomat to provoke war. In December 1931, there was a similar plot against Japan's ambassador to the Soviet Union, Hirota Kōki (廣田弘毅, 1878–1948), as well.[185] Stalin often used political provocation as foreign policy.

However one interprets Moscow's relationship to this period of political terror in Japan, there is no doubt that Moscow carefully avoided disrupting the already-whirling maelstrom. Ōhashi Chūichi, Japan's consul in Harbin, noted an odd phenomenon: After the Mukden Incident, the Soviet officials at the consulate and the CER kept completely silent and avoided contact with the Chinese. Anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist propaganda, which was already tempered in the months before the incident, had now stopped. Everyone found this "exceedingly bizarre."[186] A the time, the Soviet military attaché's office in Tokyo communicated infrequently with Moscow. Instead, TASS, the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union, dispatched many reports *en clair*.[187] Japanese diplomats in Europe thought Moscow's silence was "eerie."[188]

What Moscow did do was provide a coherent narrative: It characterized the Mukden Incident and the occupation of Manchuria as Japan's first big steps in its effort to realize the Tanaka Memorial of conquering the world and particularly Manchuria and the Soviet Far East. The Soviet narrative shaped the future events of Japanese aggression. This chapter has already discussed the likelihood that Stalin first sanctioned the publication of the Tanaka Memorial in the autumn of 1929. Now, he was tying the hoax to the geopolitical outrage in particular, offering a perspective of Japan that was not only being determined by its own conspirators but was also being shaped by his own actions. Stalin had the power to transform Manchuria into the perfect trap, and he knew how to do it. Without publicly interfering, he allowed Japan to dig itself in deeper in its attempt to handle the diplomatic fallout of this mess. Unlike the Japanese, John T. Pratt

[184] Many defendants were familiar with Marxist literature and used Marxist or quasi-Marxist concepts in their statements. Kazami Akira (see Chapter 4, p. 299), a Marxist who became the prime minister's secretary in 1937, was close to one of the coup participants, Tachibana Kōzaburō (橘孝三郎, 1893–1974). See Hosaka Masayasu, *Goichigo jiken: Tachibana Kōzaburō to Aikyōjuku no kiseki* (Tokyo, 1974).

[185] See Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Political Provocation as Stalin's Foreign Policy: The von Twardowskii Affair, 1932," *Historia est testis temporum*, Bibliotheca Europae Orientalis, vol. XLVII, ed. Jan Malicki (Warsaw, 2017), 105–126.

[186] JACAR, B04013030600, 8 (15 October 1931).

[187] "Jikyoku ni saishi zai Tōkyō kakkoku tai(kō)shikantsuki bukan no dōsei," in *Gendaishi shiryō (11): zoku Manshū jihen* (Tokyo, 1965), 532.

[188] Haibara Shigeki and Kasuga Masahiko, *Manshū jihen gaikō shi* (Tokyo, 1932), 358.

(1876–1970), a British diplomat and expert of the Far East, clearly saw Stalin's ruse; he remarked in 1932 that Japan was "digging her own grave in Manchuria and the more the Nanking [Nanjing] Government is weakened and discredited the more likely is Communism to spread in China."[189]

Thus, in spite of the alarming narrative, no one observed any sense of urgency in the Soviet Union. Stalin did not even return to Moscow from his summer resort in the south, returning only on October 11. Nor did Troianovskii, who at the time of the Mukden Incident happened to be on leave in Moscow, rush back to Tokyo. He met Stalin on 2 November 1931 in the Kremlin and only then returned to Tokyo.[190]

Koiso Kuniaki, who became the Kwantung Army's chief of staff in July 1932, and later, during World War II, Japan's prime minister, offered a view of the Manchurian Incident in an interview given in 1942. With a proviso that it might not be a good idea for him to say so in light of Japan's delicate relations with the Soviet Union, Koiso professed to believe that Moscow's position toward Japan and Manchuria at that time was to give Manchuria to Japan for the time being in order to build it up before grabbing it from Japan by war.[191] Koiso was right.

Stalin's "appeasement" of Japan

Stalin's caution revealed his strategy. He first commented five days after the incident, officially proclaiming that Japan could be in collusion with other countries regarding the division of China into spheres of influence. He ruled out military intervention and considered diplomatic intervention inexpedient, because, as he said, it might unite the imperialists. Instead, he argued, let them fight among themselves. He instructed that the Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* criticize Japan as an occupier, the League of Nations as an instrument of war and not of peace, the Kellogg-Briand Pact as a tool for justifying occupation, America as a supporter of division, and the "imperialist pacifists" of Europe, America, and Asia as dividing and enslaving China. He added that the government newspaper *Izvestiia* should take the same position but that it was absolutely necessary that it take a more moderate and cautious position.[192] In contrast, Maksim M. Litvinov, the people's commissar of foreign affairs since 1930, proposed active intervention against Japan from the beginning. Dissatisfied with Stalin's caution and restraint, Litvinov gave permission to the government newspaper *Izvestiia* to print a poem by Dem'ian Bednyi (1883–1945). The poem, sharply critical of the Soviet government's restraint, questioned why Moscow remained silent in the face of Japan's aggression against China.[193] Stalin reprimanded the poet, Litvinov, and the

[189] Quoted in George Alexander Lensen, *The Damned Inheritance: The Soviet Union and the Manchurian Crises 1924–1935* (Tallahassee, FL., 1974), 331.

[190] See *Na prieme u Stalina*, 50.

[191] See Mori, *Manshū jihen no rimenshi*, 280.

[192] See *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 116.

[193] Dem'ian Bednyi, "Chto dal'she?," *Izvestiia*, 23 September 1931, 2.

newspaper editor, Ivan M. Gronskii (1894–1985).[194] This episode suggests that Stalin kept his actual policy toward Japan hidden even from people like Litvinov. Diplomats, let alone poets, were not up to the task, in Stalin's view.

Moscow's "appeasement" of Japan was noteworthy.[195] In October 1931, Moscow declared its intention of "strict non-intervention."[196] In January 1932, Stalin instructed that in Siberia and the Far East, no radio news in any language be broadcast on the events in Manchuria. Subsequently, Moscow allowed the Japanese to use the CER to transport soldiers, which violated both the 1924 Sino-Soviet treaty and the 1925 Soviet-Japanese treaty. In March 1932, Stalin instructed the authorities in Sakhalin not to rock the boat against the Japanese on oil and coal concessions.[197] Moscow lodged no protest against the foundation of Manzhouguo. In fact, far from demurring, Stalin told the Japanese that Moscow was ready to sell the CER to Manzhouguo.[198] As discussed earlier, this was something Moscow had wanted to do for some time. Stalin evidently knew exactly what he was waiting for. Soon thereafter, Moscow offered de facto recognition of Japan's puppet state by allowing its consulates to open in Blagoveshchensk and Chita. In June 1932, Bliukher proposed to Voroshilov that Japanese airplanes violating Soviet airspace be shot down. Voroshilov did not consider it necessary to consult the Politburo (or Stalin). Stalin, however, categorically prohibited Soviet forces from shooting at the Japanese planes without Moscow's explicit permission. Stalin insisted that his right-hand man, Lazar' M. Kaganovich (1893–1991), not succumb to Bliukher's cries.[199] There were numerous similar incidents in which Moscow took what appeared to many Soviets to be a humiliating position toward Japan.[200]

Stalin had no interest in capitulating to Japan, and one would be succumbing to the same naivety as the Japanese conspirators to see Stalin as treating Japan either with friendship or fear. Rather, Stalin wanted Japan mired in Manchuria. So, while secretly supporting the Chinese partisans and Korean insurgents against

[194] See *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 122.

[195] Andrzej Nowak, *Pierwsza zdrada Zachodu: 1920—zapomniany appeasement* (Kraków, 2015), 13, claims that the appeasement of Hitler dated back to the West's "appeasement" of Japan in 1931–32. Britain and France did not take an overtly critical position to Japan's invasion, but the real appeaser was the Soviet Union. Jonathan Haslam has actually used the term "appeasement" to describe Moscow's response. See his *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933–41: Moscow, Tokyo and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1991), 11.

[196] "Zaiavlenie tov. Karakhana," *Izvestiia*, 20 October 1931, 1.

[197] See *VKP(b), Komintern i Iaponiia*, 76–78.

[198] Ibid., 79.

[199] *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 141. According to a Japanese source, Bliukher determined that it would be easy to defeat and expel Japan from Manchuria. Stalin objected on the grounds that the Japanese would be united against a Soviet offensive. If Moscow sold the CER to the Japanese, peace would be secured for three years. Meanwhile, the Soviets should disrupt the Japanese command; only then could Japan be beaten. See *Hatoyama Ichirō, Kaoru nikki. Jōkan. Hatoyama Ichirō hen* (Tokyo, 1999), 200. Stalin made a similar point in 1941 (see Chapter 5, p. 410).

[200] These are detailed in Terayama Kyōsuke, "Sutārin to Manshū: 1930 nendai zenhan no Sutārin no tai Manshū seisaku," *Tōhoku Ajia kenkyū*, no. 9 (2005): 89–110.

the Japanese occupiers, he insisted that Moscow had nothing to do with them. The Soviet secret police sent agents to Manchuria for subversion. Yet, when they were caught, Stalin exploded against the police for the indiscretion.[201] Moscow's ultimate interest was not minor subversion operations but a big subversion—the collapse of imperialist powers and the triumph of Communism in Manchuria and China. As Karl Radek told a Polish diplomat in the spring of 1932, Moscow was not particularly interested in the Sino-Japanese dispute in Manchuria. "A hundred times more important" was the "growth of Communist seeding in China" (*wzrost posiewu komunistycznego w Chinach*).[202]

The Shanghai Incident, January 1932

A reevaluation of events such as Zhang Zuolin's assassination and the Manchurian invasion offers a new perspective for interpreting other key moments in history. The Shanghai Incident of 1932 deserves particular attention in this regard. In January 1932, some Chinese individuals in Shanghai were bribed to stage an assault on Japanese Buddhist monks, one of whom died in the attack. The incident led to a dramatic escalation in Sino-Japanese tensions beyond Manchuria. Yet, instigators of the bribery were none other than Tanaka Ryūkichi and Kawashima Yoshiko (see Chapter 2, p. 147). It seems that Tanaka, having already worked with the Soviets in both Zhang Zhuolin's assassination and the invasion of Manchuria, had returned to serve in another important role. While Soviet traces were hidden, the culprits behind this incident[203] lead directly to Moscow. One cannot justifiably assume otherwise in view of Tanaka's connections to Moscow.

Moscow had good reason to participate in instigating such an incident. Japan's invasion of Manchuria did not seem to satisfy Moscow, probably because it did little to disturb the Western powers (save the United States) that had far fewer stakes in Manchuria than had Japan or the Soviet Union. Moscow had to target Shanghai if it were to attract the full attention of the Western powers. The attack on the monks, combined with heightened anti-Japanese sentiment caused by the Mukden Incident, brought an eruption of violence. Japan insisted that radical and Communist elements of the Chinese Nineteenth Route Army were to blame for deliberately escalating the tension.[204]

The amplified tension led to major battles between Chinese and Japanese forces. The Japanese Navy, envious of what appeared to be the army's brilliant

[201] Ibid., 93–95.

[202] *Polskie dokumenty dyplomatyczne. 1932* (Warsaw, 2011), 712. In this regard, Rana Mitter seems to underestimate secret Soviet subversive operations in Manchuria after Japan's occupation. See his *The Manchurian Myth*.

[203] It is possible, however, as Li Gang has argued, that Kawashima played no critical role in the Shanghai Incident. See Li Gang, *Chuandao Fangzi shenpan dang'an da jiemi* (Hong Kong, 2012), 47–48. If so, it is likely that it was Kawashima who controlled Tanaka and not the other way around.

[204] Kaigunshō, *Shanhai jihen to teikoku kaigun no kōdō* (Tokyo, 1932), 5.

success in Manchuria, seemed eager to score its own success. The navy sent reinforcements along with its fleet, as did the army. As fighting proliferated, Japanese forces resorted to aerial bombing of the civilian population. If this was Soviet provocation, it was brilliant. It was in Shanghai that the economic interests of the Western powers were concentrated. They were sensitive to any disturbance. The Western powers turned roundly critical of Japan. It was only then that the League of Nations resolved to put Japan's aggression in Manchuria and Shanghai on the agenda for its next meeting. Moscow observed this development with satisfaction. It is odd but telling, as a Russian historian has pointed out, that Moscow uttered not a single word of criticism of Japan regarding the Shanghai Incident.[205] The Chinese forces, some of which had been trained by German military advisers, fought effectively against what appeared to many observers to be far superior forces. After tens of thousands of military and civilian casualties, the Chinese Army retreated, and the battle came to an end relatively quickly—in March 1932.

This turned out to be a significant event. As one historian put it, the heroism exhibited by the Chinese in the battle against Japan "probably inspired more Chinese than ever before to feel strong patriotic emotions."[206] The Shanghai Incident also drew Western powers closer together against Japan. On 15 April 1932, against the backdrop of rising anti-Japanese sentiment in and outside China, the CCP officially declared war against Japan under the name of Mao Zedong.[207]

Japan's battleground performance in Shanghai did not impress observers. As Vitalii M. Primakov, who was a military attaché in Tokyo in 1930, noted, it exposed the weakness of the Japanese forces.[208] Moreover, it convinced the Chinese that the Japanese forces actually had feet of clay. Troianovskii noted from Tokyo that Japan's struggle in Shanghai delivered not a material but a moral blow to Japan.[209] After the battle in Shanghai ended, the Japanese Navy suspected Tanaka Ryūkichi of playing a nefarious role in Shanghai and complained to the army. Nevertheless, Tanaka was never sanctioned but rather continued to climb up the ranks of the army hierarchy. Moscow chalked up a resounding political victory over Japan.

In the middle of the Shanghai Incident, in February 1932, Moscow engaged in more provocation, using Ataman Semenov, the leader of the anti-Soviet Russian émigrés in the Far East who worked sub rosa for the Soviet Union. Semenov proposed preparations for anti-Soviet operations to Araki Sadao (a Russian specialist who was Japan's minister of the army at the time), expressing his

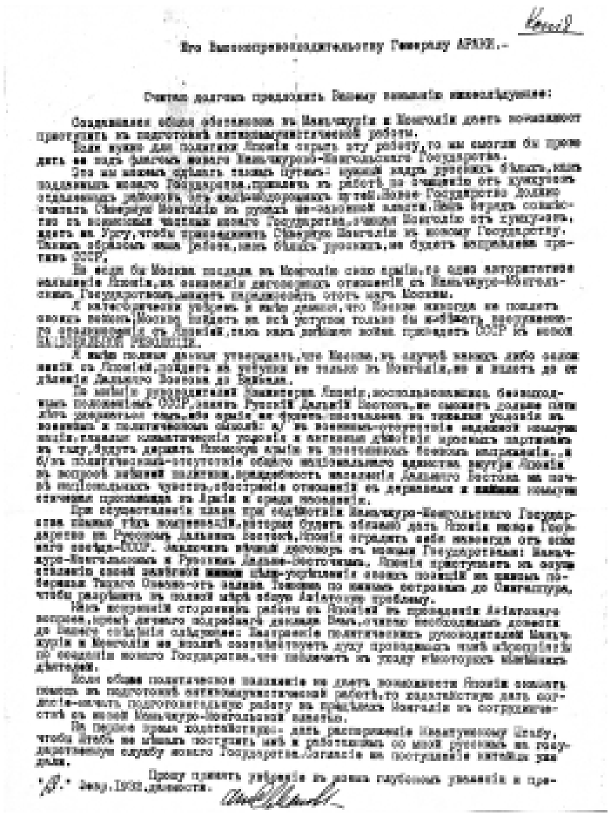
[205] V.V. Chubarov, "Voennye konflikty v Kitae i pozitsiia SSSR (1927–1933 gg.)," in *Sovetskaia vneshniaia politika. 1917–1945 gg. Poiski novykh podkhodov* (Moscow, 1992), 121.

[206] Donald A. Jordan, *China's Trial by Fire: The Shanghai War of 1932* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2001), 235.

[207] See Stuart R. Schram, *Mao's Road to Power: Revolutionary Writings 1922–1949* (Armonk, NY, 1997), 4:206–8.

[208] L. Vitmar [Primakov], *Po Iaponii. Ocherk* (Sverdlovsk–Moscow, 1933), 11.

[209] AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, ll. 21–22.



Его Высокопревосходительству Генералу АРАКИ.-

Считаю долгомъ предложить Вашему вниманію нижеслѣдующее:

Figure 3.8. Ataman Semenov's letter to Araki Sadao, 12 February 1932, urging him to prepare for military intervention in the Mongolian People's Republic.

willingness to carry them out under the flag of a new "Manchu-Mongolian state." With Japan's help, he would "cleanse" Northern (Outer) Mongolia of "honghuzi" (Red beards or Bolsheviks), go to Urga (Ulaanbaatar), and attach "Northern Mongolia" to the new state. He stated that he was "categorically" certain (and had information to the effect) that Moscow would not send its forces to Mongolia but would make concessions to avert war with Japan (which he said could lead to a "National Revolution" in the USSR). His provocation was even more glaringly obvious when he stated that he had solid intelligence that in case of complications with Japan, Moscow would yield to Japan not just Mongolia but the Far East up to the Baikal.[210] (Stalin had offered the same kind of provocation earlier [see Chapter 2, p. 112].) Semenov's attempt failed.

Moscow deliberately continued its non-interventionist position throughout the events in Manchuria and Shanghai, successfully pitting the Western powers against Japan. Moscow's rationale for its declared "neutrality" was that even a minor event might provoke Japan into staging war against the Soviet

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[210] "Semenofu shokan," Araki Sadao Papers, V-85, Kindai Nihon hōsei shiryō sentā genshiryōbu, University of Tokyo Faculty of Law, Japan.

Union. Certainly, Moscow was not in a strong position to fight. The policy of collectivization and de-kulakization (dispossession of refractory peasants) had created political instability, with small-scale peasant rebellions taking place in Siberia and the Maritime Province. The threat of famine was becoming evident in Ukraine and elsewhere. Famine and a mass exodus of people to China gripped Kazakhstan. In the Mongolian People's Republic, mass rebellions against the radical sovietization of the country overran one third of the country. Blaming (wrongly but deliberately) Japan for this trouble, Moscow was forced to send military forces to crush them.[211] Moscow was thus not looking for war. Yet, this explanation for non-intervention appears considerably weaker when one considers that Moscow knew well that Japan had neither the intention nor the ability to stage war against the Soviet Union. Japan was too preoccupied with Manchurian affairs to make plans for war. Before attacking northern Manchuria, Ishiwara and others assured the Soviets that they would honor Soviet interests there without fail. Ishiwara's plan, after all, was ten years (sometimes fifty years) without war in order to master Manchuria.

Effects of Moscow's neutrality

Moscow's neutrality throughout the Mukden and Shanghai Incidents had a profound effect on Japan. In September 1932, Troianovskii wrote to Moscow, with some satisfaction, that Japan's situation in Manchuria had become fiendishly difficult. He saw no signs that Japan would accrue economic benefits from Manchuria for some time. This was good, he added, because Japan was interested in keeping friendly relations with the Soviet Union.[212] In November, he followed up with another report in which he stated that Japan had a far taller order ahead in Manchuria than did the Soviet Union with its five-year plan. With money for investment lacking, coupled with the difficulty of controlling a population of thirty million people, the mastering of Manchuria was an extraordinarily excruciating process. Yet, he firmly believed that Japan would not withdraw from Manchuria. If it did, there would be a "revolution" in Japan.[213] Troianovskii's upbeat observation about Soviet-Japanese relations was based on his subordinate's report. In October, Ivan I. Spil'vanek (1883–?) traveled from Tokyo to Korea and Manchuria and wrote a detailed report to Troianovskii. He spoke with many Japanese officials and military men (Koiso, Honjō, and others), all of whom emphasized friendship with the Soviet Union. (By the time Spil'vanek toured Manchuria, Ishiwara and Itagaki had been removed from their positions in the Kwantung Army.) They hoped for Moscow's continuing neutrality while they established control in Manchuria. They had no intention

[211] See Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Eurasian Crisis of 1931–1933," in *XX zuuny Mongol: tüükh, soël, geopolitik, gadaad khariltsaany tulgamdsan asuudluud. Tüükhch, diplomat Ts. Batbaiaryn 60 nasny oĭd zoriulsan ögüülliĭn ėmkhėtgėl* (Ulaanbaatar, 2017), 100–112.

[212] AVP, f. 0146, op. 15, p. 149, d. 5, l. 239.

[213] Ibid., f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, l. 141.

of attacking the Soviet Union, Spil'vanek emphasized. He wrote that he had heard that when Araki Sadao advocated war against the Soviet Union, Ishiwara contemptuously declared: "Let Araki fight. The Kwantung Army will not fight the Soviet forces."[214] As will be discussed, however, Araki's incendiary speeches were merely for political show.

Not trusting diplomats, Stalin often ignored their reports, emphasizing instead Japan's grandiose plans of aggression. Stalin kept matters of critical importance to himself. All matters related to Japan and the Far East had to be cleared with Stalin.[215] In spite of his official propaganda, however, Stalin was confident in private correspondence that Japan would not attack the Soviet Union. Writing to Voroshilov on 27 November 1931, Stalin stated that Japan would not attack the Soviet Union this winter but perhaps next year. Japan would be pushed to do so by its desire to consolidate its control of Manchuria. Yet, Japan, Stalin claimed, could settle down in Manchuria only after it had succeeded in setting China and the Soviet Union against each other. And this would happen only if Japan helped the Chinese to "grab the CER, Outer Mongolia, and the Maritime Province" and placed in power its protégés completely dependent on Japan. According to Stalin, Japan's plan was to rely on Manchuria in a war with the United States. Without Manchuria, Japan would be like a mouse in a mouse trap (мышеловка) caught between an increasingly militarized United States, a "revolutionized" China, and a quickly developing Soviet Union.[216] In other words, Stalin was certain that Japan would not be able to fight against the Soviet Union. As an astute Russian historian has observed, it is difficult to see any genuine fear of Japan's aggression against the Soviet Union at the time. All the same, Stalin did not stop his methodical and inexorable campaign to emphasize and denounce the nefarious schemes of Japan and other capitalist countries, pressing for ever more militarization of the Soviet Union.[217]

Most Soviet diplomats, including Litvinov, Troianovskii, and Spil'vanek, were not privy to Stalin's schemes. Spil'vanek, having seen Moscow's neutrality and Japan's friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union, seems to have believed that Moscow and Tokyo were in accord on economic matters concerning Manchuria and the Far East, emphasizing that now was the time for "*political* [emphasis added] understanding" between the two countries.[218] It was not just Spil'vanek. As discussed earlier (see Chapter 2, p. 113), Bliukher, whose cries Stalin had commanded Kaganovich to ignore, suspected a secret agreement between Stalin and

[214] Ibid., f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, ll. 144–159 (the quote is l. 157). In March 2019, Russian archivists apparently considered this report (f. 0146, op. 15, p. 149, d. 5, ll. 277–92) inconvenient and sealed it from the author of this book, even though they previously allowed other researchers to read it. Fortunately, a copy was found in a different file, on which this description is based. A detailed diary of Spil'vanek's journey is ibid., f. 08, op. 16, p. 166, d. 164, ll. 6–15.

[215] See Gronskii's note on 14 April 1932: RGASPI, f. 79, op. 1. d. 554, l. 39.

[216] *Sovetskoe rukovodstvo. Perepiska. 1928–1940* (Moscow, 1999), 161–62.

[217] Ken, *Mobilizatsionnoe planirovanie*, 272–74, 461.

[218] AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, l. 145.

Kuhara. In fact, many foreign observers likewise suspected the existence of a Moscow-Tokyo secret deal. Soon after the Mukden Incident, "Mr. Mo Te-hui [Mo Dehui (莫德惠, 1883–1968)], the head of the Chinese delegation in Moscow" was reported to suspect "some kind of understanding between the Soviet and Japanese Governments as to the extent of the Japanese occupation, and that so long as the Japanese did not go beyond certain limits the Soviet Government would not make any formal protest or otherwise intervene." He was "anxious to discover what exactly had passed between the Soviet and Japanese Governments."[219] A possible agreement between Tokyo and Moscow was bruited about all over the globe. The Polish military attaché reported on it.[220] In March 1932, the U.S. State Department suspected "a working understanding, probably informal, between Japanese and Russian authorities": "It has been Russia's policy not to obstruct Japan, but rather to *encourage* [emphasis added] Japan to extend herself at China's expense and in defiance of the other powers."[221]

The rumor of a secret Soviet-Japanese deal was such that the Soviet unofficial diplomat in the United States, Boris E. Skvirskii (1887–1941), had to deny it publicly. As a representative of the Far Eastern Republic, Skvirskii took part in the Washington Conference in 1921–1922, after which he remained in the United States as an unofficial Soviet envoy. In December 1931, Skvirskii, for the first time during his long stay in the United States, gave a newspaper interview to deny that the Soviet Union had any secret deal with Japan or any other government regarding Manchuria.[222]

Taking advantage of the widespread rumor, Moscow also engaged in elaborate disinformation to influence American and British politics. In February 1932, Lieutenant-Commander Paul FitzSimons of the U.S. Naval Reserve reported to U.S. Naval Intelligence about a "report from one of my correspondents in Europe, whom I know to be absolutely reliable" about the existence of an "agreement between the Soviet Union and Japanese Governments." According to the agreement, the Soviet press was instructed to "protest vehemently against the occupation of Manchuria by the Japanese" with a proviso that "at each advance of the Japanese the Soviet protest—but never exceed a 'platonic objection' on their part, which Japan ignores." The report added: "This attitude is systematic. The Russian press violently attacks Japan in order to change world opinion but at the same time Moscow is working in secret and in perfect accord with Tokio. This agreement has been in existence several years." The secret agreement divided China into respective spheres of influence: "Oriental China" to Japan and "Occidental China" (referring to Chinese Turkestan or Xinjiang) to the Soviet Union,

[219] *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part II. Series E. Asia 1914–1939. Volume 39. China, October 1930–December 1931* (Bethesda, MD, 1994), 252, 298.

[220] H. Flojar-Rajchman to Warsaw, 23 February 2932, RGVA, f. 308k, op. 3, d. 299, ll. 25–26.

[221] Justus D. Doenecke, ed., *The Diplomacy of Frustration: The Manchurian Crisis of 1931–1933 as Revealed in the Papers of Stanley K. Hornbeck* (Stanford, CA, 1981), 175.

[222] "Denies Soviet Plans Manchurian Move," *New York Times*, 5 December 1931, 10.

which thus would gain a foothold to advance to British India.[223] This was credible enough to attract American and British attention at the time. The fear was that Moscow and Tokyo were trying to monopolize China to the exclusion of the United States, just as Russia and Japan had done after the Russo-Japanese War. The point of this disinformation was to alert Washington to Japan's aggression in "Oriental China," where the United States had much at stake, and to shield Moscow from accusations of collusion, by suggesting that it was only interested in "Occidental China," where Washington had little stake at the time.

Other published texts during this period give further insight into Stalin's covert intentions behind his strategy of "appeasement." While many Russian publications claim that Japan's invasion of Manchuria was unexpected,[224] an essay by Karl Radek contributed to the American journal *Foreign Affairs* betrays a different reality, one that seems far more in line with Stalin's own stated interest of entrapping Japan. Radek boasted in the essay that "Soviet observers who studied the situation in Manchuria in the summer of 1931 were able to give a very accurate forecast of what lay ahead." Radek quoted V. Avarin and N. Terent'ev to show that Moscow had predicted Japan's invasion of Manchuria.[225] It is true that Avarin had expected "some decisive action on the part of Japanese imperialism" at any moment. Yet, if one reads Avarin carefully, it turns out that his prediction of "some decisive action" concerned Japanese-American conflict.[226] Avarin was a military intelligence officer whose real name was Vladimir Iakovlevich Aboltin (1899–1978). He served as the Soviet general consul in Harbin in 1925–27, and in 1935–37, he worked in Beijing under the disguise of a TASS correspondent.[227] Avarin's book, released to the printer on 24 September 1931 (six days after the Mukden Incident), was a penetrating analysis of Japanese-American contention over Manchuria. In it, he argued that Japan, a weaker power than the United States, had been pressed hard in its own backyard by U.S. economic power and, following one retreat after another, Japan had retreated to its limits (предел).[228] Therefore, Avarin hoped, Japan would be forced to take decisive action against the United States. Avarin's "prediction" reflected accurately Stalin's hidden agendas.

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[223]"Enclosure to a personal letter addressed to Mr. Castle, from Winter Cottage, Harrison Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island, dated February 17, 1932," Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck Papers, box 396.

[224]See for example V.N. Lobov, *Voennaia khitrost' v istorii voin* (Moscow, 1988), 138.

[225]Karl Radek, "The War in the Far East," *Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 4 (July 1932): 541–42, referring to V. Avarin, *Imperializm i Manchzhuriia. Etapy imperialisticheskoi bor'by za Manchzhuriiu* (Moscow–Leningrad, 1931); N. Terent'ev, "Iapono-kitaiskii zheleznodorozhnyi konflikt v Man'chzhurii," *Problemy Kitaia*, nos. 6–7 (1931): 197–233. Radek's article was translated into Japanese and published in the same year as "ソヴィエト・ロシアの見た極東の戰爭" in *Nihon to sekai (6)* (日本と世界 [6]), 22–41.

[226]Avarin, *Imperializm i Manchzhuriia*, 235.

[227]See "Latysh Aboltin (Avarin) Vladimir Iakovlevich," accessed 3 May 2019, https://www.liveinternet.ru/users/1993026/post156972128/.

[228]Avarin, *Imperializm i Manchzhuriia*, 268, 279.

Avarin's colleague, Terent'ev—namely Anatolii Ia. Kantorovich (1896–1937) who was a diplomat and Sinologist—argued similarly: The core of the Sino-Japanese conflict in Manchuria was a conflict of railway interests that could not be solved in light of Japan's imperialist aspirations and Manchuria's own economic interests. If a third party (such as the United States) got involved in this process, it might lead to a "most acute crisis." Japan's annexation of Manchuria would not be tolerated by other powers.[229] In other words, Terent'ev expressed ideas similar to those of Avarin, reflecting Moscow's desire for American-Japanese conflict over Manchuria.

If so, why did Radek imply that these works foresaw Japan's occupation of Manchuria? It appears that Radek was tempted to divulge the secret of Moscow's role behind Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Radek almost certainly cleared his essay with Stalin. Given the fact that at the time, Radek saw Stalin well-nigh daily (and sometimes "several times a day") to coordinate Moscow's foreign policy,[230] Radek, unlike other Soviet diplomats, knew Stalin's policy toward Japan. Radek's leak also performed another function. By stressing that, in light of the "objective analyses" of Manchuria's situation, Japan's invasion was predictable, it sought to shield Moscow from suspicions of collusion with Tokyo.

Chen and Shidehara redux

In this light, Eugene Chen's visit to Shidehara just before the Mukden Incident looms ever larger as a provocation engineered by Moscow. After the Mukden Incident, Shidehara contacted Chen through Suma, the Japanese consul in Canton. Shidehara was surprised to learn that Chen's view was completely different from his own: Chen welcomed Japan's invasion of Manchuria, because it would unite Zhang Xueliang and others in favor of a Sino-Japanese treaty (directed against Communism).[231] Chen's response made no sense: It was Japan, not the Soviet Union, that had invaded Manchuria. Moreover, Shidehara had stated to Chen before the Mukden Incident that Japan acknowledged China's sovereignty over Manchuria and pledged that Japan had no intention to invade Manchuria. Japan invaded Manchuria, which united China against Japan. Chen, however, blamed Chiang Kai-shek for inciting the anti-Japanese movement.[232] On 26 September 1931, eight days after the Mukden Incident, Chen publicly sent an official inquiry to Shidehara, reminding him of his statement about China's sovereignty and his pledge about Manchuria. Emphasizing that the invasion of Manchuria was against Shidehara's pledge, Chen asked whether the Japanese government had abjured its policy toward China or whether some "feudal" elements within the Japanese government were engaged in aggression.[233]

[229] Terent'ev, "Iapono-kitaiskii zheleznodorozhnyi konflikt v Man'chzhurii," 233.

[230] See W.G. Krivitsky, *I was Stalin's Agent* (London, 1940), 26.

[231] See Shidehara Kijūrō, *Gaikō gojū nen* (Tokyo, 1987), 155–56.

[232] Suma to Shidehara, 3 October 1931, JACAR, B02030195900.

[233] JACAR, C12120040200. See also *Gendaishi shiryō (11): zoku Manshū jihen*, 542–43.

Shidehara responded: "The events of the last few days [the Mukden Incident] signify in no respect repudiation of our settled policy for friendly cooperation with China and for the maintenance of her territorial integrity. On the contrary they have confirmed my belief in the soundness of that policy."[234]

In his memoir, Shidehara stated that thereafter, he could no longer communicate with Chen, and later he learned that he had died, although he did not say when Chen died. Chen did not die until 1944, frequently appearing in the news in the 1930s. In fact, Chen continued for some time to propose a Sino-Japanese arrangement similar to the one he and Shidehara had agreed on in August 1931: the recognition of Japan's "legitimate rights" in Manchuria "based on the policy advocated by Sun Yat-sen." This time, Shidehara did not offer his view on the matter in light of the rapidly deteriorating situation in Manchuria.[235]

Shidehara must have been taken by surprise, however, when Chen's policy changed dramatically soon thereafter. The Mukden Incident led the Nanjing government to call for a national reconciliation. In November 1931, Chen issued a statement to rebuff widespread speculation that in August 1931, he had sold Manchuria to Japan. He declared:

> I went to Japan—this point must be underlined—to secure *information* from Baron Shidehara regarding the real aim and policy of his Government *vis-a-vis* China, especially about Manchuria. The National Government [in Canton] desired this information in order to decide whether the time had come for the adoption of the policy which Dr. Sun, with the foresight and vision of a great civilized mind, had pointed out as the way of peace and strength to this country. I had no instruction or authority to enter into any sort of *negotiation* with Baron Shidehara or any other Japanese, nor did I attempt in fact to enter into any negotiation with any one in Japan regarding Manchuria or any other matter. All the reports, alleging that I visited Japan for some dark purpose—to make a deal in arms or beg for Japanese gold or sell Manchuria and so forth—are entirely false and largely the work of the publicity thugs in the service of Nanking [Nanjing].
>
> In view of the calamitous situation in Manchuria, and the embittered state of the nation's feeling towards Japan and the Japanese, I do not think it would evince a sense of reality to consider at the present moment, the possibility of a new orientation of policy in the direction indicated by Dr. Sun. Those who hope for better things, must wait.[236]

[234]"Baron Shidehara's Reply to Eugene Chen," *China Critic*, 29 October 1931, 1,063.

[235]Usui Katsumi, *Manshū jihen: sensō to gaikō to* (Tokyo, 1974), 62–63. Regarding "based on the policy advocated by Sun Yat-sen," see "Is A Rapprochement Possible?," *Japan Times*, 5 December 1931, 4.

[236]"Mr. Eugene Chen Explains," *Hong Kong Daily Press*, 25 November 1931, 12.

Obviously, Chen's account was false: He did enter into negotiations and sign an agreement with Shidehara. Shidehara could have easily discredited Chen, but to do so would have revealed his double-dealing with two Chinese governments. Chen did not quite succeed in exposing Shidehara as a double-dealer, but Chen did succeed in exposing Shidehara as powerless in controlling Japan's military actions in China.

At any rate, Nanjing's call for national unity led to a de facto dissolution of the Canton government, and in late December 1931, Chen accepted the position of foreign minister of the Nanjing government, once Chiang resigned. Chen now followed the new line of the Nanjing government and advocated a hard line on Japan, calling for the severance of diplomatic relations and the declaration of war. Chen fulminated against Chiang's non-resistance policy, which he claimed led to the loss of Chinese territory. The new hard line on Japan, compelled by the indignation of the Chinese people, especially students,[237] was so risky politically that the government failed to follow through. Frustrated, Chen told a U.S. diplomat that "if the West did not block Japanese aggression, he and Sun Fo [Sun Ke] were desperate enough to turn to Russia."[238] Soon, in January 1932, Chiang returned to the government, and Chen left, complaining that his policy was not accepted by the Nanjing government.[239] Chen moved to Shanghai when Japanese military actions were about to take place. According to Japanese sources, he helped the anti-Japanese movement and the Nineteenth Route Army.[240] To fight the Japanese, Chen solicited overseas Chinese (華僑) donors for funds to help the Chinese Army.[241]

In his memoirs, Shidehara appears to want to close this embarrassing episode by suggesting that Chen died not long after the Mukden Incident. Shidehara probably realized by the time of Chen's about-face that Chen was a dangerous provocateur who was attempting to discredit Shidehara as the foreign minister by implicating him in a severely anti-Chinese agreement. In any case, Shidehara lost his position with the fall of the Wakatsuki cabinet in December 1931. It is possible that Chen claimed Shidehara's departure as justification for a change of policy on his part. At the same time, the Canton government had practically dissolved itself by then. Moreover, Chen's about-face came before, not after,

[237] Ten days after the Mukden Incident, Wang Zhengting, the head of KMT's Foreign Relations Department, was beaten up by angry students demanding action against Japan. He sustained a heavy wound, passed out, and was hospitalized. He resigned his position. See Zhang Tengjiao, *Tandian jianzhe, Wang Zhengting zhuan* (Taipei, 1983), 92, 156. In December 1931, Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培, 1869–1940) and Chen Mingshu (陳銘樞, 1889–1965), both high government officials and advocates of anti-Japanese resistance, were also beaten up by angry students and hospitalized. Among the students were Communists. See "Xuesheng shiwei baodong," *Guowen zhoubao* 8, no. 50 (1931): 9.

[238] Donald A. Jordan, *Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931–1932* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1991), 263.

[239] See "Chen Youren cicheng," *Guowen zhoubao* 9, no. 6 (1932): 3.

[240] "Shanhai jiken ni kansuru hōkoku," 10 February 1932, JACAR, A03033731800, 15.

[241] Qian, *Geming waijiaojia Chen Youren*, 207.

the collapse of the Wakatsuki cabinet. In light of Chen's strange behavior and intimate ties to Moscow, his change in policy can be explained in a far clearer way; Chen had accomplished what he and Moscow wanted: to cast unequivocally Japan as an imperialist aggressor. In 1932, Chen campaigned for the resumption of Soviet-Chinese diplomatic relations.[242] At the same time, however, Chen had not quite succeeded in his immediate mission, which was to discredit Shidehara; instead, he struck Chinese politicians as a dangerous provocateur. His lack of finesse in his change of policy in December 1931 reinforced this image. Most likely, then, his change reflected the fact that he had outlived his political utility for Moscow. Hence Stalin's question in 1937 about what had happened to Chen ("a hollow man," p. 211), even though Stalin must have known that Chen had not disappeared from China's political scene.

From "appeasement" to offensive

Stalin's policy of "strict neutrality" toward Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931–32 was a colossal gamble. The creation of Manzhouguo meant the Soviet Union came face-to-face with Japan over common borders some 4,000 km long. This posed an incalculable potential danger to the Soviet Far East and Siberia. Yet, there was no sign that Stalin was concerned about Japan's threat—except in rhetoric and propaganda. But while his "strict neutrality" reflected his secret policy of trapping Japan in Manchuria and using it to inflame its relations with other countries, this represented only one part of Stalin's plan. While loudly proclaiming Japan's aggression far and wide, Stalin quietly diverted enormous resources to the buildup of the Soviet military. In 1934, when Stalin was confident of the Soviet Union's absolute military superiority over Japan in the Far East, he would go on the offensive.

Japan's military occupation of Manchuria was both reckless and irrational; it not only further alienated the Western imperialist powers, but it also gave Japan a wildly misplaced confidence in dealing with the Soviet Union. Stalin was prepared to attack and win. The Tokyo government should have recognized this and withdrawn from Manchuria immediately. Yet, Tokyo ultimately followed the Japanese conspirators' lead, who had the support of the population. By a policy of "strict neutrality," Moscow convinced Tokyo that it could get away with the occupation of Manchuria. Even those who may have recognized Japan's vulnerability saw no way out. Ishiwara knew, as discussed earlier, that Japan's occupation of Manchuria was a contradiction that he would never be able to resolve. When Asahara Kenzō (浅原健三, 1897–1967), a leftist labor activist who had become Ishiwara's close associate, argued that Ishiwara's military action in Manchuria and his belief in "no war" were contradictory, Ishiwara readily admitted that they were, but he insisted that the antinomy was unavoidable.[243] Ishiwara almost certainly foresaw that his Manchurian

[242] *Zhonghua Minguo waijiao shiliao huibian* (Taipei, 1996), 7:3,199.

[243] Quoted in Maki Hisashi, *Fukutsu no shunrai. Sogō Shinji to sono jidai (ge)* (Tokyo, 2013), 130.

adventure would ultimately fail. Yet, he saw no other choice than to take the Soviet bait.

Nevertheless, many other Japanese were completely misled by the Soviet Union, allowing Moscow to continue its game of deception as it built up its military forces. During this time, the famed Soviet spy Richard Sorge played a role. Kanokogi Takanobu (鹿子木員信, 1884–1949), a naval officer-turned-philosopher who became an ideologue of radical nationalism in Japan, left the following account. He first met Sorge in Beijing when it and Tianjin were "about to fall" into Japanese hands. Sorge, posing as a journalist, told Kanokogi that if Japan conquered "all of China," which was "very likely," Europe would be no match for Japan's military, organizational, and economic strength. Kanokogi was very pleased with the German journalist's prognosis.[244] Then, Kanokogi reflected that Japan would not need to attack its northern neighbor, as "Soviet Russia," a poorly run Marxist state, was in a nosedive, and the Russian people were at the end of their patience with the Soviet government. In other words, Japan had a free hand in China.[245] Whether Kanokogi was simply naive or was playing Moscow's game secretly cannot be easily determined. It is known that Kanokogi, profoundly affected by his experience of the Russo-Japanese War, was once close to pro-Russian Japanese ideologues such as Mitsukawa Kametarō and Ōkawa Shūmei (see Introduction, p. 14). It is also unclear whether Kanokogi actually met Sorge. Kanokogi had written that he met Sorge when Beijing and Tianjin were about to fall, but this did not happen until July 1937. Clearly, Kanokogi was referring to Japan's military action in Rehe ("Battle of Rehe [or Jehol]") in the first months of 1933 that led up to Manzhouguo's annexation of Rehe province. (Kanokogi's essay, in which he offers Sorge's views, was a talk he gave in Tokyo in the summer of 1933.) Sorge, suspected of Soviet connections by the Chinese authorities, left Shanghai on 12 November 1932 for Tokyo, intending to reach Vladivostok nine days later. Arriving in Japan, he apparently decided to return to China, visiting Dalian and Mukden in early January 1933 with the intention of writing a book ("Japan's Peaceful Invasion of China"). Sometime later in January, Sorge did return to Moscow.[246] So, it is just possible that Kanokogi actually met Sorge in Beijing , Dalian, or Mukden in early 1933, though at the time, Beijing was not about to fall. Whatever the case, Sorge convinced the prominent Japanese nationalist ideologue that Japan's invasion of China would be "peaceful"—that is, that Moscow would not interfere in Japan's adventure deeper into China and that Japan would become invincible.

Meanwhile, the Soviet military buildup in the Far East rapidly progressed. The Polish military attaché in Moscow, Jan Kowalewski (1892–1965), who had trained Japanese code breakers in the early 1920s in Tokyo, observed massive

[244] Kanokogi Takenobu, *Sumera Ajia* (Tokyo, 1937), 68–70.

[245] Ibid., 74.

[246] M. Alekseev, *"Vash Ramzai." Rikhard Zorge i sovetskaia voennaia razvedka v Kitae 1930–1933 gg.* (Moscow, 2010), 590, 634–35.

Russian military transports headed to the Far East and was disappointed by how lightly his Japanese colleagues in Moscow took this move. Kowalewski thought that Moscow was preparing for war, but the Japanese were not alarmed: They were convinced that Moscow would not go to war.[247] In fact, Moscow understated the official figures for defense expenditure. In 1933, for example, "the published figure for the expenditure of the People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs" was 1,421 million rubles, but the "true figure was 4299 millions [*sic*]."[248] As far as the Far East was concerned, available data suggest that Moscow engaged relentlessly in disinformation throughout "Operation General" (see p. 195 in this chapter), "Maki-Mirazh" (see p. 195), and other similar clandestine operations.

According to Japanese data, as of 1 September 1932, a year after the Mukden Incident, the Soviet Special Far Eastern Army (OKDVA) had eight or nine rifle divisions, an increase of two to four divisions since September 1931, while the Japanese forces in Manchuria and Korea had doubled from three to six divisions.[249] The actual figures of Soviet forces were much larger: In just five months, from January to May 1932, OKDVA's rifle divisions soared from six to ten. Moreover, its armored vehicles (including tanks) jumped from 40 to 276, and its soldiers from 39,000 to 113,000. By the end of 1932, the number of soldiers had increased to 140,600; by 1935, that number ballooned to 241,311.[250] In 1935, the OKDVA had fourteen rifle divisions, whereas Japan had only five. In the same year, the Soviet forces had 1,438 military airplanes, to Japan's 220. Japan's estimate of Soviet planes in the Far East for that year, 950, was also far smaller than the actual tally.[251] In 1934, Ivan A. Rink (1886–1938), the Soviet military attaché in Tokyo, asserted that the Soviet Union "had a larger number of mechanized vehicles and airplanes in the Far East than existed in the entire Japanese army." Even earlier, he and the British and French military attachés in Tokyo believed, in any case, that the "thinking of the Japanese army was outmoded in many respects."[252]

Already, in 1933, the Japanese Army knew of the Soviet deployment in the Far East of a dozen or so long-range heavy bombers that could reach Tokyo and

[247] Kowalewski to Warsaw, 23 February, 1 and 29 March 1932, RGVA, f. 308k, op. 12, d. 120, ll. 8–10. German diplomats in Novosibirsk also noticed massive military transport to the Far East, and their reports to Berlin were intercepted by Soviet authorities: ibid., f. 4, op. 19, d. 13, ll. 131–32.

[248] Mark Harrison and R.W. Davies, "The Soviet Military-Economic Effort during the Second Five-Year Plan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 49, no. 3 (1997): 369.

[249] See Hayashi Saburō, *Kantōgun to kyokutō Sorengun* (Tokyo, 1974), 53; Shimanuki Takeharu, "Manshū jihen ni tomonau tairiku kokubō (2)," *Kokubō* 12, no. 2 (February 1963): 52–53. See also Jonathan Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930–1933: The Impact of the Depression* (New York, 1985), 83, 146–47

[250] E.A. Gorbunov, *Vostochnyi rubezh. OKDVA protiv iaponskoi armii* (Moscow, 2010), 67, 141.

[251] Ibid., 141; Shimanuki, "Masnhū jihen ni tomonau tairiku kokubō (2)," 52–53; Hata Ikuhiko, *Taiheiyō kokusai kankeishi: NichiBei oyobi NichiRo kiki no keifu 1900–1935* (Tokyo, 1972), 277.

[252] Quoted in Lensen, *The Damned Inheritance*, 399, 434.

Osaka and return to Vladivostok. They were nothing but offensive weapons.[253] In 1934, Japan estimated that "several dozen" such bombers were stationed in the Far East.[254] By 1935, there were in fact more than 200.[255] By 1934, the Soviet superiority over the Kwantung Army, as the Russian historian E.A. Gorbunov has recently noted, became "absolute," and the Kwantung Army was not able to match OKDVA thereafter.

By 1934–35, however, Japan's estimate of the Soviet forces in the Far East had become more or less accurate.[256] Clearly, Japan was now aware of the Soviet Union's military superiority in the region. Gorbunov concluded that the task of Japan's forces in Manchuria could only have been "defensive."[257] Already, in the spring of 1933, Kasahara, a Soviet specialist in the Japanese Army (see Chapter 2, p. 150), had reached the same conclusion by observing the absolute superiority of the Soviet forces in the Far East.[258]

At this point, Japan could not delude itself any longer. It had swallowed Soviet disinformation wholesale, such that for the two or three years following the Mukden Incident, it seriously underestimated the growing Soviet military forces in the Far East. From the Tanaka Memorial to the sudden reversal of military balance in the area, a sequence of events perfectly lined up to take advantage of Japan's hubris and vulnerabilities, revealing yet again Stalin's hidden, orchestrated efforts in Manchuria. By misrepresenting the Soviet forces, Stalin encouraged first the conspirators and then the Japanese government to endorse the potential political benefits of occupying Manchuria. For his part, Stalin possessed generally accurate data on Japan's military forces. Later, in 1937–38, Moscow would justify the military buildup by accusing Soviet military specialists of "disinformation"—that is, of "systematically exaggerating" Japan's military strength. It was Stalin who systematically exaggerated Japan's military strengths. Fully confident in the Soviet military superiority by this point, Stalin willingly disposed of numerous Soviet military specialists to keep his earlier intentions hidden. V.V. Smagin (1894–1938) was one of them. Smagin worked in Tokyo from 1926 to 1931 first as an assistant military attaché and then as a military attaché. After his return to Moscow, he maintained close relations with Japanese military attachés in Moscow as head of the Soviet military's Foreign Relations Department. Falsely charged as a Japanese spy, Smagin was executed in 1938.[259]

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[253] Rikugunshō chōsahan, *Kyokutō no jōsei ni tsuite* (Tokyo, 1933), 3–4.

[254] Rikugun shinbunhan, *Kokubō no hongi to sono kyōka no teishō* (Tokyo, 1934), 48.

[255] Gorbunov, *Vostochnyi rubezh*, 141.

[256] See the figures quoted in Coox, *Nomonhan*, 78.

[257] Ibid., 66, 104, 141.

[258] Kasahara Yukio, "Gunbi jūjitsu no 'So'renpō kyokutōgun: NiSso moshi tatakawaba," *Hanashi*, 1, no. 1 (April 1933): 78–79.

[259] See *Lubianka. Sovetskaia elita na stalinskoi golgofe. 1937–1938* (Moscow, 2011), 169, 473. On Smagin, see also *Lubianka. Stalin i VChK-GPU-OGPU-NKVD: ianvar' 1922–dekabr' 1936* (Moscow, 2003), 482–83. Before his arrest, Smagin sensed his own doom and divorced his wife, Marina Vladimirovna, to save her. Nevertheless, she was arrested and executed.

One reason Ishiwara and others persisted in the belief that the occupation of Manchuria would almost cripple Soviet military operations in the event of war was the limited transport capacity of the Soviet rail system to the Far East. If the CER connection to Vladivostok were interrupted, it would be immensely testing for Moscow to reinforce quickly the Soviet forces in the Far East (including the naval fleet and submarines in Vladivostok).[260] Fully cognizant of the Japanese conspirators' lack of aggressive plans against the Soviet Union, Moscow nevertheless started double-tracking the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1932. By September 1934, the double-tracking of the railway had been completed from Karymskoe (near Chita) to Krasnopartizansk (today's Belogorsk) in the north of Blagoveshchensk. The line from Cheliabinsk to Ulan-Ude had already been double-tracked in 1914, followed by the Ulan-Ude–Urusha line (1,570 km.) in 1933–35, the Urusha–Khabarovsk line (1,314 km.) in 1934–36, and the Khabarovsk–Vladivostok line in 1936–39. "Thus the whole line from Vladivostok to Chelyabinsk (through Khabarovsk, Svobodnyi, Chita, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk, Omsk)" was double-tracked by 1939.[261]

Troianovskii's successor, Konstantin K. Iurenev (1888–1938), who began his tenure in Tokyo in January 1933, was confident of Soviet superiority over Japan. In September 1933, Iurenev told Joseph C. Grew, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, that "Soviet Russia is not only able to meet any overt act of aggression by the Japanese Army, but is well prepared on land and in the air to take the *offensive* [emphasis added] across the border into Manchuria if such a step becomes necessary."[262] In March 1934, Grew reported to Washington on his conversation with Iurenev:

> Mr. Youreneff repeated what he has frequently said to me before that the Soviet Union is fully prepared for all eventualities and is strongly fortified both in Vladivostok and along the Siberian border. The double tracking of the trans-Siberian railway has been carried on steadily throughout the winter in spite of the intense cold. If the Japanese should attack, they could of course pour immense forces into Manchuria and might be able to take Vladivostok and the adjacent portion of Eastern Siberia, but further operations would entail extending and weakening their lines of communication, and little by little the Soviets could pour more and more troops into that region. If war should commence, it would not stop until one side or the other was completely exhausted, and it would take a long time to exhaust

[260] The Pacific Fleet was re-established in Vladivostok in April 1932, in the wake of Japan's invasion of Manchuria. See Haslam, *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1930–1933*, 83. However, its re-establishment was decided *before* the Mukden Incident, in August 1931. See Gorbunov, *Vostochnyi rubezh*, 447, 457.

[261] A.J. Garjdanzev, "The Trans-Siberian Railway and the Problem of Soviet Supply," *Pacific Affairs* 14, no. 4 (December 1941): 404.

[262] Quoted in Joseph C. Grew, *Ten Years in Japan* (London, 1944), 94.

> the almost unlimited power of the Soviets. Japan's navy, he said, is of course incomparably stronger than the Russian navy but the Russian fleet of submarines at Vladivostok is very strong and the sinking of a Japanese battleship or two would have immense significance and would alter the whole situation in the Far East. He said furthermore that while the Soviet measures were now purely defensive in character, if war should break out these measures would immediately become *offensive* [emphasis added], and unless Japan should quickly win an outstanding victory the Soviets would be able to occupy part or all of Manchuria, especially, he said, as at least 100,000 of the present troops of "Manchukuo" [Manzhouguo] would support the Soviets arms [*sic*] and might turn the whole tide of the operations.[263]

Three points in Iurenev's remarks are noteworthy. First, however successful Japan might be initially in the event of war, Japan had virtually no possibility of winning. This was clear to people like Ishiwara, but not to every Japanese strategist. Second, even though Iurenev overstated his case ("at least 100,000 of the present troops of 'Manchukuo' would support the Soviets arms," which would have meant practically the entire Kwantung Army and Manzhouguo troops), the Soviet Union commanded considerable influence over the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. Clearly, he meant that the Soviet Union had its agents among the commanding posts of the Kwantung Army. Third, the Soviet Union, unsurprisingly, did have *offensive* plans against Japan, to be activated in case of need.

This last point was repeated by Iurenev to Grew a few weeks later. Grew wrote:

> He [Iurenev] said that he did not expect that war between the two countries would break out this year because the Japanese are not at present adequately prepared. In view of the large Soviet forces in Eastern Siberia the Japanese would need to have at least half of their army in Manchuria which would mean two hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand men instead of the one hundred thousand, approximately, which are now there. Next year, however, the situation might be different. If war should break out the Soviet Army would immediately cross the frontier into Manchuria and would occupy Korea and with their heavy forces of airplanes and submarines he believed that a Soviet victory would be assured. Time, he said, was on the side of the Soviets.[264]

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[263] "*Strictly Confidential*, Conversation, Constantin Youreneff, Soviet Ambassador," 9 March 1934, Joseph Clark Grew Archives, Houghton Library, Harvard University, MS Am 1687.3 (1), 4–5.

[264] "*Confidential*, Conversation, The Soviet Ambassador, Mr. Youreneff," 1 May 1934, Grew Archives, MS Am 1687.3 (1), 2.

Figure 3.9. Konstantin Iurenev, the Soviet ambassador to Japan (1933–37), under Soviet arrest in 1937

Grew further reported:

> Mr. Youreneff remarked that when Mr. Troyanovsky was Ambassador to Japan he had been obliged to follow a policy of soft speaking and he was therefore regarded as a friend of Japan. This was because Soviet Russia at that time did not feel confident of being sufficiently strong in Siberia to meet a Japanese attack but now all this had changed and he himself is able to follow a policy of firmness and straight speaking, leaving no doubt whatsoever as to the determination of his Government not to cede an inch of territory.[265]

In fact, Troianovskii's "soft speaking" was dictated by Moscow more as a dissimulation than as a reflection of Soviet diffidence. Still, Iurenev was right that in 1934, Moscow had turned resolute in its policy toward Japan.

Needless to say, it was Stalin who dictated the turn. Already, in October 1933, Stalin had begun a "long and solid (but not shrill)" press campaign concerning the Soviet resolve against Japan and its "scoundrels."[266] This happened in conjunction with Moscow's exposure of confidential Japanese telegrams allegedly planning to seize the CER from the Soviet Union. (Komatsubara, the head of Japan's military mission in Harbin at the time, was the likely source of this exposure.) Using this occasion, Moscow turned decisively defiant toward

[265] Ibid., 4–5. Some Japanese individuals complained that Moscow still retained an aggressive attitude. While many old Russian towns were renamed after the revolution, Vladivostok ("Conquer the East") was not. At one point, Troianovskii suggested to Moscow that it be renamed. It was not, however.

[266] *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 396, 401.

Tokyo. Gronskii, the editor of *Izvestiia*, noted that this decision was taken without notifying the commissar of foreign affairs, Litvinov. Litvinov was at a loss and complained that the kinds of things the Soviet press now published were normally written on the eve of a "declaration of war."[267] In December 1933, a Japanese officer stationed in Manzhouguo's consulate in Chita reported that the Soviet positioning of military forces in the Far East had become more offensive than defensive.[268]

In November 1934, when Stalin met Mongolian delegates in Moscow, he told them that the "Soviet Union has grown strong over the last two years, while Japan has been trying to digest Manchuria. The Soviet Union is *ready for war* [emphasis added] and is not afraid. We have bombers that can fly 2,000 km nonstop. . . . In the event of war it won't be difficult for us to reach Tokyo, Harbin, Mukden. If war begins, we won't stop."[269]

3.4 Sino-Soviet-American Rapprochements

Besides the Soviet military buildup in the Far East, the most significant factor that contributed to Stalin's decision to stop feigning appeasement of Japan was the resumption of diplomatic relations with China in late 1932 and with the United States in late 1933. In neither case did Stalin need to plead for normalization. The others came to him, offering a Soviet-Chinese-American "mouse trap" for Japan.

China's initiative

It was China's Nanjing government that took the first step toward rapprochement with the Soviet Union. China had remained deeply distrustful of the Soviet Union when it had appeared to be "appeasing" Japan, the aggressor. Even at the time of a national emergency, with catastrophic flooding that befell China and Manchuria,[270] Chiang Kai-shek never ceased his fight against the Communists, as he knew they were supported by Moscow. Nevertheless, China turned to the Soviet Union for help, fully aware that Japan could only be manacled by external forces. Eight days after the Mukden Incident, Ma Dehui, the plenipotentiary to the Soviet-China conference on the CER, spoke to Karakhan as a "private person" on the need to normalize Soviet-Chinese relations to minimize or even end Japan's aggression. Karakhan assured him that the Soviet Union was China's only friend in the world and that it was always in favor of friendly relations with China. However, he emphasized that he needed an official, not private, approach

[267] Ivan Gronskii, *Iz proshlogo. . . . Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1991), 147.

[268] See *Zoku gendaishi shiryō 4. Rikugun: Hata Shunroku nisshi* (Tokyo, 1983), 59.

[269] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 351, l. 70 (24 November 1934).

[270] Japan's invasion coincided with the devastating Yangtze–Huai River floods, which resulted in untold numbers of deaths, the estimate ranging from half a million to four million. The Chinese government complained that Japan's invasion would have been akin to a foreign invasion of Japan at the time of the Great Earthquake in 1923.

to this matter.[271] Karakhan must have been elated that Moscow was now in a stronger position. Japan's aggression had strengthened and almost rehabilitated the Soviet Union's standing in China.

However, China was still acutely mindful of Moscow's imperialist aggression. The issue of the 1929 war was still fresh. There were therefore disagreements within the Chinese government about resuming relations with Moscow, whose de facto recognition of Manzhouguo deeply offended many Chinese. Ultimately, in June 1932, the Chinese leaders, including Chiang Kai-shek, decided to propose, first, a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and, then, proceed to the restoration of diplomatic relations.[272] Soviet moles in the Chinese government immediately transmitted this critical information to Moscow. Litvinov found the Chinese proposal acceptable. Stalin and his entourage did not. They rejected the Chinese provision demanding the clarification of Moscow's attitude toward Manchuria. Moscow knew that China would oppose the selling of the CER to the Japanese, which was already under discussion. Indeed, Moscow rejected any mention of old agreements (on the joint Sino-Soviet operations of the CER) as a condition of resuming diplomatic relations.[273] Moscow also suspected that by inking a non-aggression treaty, China meant to implicate the Soviet Union in the Manchurian dispute. Moscow demanded a diplomatic rapprochement with no conditions, to be followed by the discussion of a non-aggression pact. At the same time, Stalin cautioned his operatives to stay on their toes not to allow China and Japan to come to terms; in that scenario, the United States would take a position of neutrality. Instead, using the possibility of of Sino-Soviet and Soviet-American rapprochement as a diplomatic weapon, Litvinov should scare Japan into accepting a non-aggression pact with Moscow.[274]

China remained suspicious of Moscow. In the end, in October 1932, China relented and agreed to resume diplomatic relations without any pre-conditions. In November, diplomatic relations were officially restored, and the following spring, Yan Huiqing (顏惠慶, 1877–1950) became China's ambassador to the Soviet Union, and Dmitrii V. Bogomolov (1890–1938) the Soviet ambassador to China.[275]

Japan now faced the formidable coalition of its two gigantic neighbors. Britain, too, was alarmed. In a conversation on 14 December 1932 with a Polish diplomat, Sir John Allsebrook Simon (1873–1954), the British foreign minister, expressed deep concern about the rapprochement of China and the USSR: They would collaborate against the Western powers, and Soviet influence in China would increase. Simon was very critical of the United States for its lack

[271] See *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1968), 14:544–48.

[272] See Li Jiagu, *Hezuo yu chongtu: 1931–1945 nian de Zhong-Su guanxi* (Guilin, 1996), 13.

[273] See D.B. Slavinskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Kitai: istoriia diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii 1917–1937 gg.* (Moscow, 2003), 221.

[274] See *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 159–60, 163, 198–200, 206–7. See also *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. III* (Moscow, 2010), 96–99, 113–14, 120–22.

[275] Li, *Hezuo yu chongtu*, 14.

of concern about the danger of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Polish diplomats confirmed British fears: China had begun acting quite aggressively toward the Western powers.[276] In Tokyo, Troianovskii, the Soviet ambassador, was upset at being kept in the dark: Moscow had informed him of the resumption of Sino-Soviet diplomatic relations only a few days before the official announcement was made.[277]

FDR's flirtations with Stalin

An even greater diplomatic coup for Moscow was the resumption of Soviet-American diplomatic relations in November 1933. Simon was correct that Washington was not concerned about Soviet influence in China. It even welcomed it. Faced with Japan's occupation of Manchuria, Washington turned to Moscow for support. This was what Moscow had sought since 1917. Generally, this rapprochement is ascribed to Hitler's ascension to power in Germany in January 1933. Both U.S. and Soviet documents leave no doubt that it was Japan's occupation of Manchuria that led to the thaw between Moscow and Washington. In this respect, Stalin had achieved yet another critical goal in drawing Japan into Manchuria.

The United States was far bigger and wealthier than Japan, and commanded in equal measure both contempt and fear in Moscow. At the same time, since 1917, Moscow had begun courting the United States as a counterweight to Japan. The United States, as Lenin implied, was the lesser evil because, unlike the other imperialist powers such as Japan, the United States had entertained no explicit desire to extend its territory at the cost of other countries. Moscow never stopped wooing Washington, nor did it cease pitting Japan and the United States against each other. Washington continued to ignore the courting from the atheist state until Japan's invasion of Manchuria changed all that. Now, it was Washington that courted Moscow, albeit secretly.

Were it not for its interest in wresting control of China from Japan, Moscow would not necessarily have found Washington's about-face particularly attractive. For Stalin and other Bolsheviks, "scoundrels" were "scoundrels," whether in Tokyo or Washington. From the anti-imperialist perspective, Japan's invasion of Manchuria was nothing historically new: Other imperialist powers had made similar acquisitions elsewhere for a long time. When the Second International, which Stalin denounced as "social fascism," adopted a resolution denouncing Japan's invasion, Stalin declared it "despicable" (сволочная). It opposed some imperialists while keeping silent on others.[278] The American-Soviet rapprochement attracted him for only one reason; it could help him subvert one imperialist power with another.

[276] *Polskie dokumenty dyplomatyczne. 1932*, 710–13, 724.
[277] AVP, f. 0146, op. 16, p. 152, d. 2, l. 7.
[278] *Stalin i Kaganovich*, 231.

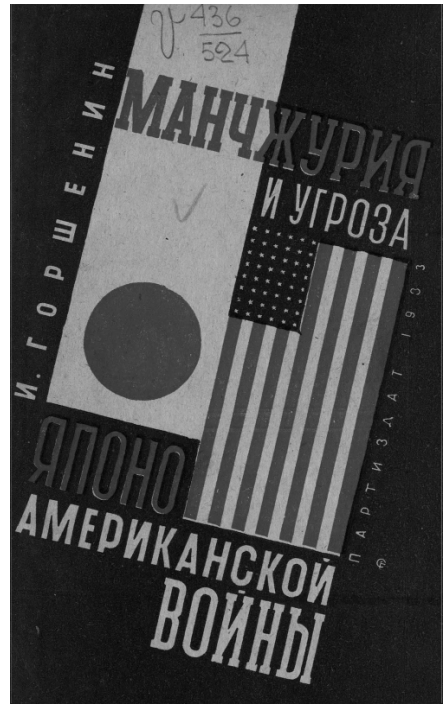

Figure 3.10. The cover of I. Gorshenin, *Manchzhuriia i ugroza iaponoameriaknskoi voiny* (Manchuria and the Threat of Japanese-American War) (Moscow: Partiinoe izd-vo, 1933), predicting war between Japan and the USA.

Likewise, Radek's contribution to the American journal *Foreign Affairs* (July 1932), in which he claimed Moscow had predicted Japan's invasion, simultaneously implied Japan's action with an even-handed criticism of all imperialists. The point, for Moscow, was not to demonize Japan to the advantage of other imperialists; rather, it was to set the imperialists against one another. Thus, Radek argued that American ambitions in China made the Nanjing government appear "in the eyes of Japanese imperialists as the agent of American capitalism." "If," he insisted, "Japan retains Manchuria this will represent a drastic defeat of the foreign policy of the United States." In any case, American policy in China, Radek contended, seemed to "aim at collecting a rich harvest without taking any risks." France wanted to overlook Japan's aggression because it was hostile toward "the nationalistic movement in the Orient, which threatens the French position in Indo-China." Britain, Radek claimed, was not "in the position of putting a check upon Japan's policy toward China." Moreover, in its imperialist struggle against the United States, Britain did "not want to lose her Japanese trump." By offering an armistice in Shanghai in the spring of 1932, London sought to "relieve Japan from the moral pressure of the small Powers, members of the League [of Nations], supported by American public opinion." Radek's tone was even sympathetic toward Japan. As he declaimed, Japan assigned to Manchuria the role of "insuring Japan against the dangers of a blockade" by

the United States. Japan was no different from other imperialist powers, Radek declared: Japan's fault was that it had "entered the path of expanding her colonial possessions at a time when the colonial system all over the world is displaying unmistakable signs of deterioration." Simultaneously, however, Radek exhorted Washington to reconsider its policy toward the Soviet Union: It was "an example of the complete lack of vision and determination in the foreign policy of the United States. The Japanese laugh at the threats of the American press."[279] This view, published in the United States, undoubtedly reflected Stalin's views. It was characteristic of the Soviet method of courting through criticism.

Washington's initial reaction to Japan's invasion of Manchuria was disappointing to Moscow, however. U.S. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson feared that a strong reaction against Japan's invasion of Manchuria on the part of Washington would weaken moderates in Japan. Stimson was, at least in writing, sympathetic with Japan's quandary: It was Washington's insistence on the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, as well as the American anti-Japanese immigration law, that had soured Japanese-American relations. He was also charitable toward Japan's suffering from numerous Chinese provocations. Stimson believed that Shidehara and Prime Minister Wakatsuki, a colleague of his at the London Naval Conference a year earlier, were moderates and should be given "an opportunity free from anything approaching a threat or even public criticism, to get control of the situation."[280]

Stimson's hopes were repeatedly dashed by Tokyo, which appeared unable to control its military forces, whom Stimson described as "mad dogs."[281] Soon, in December 1931, the Wakatsuki cabinet fell, and Shidehara was out of power. With neither Britain nor France taking a stalwart and principled stand toward Japan, Washington stated that Japan's action abrogated the letter and spirit of the international treaties to which Japan was a signatory, particularly the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922 regarding the Open Door Policy in China, and the Kellogg-Briand Treaty of 1929 that banned war as an instrument of national policy. By the beginning of 1932, Washington's position toward Tokyo hardened decisively. This resulted in the announcement on 7 January 1932 of what came to be called the "Stimson Doctrine," which declared:

> The American Government deems it to be its duty to notify both the Government of the Chinese Republic and the Imperial Japanese Government that it cannot admit the legality of any situation *de facto* nor does it intend to recognize any treaty or agreement entered into between those Governments, or agents thereof, which may impair the

[279] Radek, "The War in the Far East," 551, 553, 555–56.

[280] Henry L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis: Recollections and Observations* (New York, 1936), 34. On Stimson and Japan, see also Armin Rappaport's classic, *Henry L. Stimson and Japan, 1931–33* (Chicago, 1963).

[281] Quoted in Michael Chapman, "Fidgeting over Foreign Policy: Henry L. Stimson and the Shenyang Incident, 1931," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 4 (September 2013): 745.

> treaty rights of the United States or its citizens in China, including those which relate to the sovereignty, the independence, or the territorial and administrative integrity of the Republic of China, or to the international policy relative to China, commonly known as the open door policy; and that it does not intend to recognize any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Pact of Paris [Kellogg-Briand Treaty] of August 27, 1928, to which treaty both China and Japan, as well as the United States, are parties.[282]

This and other actions by Stimson did not help the situation. A recent American study of Stimson has concluded that "Stimson's fidgeting of an interventionist knife in the wound of Japanese parliamentary democracy precluded face-saving compromise, isolated Japan as a pariah state, poisoned U.S.–Japan relations, and created a discourse of militaristic competition on both sides of the Pacific."[283] Obviously, Stimson's reactions pleased Moscow.

Ultimately, Washington's position may well have been determined by Soviet influence in Washington. Stimson valued Japan's presence as a shield against Communism. After the Mukden Incident, on October 15, Stimson wrote: "Japan really stood as our buffer against the unknown powers behind her on the mainland of China and Russia."[284] Yet, his deputies thought otherwise, most notably John Franklin Carter (1897–1967), who worked in the State Department until 1932 and continued to have influence on the chief of its Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Stanley K. Hornbeck. Carter, who later became Franklin D. Roosevelt's "secret investigator," is now suspected of being a Soviet agent, although no hard proof has surfaced so far.[285] Carter unerringly defended Russia's rights in China:

> Russia's historic policy towards China has been consistently pacific and friendly and even the notable exception of Russia's adventure in Manchuria and Korea (1896–1904) may be regarded in part as the working out of a joint Sino-Russian bargain designed to protect China from Japanese aggression and to restore Korea to Chinese suzerainty. The infiltration of Russian influence into Outer Mongolia is illustration of the character of the relationship which Russia desires

[282]United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1932. Volume III. The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1943), 8.

[283]Chapman, "Fidgeting over Foreign Policy," 748.

[284]Ibid., 745; Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933* (New York, 1973), 157.

[285]Gene A. Coyle, "John Franklin Carter: Journalist, FDR's Secret Investigator, Soviet Agent?," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 24, no. 1 (2011): 148–72. This essay concludes that the allegation against him is "plausible" and that there is "probably enough smoke to have convinced a World War II counterintelligence officer that further investigation of Carter was warranted" (169).

> with China and it may usefully be compared with our own general position in Northern Mexico. Russia's special position in Northern Manchuria may also be compared with our own special position in Panama.[286]

Carter purposefully misrepresented and whitewashed the history of "Russia's adventure." Washington, Carter insisted, should involve the Soviet Union in the solution of the Manchurian question to check "a possible Japanese effort to rely on American fear of Communism to enlist American support for a regime of Japanese predominance in the Far East."[287] Hornbeck concurred: "For any real solution of the Manchurian problem, Russian rights and interests must be given consideration."[288]

Carter advocated for the establishment of "some form of diplomatic liaison" with the Soviet government and suggested, implausibly, that London would follow Moscow's lead: "In case Russia should feel emboldened to embark on a more vigorous policy vis-à-vis Japan in Manchuria, British policy would tend to follow and support the Russian lead – if that lead were endorsed and supported by the United States."[289] In a memorandum dated 31 January 1934, Hornbeck advocated for the explicit support of the Soviet Union against Japan in the event of war. By then, FDR had replaced President Herbert C. Hoover (1874–1964), and U.S.-Soviet diplomatic relations had been restored. Neither China nor the Soviet Union regarded the United States as a "rival, competitor or an enemy," whereas Japan did: The "objectives in the field of international relations of Japan and the United States differ very widely and seem in several respects irreconcilable." Then, Hornbeck emphasized that it "follows that we could not view with complacency a Japanese military victory over the Soviet Union. / We therefore should so steer our course as to insure, as far as possible, against such an eventuality." Hornbeck added that "we should discreetly let it appear that our sympathies are and in the event of such a war [with Japan] would be with the Soviet Union." If the war turned strongly in Japan's favor, Hornbeck stated that the United States "will at the 'psychological moment' throw our armed forces in on the side of the Soviet Union."[290]

Moscow had other assets with which to influence U.S. politics. The year in which Japan created Manzhouguo, 1932, was the year of a U.S. presidential election. Moscow mobilized its influence, although its full scale still remains unknown. Hoover, a staunch anti-Communist Republican, was challenged

[286] 18 February 1932 memorandum in Doenecke, *Diplomacy of Frustration*, 155. Likewise, Carter grossly downplayed the CCP, which was "in reality far more closely resembling the Taiping or the 'Boxer' movement than anything 'made in Moscow.' " See Shizhang Hu, *Stanley K. Hornbeck and the Open Door Policy, 1919–1937* (Westport, CT, 1995), 217.

[287] 10 March 1932 memorandum in Doenecke, *Diplomacy of Frustration*, 174.

[288] 11 March 1932 memorandum in ibid., 176.

[289] 17 February and 10 March 1932 memoranda in Ibid., 152, 174.

[290] 31 January 1934 memorandum, "Russo-Japanese Conflict Problem: What should be the attitude and course of action of the United States," Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck Papers, box 396.

by FDR, a Democrat. During the campaign, FDR never publicly advocated recognizing the Soviet government so as not to alienate millions of voters of Slavic origin (particularly ethnic Poles and anti-Soviet émigrés from the former Russian Empire). Yet, FDR, whom Charles E. Bohlen (1904–74), a Soviet hand in the State Department, once called "very much a political animal,"[291] was from the beginning determined to use Moscow as a counterweight against Japan in the Far East. The initiator of the New Deal, which critics called "socialism," was interested in the Soviet experiment as a correction to the classical model of capitalism that was seriously discredited by the Great Depression. Moscow helped FDR shape a charitable view of the country worthy of U.S. recognition. At the same time, FDR eagerly consulted Walter Duranty (1884–1957), the infamous correspondent of the *New York Times* in Moscow who knowingly denied the existence of widespread famine in the Soviet Union at the time, a famine in which millions of people died. Duranty, moreover, deliberately misrepresented the Communist country as a successful experimentation with modernization, a lesson from which the capitalist countries (including the United States) should learn.[292] There is testimony that Duranty, who apparently was fond of young women, worked under the control of the Soviet secret police in the 1930s.[293] "It was Walter Duranty, more than any other individual, who persuaded Franklin Roosevelt of the wisdom of granting diplomatic recognition to the Soviet government."[294] In seeking to achieve a rapprochement with Moscow, Roosevelt also came under the spell of another American, Armand Hammer (1898–1990), a businessman who is now widely believed to have been a Soviet agent.[295]

FDR beat Hoover soundly and took the presidency in March 1933 in the midst of famine in the Soviet Union. In opening negotiations with Moscow, FDR did not rely on Cordell Hull, the secretary of state, who had a number of reservations. In his memoirs, Hull said: "I kept an open mind on the subject [of opening diplomatic relations with Moscow] myself, and while leaning strongly toward recognition, declined to agree to any final action until this Government had first satisfied itself on certain vital points." These "certain vital points" included Communist propaganda by the Comintern, freedom of religion, and debt issues dating to 1917 (amounting to tens of billions of dollars in today's value). FDR's position was: "Two great nations like America and Russia should be on speaking terms."[296] Skirting Hull, FDR relied on Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (1891–1967), then the governor of the Federal Farm Board who would soon

[291]Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History 1929–1969* (New York, 1973), 177.

[292]On Duranty's reporting, see S.J. Taylor, *Stalin's Apologist: Walter Duranty; The New York Times's Man in Moscow* (New York, 1990).

[293]Carl Blumay and Henry Edwards, *The Dark Side of Power: The Real Armand Hammer* (New York, 1992), 48.

[294]Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken: An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (New York, 2008), 55.

[295]Ibid.

[296]*The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), 1:294, 297.

become the Secretary of Treasury, and particularly on William Ch. Bullitt Jr. (1891–1967), a diplomat who had experience dealing with Lenin and the Bolsheviks in 1919 as a U.S. special envoy.[297] Hull described Bullitt as "particularly friendly toward Russia" and "an ardent proponent of recognition."[298]

It was FDR who took the initial steps, although Moscow, as discussed earlier, had long courted the "scoundrels in Washington" through invective. Negotiations were carried out in great secrecy. Through Morgenthau, Bullitt met the unofficial Soviet representative in the United States, Skvirskii (see p. 232 in this chapter). The secrecy FDR demanded of Bullitt in negotiating with Skvirskii was remarkable:

> (1) That there should be absolutely no publicity of any sort in regard to this matter.
>
> (2) That in case the reply [by Moscow] should not be satisfactory, the copy [of the American proposal for negotiation, which is unsigned] I [Bullitt] handed him [Skvirskii] should be burned up or buried in the Soviet archives.
>
> (3) That he [Skvirskii] should transmit the text by his most private code to Moscow and should obtain a draft of reply to be communicated to me as soon as received.
>
> (4) That on receipt of a satisfactory reply he would receive a signed original of the copy.
>
> (5) That no publicity whatever should be given the proceedings by the Soviet Government, but that the President should control the time and form of any publicity, and that he would inform the Soviet Government as to the hour of any announcement in the United States.[299]

Skvirskii, in return, did something highly illuminating. He tempted Bullit with confidential information about, of all things, Japan. Bullitt wrote to Hull on his conversation with him on 15 October 1933:

> Mr. Skvirsky began to talk about the Far East and asked me what information we had about Japan's intentions. I told him that we had none whatsoever; that the matter was entirely obscure and not one that I was empowered to discuss. He volunteered the information that, in addition to the Japanese documents which have already

[297] See Robert Paul Browder, *The Origins of Soviet American Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ, 1953), chap. 6.

[298] *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 1:296. On Bullitt and the Soviet Union, see the classic by Beatrice Farnsworth, *William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union* (Bloomington, IN, 1967); a recent work by Alexander Etkind, *Roads Not Taken: An Intellectual Biography of William C. Bullitt* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2017).

[299] "Memorandum for the Secretary," 11 October 1933, William C. Bullitt Papers, Yale University, group 112, box 110, series II, folder 405.

> been published, the Russians have all telegrams exchanged between the Japanese representatives in Manchuria and the Government in Tokyo.[300]

Skvirskii knew that Washington's true concern was not amicability between the Soviets and the Americans but rather Soviet support against the threat from Japan. What Skvirskii was offering, fundamentally, was support against Japan.

After weeks of secret negotiations, in November 1933, FDR made public the resumption of diplomatic relations with the USSR. He told Litvinov, visiting Washington for this occasion, that he was interested in exchanging with Moscow information about Japan and that the United States would do everything in its power "to deflect the Japanese menace" from the Soviet Union. If the Soviet Union were attacked by Japan, he would offer the Soviet Union "*100 percent* [emphasis added] moral and diplomatic support."[301] It turned out that FDR demanded heightened secrecy so as not to alert Japan to the Soviet-American rapprochement. He appointed Bullitt as the first U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union. Through Bullitt, FDR let Moscow know that, wishing to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow "from the very beginning," he had waited for an opportune time. FDR feared that U.S. recognition of the Soviet Union might provoke Japan to attack the Soviet Union, and therefore, he waited for the port in Vladivostok to freeze before announcing the opening of diplomatic relations with Moscow. The Soviet official, Grigorii Ia. Sokol'nikov (1888–1939), the deputy people's commissar of foreign affairs, was taken aback by such solicitude from the U.S. president. He responded by assuaging FDR's concern: Sokol'nikov told Bullitt that "today an attack against the port by [gun]boats is not as dangerous as before, because it can be protected from the air."[302] It appears that FDR sent his message only orally. No written note of this message is found in the Bullitt archive. An oral message obviously could not be "burned up." A record of it, however, can be found "buried in the Soviet archives." Interestingly, a copy of Sokol'nikov's notes of his conversation with Bullitt on 13 December 1933 can be found in the Japanese Section of the Russian Foreign Ministry Archive.

Stalin's instruction to Litvinov also makes it clear that Stalin, like FDR, sought the rapprochement against Japan.[303] Notably, Stalin appointed Troianovskii, the former Soviet ambassador to Japan, as the first ambassador to the United States. In his conversation with Sokol'nikov, Bullitt advised him not to rely on

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[300]"Memorandum of conversation with Mr. Boris E. Skvirsky, Sunday, October 15, 1933, at 7:45 p.m.," Ibid.

[301]*Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniia. Gody nepriznaniia 1927–1933* (Moscow, 2002), 719.

[302]AVP, f. 0146, op. 16, p. 153, d. 10, l. 250. This is also reported by Karakhan: *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1970), 745. See also Kuromiya, "The Eurasian Crisis of 1931–1933," 110.

[303]See his instruction (marked "Top secret, no copy should be made" and dated 24 October 1933) that "an agreement against Japan," if only a temporary one, should be obtained in negotiating with FDR. See RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 82, l. 43. See also ibid., f. 17, op. 162, d. 15, l. 119.

the English, who could not be trusted on matters in the Far East. They did not demur to Japan's capture of Manchuria and would not object to its grabbing of the Soviet Maritime Province. Bullitt confessed that he did not keep the English informed of U.S. policy on the Far East. He expressed his desire to keep in close contact with Sokol'nikov regarding Far Eastern affairs.[304]

A close look at the agreement between the two countries also makes it clear that Hitler's ascension to power in 1933 was not the main instigator of the rapprochement. It was Japan. As Stalin did, FDR, too, at first underestimated Adolf Hitler. Roosevelt was sanguine about Hitler's eventual fall: He was merely "a dangerous military mentor of youth."[305] Nor did FDR show concern about the peril of Moscow's subversion. The Soviet-American rapprochement included certain provisos Moscow had to abide by, such as the guarantee of freedom of conscience and the cessation of Communist propaganda in the United States. None of these concerned Roosevelt much, and Stalin had absolutely no intention of observing them. Notwithstanding the provisos, Moscow carefully and successfully used the American Communist Party for propaganda. More significantly, Moscow's intelligence deeply penetrated the U.S. establishment under FDR.[306] FDR went to extraordinary lengths to accommodate Stalin. When the Soviet ambassador wanted to see him, FDR even received him from bed if ill.[307] FDR turned out to be Stalin's most trusted partner until his death in 1945, as will be discussed. The Soviet-American rapprochement consolidated Moscow's international position and further ostracized Japan. In East Asia, Japan now faced three countries—China, the Soviet Union, and the United States—all of which were far bigger than itself.

Even before the 1933 rapprochement, it was clear to Washington that many U.S. and other foreign citizens had been disappearing in the Soviet Union. Their fates were unknown, and they were assumed to have been arrested. Some of them subsequently were released, and their ordeals of arrest and imprisonment by Soviet security organs became known to the world. Washington was naturally concerned about these matters. Roosevelt, however, was happy to accept Moscow's inane assurance that U.S. citizens would be given consular assistance in the event of arrest, and he continued to ignore the disturbing fact of disappearing U.S. citizens in the Soviet Union.[308] After arriving in Moscow, Bullitt soon recognized the reality on the ground and turned sharply critical of Stalin and his government. When Moscow complained that it was not getting the financial credit it had expected from the United States, Bullitt answered that Washington had resumed relations with Moscow from "purely political considerations," to enable the United States to help the Soviet Union in case of war between Japan

[304] AVP, f. 0146, op. 16, p. 153, d. 10, ll. 249–250.

[305] *Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniia*, 719.

[306] See John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (New Haven, CT, 2010).

[307] See Krutitskaia and Mitrofanova, *Polpred Alekdandr Troianovskii*, 153.

[308] These harrowing stories of the forsaken Americans are told in detail in Tzouliadis, *Forsaken*.

and the Soviet Union.[309] Having determined that Bullitt was no longer fit for work in Moscow, FDR recalled him to Washington in 1936.

FDR's appallingly benign views of the Soviet Union reflected the depth of American alienation from Japan. From the U.S. point of view, nothing could possibly excuse Tokyo's actions in Manchuria. Tokyo's recognition of Manzhouguo in September 1932 marked the zenith of Japan's challenge to the post–World War I order in Asia.

William R. Castle, Jr. (1878–1963), who served as the U.S. ambassador to Japan for a few months in 1930, was very sympathetic to Japan but could not tolerate its disregard of the treaties, especially the Kellogg-Briand Treaty, in which he had played a role. In a speech he gave in April 1933, after he left the position of undersecretary of state, Castle expressed sympathy with Japan but defended the Stimson Doctrine. Even though the United States had supported China, as an underdog in the Sino-Japanese dispute, Castle contended, the United States had always viewed Japan as its protégé, an adopter of Western values, and a stabilizing force in Asia. Like many other observers, Castle deplored American (and Western) hypocrisy, and he bemoaned Japan's too faithful emulation of the West. Japan adopted "too many of the bad qualities of western civilization along with the good." Japan "abused her success," Castle continued, but "even then we realized that Japan was only doing what the great Western nations had done throughout their history." Castle contended that Japan was wrong to think that America was its nemesis. Rather, Japan had not adopted fully "our intellectual processes and spiritual values." According to Castle, "To us the higher patriotism consists in scrupulous observance of treaty commitments even if this appears temporarily disadvantageous. To the Japanese mind loyalty to country must supersede loyalty to paper agreements." The Stimson Doctrine was "a real addition to the precepts of international law" directed against the "use of force in the settlement of international disputes."[310]

Strikingly, Castle had nothing to say about the role Moscow played behind the scenes in the Sino-Japanese contention or the geopolitical game that Washington (like Moscow, London, Nanjing, and Tokyo) played in Asia. Moscow's policy was always to spoil (срывать) any American-Japanese rapprochement without giving the game away.[311] As it turned out, without so much as lifting a finger, Moscow managed to form an implicit united front with Washington against Tokyo, a remarkable political achievement.

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[309] Bullitt to Skvirskii on 11 September 1934, *Sovetsko-amerikanskie otnosheniia 1934–1939* (Moscow, 2003), 221, 289.

[310] "American Policy in the Pacific," 7 April 1933, in Hornbeck Papers, box 46. Regarding the observation of treaties, it is to be remembered that MacMurray (see Chapter 2, p. 172, footnote 442) thought differently: Japan was more observant in the 1920s than the United States, as far as the treaties regarding China were concerned, a point of view shared by British diplomats. Regarding Castle as a diplomat, see Alfred L. Castle, *Diplomatic Realism: William R. Castle, Jr., and American Foreign Policy, 1919–1953* (Honolulu, 1998).

[311] See Radek's letter to Stalin, 3 April 1934: RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 792, l. 1.

3.5 Duel of Political Operatives

Japan was late to realize the seriousness of its international isolation. In as much as it did, it saw the Manchurian adventure as the only imaginable way out of its impasse. All the while, Japan continued to pin hopes on some form of agreement with Moscow or at least clung to the illusion of Moscow's "appeasement." Moscow was thus able to use Japan's isolation, particularly from the Western nations, to keep the illusion alive while criticizing Japan in the press. In this way, Moscow advanced its rapprochements with China and the United States while secretly enticing Japan into Manchuria.

Radek's assessment of Japan and the world

Karl Radek was the most effective communicator, bar none, for a message of flattery and threat. A mischievous man with a mordant sense of humor, he was given to making caustic fun of Western hypocrisy, a subject that entertained the political left *and* right in Japan more than anything else. In this way, even while laying out his critical views of Japan, Radek maintained a political veneer of authenticity. Writing in April 1932, Radek compared Japan's "conquest of Manchuria" to Hideyoshi's failed attempt to subjugate Korea in the late sixteenth century.[312] Radek said that this time, unlike in Hideyoshi's, "no heroic legends about war and its brave deeds will save them at home," given Japan's fragile economic base. Yet, he knew how to please the Japanese while criticizing them:

> From the point of view of their own interests and their own politics the ruling classes of Japan could present a thousand arguments to justify their acts against China. Those arguments are neither better nor worse than those by which the imperialists of the so-called white countries justify their campaigns and their conquests. When the Japanese diplomat Sato [Satō Naotake, 1882–1971] through clenched teeth asked the Areopagus of Geneva—that gathering of representatives of the capitalist countries—"And what sort of judges are you?" truth was on his side. But when Japan gets entangled in armed struggle with China, when her armies have broken the back-bone of the last anti-revolutionary government of China, and when Japan, weakened by those battles, finds herself face to face with the raging sea of China's masses, these correct references to the fact that she had done nothing that other capitalist powers have not done will not help her. What will happen then is that through the lips of the Chinese masses history will repeat the words a German poet threw in the face of the

[312] Karl Radek, "Khideiosi," *Izvestiia*, 10 April 1932, 2. This essay was translated into English in his *Portraits and Pamphlets* (London, 1935), 177–86, from which the following discussion is taken. Hideyoshi refers to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1537–98), Japan's samurai ruler.

> Napoleonic armies when after having defeated Germany and trampled her underfoot, they returned themselves utterly broken from the snowy plains of Russia.
>
> "Defeat them—,
> The tribunal of history
> Will not ask you for reasons."
>
> When Japanese cannon defeated tsarism on the fields of Manchuria, Russian revolutionaries had no illusions as to the intentions or motives of Japan, but they did acknowledge that in Japan progressive Asia had beaten backward Europe. . . . In spite of the fact that the equality of Japan within the family of the capitalist powers is quite illusory, in spite of the false, hypocritical compliments that bourgeois diplomacy showers upon Japan from time to time, the Japanese people are for the capitalist world a yellow people, a contemptible people. For the toilers of Japan the door into the United States, as into many British colonies, is closed. The Soviet Union is the only country which, even at present, at a time of strained relations, has not for a single moment forgotten the respect due to the great achievements of Japan, to the way she has broken through the barriers of feudal theocracy by science and engineering.[313]

Radek was proven right in 1945 in his comparison of the Japanese Army in China with the Napoleonic army on German soil.

Radek even openly warned the Japanese about the hopelessness of Japan's adventure in Manchuria, an extraordinary move in Stalin's deception game. He wrote:

> We can declare without boasting that our country is bigger than Japan, both in human and material resources. . . . In case of danger it will arm armies of millions sufficient to close all its borders. . . . it is *ludicrous* [emphasis added] to think of a victory of the Japanese imperialists over us. . . . Japanese imperialism has thrown down a challenge to the great Chinese nation. The adventurist elements of Japanese imperialism are now working to strain relations between Japan and the Soviet Union. They are doing it at the very moment when a menacing enemy has appeared in Japan's rear. That is American imperialism, . . . In such an atmosphere it needs *madness* [emphasis added] to create new fronts against oneself, to make an enemy of a great country which stands aside from the struggle which is rending the imperialist world asunder,

[313] Radek, *Portraits and Pamphlets*, 180–81. I have slightly modified the English translation according to the Russian original. In 1941, Stalin spoke of Napoleon in the same vein: "When Napoleon I led war under the slogan of liberation from serfdom, he won support and sympathy, found allies, and was victorious. / When Napoleon I turned to wars of aggression, he met many enemies and was defeated." See O.V. Vishlëv, "Rech' I.V. Stalina 5 maia 1945 g. Rossiiskie dokumenty," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 4 (1998): 84.

> a country which does not seek profit at the expense of other nations, which only asks for the maintenance of peace on its borders and respect for its interests. . . . Their [Japan's] situation is more difficult than that of Germany before the war. Either Japan will be isolated and destroyed at the decisive moment or, despite her present military strength, she will be the object of an Anglo-American struggle. The decisive factor in a great war is economic reserves, in which Japan is poor. The attempt to solve the contradictions of the Japanese situation by way of war can end only in a great defeat for Japan. There is no complete solution of her difficulties under the existing capitalist order. But in friendly co-operation with the peoples of the Asiatic Continent, by assisting them and obtaining in exchange all she needs, Japan still has a great future ahead. By struggling against all the great currents of history she is steering direct for *the greatest calamities and the greatest of defeats* [emphasis added].[314]

Apart from his own sanctimonious homily about the Soviet Union ("a country which does not seek profit at the expense of other nations"), Radek was quite right about Japan. Ishiwara might have responded that "friendly co-operation with the peoples of the Asiatic Continent" was exactly what he intended to achieve. Ishiwara was well aware, as discussed earlier, that his solution was a contradiction in itself. Yet, he must have been pleased that Radek understood Japan's conundrum so well.

One might think that Radek's message would alert other Japanese politicians to the Soviet Union's true thoughts on Japan's invasion of Manchuria. This was not the case. Again, by taking advantage of Japan's international isolation, Moscow could keep Japan in an uneasy reliance on its neutrality. Consider, for example, in 1932, when the League of Nations—with the participation of the United States (which was not even a member)—sent an investigation team called the Lytton Commission to Japan and China. Moscow sent a directive to its diplomats and representatives not to cooperate with it. When A.A. Znamenskii, the Soviet general consul in Mukden, met the commission on his own initiative, he was fired and recalled to Moscow.[315] Obviously, Radek was dishonest to contend that the Soviet Union, unlike the United States, was disinterested in the fate of Manchuria. Yet, his argument played into Japan's own narrative that it could rely on the Soviet Union's neutrality. By doing so, Radek effectively encouraged Japan to see real threat as coming solely from the West. Writing in October 1932, Radek expressed utmost contempt for the Lytton Commission and its report (which was, in spite of Japan's protest, sympathetic with Japan's position in China in general). Radek loudly criticized the Lytton report for keeping silent about American economic interests in Manchuria competing

[314] Radek, *Portraits and Pamphlets*, 182–85.

[315] See A.Iu. Sidorov, "Sovetskii Soiuz i agressiia Iaponii v Man'chzhurii v 1931–1932 gg. (po novym dokumentam)," *Prepodavanie istorii v shkole*, no. 4 (2008): 47.

with those of Japan. America was not a disinterested party in this matter, so why, he asked, was it silent? In the old days, Japan and Russia had fought for hegemony over Manchuria, but now, it was Japan and the United States that were fighting. Radek recalled Washington's various attempts to break into the Manchurian market (including its attempts to "internationalize" the CER). After all, Radek stated, it was the Western imperialists that began dividing up China long before Japan did. It was America that used the League of Nations to put the squeeze on reluctant nations such as Britain and France to attack Japan. The significance of the Lytton report lay in its "anti-Japanese propaganda," seeking to implicate the Soviet Union in its campaign against Japan by stating that in solving the Manchurian crisis, it was vital to take into consideration the "interests of the Soviet Union."[316]

Radek's obloquy of the Western powers did not cease, helping to weaken Japan's guard against the Soviet Union. In May 1933, Radek wrote that American "isolationism" was merely a mask: The United States never sequestered itself from world politics. America simply controlled the world by the power of the dollar. Other countries, Britain in particular, resisted America's bullying with the only card they had, Japan. So, the United States now had to abandon its proud "isolationism" and recruit other countries, using the League of Nations, for a possible march on the Far East.[317] Radek told the Japanese military attaché to Moscow, Kawabe Torashirō, how insistent the Americans were in telling the Soviets about Japan's danger to the Soviet Union.[318] Kawabe, who later realized that Moscow's ultimate goal had been to mire Japan in Manchuria,[319] was nevertheless pleased with Radek's essays. It is not hard, in retrospect, to see why the Japanese mistakenly believed that the Soviet Union stood on their side in spite of all the Soviet criticism of Japan.

Such was Radek's management of Moscow's relations with Japan. He used his essays to provide penetrating analyses of Japan's geopolitical weaknesses, while leveraging the effects of its international isolation to maintain a veneer of neutrality. It is precisely his ability to balance his honest reflections with a rhetorical strategy in line with Moscow's diplomatic approach that makes his essays so illuminating of the time. Consequently, Japan as a nation failed to see the direction Moscow was heading. Yet, even when emphasizing Moscow's peace-loving policy, Radek could not help but reveal Moscow's future expectations: "War holds out gross sufferings for the peoples of the whole world. It is true that *it will break down obstacles to socialism* [emphasis added], but it will exhaust and undermine material forces for a decade, it will bleed the masses of the people

[316] Karl Radek, "Doklad Komissii Littona: nauchno-issledovatel'skaia brigada Ligi Natsii," *Izvestiia*, 13 October 1932, 2–3.

[317] Karl Radek, "Vozvrashchenie Kolumba v Evropu," *Izvestiia*, 24 May 1933, 2. This is included in his *Podgotovka bor'by za novyi peredel mira* (Moscow, 1934), 135–41.

[318] See *Lubianka. Stalin i VChK-GPU-OGPU-NKVD: ianvar' 1922–dekabr' 1936*, 484.

[319] See Kawabe Torashirō, *Kawabe Torashirō kaisōroku: Ichigayadai kara Ichigayadai e* (Tokyo, 1979), 54.

white. For this reason we are passionate opponents of the solution by war of the capitalist contradictions which have again accumulated in the whole world."[320]

Tokyo's secret diplomacy with Moscow

Tokyo was not, of course, entirely blind to Radek's true thoughts; it suspected Moscow's ultimate goal was to export revolution to China, Japan, and elsewhere. It did not completely trust Moscow. This tension resulted in a matrix of secret diplomacy that both sides used to try to gain an advantage. Three months after the Mukden Incident, Moscow proposed a non-aggression pact to Tokyo. In the West, Moscow was successful in concluding such pacts with Lithuania (in 1926), as well as Finland, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, and France (all in 1932). In 1933, Moscow signed a similar pact with Rome. Moscow was unsuccessful with Tokyo, however. Japan insisted that the Kellogg-Briand Treaty rendered such a treaty otiose. Tokyo made it clear, however, that if Moscow recognized Manzhouguo de jure, it would sign such a treaty. It was not something Moscow could do officially. Moscow used Tokyo's lack of a positive response as a manifestation of its aggressive intention toward the Soviet Union. Tokyo, in turn, complained that while Moscow did not publicize discussions on non-aggression treaties with Poland and France until they were signed, it publicized from the start negotiations of a non-aggression pact with Japan.[321]

In Japan's political circles, there was much support for a pact with the Soviet Union. It would help Japan focus on Manchuria without fear of a threat from the north. True, Tokyo preferred Moscow's recognition of Manzhouguo to a non-aggression pact. Yet, it made little sense for Tokyo to reject it. Moscow insisted that Tokyo's refusal was an admission that it entertained the idea of attacking the Soviet Union at an apposite point in the future. There were at least two reasons for Tokyo's reluctance to conclude such a pact. One was Tokyo's search for an alternative, secret arrangement of Manchurian affairs with Moscow. Another was Tokyo's heeding of public opinion. The two were related and suggest that Moscow's proposal was merely an elaborate political game.

Castle's criticism of Tokyo's uncertain commitment to observing international laws may not have been inaccurate. The Japanese politicians were disinclined to formal, legal arrangements with Moscow. Perhaps the experience with the United States in the 1920s regarding China had left them with the impression that the decks were stacked against them, even in the matter of observing international laws (see Chapter 2, p. 172). Additionally, a non-aggression pact with Moscow would undoubtedly have alarmed the West, causing suspicions of a secret alliance between the two countries. In hindsight, the outcomes of similar agreements reveal the opportunism of Moscow's offers: In 1939, Moscow broke the non-aggression pact with Poland and destroyed the country in collusion with

[320] Radek, *Portraits and Pamphlets*, 185.

[321] 27 December 1932 report from Tokyo in AVP, f. 146, op. 15, p. 149, d. 1, l. 241.

Nazi Germany. Then, the Soviet Union flouted the non-aggression pact with Finland, brutally attacking it. (And, as it happened, in 1945, Moscow broke the neutrality pact with Japan, signed in 1941, and attacked Japan.)

Tokyo pursued a secret deal with Moscow, an idea repeatedly proposed to Moscow at least since 1925. In February 1932, Yamamoto Teijirō (山本悌二郎, 1870–1937), a cabinet member, broached the subject with Troianovskii. Although Moscow considered a secret deal to be a mere political ploy to scare the United States, it did not necessarily exclude such a possibility with Japan, as it would have been useful to protect Soviet interests in the event of an American-Japanese war.[322]

This led nowhere, however, because at the time, Moscow suspected that Japan was working out an alliance with Poland and Romania directed against the Soviet Union.[323] In September 1932, Hirota Kōki, the departing Japanese ambassador to the Soviet Union, expressed interest in a "far-reaching agreement" with Moscow, similar to the one Russia and Japan had reached in 1916—that is, the division of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia into their respective spheres of influence. Hirota defended his proposal by explaining that Japanese public opinion was against a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. Hirota's proposal made little sense; still, Japan wanted Moscow to recognize Manzhouguo, if only in secret. By then, Japan had occupied Manchuria and northeastern Inner Mongolia, forming Manzhouguo already in the spring of 1932.[324] At the same time, Araki Sadao, the minister of the army, spoke to Troianovskii about the necessity of forming a Soviet-Manchu-Japanese alliance, an "agitational means against the USA," as understood by Soviet diplomats.[325] In November 1932, on his way to Geneva, Matsuoka Yōsuke (松岡洋右, 1880–1946), Japan's plenipotentiary to the League of Nations meetings concerning the Manchuria crisis, stopped in Moscow. He sought in vain to see Stalin in person,[326] but following Tokyo's instructions, he floated the idea with other Soviet officials (including Radek) of resisting the West (America in particular) by an alliance with the Soviet Union. Matsuoka later stated that the two countries agreed on 90 percent of the deal, but could not hurdle the remaining 10 percent. Matsuoka arrived in Geneva with no strong card to play against Japan's critics.[327] While Japan sought to use the Soviet Union against the West, the Soviet

[322] Karakhan's "top secret" note to Troianovskii, 15 February 1932: AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 216, ll. 5–7.

[323] RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 12, ll. 107–8 (17 April 1932)

[324] AVP, f. 0146, op. 15, p. 149, d. 3, ll. 69–72 (as told by Louis Fischer [1896–1970], an American journalist in the Soviet Union to Konstantin A. Umanskii [1902–45], a Soviet diplomat).

[325] AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 150, d. 208, l. 125.

[326] Ishiwara was a member of the Japanese delegates and saw Egorov, the Red Army chief of the staff, in Moscow on his way to Geneva. Yamaguchi Jūji, *Kieta teikoku Manshū* (Tokyo, 1967), 177, states that Ishiwara met with Stalin at that time. This cannot be confirmed by other sources.

[327] See Tsunoda Tokio, "Fūun no hito Matsuoka Yōsuke o shinobu," *Minshu kōron* 8, no. 12 (1957): 23. Matsuoka spoke with Litvinov, but its record has not been located. See *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1969), 15:800.

Union sought to scare Warsaw with the specter of a Soviet-Japanese rapprochement.[328]

Tokyo's search for secret deals with Moscow reflects both its old thinking and its international isolation. Its attempts invariably failed, but they indicate why Tokyo was not as interested in a formal non-aggression pact. Here arises the question of the Stalin-Kuhara secret deal discussed earlier. Kuhara was a partner to the Ishiwara-Itagaki-Kōmoto conspiracy that led to the Mukden Incident,[329] resulting in Manchuria's "independence" from China and the formation of Japan's puppet government Manzhouguo. As the Chinese historian Sun Guoda has recently speculated, it is quite possible that a secret or implicit agreement or understanding existed between Japan and the Soviet Union, by which Japan pledged that it would not threaten the Soviet Far East and the Soviet Union would reciprocate by promising not to prevent Japan from conquering China (including Manchuria) (see Chapter 2, p. 117). According to Hirano Reiji, Kōmoto's brother-in-law, Kuhara was "not averse to joining hands even with the Soviet Union."[330] Stalin was confident that Japan would bog down in China and thus be "neutralized."

After the Mukden Incident, Kuhara met with Soviet officials frequently. In December 1932, he told Troianovskii that he supported the non-aggression pact and that Japan would sign it. He told the ambassador that he was not concerned about Communist propaganda, which the opponents of the pact presented as a threat to Japan. Japan once feared Buddhism and Christianity, but "nothing terrible had happened." It would be the same with Communism: Japan would digest it.[331]

At the time, the Japanese who opposed the pact deliberately soft-pedaled the Soviet threat: The Soviet Union was not strong enough to pose a serious menace, and therefore, no pact was necessary. This was the reasoning, for example, of Masaki Jinzaburō (真崎甚三郎, 1876–1956), the army's deputy chief of staff who rejected the pact. Yet, a closer look complicates the situation. Although Masaki was aware of the potential Soviet threat, he upheld his official, benign view of the Soviet Union by referring to the views expressed by Komatsubara,[332] then the head of Japan's military mission in Manchuria who had been passing Soviet disinformation on to Japan in the late 1920s (see p. 195 in this chapter). Either way, the Soviet Union was playing an arcane game. Could they have helped

[328] Karol Krzewski's report from Moscow, 17 July 1933, in CAW, I.303.4.1862, n.p.

[329] In Ishiwara's archive (Ishiwara Kanji kankei bunsho), there was a file (no. 169) about "Kuhara's activity" in 1931–32, but the document evanesced, and the archivists cannot find it. One suspects that there was something inconvenient in it for Kuhara, who died in 1965. Ishiwara died in 1949.

[330] Hirano, *Manshū no inbō sha*, 181.

[331] AVP, f. 0146, op. 16, p. 152, d. 2, l. 18.

[332] See Shiraishi Masaaki, "Manshū jihen ki rikugun no taiSo ninshiki no ichimen: Masaki Jinzaburō o chūshin ni," *Gunji shigaku* 37, nos. 2–3 (2001): 230–31; Kitaoka Shin-ichi, "Rikugun habatsu tairitsu (1931–35) no saikentō: taigai, kokubō seisaku o chūshin to shite," in Kindai nihon kenkyūkai, ed., *Shōwa ki no gunbu* (Tokyo, 1979), 75–76.

dissuade Japan from acceding to their non-aggression proposal with their own disinformation? It should be noted that Masaki was also one of the leaders of the military group *kōdōha* (皇道派, literally "imperial way faction"), whose rallying cry was war against the Soviet Union. Evidently, the Soviet disinformation was more effective than Moscow's appeals for non-aggression. What the discerning reader of Soviet history should by now grasp is that Moscow's interests were not, in fact, at odds with its disinformation. The far more likely reality was that Moscow had no interest in realizing a non-aggression pact in the first place.

In hindsight, Moscow's proposal to Tokyo of a non-aggression pact appears to have been little more than an elaborately conceived political weapon. Moscow knew that Japan's public opinion was overwhelmingly negative about such a treaty. That is why in Japan's case, unlike in the cases of Poland or France, Moscow made a public proposal to Tokyo, fully aware that it would not be accepted. In the unlikely event of acceptance, it would entail benefits to the Soviet Union: Japan's attention would turn definitely to the south of China, where Japan would clash with the Western imperialist powers. Japanese politicians played a high-stakes game with Moscow. Masaki's case has already been discussed. More importantly, Araki Sadao and Moscow played an elaborate political game as well. Along with Masaki, Araki, the minister of army from late 1931 to early 1934, was the blimpish leader of the military clique *kōdōha*, which took a radical, hardline position toward the Soviet Union. Moscow made the most of Araki's incendiary remarks about the Soviet Union to attack Japan's aggressive intentions.

Araki Sadao, Japan's rightists, and the Soviet Union

Yet, Araki was, in fact, a supporter of good relations with Japan's northern neighbor, a point historians have failed to understand. The game worked in the following way. Araki was a rabble-rousing performer in public. In private, he explored common ground with the Soviet Union against Britain and the United States. In a conversation with a Polish diplomat in July 1932, Troianovskii boasted that of all the foreign diplomats, he, Troianovskii, had the closest relationship with Araki. Troianovskii explained that it might be because Araki knew no foreign language but Russian. In fact, Araki had sympathy in spades for Russia (*dużo sympatji dla Rosji*), and he kept the Russian habit of drinking tea from a samovar. Troianvskii was labeled as a "pro-Japanese" diplomat by the Pole.[333]

Very revealing is an intimate conversation Araki carried on in Russian on 6 January 1933 with Troianovskii, the departing Soviet ambassador to Japan. Araki had a high regard for Troianovskii and wanted him to stay in Tokyo, but Troianovskii had been recalled to Moscow. Araki explained to him that he personally was in favor of a non-aggression pact but that the Japanese public would not accept it. They believed that the West had deceived Japan through treaties such as the Washington Treaty, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and the London Treaty;

[333]RGVA, f. 308k, op. 3, d. 299, l. 160.

thus, Japan feared international agreements. Instead of a pact, Araki wanted an "understanding" with Moscow on fundamental issues such as the Manchurian question. Araki floated the idea of creating an Asian version of a League of Nations, in which the Soviet Union would become a member.[334] Araki emphasized that he was a "proletarian" (he had worked as a cooper), and Japan itself was a proletarian and not a bourgeois state, echoing the claim of many Japanese opposed to the domination of the world by Western nations (see Chapter 2, p. 87). He complained that the Americans regarded the Japanese as a lower, second-class race. Japan, according to Araki, placed emphasis on spirituality, morality, and ideas and not on materialism (by which he meant both Western capitalism and Marxism). At the same time, he sought to engage Troianovskii by explaining that Japan did not need "Mitsui and Mitsubishi" (referring to zaibatsu) but rather a "simple and modest life for everyone." Troianovskii was suspicious and noted that "Araki is a candidate to become a Hitler. He's sincere, a fanatic, and capable of action."[335]

Troianovskii's suspicions notwithstanding, Araki, like many other Japanese who were distrustful of the Anglo-American liberal order, had a weakness for Communism, even though he rejected it. Kamei Kan-ichirō, a Social Democrat who supported a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, sought Araki's support in vain. He left the following note on Araki, with whom he met frequently in the 1930s. Araki was against the pact but supported "peace diplomacy" and unwaveringly favored a reconciliation (融和) with the Soviet Union. Kamei's colleague, Asō Hisashi (麻生久, 1891–1940), was so impressed by Araki that he muttered: "What an interesting man!"[336] After World War II, Kamei spoke of Araki sympathetically. Kamei commented on a conversation in which he asked why Araki, who had influence among the young, radical army officers, did not mobilize them to support peace with the Soviet Union and China. Araki responded, "I only sympathise with the younger officers. They only boast of me." In his post–World War II statement to the occupation forces regarding this conversation with Araki, Kamei wrote in English:

> He [Araki] answered, "No, we cannot have faith in Soviet diplomacy, as we must always be prepared for the unexpected attack from Soviet Russia." He added, "Party leaders [such as Kamei and Asō] do not understand this international situation and only talk of peace. Unless men who understand this international situation and make nation-wide preparation, the fate of our country is at stake. [The] Japanese system, political and economic, must be changed fundamentally after

[334] In protest of the League of Nations' adoption of the Lytton report, Japan withdrew from the league in March 1933.

[335] AVP, f. 0146, op. 16, p. 152, d. 2, ll. 63–67. See also Troianovskii, *Cherez gody i rasstoianiia.*, 51–52.

[336] Kamei Kan-ichirō, "Kaisō (sōkō)," Kamei Kan-ichirō kankei bunsho, no. 340, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo, 32.

> the manner so to speak [of the] Soviet system under Japanese ideology."
>
> I said to him, "The historical development of mankind does not know national borders. You should select between Communism, Socialism or New Deal or Feudal Capitalism as we have and nothing more. There is no such thing as sovietic [*sic*] national organization under the Japanese family system."
>
> ARAKI retorted always like Kipling, "East is East and West is West, [the] Japanese system should always be the Japanese system but for the sake of progress we must sometimes take in something from Europe. We should have Sovietic [*sic*] concentration of national power for the purpose of defense under [the] Japanese family system which is democracy itself."[337]

Araki's public statements were merely a show of sympathy for the benefit of the young officers. Araki's fear was that a non-aggression pact might weaken their ideological guard against Soviet Communism. So, oddly, like Masaki, Araki deliberately understated the threat of the Soviet Union to reject a non-aggression pact with Moscow.[338] At the same time, Araki was interested in a Soviet style transformation of Japan's body politic! This kind of game was dangerous, as Hornbeck understood in 1933:

> The incitation to patriotic nationalism in Japan which has been fostered by the Japanese Government for several years has produced an arrogance and overconfidence among the population which may prove to be a Frankenstein. It appears probable that the Japanese Government may not be able to control this super-patriotic fever, and that in this factor lies the most immediate danger of a break with Russia at this time.[339]

Araki's deceptive posture soon became known to the public, and he was politically marginalized.

Araki was useful to Moscow: He supported peace with the Soviet Union in private, but in public, he was jingoistic and belligerent. Moreover, Araki's public belligerence was equally directed toward the United States. This meant that Moscow was able to attack him and his cohort publicly and with impunity as Japan's true face—enemies of peace and the Soviet Union. That Araki was the minister of the army lent credence to Moscow's propaganda. He was also useful

[337] Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 50:33. Araki's argument is consistent with his "top secret" memorandum (undated, ca. 1932) on why a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union was unacceptable at that moment. See "NiSso fukashin jōyaku teiketsu no kahi," Araki Sadao bunsho, no. 453, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo.

[338] See Kikkawa Manabu, *Arashi to tatakau tesshō Araki. Rikugun rimenshi* (Tokyo, 1955), 271.

[339] "Estimate of Russo-Japanese Situation," 11 October 1933, Stanley Kuhl Hornbeck Papers, box 396, 2.

to Moscow in another respect: He understated the military strength of the Soviet Union and anachronistically called for the education of soldiers in the "Japanese spirit" as a mighty weapon against the Soviet army. Moscow knew all along that the Japanese military did not want a non-aggression pact "*only because* [emphasis added] it would have a demoralizing effect on Japanese society."[340] Except for occasional alarms, Soviet diplomatic reports from Tokyo did not emphasize the possibility of a Japanese attack against the Soviet Union. They did remain distrustful of Tokyo, however, just as Tokyo was deeply suspicious of Moscow. Even in internal documents, Troianovskii, for example, emphasized that Japan's action was based on the Tanaka Memorial, a master plan for "world conquest."[341] All indications suggest that Troianovskii knew better. If so, his discussion of the Tanaka Memorial in internal documents was meant for Moscow's consumption.

All the same, Moscow relentlessly carried out propaganda against Japan's aggressive plans. It is true that individual politicians, diplomats, and military officials in Japan were sometimes given over to the fancy of territorial expansion at the cost of the Soviet Maritime Province and Siberia. In July 1931, before the Mukden Incident, Japan's ambassador to the Soviet Union, Hirota, conveyed his opinion on the Soviet Union to the General Staff in Tokyo, which was intercepted and reported to Stalin: "On the question of whether Japan should declare war on the Soviet Union—I deem it necessary that Japan be ready to declare war at any moment and to adopt a tough policy towards the Soviet Union. . . . The cardinal objective of this war must lie not so much in protecting Japan from Communism as in seizing the Soviet Far East and Eastern Siberia."[342] Moscow published part of this intercept (without naming the author) in March 1932 to coincide with the proclamation of Manzhouguo.[343] Just before this publication, in February 1932, Katakura Tadashi, a disciple of Ishiwara's, let this fantasy take him over. In a published essay, he wrote that Manzhouguo "had the geographical advantage to expand its territory radially in the direction of Siberia, Outer Mongolia, Ili, and Xinjiang."[344] In May 1932, the Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* published an article that presented the most militant, anti-Soviet Japanese publications as representative of Japan, arguing that their positions proved the genuineness of the Tanaka Memorial: Japan was now preparing for war against the Soviet Union and the United States.[345]

In fact, Japan had made no preparations for an offensive war of territorial expansion at the cost of the Soviet Union. Like all armies, it had plans for offense

[340]A frank admission by Boris S. Stomoniakov (1882–1940), a high-ranking official in the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, AVP, f. 0146, op. 19, p. 170, d. 12, l. 39 (22 October 1936).

[341]See for example AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, l. 20 (31 March 1932 report to Karakhan) and f. 0146, op. 15, p. 149, d. 5, ll. 52–56 (15 April 1932 report to Karakhan).

[342]*Lubianka. Stalin i VChK-GPU-OGPU-NKVD: ianvar' 1922–dekabr' 1936*, 292.

[343]"Sovetskii Soiuz i Iaponiia," *Izevsttia*, 4 March 1932, 1 (editorial).

[344]Katakura Tadashi, "Manshū kenkoku to sono risō," reproduced in Koyama Noboru, comp., *Koyama Sadatomo to Manshūkoku. Jō* (Tokyo, 1996), 89.

[345]"Budem buditel'ny," *Izvestiia*, 30 May 1932, 1 (editorial).

in the event of war. These focused on liquidating Soviet forces in Vladivostok and in the Maritime Province and on winning major battles expected to be fought in the Daxing'anling region (i.e., inside Manchuria and Inner Mongolia and not on Soviet territory). If Japan were successful in these battles, then it would proceed into Soviet territory in the east of the Baikal. (This last part was not in Ishiwara's plans, however.) As Moscow built up its Far Eastern military forces, Tokyo prepared for Soviet offenses. Yet, Japan, busy with Manchurian affairs, had neither serious offensive war plans against the Soviet Union nor serious war preparations. By the time the situation in Manchuria was somewhat stabilized in 1934–35, Japan began to realize that the Soviet Union had beaten it to the punch in military buildup. Japan was able to devise only palliative defense plans against the Soviet forces.[346] Moreover, Japan's counterintelligence was lax (its notoriety for brutality against suspects notwithstanding). The war plan, such as it was, with regard to the Soviet Union for 1933 was stolen and ended up in Soviet hands. It was promptly translated into Russian.[347]

Some radical political and military circles continued to use bellicose rhetoric against the Soviet Union. Yet, Japan's main concern was clearly the southern region of Manzhouguo, where, supported by the Nanjing government and the CCP, resistance to the Japanese occupation persisted. To secure Manzhouguo, Japan sought to subdue it militarily. This resulted in the Jehol (Rehe) expedition in January 1933. The Japanese forces overwhelmed the Chinese, which impressed Owen Lattimore, no friend of Japan, as the "first tryout of the modern blitzkrieg."[348] Ordered by the emperor not to cross the Great Wall into Hebei province, closer to Beijing, the expedition was halted. A truce (Tanggu Truce) was signed in May 1933. It created a 100-km wide demilitarized zone extending just to the north of Beijing on terms humiliating to the Chinese. Although this may have secured a truce between China and Japan for the time being, it further stirred China's nationalist sentiments and made the capture of Hebei (including Beijing) irresistible to the Japanese. This was a development Moscow welcomed.

Meanwhile, Soviet disinformation continued, which influenced Japan's strategy regarding the Soviet Union. In addition to the understated data on the Soviet military forces in the Far East, disinformation on the extensive existence of "anti-Soviet forces" within the Soviet Union, including within the Red Army, was fed to Tokyo.[349] Moscow used this disinformation widely, as discussed in the Introduction. This led to a heated controversy among Japanese strategists,

[346] See Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Kantōgun 1. TaiSo senbi, Nomonhan jiken* (Tokyo, 1969), 246–54; *Senshi sōsho: Daihon-ei rikugunbu 1. Shōwa jūgonen gogatsu made* (Tokyo, 1967), 338–49.

[347] *Zoku gendaishi shiryō 4. Rikugun: Hata Shunroku nisshi*, 59. Tomita Takeshi, *Senkanki no NiSso kankei 1917–1937* (Tokyo, 2010), chap. 4, provides a concise history of both Soviet and Japanese intelligence operations in the interwar period.

[348] Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Stalin's Great Terror and The Asian Nexus," *Europe-Asia Studies* 66, no. 5 (July 2014): 788. Even so, Japan's actions, like those in Shanghai earlier, did not impress Soviet observers. See AVP, f. 0146, op. 17, p. 158, d. 6, ll. 345–46 (assessment by V. Zhelezniakov).

[349] Kamei, "Kaisō (sōkō)," 11. Kamei did not call the information "disinformation," how-

particularly between those who believed that the Soviet Union was inherently weak and unstable and those who insisted that Stalin's Soviet Union was strong and stable and becoming even stronger. This division coincided roughly with the split between the *kōdōha* and the *tōseiha* (統制派, literally "control faction"). The latter faction, though not necessarily a well-articulated group, emphasized discipline and control in the military forces. It evaluated the Soviet economic achievements positively and was alert to the need for Japan to adapt more effectively to the modern era of total war. In June 1933, the controversy between them led to a confrontation between Obata Toshishirō (小畑敏四郎, 1885–1947), a Russian expert and the head of the Army General Staff Third Department (in charge of transport and communication), and Nagata Tetsuzan (永田鉄山, 1884–1935), the head of the Second Department. Obata was close to the *kōdōha*, and Nagata was said to be the leader of the *tōseiha*. It was reported that Obata emphasized the need to strike the Soviet Union sooner rather than later, although some claimed that Obata's strategy was, in essence, a defensive one against the Soviet Union. In the end, Nagata won, even though there was much sympathy for Obata.[350] Obata's influence waned thereafter.

It is unclear whether this was the outcome Moscow desired. Obata's victory would have posed no problem. There was little prospect for a non-aggression pact in any case, and Obata's belligerence would have been a first-rate propaganda tool against Japan. Neither did Nagata's victory pose serious problems for Moscow. It relieved Moscow of the prospect of war with Japan for the time being. Moreover, Nagata and those close to him, such as Kamei, Mutō Akira (武藤章, 1892–1948), and Shinjō Kenkichi (新庄健吉, 1897–1941), entertained some degree of sympathy for the Soviet Union. Mutō, like Ishiwara, was a student of the works of Karl Marx.[351] Mutō is known to have had contact with the Soviet spy Richard Sorge, whom he grew to trust, even imparting to him invaluable information on the Japanese army.[352] To study the Soviet planned economy, Nagata dispatched Shinjō to the Soviet Union, where he worked more than a year from 1936 to 1937.[353]

These political reactions to the Soviet Union, from Araki's belligerent public statements to the *kōdōha* and *tōseiha* debates, illustrate how Japan's political attitudes were shaped during this time by the Soviet Union. On the one hand, many Japanese were radically opposed to both capitalism and Communism,

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ever. A social-democratic leader, he simultaneously worked for the Army General Staff Second Department (see Introduction, p. 18).

[350] Suyama Yukio, *Sakusen no oni Obata Toshishirō* (Tokyo, 1983), 90–92.

[351] See Yatsugi Kazuo, "Rikugun gunmu kyoku no shihaisha," *Bungei shunjū* 32, no. 16 (October 1954): 110.

[352] Julius Mader, *Dr. Sorge-Report. Ein Dokumentarbericht über Kundschafter des Friedens mit ausgewählten Artikeln von Richard Sorge* (Berlin, 1985), 370.

[353] Shiozaki Hiroaki, " 'Tōseiha' no 'keizai seisaku shisō': Shinjō Kenkichi no baai," in Kindai nihon kenkyūkai, *Shōwa ki no gunbu*, 96–121. Obviously, this decision was made before Nagata was killed in August 1935.

embracing an aggressive, nationalistic stance that reflected Japan's isolation from the Western world and the threat from the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the same situation drove others to search for common political ground with the Soviet Union, even if they rejected Communism as a whole. What resulted was a confusing, well-nigh paradoxical escalation of both militaristic posturing and partiality to Soviet politics. The two sides were often intertwined, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish between the left and right in the course of the 1930s. Even though neither necessarily represented the overall perspective of Tokyo at the time, they combined to drag Japan into an ever more inescapable international quandary.

Nikolai Raivid as special political operative in Tokyo and Harbin

This situation can be clearly observed in the joint Soviet-Japanese study group arranged by Nagata Tetsuzan through Ōkoshi Kenji (大越兼二, 1903–73), a brother-in-law of Itagaki Seishirō, one of the key conspirators of the 1931 Mukden Incident. In October 1933, according to Kamei, the Soviet government responded to Ōkoshi (serving at the Manzhouguo consulate in Chita at the time), and arrangements were made to form a joint Soviet-Japanese group for the study of Japan's Emperor System. Kamei claimed that from the Soviet side, Nikolai Ia. Raivid (1897–1937) joined the group under orders from Otto Kuusinen (1881–1964), a Finish Communist who served as a high-ranking official of the Comintern in Moscow (and whose wife, Aino Kuusinen [1886–1970], worked in Japan from 1934 to 1937 as a Soviet spy). Kamei and his colleague in the Shakai Taishū Tō (a Social-Democratic party), Asō Hisashi (see p. 264 in this chapter), joined the group on the Japan side. The study group met initially at the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo but soon moved to Harbin to keep Japanese police out of its hair.[354] Kamei claimed he talked to Kuusinen in Harbin in 1933 or 1934.[355]

Kamei and his party supported a Soviet-Japanese non-aggression pact. Their stance certainly did not go amiss for Moscow. Kamei also met Raivid outside the study group, although it is unknown how often. He claimed that he frequented the Soviet Embassy at the time.[356] Kamei was not a Communist, although Masaki

[354] In 1934–35, Raivid doubled as the Soviet general consul in Harbin. See Natsional'naia politicheskaia entsiklopediia, "Raivid, Nikolai Iakovlevich," accessed 31 May 2018, http://politike.ru/termin/raivid-nikolai-jakovlevich.html.

[355] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 195–96. There is a slightly different story, one that claimed it was Sergei M. Kirov (1886–1934) who broached the proposal to Ōkoshi. See Kamei Kan-ichiro and Takahashi Masanori, "Senchū, sengo, soshite 70 nen," *Seikeijin* 17, no. 9 (September 1970): 20–21. Ōkoshi has left an interesting account of an intimate conversation on Japanese history he had in 1934 with a high-ranking Soviet Communist Party official, whom he chose not to name but regarded as a close associate of Kirov. This official's main interest was in the uniqueness of Japan's Emperor System. See Ōkoshi Kenji, "Han Sutārin ha ga saguru 'nihonshi no himitsu'," *Ronsō*, no. 2 (1963): 111–19.

[356] *Gendai shi shiryō 44: Kokka sōdōin (2). Seiji* (Tokyo, 1974), 540.

Figure 3.11. Nikolai Raivid, a Soviet diplomat and secret operative, under Soviet detention in 1937

said Kamei was guided by "pure Marxism."[357] He was a conspirator, an anti-imperialist, and a social-democratic leader who worked for the Army General Staff Second Department (intelligence). He believed that Japan could survive in the international environment of the time only by allying with the Soviet Union. More broadly, he advocated internationally for a "socialist link among Japan, China, the Soviet Union, and Germany" and domestically, a new party of right and left that combined "scientific statism and national socialism."[358] The Communists' goal of overthrowing the Emperor System stood as an obstacle to achieving this end, so he sought to change their goal. Moscow, in turn, used him politically.

Kamei's main goal in the study group, to change the Soviet/Comintern policy toward Japan and the outlawed JCP, involved separating the issue of the Emperor System from the issue of private property. That, according to Kamei, would weaken the Japanese reactionaries who sought to "protect private property" as part of the Emperor System. Kamei's calculation was that if the Comintern abandoned the goal of abolishing the Emperor System, the Japanese would become much more open to socialism and Communism. Asō noted in private correspondence that at that time, they turned directly to the "center of the Comintern" for instruction.[359]

Raivid showed interest, at least theoretically, in re-examining these matters. However, the Japanese Communists, upset by the possible cooperation with the right wing, sought to disrupt the meetings and discussions.[360] The study group does seem to have produced a new Comintern orientation regarding Japan that emphasized anti-parliamentarian, anti-liberal, anti-capitalist movements rather than Communist propaganda. "After studying Japan from every angle," the

[357] *Masaki Jinzaburō nikki* (Tokyo, 1983), 4:79.
[358] *Gendaishi shiryō (44). Kokka sōdōin (2)*, 539, 542.
[359] Ibid., 540.
[360] Ibid., 568.

Comintern—to wit, Moscow—came to the conclusion that it would encourage Japan's nationalist jingoism, ordering Communists to penetrate the right-wing, patriotic, "statist" movements to fan their anti-parliamentarian, anti-liberal, anti-capitalist sentiments. The goal was to drive Japan to war, which in the end would benefit the Communist movement. The Japanese police soon noted this change of orientation among the Japanese left (see Introduction, p. 17).

The new Soviet policy was revealed a few years later, in 1940, in a lecture in Tokyo. The lecturer, Hanzawa Gyokujō, was a diplomatic journalist who had earlier (in 1927) advocated some kind of deal with Moscow regarding Manchuria, claiming that both Japan and the Soviet Union were "non-propertied peoples" fighting against "capitalist conquerors" (see Chapter 2, p. 87). Concerned about Soviet penetration of Japanese nationalist organizations, in his lecture, Hanzawa revealed the shift in the Comintern policy on Japan. He had received the information from a "friend" who, in turn, had gotten it from a "Trotskyite" who served the Soviet government under camouflage. His "friend" was almost certainly the Japanese journalist Fuse Katsuji (see Chapter 2, p. 84), and the "Trotskyite" Nikolai Raivid.[361]

Raivid, with whom Kamei joined the study group, was a secret political operator, but was unlikely a spy, in the narrow sense of the word. By then, to avoid any complications with Japan, the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo had banned all "illegal activity" by its staff.[362] Rather, Raivid, like Besedovskii in the 1920s, was tasked with steering Japanese politics in the direction desired by Moscow. On 11 August 1933, the Politburo appointed him counselor at the Tokyo embassy.[363] While many journals kept by ambassadors and other counselors (e.g., Troianovskii, Iurenev, Besedovskii, and Maiskii) are available in the Foreign Ministry Archive in Moscow, the journals kept by Raivid for 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937 are *not* available to researchers: Every request the author of the present book was rejected with the note, "not given to the reading room" (не выдается в читальный зал). The same applies to other files written by Raivid. He was a specialist in European affairs, but he was interested in Asian affairs as well: In 1925, he published a book on China.[364] All this suggests that he engaged in special political operations, which involved prominent Japanese politicians and

[361]"Kominterun no Tōa katsudō to sono waga kokujō ni oyoboseru eikyō," Masaki Jinzaburō bunsho, no. 2423, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo. This document has no pagination. Hanzawa was interrogated by Japanese prosecutors for implying that some right-wing leaders, including some prominent military officers, were Comintern agents. He did not seem to be imprisoned, however. See "Hanzawa Gyokujō chōshu sho," Ōta Taizō bunsho, nos. 82–85, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo.

[362]Troianovskii's report to Karakhan, 31 March 1932, in which he noted that he had "closed all illegal institutions hiding in the embassy's school, kindergarten, and the like." AVP, f. 08, op. 15, p. 151, d. 217, l. 37. His successor Iurenev continued the practice: ibid., f. 05, op. 16, p. 25, d. 143, l. 22 (June 1936 report).

[363]RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 928, l. 25.

[364]N. Raivid, *Sovremennyi Kitai: politiko-ekonomicheskii ocherk* (Sverdlovsk, 1925), which, following the Soviet policy of the time, was more critical of Anglo-American imperialism than of Japanese imperialism.

military men whose names, in Moscow's judgment, cannot be released even now.

Raivid left Tokyo for Moscow in May 1937. He was arrested in Moscow soon after, on 18 June 1937, accused of being a German, Japanese, and Polish spy. He stated that he, a Menshevik in 1917–18, had been arrested for one night in the summer of 1918 in Ivanovo-Voznesensk. In 1919, he joined the Communist Party, and in 1925, he supported the Zinov'ev-Kamenev opposition to Stalin and Bukharin. In preliminary investigations, Raivid confessed that he met Fuse Katsuji often in Japan and Harbin and exchanged views. According to his undoubtedly forced confessions, Raivid had earlier been recruited by German intelligence, about which Fuse knew. Feeling threatened with exposure, according to his "confession," Raivid began providing secret information to Fuse, who was, Raivid claimed, actually a spy for Japan. After the 26 February 1936 military coup attempt in Tokyo (see Chapter 4, p. 296), many Japanese feared meeting Raivid, but Fuse was happy to see him. Initially, they met outside the embassy but later at the embassy. Raivid provided Fuse with his views of the coup.[365] The indictment against him claimed that Raivid confessed to anti-Soviet, counterrevolutionary espionage but that he denied he was given terrorist-diversionary tasks. At the closed trial held on 8 October 1937, Raivid denied that he was a German-Japanese-Polish spy. When told that he had confessed to his espionage activity in preliminary investigations, he answered that he had not. He had nothing more to say. The trial lasted for only twenty minutes, from 19:10 to 19:30.[366] More than half of the Raivid file in the former Soviet secret police archive in Moscow is sealed. One suspects that in the sealed section, Raivid spoke about his work in Tokyo and Harbin, including the study group with Kamei and Asō. Raivid was sentenced to death on 8 October 1937 and was shot on the same day. He was exonerated in 1956.[367]

It is possible that Fuse was a member of the study group and knew what conclusions it had reached. In 1934, Karl Radek called him a "serious Japanese journalist" who was regarded in Japan as a "Sovietophile."[368] It is also possible that Raivid had frank conversations with Fuse, who had interviewed Lenin, Trotskii, and Stalin, and had a charitable, if critical, view of the Soviet system. As a keen observer of political life in Japan, China, and the Soviet Union, Fuse came to know Moscow's strategy toward Japan from one source (Raivid) or another (Kamei and Asō).

[365] TsA FSB, f. R4863, ll. 20–22, 41–44.

[366] Ibid., ll. 61–62.

[367] See Memorial, "Donskoe, alfavitnyi ukazatel'," accessed 31 May 2018, http://old.memo.ru/memory/donskoe/d37-10.htm. According to this site, he was sentenced on 28 October 1937, but his file suggests 8 October. Raivid was mentioned as a German spy in the 1938 "Bukharin trial." See *Report of Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet "Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites": Heard before the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the U.S.S.R., Moscow, March 2–13, 1938* (Moscow, 1938), 102–3.

[368] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 791, l. 107.

Many years later, Kamei testified that in 1961, he received an invitation to the Soviet Union, along with a letter from Raivid. After some negotiation, he visited the country twice in 1964 or 1965.[369] The "letter from Raivid" could not have been from him: He had long been dead. Kamei did not say that he met the late Raivid alive in Moscow. Either Moscow or Kamei, or both, were untruthful. Raivid widely and deeply cultivated the Japanese elite. From them, he extracted vital intelligence, with which he, in turn, influenced Japan's policy decision-making. Yet, Raivid also knew that Tokyo did not always fall into Moscow's trap and reported to Moscow to that effect. Raivid's honesty, in the end, cost him his life (see Chapter 4, p. 302).

3.6 The "Mad Dog"

Japan was belligerent to the Soviet Union and the Anglo-American world. Stalin knew, however, that, as far as the Soviet Union was concerned, it was a show some Japanese military leaders put on for the radical nationalist circles (particularly the young officers) opposed to both Communism and capitalism. After World War II, Soviet prosecutors working for the Tokyo War Crimes Trial pressed Araki and others to confess that they, in fact, meant to stage war against the Soviet Union. They categorically denied this. Kawabe, who had worked in the General Staff from 1929 to 1932 and then served as a military attaché in Moscow from January 1932 to March 1934, responded to Soviet interrogators:

> Q.: Were there any plans to utilize MANCHURIA as a foothold against RUSSIA in the operational plans at that time [1929–1932]?
> A.: No. It was the same as in the previous plan. I was in the General Staff Headquarters until January 1929, and the Manchurian Incident occur[r]ed in September 1931, so there were actual operations in MANCHURIA, and we had no time to be even thinking about attacking RUSSIA. My time includes the period after the outbreak of the incident.

Unsatisfied, they pressed him further:

> Q.: Wasn't there any discussion within the General Staff Headquarters about using MANCHURIA as a base in a war against RUSSIA after MANCHURA was occupied?
> A.: About what are you referring to? If it is up to January 1932, to the best of my knowledge there were absolutely no such plans. I cannot answer your question in regard to plans after that period because I was not with the headquarters.[370]

[369] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 222–23; Takahashi, *Kaisō no Kamei Kan-ichirō*, 145.
[370] Awaya and Yoshida, *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 51:181–82.

Kawabe's denial notwithstanding, the Soviet prosecutors pressed him hard, to no avail. Kawabe responded:

> At that time [1932–34], this is what I thought: The Russian newspapers, the editorials in the organ of Russia stated that JAPAN was strongly Anti-Soviet. Japanese newspapers and magazines were undoubtedly writing such big and strong articles, but actually the minds of JAPAN's military were not decided. Also, they didn't have that much actual strength (TN. to attack RUSSIA?). It was only a *demonstration* [emphasis added]. RUSSIA is so big that such a thing was not even considered. That is a fact. At that time, JAPAN's policy toward RUSSIA was for the Army to avoid positively having trouble with RUSSIA even if transfer [of military forces] was made to MANCHURIA.

Kawabe added that "the show of power by certain factions in Japan against RUSSIA was unwise. . . . It was foolish to spread propaganda against RUSSIA without having the actual strength [TN. to fight Russia?]."[371] This may not have been especially convincing to Soviet interrogators. Even many Japanese feared that those hardliners actually meant what they propagated. Suzuki Teiichi later stated that there was a fundamental misconstruing of Araki, even within the Japanese military, to the effect that he seriously meant war with the Soviet Union. Araki, Suzuki emphasized, did not consider war with the Soviet Union.[372] The Soviet prosecutors did not interrogate the most obvious person to question regarding the Mukden Incident and Japan's invasion of Manchuria, Ishiwara Kanji. The Soviets went to see him in Tokyo after the war,[373] but they chose not to question him for the trial, fearing that he might inconveniently spill the beans.

Stalin used Japan's belligerence to mobilize the Soviet Union and the world against Japan's "plan for world conquest." According to William Bullitt, in December 1933, Stalin told him that:

> He [Stalin] and all other members of the Soviet Government considered an attack by Japan in the spring [of 1934] so probable that everything possible must be done to secure the western frontier of the Soviet Union from attack; that he did not fear an immediate attack by Germany or Poland or both combined, but that he knew that conversations had taken place between Germany and Poland looking toward an eventual attack on the Soviet Union if the Soviet Union should become embroiled in a long war with Japan; that he feared that a war with Japan might drag on for years and that after a couple of years Germany and Poland combined might attack the Soviet Union,

[371] Ibid., 189–190. Comments by "TN" seem to be those by the translator.

[372] Suzuki Teiichi, "Gunbu no hitobito," *Fumi*, 46 (July 1981), 15.

[373] See Takagi and Takagi, *TōA no chichi Ishiwara Kanji*, 22–23.

> Poland with the hope of annexing the Ukraine and parts of Lithuania and Germany with the hope of annexing the remainder of Lithuania as well as Latvia and Estonia.[374]

According to Bullitt, only Karl Radek contradicted his boss: Radek did not believe that Japan would attack in the spring of 1934.[375] Stalin told Bullitt that he:

> felt that anything that could be done to make the Japanese believe that the United States was ready to cooperate with Russia, even though there might be no basis for the belief, would be valuable. He asked whether it might not be possible for an American squadron or an individual warship to pay a visit during the spring to Vladivostok or to Leningrad. I [Bullitt] said that I could not answer that question, but would submit it to my Government.[376]

Moscow was confident that it had spoiled the relationship between Japan and the United States.

In the autumn of 1933, Radek consulted with Stalin concerning a proposed article about Soviet foreign policy for the American journal *Foreign Relations*. Stalin approved Radek's draft as "good" (хорошая).[377] In this article published in January 1934, soon after the Soviet-American rapprochement, Radek emphasized the Soviet Union's peaceful policy by saying that the Soviet Union "does not need war": "It recognizes as equitable only one war, the war for the defense of socialism, the war of the enslaved peoples for their liberation." He sought to refute persistent rumors about a Soviet-Japanese secret deal by stating that the Soviet Union "never accepted the partition of Manchuria into spheres of influence." Then, he traduced Japan for refusing to sign a non-aggression pact, proof of the "existence in Japan of very strong tendencies to preserve complete freedom of action in case of conflict with the Soviet Union." He suggested that Japan intended to "occupy China before the economic domination of the United States has been fully established there." Then, he gave a stern warning to Japan with clear reference to the United States: A "situation might arise when the Soviet Union would carry on action parallel with the enemy of its own enemy, or would even coöperate with him in a joint action."[378]

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[374] United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Soviet Union, 1933–1939* (Washington, DC, 1952), 60.

[375] Ibid., 57.

[376] Ibid., 61.

[377] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 791, ll. 33–40.

[378] Karl Radek, "The Bases of Soviet Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 12, no. 2 (January 1934): 201, 202, 203, 204. The Russian version was published as "Osnovy vneshnei politiki Sovetskogo Soiuza," *Izvestiia*, 16 December 1933, 2. This article was translated into Japanese and published in the same year as "ソヴイエト外交の基本" in *Nihon to sekai (2)* (日本と世界 [2]), 54–69. Litvinov, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs, criticized this essay, which Stalin highly valued. See Jean-François Fayet, *Karl Radek (1885–1939). Biographie politique* (Bern, Switzerland, 2004), 681.

Alarmed by Radek's essay, which he read in Russian, Fuse published an essay in English, divining what Moscow's true intentions were. He wrote:

> While in Moscow, I asked several Soviet leaders: "Would the Soviet attack Japan from behind, if Japan went to war with America?" They invariably laughed at the idea, replying that the motherland of Socialism would certainly not interfere in a conflict between two capitalistic States. "The Red Army has been trained to abhor any aggressive policy," they assured me, "and therefore it could not be led into a war of aggression." They said that such an attempt would mean the collapse of Bolshevism itself. Recent indications, however, would seem to belie this assertion.[379]

In consultation with Stalin,[380] Radek wrote a rejoinder to Fuse's article by stating that it was Japan who occupied a foreign land (Manchuria) to use it as a staging ground against the Soviet Union.[381] Fuse's nightmare turned into reality in 1945. Bolshevism did not collapse, however.

Just as Stalin hoped, Japan was embroiled in China. Iurenev, unlike his forerunner as ambassador, Troianovskii, was far less subtle in his relations with the Japanese, although he, like Troianovskii, did not seem to be informed of many of Moscow's operatives working sub rosa in Japan. Writing to Sokol'nikov, Iurenev on September 1933 gloated over Japan in extremis—international isolation compounded by internal economic difficulties. Japan's China policy had hit a wall. In 1931–32, Japan had missed an unprecedented opportunity to strike the Soviet Union. Now, if Japan were waiting for the Soviet Union to collapse, it would be nothing but a "monstrous folly." Iurenev was well aware that Araki had put up an anti-Soviet show for the radical young officers. Now, they were unhappy with Araki's "conciliatory policy" toward Moscow. But Japan was not ready to strike the Soviet Union. Echoing Stimson's characterization of Japan (see p. 248), Iurenev concluded: "Japanese imperialism is a mad dog, from whom one cannot expect a particular 'logic' of behavior."[382] Two months later, Iurenev wrote to Sokol'nikov, stating that "Japan is becoming more and more a cornered wolf, who in madness can be extremely dangerous."[383] In Iurenev's view, Japan was now forced to acknowledge its defeat, and that was why it was menacing war against "any and all that stood in its expansionist way."[384]

It was at this time that Stalin devoted himself to studying Japan.[385] Although his knowledge on Japan was limited, his political operations had worked

[379] Katsuji Fusé, "Japan and Soviet Russia," *Contemporary Japan*, March 1934, 604–5.

[380] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 791, ll. 107–109.

[381] Karl Radek, "Iskrenniaia beseda s gospodinom Fuse," *Izvestiia*, 30 March 1934, 2.

[382] AVP, f. 05, op. 13, p. 94, d. 75, ll. 38–42.

[383] Ibid., l. 47.

[384] Ibid., f. 0146, op. 17, p. 158, d. 16, ll. 296–97 (April 1934).

[385] Iu. Geogriev, "Kak I.V. Stalin izuchal Iaponiiu," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 10 (2010): 89–98.

extremely well. This is reflected in a conversation that M.I. Kalinin (1875–1946), a Politburo member, had in May 1934 with Soviet specialists of Japan (military and intelligence specialists, diplomats, and others). In it, Kalinin admitted that there were no hints that Japan was preparing for war against the Soviet Union: "Manchuria will save us" and Vladivostok was now unassailable, in any case. He added: "*If they [the Japanese] were to take Beijing, this would be beneficial to us* [emphasis added]." An expert present at the meeting expressed doubt about Japan's plan to capture Beijing. Kalinin retorted, "They will," adding that "The scum [Japanese] fear us, blackmail us terribly, and want to take as much as possible from China." Earlier, Kalinin had talked with Stalin, who said that Japan was not guided by common sense but by adventurism. Kalinin agreed that Japan was on "endless adventures." He was of the opinion that "we'll have a fight with them, maybe in three years."[386] In conclusion, he suggested that Moscow had a secret plan:

> It's necessary that the opinion that Japan is strong be spread. If we give it a crushing blow in the first three months [of fighting], the Western borders will be quiet. It would be very advantageous for us to fight with Japan and beat them soundly. If we beat Japan, then no bastard in the West would poke his nose in. *War with Japan does not pose a special danger* [emphasis added].[387]

All this indicates that Moscow planned, with confidence in spades, for a short, decisive war with Japan. Indeed, this was what Moscow did in 1939 at Nomonhan/Khalkhin Gol. However, it did not prevent "Western bastards" from poking their nose into the Soviet Union in 1941.

By then, it was evident that Japan's fate in Asia was almost certainly doomed: Japan had become a "mad dog" in a trap, or a "cornered wolf." Moscow ensured with ruthless determination that the mad dog would be finished off. The following chapters are an account of how Moscow accomplished this.

[386] A.S. Lozhkina, " 'Nam bylo by ochen' vygodno podrat'sia s Iaponiei i osnovatel'no pobit' ee': Stenogramma besedy M.I. Kalinina 's gruppoi priglashennykh tovarishchei'. 1934 g.," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 6 (2008): 12–16.

[387] Ibid., 17.

CHAPTER 4

China's Firetrap (1935–1938)

By the mid-1930s, Japan no longer presented any special danger to the Soviet Union. From that point, what concerned Moscow was not Japan's strength, but its unpredictable adventurism. It did not appear to Stalin to follow common sense. Moscow continued a steady drumbeat of propaganda warning of Tokyo's threat to the Soviet Union, while at the same time edging Japan's attention to China in the south. For Japan, at the heart of its unpredictability was the ineluctable sense of being cornered and the desperate search for a way out. This led to a more risky and irrational course. Japan's radical military and political circles became increasingly restive. The more aware they became of Japan's weaknesses, the more shrill their rhetoric about Japan's uniqueness and superiority to the Western world. They engaged in inflammatory rhetoric without substance. It was a recipe for disaster. Throughout all this, Moscow's goal was still to lead Japan to self-destruction by subversion and provocation without actually using its own forces. Some Japanese radicals, of whom it is difficult to distinguish the left from the right, took the bait and led Japan to an all-out war in China in 1937. Although some may not have been aware that they were being exploited by Moscow, others such as Ozaki Hotsumi (see Introduction, p. 5), a Marxist under the guise of a radical Japanese nationalist, consciously followed Moscow's direction, with the belief that war would lead to revolution in Japan.

Timeline: *1935–36*: North China Incident ‖ *1936*: Mongol-Soviet Pact; Anti-Comintern Pact (Germany and Japan); Xi'an Incident (China) ‖ *1937*: Kanchazu Island Incident (USSR and Japan); Marco Polo Bridge Incident (China and Japan); Sino-Soviet pact of non-aggression ‖ *1937–38*: Stalin's Great Terror (USSR) ‖ *1937–45*: (Second) Sino-Japanese War.

4.1 The Might of the State

Japan's political ambitions did not match its actual political and economic might, a fact that was a big elephant in the room of Japanese imperialists. All three countries that encircled it were far larger. China, however divided it may have been, was approximately twenty-six times bigger in area and seven times larger in population. The Soviet Union was about sixty times bigger in area and almost two and half times as large in population. The United States was about twenty-six

times bigger in area and almost twice as large in population. More significantly, Japan's economy was smaller than any of the three countries: In 1938, China's gross national product (GNP) without Manchuria was almost twice as big as Japan's and still substantially bigger than Japan with its colonies. The Soviet Union's GNP was more than twice as large as Japan's, while the United States' was almost five times as large.[1] From this perspective, Radek had been right to say that it would be ludicrous for Japan to think of staging a war against the Soviet Union (or China or the United States). As has been argued, Tokyo did not actually consider such folly, despite the rhetorical fervor of the radical groups. It did expect that war with the Soviet Union might break out and prepared for it; yet, it repeatedly pursued a political "understanding" with Moscow to safeguard its acquisition of Manchuria and parts of Inner Mongolia.

Japan's weakness

By the mid-1930s, Japan's strategy toward the Soviet Union had become fundamentally defensive, a view shared by diplomats of various countries.[2] In 1935, Ishiwara Kanji, one of the chief conspirators of the 1931 Mukden Incident, returned to the General Staff as chief of the Operations Section. The difference in the military and economic strength between the two countries was such that he could not devise a good strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union. He still believed that if Japan managed Manzhouguo better than Moscow managed its Far East, Japan could deter the Soviet Union from military offensives.[3] Although he was naive, his view also reflected his desperation at Japan's impasse. A year later, in June 1936, he drew up an outline for a defense strategy, which emphasized the need to focus on the "surrender" (屈服) of the Soviet Union. By this, he appears to have meant convincing the Soviet Union to abjure its intention to extend hegemony to China and the Far East. The outline emphasized Japan's lack of resources for a long war, which would be impossible to fight without maintaining friendly relations with Britain and the United States, particularly the latter. Were adequate preparations made for war, "active measures" should be taken, although it was more desirable to achieve Japan's goal without war.

This was, in fact, an argument against "active measures" in light of Ishiwara's belief that Japan could not afford war for another ten to fifty years (see Chapter 3, p. 198). Indeed, he immediately followed with a different proposal: "If the Soviet Union refuses to surrender, Japan should conclude a friendly relationship with

[1] Mark Harrison, ed., *The Economics of World War II: Six Great Powers in International Comparison* (Cambridge, 1998), 3, 7. See also Angus Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy 1820–1992* (Paris, 1995), 183, 186. On Japan's efforts to overcome its weaknesses, see Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919–1941* (Ithaca, NY, 1987).

[2] Hata Ikuhiko, *Taiheiyō kokusai kankeishi: NichiBei oyobi NichiRo kiki no keifu 1900–1935* (Tokyo, 1972.), 292–94.

[3] See *Ishiwara Kanji senshū 9: shokan, nikki, nenpyō* (Tokyo, 1986), 57.

it at an appropriate point in time and proceed to drive Britain's influence out of East Asia." Although this idea of linking up with the Soviet Union against Britain had long been circulating, at least since 1925, this was probably the first time the Japanese Army officially hinted at a shift in orientation from the north (against the Soviet Union) to the south.[4] A British military analyst of the Far East at the time commented on this shift: "Japan played into the hands of the Soviet and its Communist allies."[5]

Why Ishiwara spoke of driving the British influence from East Asia but not of driving American influence out of East Asia is unclear. Perhaps he still cleaved to the illusion that Manzhouguo could attract American investment. It is also possible that he believed that Britain had lost interest in East Asia because of the menace in Europe: In 1935, Hitler's Germany blatantly violated the Versailles Treaty by rearmament and conscription and, in 1936, the re-militarization of the Rhineland. Certain British political circles had felt all along that Britain should not be involved in the fate of Manchuria: As long as Japan did not venture militarily into the rest of China, Manchuria would be better off in Japanese hands. For these reasons, Ishiwara may have thought it would be easier to expel Britain than America. It is likewise possible that Ishiwara took "American isolationism" literally. In 1935, Walter Lippman (1889–1974), a prominent American political commentator, noted that it was "impossible for us to assume the burden of solitary opposition to Japanese imperialism in the Asiatic mainland":

> We do not intend to play the part of Japan's leading and solitary opponent in Asia because it is not in our national interests to play that part. . . . Our interests in the Far East are about one sixth as great as those of Britain. Among all the foreign nations interested in China we have about one-sixteenth of the total investments. . . . Shanghai, where the British interest is more than seven times as great as ours, . . . Hongkong, where the British interest is more than four times as great as ours. . . . It is a policy of realism in which the United States would decline to take the sole responsibility and bear the whole onus of dealing with Japanese expansion."[6]

At the time, in an effort to prevent Britain from softening its stand against Japan, the Americans had changed their confrontational tone with the Japanese. So, Ishiwara may have misread the American move.

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[4]Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1. Shōwa jūsannen ichigatsu made* (Tokyo, 1975), 83.

[5]Malcolm D. Kennedy, *The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917–35* (Berkeley, CA, 1969), 322. Later, Kennedy worked for Britain's codebreaking bureau (GC & CS). See John Ferris, "From Broadway House to Bletchley Park: The Diary of Captain Malcolm D. Kennedy, 1934–1946," *Intelligence and National Security* 4, no. 3 (1989): 421–50.

[6]Walter Lippman, "Today and Tomorrow: The American Interest in the European Crisis," *New York Herald Tribune*, 23 March 1935, 15; Lippman, "Today and Tomorrow: A New Deal in American-Japanese Relations." ibid., 22 January 1935, 19.

Of course, Washington had not given up on Asia. This was a tactic. Some have argued that the United States stuck so obstinately to Asia because of its Open Door policy. Others cynically contended that Washington repudiated its traditional liberal capitalism in favor of the "New Deal." In any case, according to these arguments, the reason for Washington's obsession with China lay not in the situation at the time but in the future: China was an opportunity for "future expansion" of the American market. The Soviet official and unofficial position was that America would fight for China.[7] In spite of his proposal to expel Britain from East Asia, Ishiwara maintained a deeply defensive posture. During these years, as will be discussed, he took a stand against the plan to separate north China from the remainder of China as a security zone for Manzhouguo. Ishiwara was convinced that the move would antagonize the Western powers decisively against Japan. His opposition reflected his sense of Japan's political and military impasse.

At any rate, the growing sense that the Soviet Union was unbeatable encouraged Japan's apparent change of course from the north to the south in China, which was exactly what Moscow had long urged implicitly. Now, it was actually coming to pass. In early 1936, Radek openly suggested to Japan's military attaché, Hata Hikosaburō (秦彦三郎, 1890–1959), that it would be better for Japan to go south than north, that it would be far easier for the Japanese to live in the south—Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the like. After returning to Tokyo, Hata socialized with the Soviet military attaché and other officials, who said the same thing to him.[8]

Notwithstanding, Japan continued to seek an "understanding" with the Soviet Union. Tokyo's purchase of the CER from the Soviet Union was part of this effort of rapprochement. Technically speaking, Moscow sold the railway to Manzhouguo, which signified Moscow's de facto recognition of Japan's puppet government. After twenty-one months of negotiation, Moscow's initial asking price of 625 million yen was pruned to 140 million.[9] The vehement protest of the Chinese government, the nominal owner of half of the CER, led nowhere. Moscow dismissed Nanjing's claim as invalid because, it maintained, the latter had no actual power in Manchuria. This example of Soviet sophistry successfully conveyed the wrong impression to Japan and the world that the Soviet Union was withdrawing from Manchuria.[10] Moreover, as Bruce A. Elleman has shown,

[7] See for example Anatolii Kantorovich, *Amerika v bor'be za Kitai* (Moscow, 1935), 492, 559–60, 607. This book was translated into Japanese in two volumes as 支那制覇戦と太平洋 (Tokyo: Seikatsusha, 1938–1941). In spite of contrary connotations, the Open Door policy was conceived in 1899 as a measure to stem the Russian expansion into China. It was "policy as intervention." See Tyler Dennett, "The Open Door Policy as Intervention," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 168 (July 1933), 78–83. After World War I it became a "policy of intervention" against Japan for America's future expansion in China.

[8] Quoted in "Berurin Tokyō (24): Sutārin no dokusai," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 28 January 1972, morning edition, 21.

[9] JACAR, A09050548600.

[10] See V.M. Kriukov and M.V. Kriukov, *KVZhD 1929. Vzryv i ekho* (Moscow, 2017), 552–59.

the CER purchase agreement included an unpublished protocol. "By secretly agreeing to work with Japan on all lawsuits arising from the 1924 to 1935 period, the Soviet Union also extended the benefits of the May 31, 1924 protocol [secret Sino-Soviet protocol that protected Moscow from Chinese litigation] to Japan. The USSR's actions were not only equally as imperialist as Japan's, therefore, but the Soviet government actually helped Japan consolidate its position in China."[11]

In fact, Japan failed to consolidate its position in China, with Moscow intentionally positioning Japan to become China's chief adversary. Many contemporary observers misread Moscow's move as well. Joseph C. Grew, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, for example, wrote that "in effect the USSR has now recognized the new politics of that portion of East Asia [i.e., Manchuria] and has been *eliminated* [emphasis added] therefrom."[12] Far from eliminating itself, the Soviet Union strategically positioned itself for attack at a future point in time when Japan would be weakened by its imperialist adventures in China. Stalin longed for this point, which came at long last ten years later, in 1945. Grew added correctly, at any event, that Japan's ambitions would turn to China and that "we may expect that Japan, wishing her back door to be secure behind her, will genuinely work for the improvement of Soviet-Japanese relations."[13] Chiang Kai-shek likewise correctly read the Soviet sale of the CER to Manzhouguo/Japan as "providing added impetus to Japanese aggression" against China.[14]

To dissemble its strategic calculations, Moscow mounted a meretricious charm offensive toward Japan. Clearly under Stalin's instruction, Karl Radek used the Asiatic trump card. Writing an essay for the *Japan Times & Mail*, Radek presented the Soviet people as the true friend of the Japanese, contending that the "Russo-Japanese war did not make a very great impression in the consciousness of the common masses of Russia." Although a "deeper impression was made by the lamentable events of the years [19]18–20," Japan "was only in the same line with the other participants of those events." Reminding the Japanese that the "earthquake of 1923 aroused a feeling of deep sympathy towards the Japanese people, and the energy with which Japan restored after the earthquake—a deep esteem towards the organizing and technical abilities of the Japanese people." Then, Radek stated: "The masses in the USSR are devoid of the 'European' attitude towards Japan, the attitude based on fear of Japanese arms and an outlook filled with contempt for the people of Asia. A significant part of the Soviet peoples is Asiatic [азиатская] and we are glad that our country spreads from Eastern Europe to East Asia." The Soviet sale of the CER, Radek added, was not

[11]Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917–1927* (Armonk, NY, 1997), 285.

[12]Grew's February 1935 dispatch to Washington in *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1935. Volume III. The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1953), 53–54.

[13]Ibid., 54.

[14]Chiang Chung-cheng (Kai-shek), *Soviet Russia in China: A Summing-up at Seventy* (New York, 1957), 69.

for profit but "for peace and for the reconciliation of interests in the Far East."[15]

The sale of the CER, which Radek insisted went for a song, ended up negatively affecting Japan's economy. The final sale price of the CER was the equivalent of 13.5 percent of Japan's military budget for 1935 and provided a large amount of valuable foreign currency and goods to Moscow. Japan bought the CER with the delusive hope of securing peace with the Soviet Union. In fact, Japan had been falling, probably unknowingly but certainly unwisely and inextricably, into the Soviet strategic trap. The purchase of the CER was a considerable burden on Japan's fragile economy. The military budget already accounted for some 46 percent of Japan's state budget,[16] which spiked to a staggering 70 percent in 1937.

The shaky economic base of Japanese imperialism was another important factor affecting Japan's relations with the Soviet Union. Japan's heavy industry paled in comparison with that of the Soviet Union. Significant in this respect was the fact that Moscow exported pig iron to Japan in the mid-1930s, an odd choice if Moscow really feared war with Japan. Japan needed pig iron for steel, and the Soviet Union was willing to sell it to Japan. Japan imported 20,000 tons in 1934, 150,000 tons in 1935, and 386,832 tons in 1936, more than half of the total Soviet export of 710,661 tons. In 1937, however, Japan's import of Soviet pig iron plunged to a mere 16 tons as Moscow sharply cut its total export to 135 tons.[17] (Moscow's shift reflected its massive military assistance to China in its war against Japan.) The 1936 import had accounted for more than 18 percent of Japan's total production for that year. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, had produced 12,488,900 tons of pig iron, or five times as much as Japan's production and import combined.[18]

Soviet industrial espionage

To make matters worse for Japan, the CER sale led to Soviet industrial espionage. Of the 140 million yen for the sale, 93.3 million were to be realized in goods. To take orders from the Soviet Union, Japanese industrial concerns were happy to show off their industrial equipment and capacity to Soviet buyers. This allowed the Soviet Union to gauge the actual strength of Japan's military works. In the 1936 book *When Japan Goes to War* by O. Tanin and E. Yohan,[19] a Japanese

[15] Karl Radek, "Soviet Masses Hope to See C.E.R. Sale Bring Mutual Benefits to Japan and USSR," *Japan Times & Mail*, 31 May 1935, 2. The English translation was slightly altered according to the Russian original, "Sovetskaia obshchestvennost' i Iaponiia," *Izvestiia*, 3 June 1935, 1.

[16] Ōkurashō shukeikyoku, comp., *Shōwa jū nendo teikoku sainyū saishutsu yosan* (Tokyo, 1935), 5–6.

[17] *NichiRo nenkan. Shōwa jūichinen ban* (Tokyo, 1936), 200–201; *NichiRo nenkan. Shōwa jūsannen ban* (Tokyo, 1938), 272, 277.

[18] *Sotsialisticheskoe stroitel'stvo SSSR (statisticheskii ezhegodnik, 1936)* (Moscow, 1936), 134.

[19] O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *When Japan Goes to War* (New York, 1936). This book was translated into Japanese as 日蘇若し戰はば: 日本の戰時持久力 (Kokusei kenkyūkai, 1936). The Russian original is *Kogda Iaponiia budet boevat'* (Moscow, 1936), which has a note "Translated from the

aviation expert was surprised to see the detailed description of the accoutrements at the factory where he worked.[20] Indeed, the book has good descriptions of the major aviation factories in Japan.[21] More significantly, the book detailed the frailty of Japan's economy and presented uncharitable conclusions about Japan:

> The first class army and navy artificially reared on the poor economic soil of Japan are intended to compensate for the economic defects of the country. The economic potentialities of military force are revealed and realized in the practical seizure of new colonies for the purpose of supplying the raw materials that are lacking and of increasing the small "national" income of the home country by the exploitation of colonial peoples. . . . Speaking figuratively, the military forces of Japanese imperialism represent a mailed fist put into action by weak muscles. The striking ability of the fist must not be underestimated, but at the same time we must properly appreciate the lack of staying power of [the] Japanese economy, [the] lack of the "strong muscles" which make repeated blows possible. The future war will consist of a series of attacks which will call for enormous economic driving power. In this Japan is deficient.[22]

The Soviet authors further pointed out that to make up for the weak economic foundations of their forces, the Japanese military "worked out a strategical theory of sudden attack and a short crushing blow." Yet, the Japanese also knew that "the one-sided subjective desire of Japan cannot determine the duration and the scale of the war." If Japan suffers a conclusive rout at the front, the book concluded, it "will be a decisive factor in weakening the potential and actual economic might of the country and will *hasten the shattering of the class basis of Japanese imperialism* [emphasis added]."[23] The book was as much a warning to Japan as a signal to the Japanese that war would present a golden opportunity for revolution in their country.

Even before this book was published, a noted Soviet scholar reached the same kind of conclusions without direct access to the Japanese factories. In 1934, Konstantin M. Popov (1903–90), a Soviet economic geographer, published a book, *Техно-экономическая база Японии* (The Technical and Economic Base of Japan), in which he showed that Japan lagged well behind the great imperialist powers in technical and economic areas.[24] The message writ large in Popov's

English" to dissemble the identities of the authors, who were Soviet military intelligence specialists. See Mikhail Alekseev, *"Vernyi Vam Ramzai." Rikhard Zorge i sovetskaia voennaia razvedka v Iaponii. 1933–1938 gody* (Moscow, 2017), 475.

[20] Kazami Akira, "Ozaki Hotsumi hyōden: junkyōsha e no banka," *Kaizō* 32, no. 9 (1951): 76.

[21] Tanin and Yohan, *When Japan Goes to War*, 180–83.

[22] Ibid., 259.

[23] Ibid., 259, 263.

[24] Konstantin Popov, *Tekhno-ekonomicheskaia baza Iaponii. Chast' 1* (Moscow-Leningrad,

oeuvre was the same as that of Tanin and Yohan—that is, Japan's rickety economic base was inadequate to underpin Japan's vaulting imperialist ambitions.

Popov's book packed a modest punch in Japan. The pro-Soviet politician Kamei Kan-ichirō mentioned it in a debate at the Diet in May 1936: Popov knew "exactly where the weaknesses of the Japanese economy lie." Kamei went on to say that the Soviet Union had fully investigated Japanese industry, particularly the precision industry, as a result of the CER transaction. He emphasized that Japan's basic productive capacity was too small for the adequate defense of the country and that Japan's heavy industry was inferior to its Soviet counterpart. He complained that even though Japan spoke of the danger of the Soviet Union, it imported 500,000 tons of pig iron from the Soviets for its defense industry. Terauchi Hisaichi (寺内寿一, 1879–1946), the minister of the army, responded that Kamei was "mostly right." When Kamei stated that capitalism would be no good for Japan's future and that Japan needed "state-wide economic planning" (国家的経済計画), Terauchi again responded that he "fully agreed"[25]—even the minister of the army understood that Japan's economy was incapable of sustaining any serious foreign war and that Moscow was well apprised of this fatal fragility.

To complicate matters, there are suspicions that Kamei and his comrade, Asō Hisashi, were party to the Soviet inspection of Japanese war works associated with the CER sale. Asō noted in private correspondence in 1940 that from the summer to the winter of 1935, they were terribly busy with Soviet-Japanese "coordination" related to the practical issues of the sale. They worked hard to promote a Soviet-Japanese political rapprochement. What else could they have been busy with other than trying to buy Soviet favor by granting access to factories? Later in his life, Kamei claimed that in 1934, he traveled sub rosa to the Soviet Union. It appears that Kamei's plan was to link the purchase of the CER to the signing of a "Soviet-Japanese friendship treaty."[26] This latter topic never surfaced in public discussion, however, and such a treaty was, of course, never signed. Now, in 1936, as if sounding the alarm at the Diet, Kamei emphasized the need for a fundamental reorganization of the economy into a "state planned economy," a euphemism for revolutionary change in Japan. In other words, Kamei had two reasons to cooperate with Soviet industrial espionage during the CER transaction: first, as a way to seek rapprochement with the Soviets, and second, as a way to bring up the necessity for a state-

1934), 5. This book was also translated into Japanese as 日本の技術的經済的基礎 (Tokyo, 1935). An English translation, too, seems to have been published in Tokyo in 1938. On Popov, see Aleksei Kirichenko, "Konsutantin Popofu (1903–1990): umarenagarano tōyōgakusha," in Nagatsuka Hideo, ed., *Zoku NichiRo ishoku no gunzō 30: bunka sōgo rikai ni tsukushita hitobito* (Tokyo, 2017), 412–35.

[25] *Dai 69-kai teikoku gikai shūgiin yosan iinkai giroku (sokki) dai 5-kai*, 46–48, accessed 28 June 2019, http://teikokugikai-i.ndl.go.jp.

[26] Kamei Kan-ichirō, "Kaisō (sōkō)," Kamei Kan-ichirō kankei bunsho, no. 340, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo, 29–31.

planned economy. Kamei's motivations align exactly with those of the array of Soviet agents discussed throughout this book. There are other explanations, of course, for Kamei's behavior; for example, he was the head of the "International Department" of the Shakai Taishū Tō, a party for the non-propertied. He also had business links with the steel and automobile industries.[27] Yet, if these are conceivable alibis, they can just as easily be seen as useful covers. It should be remembered that he worked for the General Staff's Intelligence Department while apparently retaining a direct channel to the "center of the Comintern" (see Chapter 3, p. 270).

In another sense, it hardly matters whether Kamei was a direct participant in a Soviet conspiracy or a mere assistant. His behavior exemplifies the chaotic vulnerability of the Japanese political factions in relation to the Soviet Union. On the one hand, there were operatives who made offers to Moscow in hopes of a rapprochement to avert an undesirable war. On the other, there were those who hoped to use Moscow's influence to push Japan toward war and revolution that they saw as the only way to save the increasingly desperate geopolitical position in which the country found itself. In both cases, they drove Japan toward radical strategies.

Japan's "five-year plan"

As a solution to the weakness of Japan's economy, the army advocated introducing a unified "rational" control of political and military strategy, the armed forces, and the economy under the state. This proposal was compared to "national socialism" and the "New Deal," and its authors were suspected of being Communists. This is the infamous "Army Pamphlet Incident" of 1934 (see Introduction, p. 14). Although perhaps not based on Communism, it was undeniably inspired, at least partially, by the Soviet Communist system. A pamphlet published in 1934 by the Ministry of the Army stated that in spite of the fundamental flaws of Communism, the way the Soviet Union was willing to maximize its defense capability at the cost of everything else had to be admired.[28] Kamei Kan-ichirō was involved in its writing.[29] As discussed earlier (see Chapter 3, p. 268), in 1935, Nagata Tetsuzan, the chief of the Bureau of Army Affairs, dispatched an army economist to the Soviet Union to study its planned economy. Meanwhile, in August 1935, just before Nagata was murdered, Ishiwara embarked on a plan to build up Japan's economy and military. He chose the Soviet specialist Miyazaki Masayoshi (宮崎正義, 1893–1953), who graduated in 1917 from St. Petersburg University in Russia. Having worked for the South Manchurian Railway, he had already been involved in the economic development of Manchuria and enjoyed

[27] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1969), 195; *Naimushō shūhō* 35 (21 December 1936), 672.

[28] See Rikugunshō gunji chōsabu, comp., *Kindai kokubō yori mitaru Sorenpō* (Tokyo, 1934), 6.

[29] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 196.

tremendous respect in the army. Handpicked by Ishiwara, in 1935, Miyazaki founded a special group to study the economic planning of Japan and Manchuria. After two years of hard graft, Miyazaki's group produced two thick volumes (one on Manchuria and the other on Japan) describing their five-year plans for economic development. The emphasis was on creating a "controlled economy," modeled on the state capitalism of Nazi Germany and the Soviet planned economy. They proposed to triple Japan's productive force in five years. In 1937, both plans were put into practice.[30] These five-year plans and successive plans to be implemented thereafter assumed a ten- to twenty-year span of peace to be completed. As soon as they were adopted, however, an all-out war with China started, triggered by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937, thus laying waste to the very foundation of the economic plans.

Interrogated after World War II, Kawabe Torashirō (see Chapter 3, p. 220), a former military attaché in Moscow, testified as to how the five-year plan came about:

> When I first reported for duty at the General Staff headquarters [in spring 1937], my section chief Major General ISHIHARA [Ishiwara] told me that JAPAN, for quite sometime [*sic*], must be cautious in her relations with other nations and must not make any overt moves. We must increase the home production, for example, like the Five Year Plan of RUSSIA or the Four Year Plan of GERMANY. Home affairs should be disposed of with this thought in mind. Do not think of foreign affairs.[31]

Kawabe went on to say that

> I believe that he [Ishiwara] did not mention anything about wars, at least nothing that I can recall. When I reported for duty, Major General ISHIHARA told me that JAPAN, for the time being, was not looking for any war and that it was necessary for JAPAN to copy RUSSIA's Five Year Plan and GERMANY's Four Year Plan and materialize some plans resembling the above. He also told me that he selected me as his subordinate for the execution of the above plan because I had the same conceptions that he had.[32]

By any estimate, Japan was not ready for war anytime soon.

The announcement of Japan's five-year plan in June 1937 was received with some alarm by the foreign press, however. The *New York Times*, for example,

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[30] On Miyazaki and his work, see Kobayashi Hideo, *"Nihon kabushiki gaisha" o tsukutta otoko: Miyazaki Masayoshi no shōgai* (Tokyo, 1996). As the title suggests, the author claims that it was he who laid the foundations for the post-war "Japan Inc."

[31] Awaya Kentarō and Yoshida Hiroshi, eds., *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho* (Tokyo, 1993), 51:243.

[32] Ibid.

noted that it was a "five-year scheme to place Japan, Korea and Manchukuo [Manzhouguo] on a semi-wartime basis." It was, the newspaper continued, a step to "the totalitarian goal" to "combine private enterprise with State controls," which was "justified as a means of enlarging a formidable military establishment." The newspaper ended its report with a question: "Is it preliminary to a revival of an aggressive Japanese policy in China?"[33] The simple answer was clearly no.

Noteworthy in this regard was the view of the Soviet military strategist and historian Aleksandr A. Svechin, who made his name largely through studies on the Russo-Japanese War (see Chapter 3, p. 188). (A former tsarist army general, he was arrested in 1931. In 1932, following Japan's invasion of Manchuria, he was released to work in military intelligence. Evidently, his expertise was indispensable.)[34] In early 1937, he published a disquisition, "The Foundation of Contemporary Japanese Strategy and Tactics," in the Soviet military journal *Военная мысль* (Military Thought).[35] In it, he emphasized the supremacy of Japan's Navy among its military forces, and that the Navy's orientation was always toward the south, implying that the Soviet Union was not its main target. He stated that Japan's Army was greatly spoiled by its history of fighting against a weak China and Russia.[36] However, Svechin maintained, the Japanese Army had essential weaknesses. He noted, like others, its numerical weakness, because Japan's potential pool of recruits was smaller than that of the Soviet Union or the United States. The army also suffered from a relatively limited degree of mechanization. Japan had ten times fewer automobiles than Germany and twenty times fewer than France.[37] Japan, like other countries, faced the danger of a two-front war. To surmount its weaknesses, Japan followed a "Schlieffen plan," a plan German Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen (1883–1913) built before World War I. This plan, in turn, was modeled on the battle of Cannae in 216 BCE aimed at the execution of a massive flank attack and encirclement (rather than a full frontal engagement), by means of which Carthaginian General Hannibal bested the superior Roman army. Yet, Svechin continued, Manchuria was vast (three times the size of Germany), its rail network was still sparse, and much of it (bar the Southern Manchurian Railway) had yet to be double-tracked. Likewise, the road network in Manchuria was still very small. Under these conditions, Svechin argued, to assume that the "Schlieffen plan" might work in a battle against the Soviet Union in northern Manchuria was "extremely reckless" of Japan. Japan's

[33] "Japan's Five-Year Plan," *New York Times*, 19 June 1937, 16.

[34] Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Predrassudki i boevaia deistvitel'nost'* (Moscow, 2003), 16. In 1924, Svechin wrote: "One cannot but welcome the Soviet government's rejection of certain chauvinism and the ambition of using the Red Army to make revolution with arms in hand." See his *Postizhenie voennogo iskusstva: Ideinoe nasledie A. Svechina*, 2nd. ed. (Moscow, 2000), 257. Shortly before his arrest, he was publicly calumniated as "anti-Soviet" by his colleague, Mikhail Tukhachevskii. See Tukhachevskii's speech in Svechin, *Predrassudki*, 327–36.

[35] A. Svechin, "Osnovy sovremennoi iaponskoi strategii i taktiki," *Voennaia mysl'*, no. 1 (1937): 141–65.

[36] Ibid., 154.

[37] Ibid., 148–49

past exercise of the "Schlieffen plan" had never fully worked, and its preference for "operational art" meant tactical fragmentation.[38]

In other words, Svechin clearly saw that Japan did not have much military muscle to flex against the Soviet Union. This view reflected the internal argument within the Soviet Politburo as seen, for example, in Kalinin's remarks in 1934 (see Chapter 3, p. 277). However, Svechin made the mistake of stating his argument openly and publicly. Svechin, who was a former tsarist army major-general, was arrested in 1937 and executed in 1938. Tortured though he must have been, he did not confess to the crime of "anti-Soviet activity," of which he was accused.[39] His actual crime was to have revealed the true state of Japan's military at a time when Stalin was purposefully exaggerating its strength. Radek, who had raised similar points, had also been arrested by then.

4.2 The Level of Threat

Although Stalin knew by the mid-1930s that Japan no longer presented a serious threat, this did not dissuade him from trying to eliminate any threat altogether. Ultimately, Stalin was not just interested in weakening Japan, but in driving it out of Manchuria and taking control of China himself. Yet, doing so was still complicated, if only because Japan was unpredictable: The Japanese cabinet frequently changed hands, and the government was always at sixes and sevens. Following Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in February 1933 (and Germany's in October 1933), in September 1934, the Soviet Union changed its long-standing policy of not joining any group of "bourgeois" nations and joined the League of Nations. This move by Moscow was a help to both France and the Soviet Union against Germany,[40] but it also sealed Japan's international isolation.

The following year, in August 1935, Moscow had the CCP issue a declaration ("August 1 Declaration" [八一宣言]) from Moscow, calling for the Chinese people

[38] Ibid., 158, 162. As early as 1933, the Japanese were apprised of the limits of the Schlieffen plan, however. See Katakura Tadashi, *Katakura sanbō no shōgen. Hanran to chin-atsu* (Tokyo, 1981), 126.

[39] O.F. Suvenirov, *Tragediia RKKA 1937–1938* (Moscow, 1998), 274.

[40] Litvinov sent a three-page secret memorandum to Stalin on 15 December 1933 regarding the League of Nations after a discussion with Joseph Paul-Boncour (1873–1972), the French foreign minister, in Paris in October: If Moscow and Paris concluded a mutual assistance pact, and Germany attacked the Soviet Union, prompting France to attack Germany, then Britain and Italy would be obliged to help Germany by the Locarno Treaty. But if the USSR joined the League of Nations, things would be different. If Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the league would adopt appropriate sanctions, as a result of which the Locarno Treaty's provisions would come into effect, whereby Britain and Italy were not obliged or even would not have the right to come to the rescue of Germany. Without joining the league, Moscow found it impossible to conclude a pact of mutual assistance with France. See *Ocherki istorii Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossii. Tom vtoroi 1917–2002 gg.* (Moscow, 2002), 136–37; I.A. Khormach, *Vozvrashchenie v mirovoe soobshchestvo: bor'ba i sotrudnichestvo Sovetskogo gosudarstva s Ligoi natsii v 1919–1934 gg.* (Moscow, 2011), 527–29.

to desist from fighting among themselves and organize a united front of resistance against Japan.[41] The appeal was for national resistance not against all imperialist powers but specifically against Japan. The CCP declared itself willing to place its military forces under the command of a "National Defense Government" representing all Chinese, not merely the workers and peasants, marking a radical departure from its previous antagonistic position toward the KMT. This was an appeal for national unity against Japan. There was no doubt that Moscow was targeting Japan through the CCP and China.

With the CCP so committed to fighting Japan, Moscow gained considerable leeway in China for its own schemes against Japan, as was the case a few months earlier, for example, when it sold the CER to Manzhouguo. Moreover, seven months later, in March 1936, Moscow and Ulaanbaatar concluded the "Protocol of Mutual Assistance," which formalized the "gentlemen's agreement" of 27 November 1934. The pact allowed Soviet military forces to be stationed in the Mongolian People's Republic. Although it did not name the country against which it was directed, it was evidently against Japan.[42] China cried foul; the protocol violated China's sovereignty in "Outer Mongolia," which Moscow had acknowledged in 1924. Considering China powerless and confident that Japan was China's primary adversary, Moscow ignored the Chinese objection. Chiang Kai-shek, his official condemnation notwithstanding, welcomed the pact as evidence that war between the Soviet Union and Japan was inexorable. According to Chiang, the Soviet-Mongol pact was a result of the 26 February 1936 coup attempt in Tokyo (discussed on p. 296 in this chapter). The coup, though a wretched failure, so patently exposed Japan's fragility that Moscow felt emboldened to shake up Japan by concluding the pact against it. The agreement with Ulaanbaatar was Moscow's "military provocation."[43] Chiang's hopes for a Soviet-Japanese war, which would have distracted Japan's attention from China, did not materialize, because Moscow wanted just the opposite: Japan's war against China.

The Soviet-Mongol pact alarmed Japan. Moscow claimed that the pact was necessitated by Japan's aggression, which it claimed caused frequent border skirmishes. It is impossible to tell who was actually responsible for the clashes. Each side blamed the other. If major clashes of the 1930s are any guide, there is no doubt that the Soviet forces engaged in provocation. So did Japan's military. Yet, the Japanese government itself was singularly focused on avoiding any border

[41] The final version was first published in Chinese and then in Russian in December 1935: "Obrashchenie ko vsemu narodu Kitaia o soprotivlenii Iaponii i spasenii rodiny," *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional*, nos. 33–34 (1935), 106–111. It is also available in many publications—for example, *Huabei shibian ziliao xuanbian* (Zhengzhou, 1983), 7–14.

[42] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1974), 10:136–37; Jakub Wojtkowiak, "Kontyngent Armii Czerwonej w Mongolii w latach 1936–1938." *Dzieje najnowsze* 40, no. 3 (2008): 3–13.

[43] Huang Zijin, *Jiang Jieshi yu Riben: yibu jindai Zhong-Ri guanxi shi de suoying* (Taipei, 2002), 261–62.

conflict with the Soviet Union in view of Japan's "unfavorable" position. This was clearly laid out in Tokyo's "Diplomatic Objectives" adopted in August 1936 with the support of the army and the navy. Tokyo's objectives even included a desire to accept a "non-aggression pact" with Moscow.[44] Almost certainly, Moscow knew it through intelligence. Moscow had no desire for a compromise with Tokyo, however.

The Soviet provocations were of particular importance: First, they demonstrated the offensive stance Moscow had adopted toward Japan since 1934; second, border clashes provided a prima facie reason to force Mongolia to accept permanent Soviet military presence on its soil.

The Anti-Comintern Pact

Alarmed by the Soviet offensive moves, Japan floundered. Historians make much of the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact signed in November 1936 between Japan and Germany.[45] It certainly marked a significant realignment of international politics, a development that the Anglo-American world had deemed possible or even likely ever since the Washington Conference and the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1922. In fact, the pact had very little substance and resulted in very little political fruit for either country. Unlike the Franco-Soviet Treaty of mutual assistance (1935) or the Soviet-Mongol protocol of mutual assistance (1936), it did not oblige either side to assist the other in case of war. As a Russian historian has correctly noted, it was an agreement on mutual neutrality in the event of war with the Soviet Union.[46] It was a pact of "nasty neutrality [*boshafte Neutralität*]," as a German diplomat aptly put it: It only increased suspicion of "global conspiracies," notably in Britain.[47] Based on a special report by Eugen Ott (1889–1977), the German military attaché in Tokyo, Berlin had concluded that Japan would need several years to build up its forces to be ready for war. Berlin also concluded that Japan was not in a position to fight either in terms of military discipline or national unity. For this reason, the Anti-Comintern Pact was merely an Anti-Communist (Soviet) treaty and not an alliance. This much Moscow knew very well, because Richard Sorge, a Soviet spy who befriended Ott, photocopied Ott's report and sent it to Moscow.[48]

Nor was the Anti-Comintern Pact popular in Japan. It had been initiated by the Japanese Army, which pushed it through the Hirota Kōki cabinet. (Even the

[44] See "Teikoku gaikō hōshin," in Gaimushō, comp., *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabini shuyō bunsho* (Tokyo, 1966), 2:345–47.

[45] The expression "Comintern" was a euphemism. It was directed against the Soviet Union, which Moscow, of course, knew. The pact included a secret protocol on joint intelligence against the Soviet Union, of which Moscow also knew. See Hiroaki Kuromiya and Georges Mamouria, *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus, and Japan, 1904–1945* (Warsaw-Berlin, 2016), 153–56, 203–7.

[46] Alekseev, *"Vernyi Vam Ramzai,"* 398.

[47] Erich Kordt, *Nicht aus den Akten. . . .* (Stuttgart, 1950), 156.

[48] *Gendaishi shiryō (1). Zoruge jiken (1)* (Tokyo, 1962), 256.

Japanese Army was far from united on this matter.) Moscow knew of the pact negotiations well in advance through intelligence. Just before it was signed, Japan's former minister of foreign affairs, Yoshizawa Kenkichi (芳沢謙吉, 1874–1965), visited Iurenev at the Soviet Embassy and advised him that it was not directed against the Soviet Union. Iurenev did not believe his account, however.[49] The Hirota cabinet fell soon in any case, and when the new cabinet led by Hayashi Senjūrō (林銑十郎, 1876–1943) formed in February 1937, Satō Naotake, Japan's foreign minister, openly repudiated it saying, "I was the first to regret the Japan-German Accord." He added: There "should be no war between Japan and Russia during the next ten years."[50] Even before the old cabinet fell, Japan's ambassador to Britain, Yoshida Shigeru (吉田茂, 1878–1967), visited his Soviet counterpart, Ivan Maiskii, and spoke in the same vein, blaming the "stupidity" of his government.[51] This sort of political farce was nothing new in Japanese politics. The disunity merely reflected Japan's disorientation, with its leaders sensing both the danger of the Soviet Union and their ultimate dependence on the Soviet Union. In the mid-1930s, when Japan came to realize the magnitude of its disadvantage against the Soviet forces, it also explored a better relationship with Britain and the United States. This led nowhere, however. With the Anti-Comintern Pact, Japan's desperation for international support burst to the fore. The pact brought no political benefits to Japan. Aligning with Nazi Germany merely damaged irreparably Japan's relations with Britain.

Soviet diplomats studied Japan's political scene assiduously and constantly kept Moscow informed. Under Iurenev, as under Troianovskii, the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo made contact with numerous influential people and gathered information. Their activity was so extensive and frequent that in May 1936, Boris Stomoniakov, Iurenev's immediate handler in the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow, expressed concern to Iurenev that he and his staff had gone too far: Their activity might have alarmed the "military-fascist circles" in Japan.[52] In other words, some among Japan's armed forces were deeply concerned about the vigorous work of Soviet diplomats within the Japanese political and military circles. As had been the case for years, the political divisions within these circles made it easy for Soviet diplomats to insert themselves. Stomoniakov's warning notwithstanding, Soviet diplomats did not stop their extensive work. Their reports to Moscow were, by and large, very accurate. By 1936–1937, they all tended to agree that Japan had no serious plan to engage the

[49] AVP, f. 0146, op. 20, p. 176, d. 8, l. 125. In January 1937, having breakfast with Iurenev and Raivid, Arita Hachirō (有田八郎, 1884–1965), Japan's foreign minister, explained that it was the Soviet government's distrust of Japan that drove it to embrace Germany and that the pact would not go beyond opposing the Comintern, which Arita said was not the same as the Soviet government. Ibid., l. 134.

[50] "Regrets Reich-Japan Agreement: Startling Interview in New French Weekly. Mr. Sato's Policy," *Japan Chronicle*, 12 March 1937, 5. See also Theo Sommer, *Deutschland und Japan zwischen den Mächten 1935–1940. Vom Antikominternpakt zum Dreimächtepakt* (Tübingen, 1962), 55.

[51] Ivan Mikhailovich Maiskii, *Dnevnik diplomata. London. 1934–1943* (Moscow, 2006), 1:155.

[52] AVP, f. 0146, op. 19, p. 170, d. 12, ll. 15–16.

Soviet Union in war but that Japan merely wanted to consolidate its hold in Manchuria. To secure Manchuria, and in search of more economic resources to protect itself from its worsening international isolation, Japan was already looking toward the south: Japan sought control of north China (Shandong, Shanxi, and particularly Hebei Provinces to the south of Manzhouguo) and its western flank in Inner Mongolia (Chahar and Suiyuan Provinces).

The "North China Incident"

To catalyze Japan's impending self-destruction, Moscow took advantage of Japan's fears over its isolation and secretly encouraged Japan to turn its attention to the south. Moscow used Chinese partisans to stage attacks from north China against Japanese interests in Manchuria, which took place frequently. Because north China was beyond Japan's control, the partisans staged attacks from the de-militarized zone south of the border and returned to their home base in the south for safety. This guerrilla tactic irritated the Japanese to the extreme, drawing them into north China. In June 1935, Japan forced two agreements ("He-Umezu" and "Qin-Doihara") on China, which nearly squeezed the Chinese military forces out of Hebei and Chahar Provinces, greatly expanding Japan's power in these regions. The agreements virtually abrogated China's sovereignty and angered the Chinese. A number of Chinese statesmen such as Tang Youren (唐有壬, 1894–1935) and Yang Yongtai (楊永泰, 1880–1936), as well as prominent journalists such as Hu Enpu (胡恩溥 [?]–1935) and Bai Yuhuan (白逾桓, 1876–1935), who were regarded as conciliatory to Japan, were assassinated by Chinese patriots at the time, although speculation also ran that the Japanese were responsible.[53] Japan unwittingly was falling into a fire trap set up by Moscow.

In November-December 1935, Japan created a Lilliputian buffer state independent of the Nanjing government out of the industrially rich eastern part of Hebei Province: the East Hebei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government (*Jidong Fanggong Zizhi Zhengfu*, 冀東防共自治政府).[54] Provocatively, Japan placed the capital in Tongzhou, just outside Beijing, and appointed, as its head, Yin Jukeng/Rugeng (殷汝耕, 1885–1947), who had studied in Japan and was married to a Japanese woman. This was tantamount to a coup and violated the 1933 Tanggu Truce (see Chapter 3, p. 267). In response, Chiang Kai-shek created a special government, Hebei-Chahar Political Council, (*Jicha Zhengwu Weiyuanhui*, 冀察政務委員會), to counter it and placed Song Zheyuan (宋哲元, 1885–1940)

[53] In March 1935, Tang, then China's vice foreign minister, proposed to Japan that in view of the growing tension in north China, China would consider granting a degree of autonomy to five provinces in north China in exchange for the Kwantung Army's restraint. This proposal led nowhere, however. See Suma Yakichirō, *Toki (Suma nikki)* (Tokyo, 1964), 70.

[54] There were other Japanese schemes afoot to encircle the Nanjing government with pro-Japanese "autonomous" governments in Henan, Shandong, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Hexi, Guangdong, and Guizhou, but none succeeded. See the first-hand account by Ka Bun-un (Xia Wenyun), *Kōjin banjō. Aru chūgokujin no shōgensuru NiTchū jihen hiroku* (Tokyo, 1967), 40–45.

Figure 4.1. *Jidong Fanggong Zizhi Zhengfu* and *Jicha Zhengwu Weiyuanhui*, 1935–36

at its head. With the Japanese threatening him from the east, Song's position was precarious.[55]

Moscow welcomed these events to the south of Manzhouguo, collectively referred to as the "North China Incident," (*Huabei shibian* [華北事變]),[56] for it meant that Japan's attention had turned south from Manchuria and not toward the north. The Chinese were deeply affronted by Japan's aggressive actions in 1935, which quickly amplified the anti-Japanese movement in China (the so-called December 9 Movement, [一二・九運動]). Japan had created a situation in which even a worm would turn, leading China and the world to believe that Japan meant to dragoon not just Manchuria but China as a whole into submission. Behind the scenes, Moscow drove Japan so deeply inside China that even the KMT's radical right-wing circles had no choice but to turn to the Soviet Union and the CCP against Japan. The Chen brothers, Guofu (陳果夫, 1892–1951) and

[55]This is detailed in Marjorie Dryburgh, *North China and Japanese Expansion 1933–1937: Regional Power and the National Interest* (London, 2000).

[56]Many Chinese and Japanese documents related to this incident are collected in *Huabei shibian ziliao xuanbian*, which also includes a summary of the Tanaka Memorial (45–54).

Figure 4.2. Song Zheyuan, a military commander in north China

Lifu (陳立夫, 1900–2001), both Chiang Kai-shek's confidantes who formed the infamous "CC Clique," represented this remarkable transformation of the KMT right-wing circles from "hawks" to "doves" with regard to their political enemy, the CCP and the Soviet Union.[57] Chiang himself knew well that his alliance with the Soviet Union against Japan was what Japan feared most.[58]

Song Zheyuan was deeply concerned that the anti-Japanese movement among students was being penetrated by Communists and warned repeatedly against their influence, to no avail.[59] In an interview with Ozaki Hotsumi in December 1936, Song emphasized his independence from Chiang's Nanjing government and expressed his desire to merge his government with the East Hebei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government. Yin Jukeng distrusted Song, however, telling Ozaki that Song was actually Chiang's protégé.[60] Song, according to his subordinates, often wavered and contradicted himself,[61] as he did in July 1937 (see p. 347 later in this chapter). The niece of Song's wife offered a different story: In August 1936, Song established secret contact with the CCP and Mao Zedong, with whom he collaborated secretly. He protected Zhang Kexia (see p. 346 later in this chapter), a secret CCP member.[62] According to Edgar Snow (1905–72),

[57] Yang Zhesheng, *Guomindang jiaofu Chen Guofu* (Shanghai, 2009), 268. This change did not occur suddenly in 1935 and was instead already occurring in 1934. See Fan Xiaofang, *Chen Lifu, Chen Guofu he CC* (Zhengzhou, 1993), 179–80.

[58] Yang Kuisong, *Guomindang de "lian Gong" yu "fan Gong"* (Beijing, 2008), 312 (2 and 3 October 1935 diary entry).

[59] Li Yunhan, ed., *Kangzhan qian Huabei zhengju shiliao* (Taipei, 1982), 699–700.

[60] See Ozaki Hotsumi, *Ozaki Hotsumi chosaku shū* (Tokyo, 1979), 5:49–54. At his trial after World War II, Yin told the court that Song had approved in advance the creation of the East Hebei Government, which "corresponded to the peculiar [political] situation in northern China at the time." Quoted in Masui Yasuichi, *Kankan saibanshi* (Tokyo, 1977), 176.

[61] See He Jifeng et al., "Qiqi shibian jishi," *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* (Beijing), no. 1 (1960): 10; Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, comps., *Huabei shibian* (Beijing, 2000), 557.

[62] See Li Huilan, "Song Zheyuan," in Ma Xianzhen, ed., *Xibeijun jiangling* (Zhengzhou, 1989),

who knew Song personally, he was a "good poker-player" with excellent skills at "political shadow-boxing."[63]

Snow reported from China that "Peking had the strongest anti-Japanese student organizations in the country, and in the end they were all supporting Sung [Song]."[64] They upheld Song because the CCP instructed them to support him.[65] (If so, the testimony about Song's secret connections to the CCP may well be true.) The mood of the country, especially in north China, was turning inescapably in favor of the CCP's adamantine resistance to Japan's ever advancing encroachment. Already, in 1936, relations in north China between Chinese and Japanese forces were said to be strained to the breaking point (一触即发的),[66] leading ultimately to the Second Sino-Japanese War.

It was no secret that turning Japan's attention to north China was precisely what Moscow sought. It would be surprising had Moscow *not* secretly mustered its full forces to accelerate Japan's involvement in north China. In light of Stalin's China strategy since 1928, it does not appear coincidental that the CCP's August 1 declaration (see p. 289) that called for a united front came soon after the "He-Umezu" and "Qin-Doihara" agreements were announced in June. Public criticism by the CCP of the KMT's "surrender" to Japan notwithstanding, Moscow and the CCP must have welcomed the two agreements that were humiliating to China as politically expedient.

The "February 26 Incident," 1936

Even as Japan made impossible attempts at reconfiguring north China, it was unable to uphold the discipline of its armed forces at home. On 26 February 1936, young army officers (mainly of the "imperial way faction" [*kōdōha*]) with some 1,500 soldiers staged a coup against the Japanese government, which they insisted was controlled by greedy capitalists and venal political parties. They demanded a fundamental change in governance in favor of direct imperial rule and the nationalization of big capital. Although the insurgents failed to kill Premier Okada Keisuke (they instead killed his secretary) and other cabinet members, they shot dead Takahashi Korekiyo (高橋是清, 1854–1936), the minister of finance, Saitō Makoto, the minister of home affairs and former prime minister, and Watanabe Jōtarō (渡辺錠太郎, 1874–1936), the army inspector general of education, as well as five policemen protecting them. As the Soviet spy Richard

26–28. Her account may be correct: see Yang Kuisong, *Xi'an shibian xintan: Zhang Xueliang yu Zhonggong guanxi zhi mi* (Beijing, 2012), 128–29, 242.

[63] Edgar Snow, *Scorched Earth. Book one* (London, 1941), 17, 20.

[64] Ibid., 20.

[65] Bao Wei, "Qiqi shibian qian Zhongguo Gongchandang zai Jicha Ping-Jin diqu de tongzhan gongzuo," *Changchun shifan daxue xuebao* 37, no. 3 (March 2018): 103.

[66] Dai Shouyi and Qin Dechun, *Qiqi shibian: yuan Guomindang jiangling kang-Ri zhanzheng qinli ji* (Beijing, 2010), 180 (testimony of Li Zhiyuan [李致远], a brigadier-general in China's Twenty-Ninth Army).

Sorge noted perceptively, the underlying ideas (*Grundideen*) of the rebellion were "anchored in the broadest circles of the Japanese military and many radical nationalist civil organizations." The "deepest reason" for the radical currents in the army, according to Sorge, was the "social hardship [*Notlage*] of the Japanese peasantry and the urban petty-bourgeoisie."[67]

This situation made the army hesitate with regard to the insurgents. Yet, the emperor regarded the insurgents as rebels, as did the navy (Premier Okada was a naval admiral). The army as a whole eventually condemned the rebels. Within three days, they surrendered. They were tried, and among them, seventeen leaders were executed. Later, Kita Ikki (see Introduction, p. 15) and Nishida Mitsugi (西田税, 1901–37), who did not take part in the insurgency but who were held as ideologically responsible, were also executed. Many leaders in the army were suspected of having facilitated or condoned it, but they escaped prosecution, with the exception of Masaki Jinzaburō, who was tried in camera and acquitted (because the army held the judge's feet to the fire). Kuhara Fusanosuke, a non-military politician suspected of collusion, also escaped military prosecution, although he was tried on a different charge and acquitted. Some five hundred army officers, most of whom were associated with *kōdōha*, including Masaki and Araki Sadao, were forced to retire or placed in reserve. In its stead, the "control faction" (*tōseiha*) came to control the army. Yet, this did not mean that the army became more disciplined. It remained as undisciplined as ever, and the *gekokujō* (contumacious and rebellious) spirit died hard.[68]

In May 1936, Sorge wrote to Moscow that the failed coup, an "expression of extraordinary tensions and weaknesses" in the army, pushed back Japan's war preparedness by "many months and possibly years."[69] Writing a few months after the February 26 Incident, Hata Hikosaburō, a former military attaché in Moscow, described the growing confidence of Soviet officials with whom he spoke. They had come to realize, according to Hata, that if the Japanese Army had so little discipline as to allow such an incident to happen, it could not be a formidable foe. They went so far as to say that when two sides did not get along, they would often come to reconciliation after a fight, so perhaps Japan and the Soviet Union might as well go ahead and fight a war.[70]

If the right-wing radical circles entertained the idea of a coup (attempted in February 1936), others had plans for a "countercoup." In fact, a plan emerged from a group within the army on how to deal with such a coup (were such a coup attempted by some firebrands) and how to use it as an occasion to implement

[67] R. S. [Richard Sorge], "Die Armeerevolte in Tokio," *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* 13, no. 5 (1936): 314, 316.

[68] See Daniel Orbach, *Curse on This Country: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan* (Ithaca, NY, 2017), chap. 10.

[69] *"Delo Zorge": telegrammy i pis'ma (1930–1945)* (Moscow, 2018), 114. See also Alekseev, *"Vernyi Vam Ramzai,"* 408.

[70] Hata Hikosaburō, "Saikin ni okeru Sorenpō no genjō ni tsuite," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 761 (15 August 1936): 118.

plans for the reform and renewal of Japan. The plan was drafted by Katakura Tadashi (see Chapter 2, p. 168), a disciple of Ishiwara Kanji who worked with him in 1931 in Manchuria (see Chapter 2, p. 205). The plan included, among other ideas, the dissolution of existing political parties, the independence of judiciary power, the introduction of a "controlled economy," and the "softening of class conflict." Regarding the Soviet Union, it favored the signing of a non-aggression pact and at the same time advocated taking measures to assure the collapse from within of the Soviet Union.[71] This last point was almost certainly influenced by Soviet disinformation regarding the strength of anti-Soviet groups within the country. As for Japan's renovation and renewal, it is difficult to distinguish between the supporters of the "coup" and the "countercoup." In this regard, too, the left and the right had drawn closer together, providing the Soviet Union with an opportunity to exercise "reflexive control" over Japanese politics.

Soviet diplomats' assessment of Japan, 1935–1936

Moscow must have been satisfied with these outcomes. At the very least, the February 26 coup attempt represented to Japan the growing sense that political strategies far more radical than those of the cautious centrists would be necessary for resolving its desperate predicament. It remains a question, of course, to what degree Moscow actually influenced the coup attempt. As argued earlier (see Introduction, p. 16), Moscow may well have been directly behind it: Instructions had come from Moscow to use rightist cover (see Chapter 3, p. 271), resulting in the "right turn" the Japanese left made at this time (see Introduction, p. 16). But whatever Moscow's role in the event, Japan was indeed spiraling toward precisely what Moscow wanted—more desperate, more militaristic, and more radical solutions.

Some, like Kamei, saw that Moscow's investment in this direction would determine the political future of Japan. Both Kamei and Asō were, if anything, sympathetic toward the February 26 Incident, calling the rebels revolutionary elements.[72] The left clobbered Kamei and Asō for colluding with the army's young officers and becoming increasingly fascist.[73] Yet, the two politicians continued into 1936 to call for a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and a Sino-Soviet-Japanese political agreement to determine the "common Asian goals of cultural and economic policy."[74] While it is unclear how long the study group of Kamei and Asō with Soviet specialists discussed earlier (see p. 269) continued, Kamei believed that Moscow pursued a revolutionary possibility in Japan. Moscow paid serious attention to the political currents in the Japanese Army

[71] Katakura, *Katakura sanbō no shōgen*, 30–37, 159–204.

[72] Asō Hisashi den kankō iinkai, ed., *Asō Hisashi den* (Tokyo, 1958), 464; *Gendaishi shiryō (44): kokka sōdōin (2). Seiji* (Tokyo, 1974), 544, 563.

[73] See for example *Gendaishi shiryō (14): shakaishugi undō (1)* (Tokyo, 1964), 764–65, 810, 846.

[74] *Kiki ni tatsu kokusai seikyoku* (Tokyo, 1936), 29, 32, 44–45, 47–48.

and, he argued, "recognized the possibility of fostering revolutionary opportunities" from a wide strata of the Japanese population, developing "pro-Soviet, democratic forces" in the country.[75]

Although there is truth to Kamei's view, his understanding of Moscow policy was clouded by his own personal vision. Kamei met the mysterious Soviet diplomat Raivid on 18 June 1936, during which he emphasized to Raivid the growing support among the Japanese Army for an agreement with the Soviet Union against Britain. Raivid, however, responded that he saw no signs of that. When Kamei told Raivid that his party, along with the officers from the army and navy, had "worked out a program for a joint struggle against fascism and big capital," involving a mass socialist movement using parliamentarism and possibly "revolutionary methods," Raivid rejected Kamei's optimism.[76] If Kamei was a Soviet agent, he had failed to grasp the context within which he was operating. Moscow's aim was not an immediate Communist revolution in Japan; it was reckless militarism, which, in Moscow's view, would unite China and reduce Japan to rack and ruin by tearing apart its political, economic, and social fabric.

Yet, it was not just Kamei and the radical thinkers in Japan who misjudged Moscow's aims. Soviet diplomats in Japan continued to struggle to work in tandem with Moscow, the results of which are highly revealing. Soviet diplomats in Tokyo wrote to Moscow with aplomb that Japan's threat to the Soviet Union was now reduced significantly. In his annual report to Moscow for 1935, Raivid reported that well-nigh everyone in Japan had told him that both the army and big capital in Japan were now united in advancing to the south, to China, rather than to the north. He listed, among others, Nakano Seigō (中野正剛, 1886–1943) and Kazami Akira (風見章, 1886–1961), both of the Kokumin Dōmei, a political party close to the military and in favor of a Nazi-like "controlled economy." Raivid wrote confidently that Japan now sought to extend its hegemony to all of China and grab north China. In comparison with the Soviet Far East, China was far more attractive to the Japanese as a market, a source of raw materials, and an investment site. He further noted that Japan's ambitions were growing and would not stop in China, aiming further toward Indonesia, Malaya, New Guinea, and others. Apparently, however, Raivid felt duty-bound and quickly emphasized a nearly contradictory view: that Araki, Masaki, and others remained belligerent toward the Soviet Union and that Japan as a whole was preparing feverishly for war with the Soviet Union![77] Raivid's report makes sense only when one considers the diplomats' attempts to depict simultaneously the political landscape in Japan and maintain the official line that Stalin was surreptitiously maintaining.

On 17 June 1936, Iurenev wrote to Moscow that supporters of good relations with the Soviet Union were a serious force in Japan, including the Imperial Court

[75] *Gendaishi shiryō (44)*, 548–49.
[76] AVP, f. 05, op. 16, p. 25, d. 143, ll. 26–30.
[77] Ibid., f. 0146, op. 19, p. 174, d. 74, ll. 30–32.

and the industrial and financial circles. His acquaintances honestly and repeatedly declared to him that the Japanese Army did not feel strong enough to go to war with the Soviet Union and did not wish to do so. They deserved trust, he concluded.[78] Stomoniakov disagreed, saying in his letter (dated June 26) to Iurenev that after the February 26 Incident, Japan's hostility to the Soviet Union had grown stronger: Extremist militarists had become more cautious, but their work against the Soviet Union had intensified and was having a great success.[79] Iurenev took issue with Stomoniakov, however. In his letter to Stomoniakov dated 23 July 1936, he stated: "I do not agree that Japan's hostility toward us has become stronger and continues to do so. Undoubtedly, the present situation on our borders with Manchuria cannot be regarded as stable, but I do not think that under the current conditions Japan will take the risk of any adventure against us." He added that in his view, the Soviet Union was not the sole object of Japan's armament and that there was no special ground for alarm on the Soviet Union's part.[80] A month later, Iurenev wrote to Litvinov that Japan's interest in a pact with the Soviet Union had become urgent and was popular for many different reasons. He added that this view contradicted Stomoniakov's more pessimistic assessment of Japanese public opinion about the Soviet Union.[81] There is no evidence that Moscow was, at this point, interested in a pact. Moscow was on the offensive, as would very soon become clear in the form of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

Stomoniakov's tone seemed to alter slightly, however, in October of 1936. Foreseeing a German-Japanese agreement (the Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936), he wrote to Iurenev that Japan was preparing for war against the Soviet Union in cooperation with Germany. Yet, here, his actual point was quite different and concerned the "total failure" of Japan's China policy, which united China instead of dismembering and subordinating it to Japan. "*The prospect of a real, big war with China is becoming ever more real* [emphasis added]. At the same time Japan is afraid of being drawn into this war, which could swallow up all its resources, weaken it in regard to the Soviet Union and other powers, and in the end, lead Japan to catastrophe." It was this factor, Stomoniakov argued, that had recently made Japan far more moderate toward the Soviet Union and other countries, even toward China. He emphasized that this did not mean a step change in Japan's policy, although later in his missive, he acknowledged that "serious changes" in Japan were possible.[82] Stomoniakov's analysis is resonant with Moscow's behind-the-scene strategy: to draw Japan into a "real, big war with China" that would lead to catastrophe.

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[78] Ibid., f. 0146, op. 19, p. 170, d. 11, l. 20.

[79] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR*, 19:319. Stomoniakov also took issue with Raivid's assessment. See ibid., 382, 755–56.

[80] AVP, f. 0146, op. 19, p. 170, d. 11, ll. 24 and 31.

[81] Ibid., l. 51.

[82] Ibid., d. 12, ll. 37–40. It was in this missive that Stomoniakov admitted that Japan had refused to sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union "*only because* it would have a demoralizing influence on Japanese society" (see Chapter 3, p. 266).

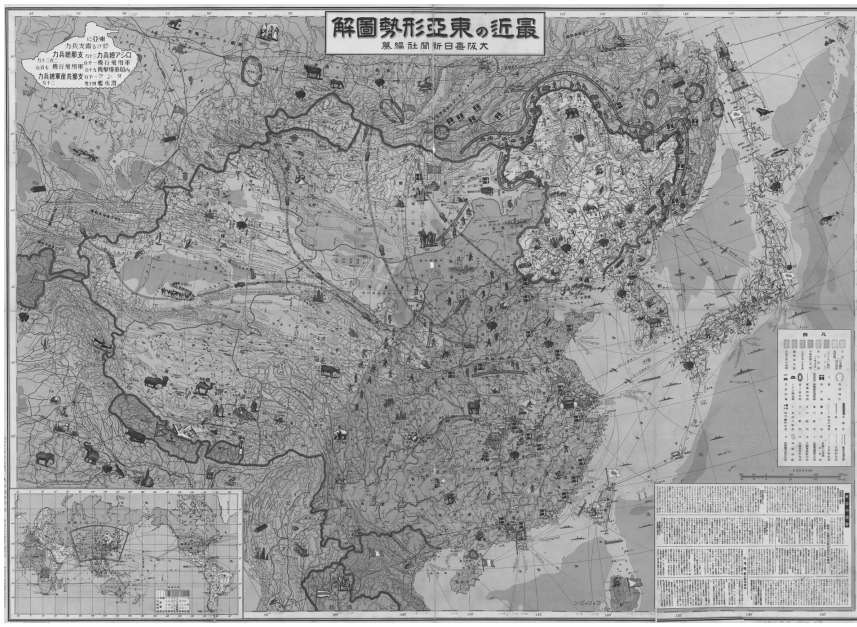

Figure 4.3. Japanese military map of China, late 1936 (the original is colored and sized 76 x 104cm)

Japan's new China policy and Soviet diplomats

Japan's blatant assault on China's integrity in 1935–36 offended the already angry Chinese. By 1937, a growing opinion was voiced in Japan that the East Hebei Government had become a hurdle to regulating relations with China. In yet another example of its political disorientation, Japan decided to reverse its action. Some in positions of responsibility in Japan were wise enough to conclude that China was unconquerable. The vastness of China, supported by more than two million soldiers and backed up by the mighty Soviet forces, made it impossible for Japan to venture into China beyond Manchuria; the most Japan could do was to retain Manzhouguo. To think otherwise, as Radek had noted already in 1932, was nothing but ludicrous. A popular map, drawn by a Japanese newspaper publisher (and not by intelligence organs) in late 1936, made this abundantly clear: China's military forces, already huge, were supported by the formidable Soviet Army and Navy, and the possible air, land, and sea routes of assistance from the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and the United States were clearly and accurately drawn on the map (see Figure 4.3, although unfortunately it is difficult to see the details in this reproduction).[83]

[83] It still underestimated the Soviet strengths in the Far East: 1,000 airplanes, 90 heavy bombers, 100 tanks, 40 submarines, and so on.

Japan's shifting position toward China elicited a skeptical response from Washington, however: "For the sixth time in 15 years Japan has announced a reversal in her policy towards China. . . . Her relations with Germany directed against Russia have grown steadily more menacing and it is possible that she would prefer China as a friend in case the clash with Russia comes."[84] This echoed the Soviet propaganda of the time about Japan's aggressive intention against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in April 1937, the four ministers (of the Army, the Navy, Finance, and Foreign Affairs) deemed it impossible for the East Hebei Autonomous Government to exist independently and agreed to end the policy of "severing north China" from the rest of China.[85] Tokyo's new moves were reported to Nanjing by Chinese diplomats.[86] Whatever plans Tokyo had devised, however, were to be forestalled by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937.[87]

Meanwhile, Raivid, assessing Tokyo's position regarding China, contradicted the official Soviet position. On 2 February 1937, when the Hirota cabinet fell in less than a year after it formed, the Soviet government, under the name of E. Zhukov, published an article about Japan in the newspaper *Izvestiia*. It contended that the Hirota cabinet had had no other policy besides preparations for war and that Japan was controlled by "aggressive forces."[88] Raivid responded on February 22 that this assertion by Zhukov was simply not the case. He further noted that the new cabinet of Hayashi Senjūrō had assumed a much more moderate tone, suggesting that Japan had learned a lesson from its past mistakes in China. Japan's anti-Soviet public stance may not have changed, but that was for the consumption of the Kwantung Army and of Germany. One reason for the fall of the Hirota cabinet had been that Japanese public opinion was against the Anti-Comintern Pact.[89] Raivid wrote back again to Stomoniakov on 26 March 1937, arguing that it was true that the new (Hayashi) cabinet did not intend to improve Soviet-Japanese relations. But the reason was simple: Japan was promoting a blistering armament program that was very unpopular. In order to break the resistance, the government needed to maintain the current, unsatisfactory state of affairs between the two countries. At the same time, Raivid emphasized that he did not think that Japan would consciously make matters worse. The "military clique" hurt for support from wide strata of the population and was fully apprised of Japan's lack of war preparedness.[90]

Shortly thereafter, the Soviet ambassador to China, Dmitrii V. Bogomolov (1890–1938), made similar observations of Japan, which were supported by other foreign diplomats in China. On 18 June 1937, for example, he wrote: "I think

[84]Quoted in "China as a Friend," *Japan Chronicle*, 12 March 1937, 5.

[85]Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabini shuyō bunsho*, 2:360–62, Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho. Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 121–27.

[86]See Zhonghua Minguo waijiao wenti yanjiuhui, comp., *Lugouqiao shibian qianhou de Zhong-Ri waijiao guanxi* (Taipei, 1966), 127–29.

[87]According to one account, the most significant event that led to the incident was the establishment of the East Hubei Government. See Kawabe Torashirō's view in 1940 in *Gendaishi*

Figure 4.4. Dmitrii Bogomolov, the Soviet ambassador to China (1933–37), under Soviet arrest in 1937

that for the near future the Japanese will not take the risk of any big adventure to the south of the Great Wall and that by and large Japanese policy in the northern provinces [of China] will be the maintenance of the status quo."[91] Three weeks later, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident took place, which quickly escalated into all-out war between China and Japan. Subsequently, Moscow accused Bogomolov of "disinformation." Like Raivid, he would soon be recalled to Moscow, tried, and executed in 1938, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ivan A. Rink, Raivid's colleague and the Soviet military attaché in Tokyo from 1932 to 1937, correctly interpreted the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as a sign that Japan no longer posed any threat to the Soviet Union and reported to Moscow accordingly. He was cashiered back to Moscow in September 1937 and arrested the following month. He was accused of sending "disinformation" to Moscow as a Japanese spy and executed in March 1938.[92]

The assessments of Raivid, Bogomolov, and Rink were no different from those of other Soviet diplomats. For example, in early July 1937, just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident took place, the Soviet ambassador to France, Iakov Z. Surits (1882–1952), conveyed the same assessments to his Chinese counterpart, Gu Weijun (顧維鈞, 1888–1985, better known as Wellington Koo). Surits told Gu regarding the Kanchazu Island incident, a minor border clash that had just

shiryō (12): Ni Tchū sensō (4) (Tokyo, 1986), 410–12.

[88] E. Zhukov, "Pravitel'stvennyi krizis v Iaponii," *Izvestiia*, 2 February 1937, 2.

[89] AVP, f. 0146, op. 20, p. 177, d. 13, ll. 20–21.

[90] Ibid., ll. 30–31.

[91] Quoted in A. Ledovskii, "Zapiski diplomata," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 1 (1991): 114. See also B.N. Slavinskii, *SSSR i Iaponiia na puti k voine: diplomaticheskaia istoriia, 1937–1945* (Moscow, 1999), 126.

[92] V.A. Runov and D.G. Vaisman, *Na zare sovetskoi razvedki. Vostochnyi fakul'tet Voennoi akademii RKKA* (Moscow, 2021), 93–94.

occurred between Japan and the Soviet Union (see p. 332 later in this chapter), that in face of the mighty Soviet forces, Japan neither wanted nor was ready to fight.[93] Surits did not admit that the Soviet side provoked the Kanchazu Island Incident. Rather, it was the Kwantung Army's "independent action." Gu and other diplomats in Paris all understood that Japan neither would nor could take a provocative and militant path and were sanguine about Tokyo's change of course to moderation.[94] After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Gu, in an effort to induce Moscow into war against Tokyo, contended that the incident was a prelude to Japan's attack on the Soviet Union. Surits quickly demonstrated a change of heart to Moscow and concurred with Gu's assessment.[95] Unlike Bogomolov, Iurenev, Raivid, and many other Soviet diplomats, Surits survived Stalin's Great Terror.

4.3 The Hidden Hand

Stalin's strategy, to mire Japan in China, continued to define his actions, even as he sought to mask them. As Japan's internal political mess grew, from the ambitious five-year plan to the February 26 coup attempt and the louder calls for a one-party system to resolve their military weakness, so, too, did the country's unpredictability. Like a cornered wolf, Japan was dangerous and irrational but no longer a serious threat to the Soviet Union. To handle such a delicate situation, Stalin continued to depend on his secret service: He employed Japanese agents and influencers and manipulated events from behind the scenes. The actors ranged from actual agents, like Ozaki Hotsumi, to unwitting collaborators. Thus, Moscow managed to keep its schemes secret and difficult to descry. Yet, they were not entirely invisible.

Overwhelmed by the Soviet military presence in the Far East, Japan's attention turned south while guarding the north. This was expressed in the phrase *hokushu nanshin* (北守南進, defend the north and advance to the south) in frequent use at the time. The first challenge Japan faced, however, came from the west. Although Japan had already incorporated northeastern Inner Mongolia into Manzhouguo, Japan did not control much of Inner Mongolia to the southwest of Manchuria. These vast areas shared borders thousands of kilometers long with the Soviet-controlled Mongolian People's Republic and, in Japan's view, presented a serious security threat to Manzhouguo. Indeed, Soviet agents were actively working to influence Inner Mongolia politically, although their task was a delicate one: to raise the Mongolians' national consciousness against Han China and Japan without undergirding the idea of a Great Mongolia (encompassing the Mongolian People's Republic and Buriatiia in the Soviet Union). For Japan, the dream of embracing Mongolia was long-standing (dating back

[93] See Gu Weijun, *Gu Weijun huiyi lu* (Beijing, 1985), 2:403, 405–6.

[94] Ibid., 383–84, 386–87, 391, 395–96.

[95] Ibid., 431–32.

at least to the turn of the century). By the mid-1930s, this dream, reinforced by the perceived necessity of creating a regime friendly to Japan, combined to set Japan once again on an adventurous political and military path deep into Inner Mongolia. Here, Tanaka Ryūkichi, who played a role in the assassination of Zhang Zuolin in 1928 and was, Russian historians now claim, a Soviet agent, played a central role.

Tanaka Ryūkichi's reappearance in China

Tanaka had worked earlier in Kalgan (Zhangjiakou) in Inner Mongolia (see Chapter 2, p. 147), taking part in the scheme to assassinate Zhang Zuolin, and then provoking the Shanghai Incident in 1932 (see Chapter 3, p. 227). From the spring of 1935 until the summer of 1937, Tanaka worked for the Kwantung Army Second (Intelligence) Department. During this time, he developed what he must have known was an absurd vision to extend Japan's influence all the way to Xinjiang. In August 1935, he informed Matsui Tadao (松井忠雄, 1901–81), appointed to Doloon nuur (Duolon) in Chahar Province, almost 500 km in the north of Beijing, that Japan would take Chahar. He would make it the base of Inner Mongolian operations, extending Japan's influence to Bailingmiao (in Suiyuan Province), to Alxa (Alashan) and Ejin (in Ningxia Province), to Qinghai, and eventually to Xinjiang. In alliance with Germany, Japan would thus create an "anti-Communist corridor" from Asia all the way to Europe. "Xinjiang," declaimed Tanaka, "will be a big deal." This scheme would theoretically make it easy to cut the Trans-Siberian Railway from Xinjiang and proceed from there to the Soviet industrial center of the Kuzbass.[96] Meanwhile, Japan and Manzhouguo worked with Nazi Germany to create an air route from Berlin to Tokyo via Rhodes (in the eastern Aegean Sea), Baghdad, Kabul, Anxi (today's Guazhou) in Gansu, and Xinjing (today's Changchun), the capital of Manzhouguo. Tanaka's plan for extending Japan's reach all the way to Xinjiang was unrealistic, to say the least. "In the 1930s, it was easier to reach Urumchi [capital of Xinjiang] from Beijing by sea (via Kobe, Japan and Vladivostok) and then by land (by railway from Vladivostok to Novosibirsk, and to Semipalatinsk followed by car or camel) than to cross China: 'Three months is fast going for a caravan from Peking [Beijing] to Urumchi.' "[97] Richard Sorge, who toured Inner Mongolia from Suiyuan in the autumn of 1936, understood the absurdity of Tanaka's fantasy. He even published an article explaining that Mongolia's terrain and the distance from Manchuria to Siberia via Mongolia were such that it was simply impossible to think of such a military expedition.[98]

[96] Matsui Tadao, *Naimō sangokushi* (Tokyo, 1966), 14.

[97] Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Stalin's Great Terror and the Asian Nexus," *Europe-Asia Studies* 66, no. 5 (July 2014): 789.

[98] See R. S. [Richard Sorge], "Zur Lage in der Inneren Mongolei," *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* 14, no. 5 (1937): 372–73. Two years earlier, Sorge wrote that such an expedition would be a "repetition of the Napoleonic march on Moscow." See Julius Mader, Gerhard Stuchlik, and Horst

In addition, Inner Mongolia was saturated in spots with Communist propaganda. Even Kalgan, the gateway to Inner Mongolia from Beijing, was "littered with pro-Communist leaflets and posters."[99] In Suiyuan, by early 1936, a KMT-CCP united front had already been successfully formed, although at the time, the CCP imposed an information embargo on this fact.[100]

Tanaka went ahead all the same. In May 1936, the Mongol Military Government was founded with Japan's support, and Prince Yondonwangchug (1870–1938) of Ulanqab assumed its chairmanship. The military forces were placed in the hands of the much younger Prince Demchugdongrub or De Wang (德王, 1902–66). At the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, Tanaka testified that he had known Demchugdongrub well since 1927.[101] Some had suspected that Demchugdongrub was "Red."[102] At the time, Tanaka's plan did not enjoy Tokyo's support. Ishiwara Kanji, then the chief of the Operations Section of the General Staff in Tokyo, opposed it. Tanaka Ryūkichi consulted Tanaka Hisashi (田中久, 1892–1969, no relation) and Matsui Tadao, both working in Doloon nuur, who declared Tanaka's plan "reckless" and "having no chance of success."[103] Nevertheless, in league with Mutō Akira (see Chapter 3, p. 268) and Itagaki Seishirō (then chief of staff of the Kwantung Army), Tanaka Ryūkichi advanced his plan.[104] In fact, in January 1936, Tokyo had prohibited the Kwantung Army from advancing into Suiyuan Province (which, separated by Chahar Province, did not share borders with Manzhouguo).[105] Ishiwara was so fumed with Itagaki, his former co-conspirator, that he reportedly said, "Itagaki is outrageous. Next time I'm in Xinjing, I'll go to his office and piss right there."[106] Tanaka diverted the Kwantung Army's expenses reserved for anti-Soviet intelligence to his Suiyuan Operation.[107]

The Suiyuan Incident

Clearly, Moscow was au courant with Tanaka's plan and took befitting measures. This is clear from Raivid's statement (see p. 309 later in this chapter).

Pehnert, *Dr. Sorge funkt aus Tokyo: Ein Dokumentarbericht über Kundschafter der Friedens mit ausgewählten Artikeln von Richard Sorge* (Berlin, 1970), 353.

[99] Parks M. Coble, *Facing Japan: Chinese Politics and Japanese Imperialism, 1931–1937* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 128, referring to as early as 1933.

[100] See a January 1936 report by Percy Chen to Pavel Mif (see Chapter 3, p. 211, footnote 126).

[101] IMTFE transcripts, 2,040.

[102] See for example Kawabe Torashirō's view in *Gendaishi shiryō (12): NiTchū sensō (4)*, 405.

[103] Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 112; Mori Hisao, *Nihon rikugun to Naimō kōsaku: Kantōgun wa naze dokusō shitaka* (Tokyo, 2009), 186.

[104] See Imamura Hitoshi, *Imamura Hitoshi taishō kaisō roku. Dai sankan. Daigekisen* (Tokyo, 1960), 75–76.

[105] Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: HokuShi no chiansen 1* (Tokyo, 1968), 9–10.

[106] *Wada Kōsaku (moto shūgiin giin) ōraru historī* (Tokyo, 2006), 65.

[107] See Inaba Masao, ed., *Okamura Yasuji taishō shiryō. Jōkan. Senjō kaisō hen* (Tokyo, 1969), 384–85.

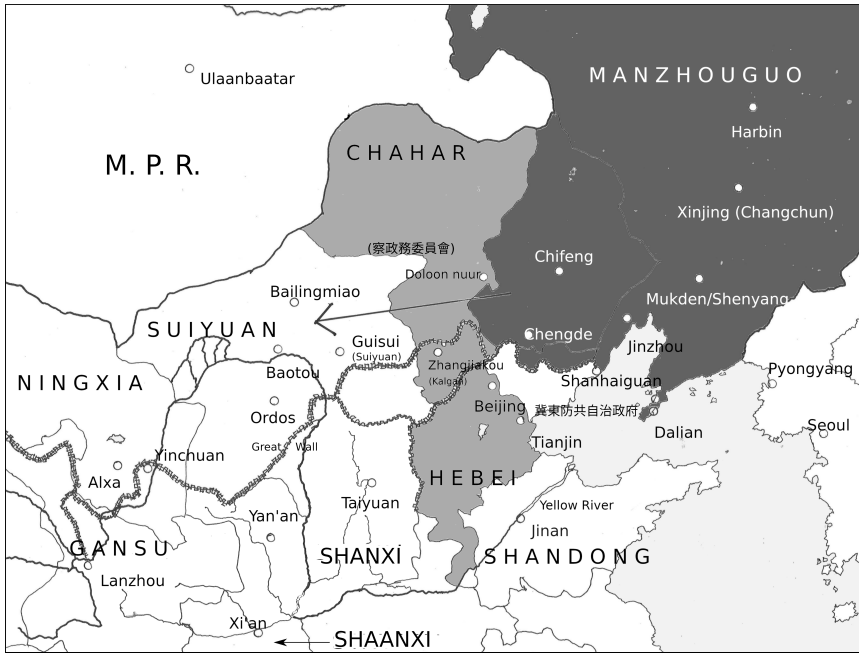

Figure 4.5. The battle for Suiyuan, 1936, carried out by Tanaka against the order of the Kwantung Army

Mao Zedong, too, had been urging the Chinese military in Suiyuan to take active measures against the Japanese, writing letters to its ruler, Fu Zuoyi (傅作義, 1895–1974), who, along with many of his soldiers, was under Communist influence.[108] Deeply disturbed by Japan's moves in Inner Mongolia, Chiang Kai-shek, too, urged Fu and others to prepare for battle.[109] Although Zhang Xueliang and the CCP also planned to send joint military units to Suiyuan, Chiang Kai-shek rejected the plan.[110] The CCP issued a special directive in August 1936, in which it called on the Mongolians to fight against the Japanese imperialists who, it proclaimed, would colonize Inner Mongolia and use it as a base for the invasion of the Soviet Union.[111] Almost simultaneously, in September 1936, Moscow

[108] See *Fu Zuoyi shengping* (Beijing, 1985), 2, 7; Li Zhixin, "Fu Zuoyi yu Suiyuan kangzhan," *Baotou shizhuan xuebao*, no. 1 (1987): 81, 84. For the clandestine activity of the CCP in Suiyuan, see Yin Qi, *Pan Hannian de qingbao shengya* (Beijing, 2018), 70–71.

[109] Yang Tianshi, "Suiyuan kangzhan yu Jiang Jieshi dui-Ri zhengce de zhuanbian," *Jinyang xuekan*, no. 4 (2012): 21–25. It is possible that U.S. authorities were secretly assisting the Chinese in the preparations. Otto Urbach (see p. 345) flew to the region in 1936 in what appears to have been a reconnaissance trip. See Karina Urbach, *Das Buch Alice. Wie die Nazis das Kochbuch meiner Großmutter raubten* (Berlin, 2020), 90–91.

[110] Wen Si, ed., *Wo suo zhidao de Zhang Xueliang* (Beijing, 2003), 159–60, 178.

[111] "Zhongyang guanyu Neimeng gongzuo de zhishixin," in *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji. Di-shiyi ce (1936–1938)* (Beijing, 1991), 68–75.

approved the CCP's battle plan to strike through to Ningxia and Gansu in the west of Yan'an, northern Shaanxi (where its headquarters settled after the "Long March"), with the promise of arms to be transferred from the southern borders of the Mongolian People's Republic via Alxa, western Suiyuan.[112] This was likely a backup plan. There are no signs that Moscow and the CCP were concerned that the Japanese forces would be able to rout the Chinese forces and advance to western Suiyuan. (This suggests that Moscow was familiar with the political and military situation in Suiyuan and that it was confident Tanaka's scheme would fail.) Just in case, however, Moscow devised a contingency plan to use the CCP's Red Army as a backup force and aid it with weaponry and ammunition, if need be. The Kwantung Army seems to have known at least some of the Chinese and Soviet moves through intelligence, which explains why the army disapproved of Tanaka's plan to invade Suiyuan. Tanaka, however, brushed off all the warnings.

In November 1936, the combined Inner Mongolian-Japanese forces advanced into Suiyuan. After initial success, in late November and early December, they suffered crushing defeats at the hands of the far larger Chinese forces underpinned by the upsurge of Chinese nationalism against the Japanese invaders. Chinese mercenaries under the Japanese command jumped ship, killed the Japanese commanders, and joined the Chinese forces.[113] Fu became an instant national hero. As the Chinese press noted at the time, this was "no ordinary victory" for China. It was more than a military victory: It was a patriotic one, inspiring the Chinese to a stalwart resistance to Japan's encroachment. As many Chinese observers noted at the time, the victory had "excited and encouraged the entire nation" and revived China's "national confidence."[114] The triumph, undergirded by the KMT-CCP united front in Suiyuan, marked a turning point in China's history, which led directly to the Xi'an Incident (see p. 310) in December.[115] As if expecting defeat, Tanaka Ryūkichi never went to the front line. The abject failure of his plan "shocked" him, and he was hospitalized. According to a witness, he looked "utterly demented."[116]

Tanaka's nonsensical planning and reactions only reinforce the growing evidence that the operation existed primarily as a Soviet provocation. At the time, negotiations were being carried out between China and Japan about creating a joint anti-Communist bloc in North China. Although Chiang Kai-shek distrusted the Communists, he did not trust the Japanese, either, although he was open to Japanese concessions. The Suiyuan Operation hardened Chiang's

[112] See *Stalin i Kaganovich. Perepiska. 1931–1936 gg.* (Moscow, 2001), 668–69; Yang, *Xi'an shibian xintan*, 230–31.

[113] Mori, *Nihon rikugun to Naimō kōsaku*, 191–94; Matsui, *Naimō sangokushi*, 189–221; Jaġcidsecen, *The Last Mongol Prince: The Life and Times of Demchugdongrob, 1902–1966* (Bellingham, WA, 1999), 163–64.

[114] See for example Zhang Chunming (張純明), "Minzu zixin de fuxing" (民族自信的復興), *Da Gongbao*, 13 December 1936, 4.

[115] See for example *Fu Zuoyi shengping*, 7–8, 191, 194, 202–5.

[116] Matsui, *Naimō sangokushi*, 214, 220; *Takebe Rokuzō nikki* (Tokyo, 1999), 169.

position on Japan, and he subsequently canceled negotiations. Both Sorge and his closest assistant, Ozaki, informed Moscow of this situation.[117] Had Moscow been searching for a way to end Chiang's relations with Japan (as it almost certainly was), the Suiyuan Operation, orchestrated by one of Moscow's more consistent collaborators, was the perfect way for Moscow to put paid to Chiang's negotiations with Japan. In retrospect, Sorge's trip to Suiyuan just before the battles took place seems to have been more than a coincidence. He was most likely doing reconnaissance for Moscow. Moreover, Raivid testified under interrogation in Moscow in 1937 that at the time of the Suiyuan Operation, he had given Fuse confidential information on the Soviet government position, which allowed Japan to maneuver in its relations with the Soviet Union.[118] This statement is exceptionally significant in that it means that the Soviet Union let Japan know that it would not interfere in the Japanese military operations in Suiyuan. Raivid would seem to have been well aware of Tanaka's Suiyuan operation. It is suggestive that both the Soviet interrogators and Raivid considered this operation a significant event.

Regarding Tanaka's activity in Suiyuan, Robert Henry Clive (1877–1948), the British ambassador to Japan, told Iurenev that he just could not understand. The Kwantung Army, in Clive's view, organized it, while at the same time, Arita, Japan's foreign minister, declared that Japan would not interfere in Chinese-Mongolian affairs. In essence, Clive declared that Arita sanctioned the defeat of the Mongols by the Chinese. This made no sense, according to Clive, because the result was the further alienation of the Mongols from the Japanese.[119]

This incomprehensible state of affairs is exactly what Moscow wanted to achieve by using Tanaka. In spite of (perhaps because of) having successfully engineered Japan's failure, Tanaka himself had a nervous breakdown. Moscow, on the other hand, got what it wanted.

Tanaka's story did not end there. Apparently having overcome his nervous incapacitation, he surfaced again sometime in 1937, when he sought to cover up his "failure" in Suiyuan by accusing a Chinese, "Li Liuqi" (李六麒), employed by the Japanese special organ in Tianjin, of being a double spy. Tanaka alleged that his operation had failed because Li informed the enemy. Tanaka ordered his subordinate, Konomi Ujitoshi (許斐氏利, 1912–80), to arrest Li. Konomi detained Li, who was handed over to the Japanese military police in Tianjin. Li confessed to his crime. Yet, he continued to work in Dairen, protected by the Kwantung Army. Konomi could not make sense of Tanaka's behavior and remained suspicious of the whole incident.[120]

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[117] See *Gendaishi shiryō (1). Zoruge jiken (1)*, 48, 316; *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)* (Tokyo, 1962), 83, 160.

[118] TsA FSB, d. R4863, l. 44.

[119] AVP, f. 0146, op. 20, p. 176, d. 8, ll. 99–100.

[120] Maki Hisashi, *Tokumu kikanchō Konomi Ujitoshi: Kaze sekireki to shite ryūsui samushi* (Tokyo, 2010), 166–70. Konomi was a master shooter and took part in the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne.

When the Chinese government forces took up the gauntlet posed by the Japanese-Mongolian forces in Suiyuan in November, Moscow promptly canceled the military aid it had promised to the CCP in its drive to Ningxia on the grounds that it might provoke war between Japan and the Soviet Union. This made no sense, of course, because Moscow already knew of Japan's scheme in Suiyuan when it promised aid to the CCP. Moreover, the Soviet aid was to be disguised by a foreign company as a commercial transaction, and the weapons were to be of foreign make, in any case. Moscow's decision was political: It was similar to 1928, when it canceled the support of the uprising in Inner Mongolia. Moscow's promise in 1936, as in 1928, was a backup plan, which was ditched when it was no longer needed in November. Once the Chinese forces united and stood up to the Japanese challenge and energized Chinese patriotic sentiments, it would have been as good as "political suicide" to assist the CCP against the KMT-run Chinese government.[121] The CCP's Ningxia-Gansu campaign failed as a result. This, in turn, led to the downfall of Mao's political rival, Zhang Guotao (張國燾, 1897–1979), who was in charge of the campaign.[122] This failure hardly mattered to Moscow, whose priority was to unite China against Japan. China's public opinion had turned decidedly against Japan and in favor of the Soviet Union. As one historian put it, "in the minds of many in China, the phrases 'anti-communism' and 'bandit-suppression campaign,' slogans dear to Chiang Kai-shek, were identified with appeasement and subservience to Japan. The concept of a [KMT-CCP] united front and cooperation with the Soviet Union meant resistance to Japanese aggression."[123]

The Xi'an Incident, December 1936

The Suiyuan Incident was followed by two significant events, one in China and another in Japan. In China, in December 1936, Chiang Kai-shek was detained in Xi'an by his subordinates, Zhang Xueliang and Yang Hucheng (楊虎城, 1893–1949), the CCP sympathizer and the director of Xi'an military and civilian affairs.[124] Their aim was to force Chiang to form a united front with the CCP against the Japanese. In the end, Chiang agreed in principle and was released.

[121]This is the point Yang Kuisong makes in his *Xi'an shibian xintan*, 234.

[122]On this process, see Sun Guoda and Lu Yang, "Sulian lian-Jiang zhengce xia de xilujun, Xi'an shibian yu Zhang Guotao pipan," *Shilin*, no. 1 (2014): 134–38.

[123]Coble, *Facing Japan*, 380.

[124]Yang's connections to the CCP date back to 1927, when he jumped ship from the KMT to join the CCP. Although he was not admitted then, he assisted the CCP, convinced that it was the only force determined to resist Japan's aggression. See Mi Zanchen, *Yang Hucheng jiangjun zhuan* (Beijing, 1986), 35–36. 60–61, 89–90. In 1931, unlike Zhang Xueliang, Yang openly advocated resistance to Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Yang considered that Japan's subsequent actions followed the script of the Tanaka Memorial. See Yang Han, *Yang Hucheng dazhuan* (Beijing, 2007), 145, 160. In 1932, the Soviet spy Richard Sorge traveled to Xi'an to see Yang Hucheng's secretary, Nan Hanchen (南漢宸, 1895–1967), a CCP member, and presumably Yang Hucheng himself. See Chen Hansheng, *Sige shidai de wo* (Beijing, 1988), 54–55. Chen Hansheng was one of Sorge's Chinese assistants.

Although much has been written on the Xi'an Incident in many languages, the full picture remains nebulous. It is said that Mao Zedong and the CCP were elated, hoping to have Chiang killed. At the news from Xi'an, Stalin called Georgi Dimitrov, the head of the Comintern, and berated him:

> Are these events in China occurring with your sanction?
> — No!
> This is the greatest service to Japan that anyone could possibly render.
> —That's how we are regarding these events, too!
> *Who is this Wang Ming of yours?* A provocateur? He wanted to file a telegram to have Chiang Kai-shek killed.[125]

Stalin dictated a peaceful solution, which was duly conveyed to China. Following Stalin's lead, the Soviet press reported on Zhang Xueliang's actions as assisting Japan's plan to divide China.[126]

Although historians have interpreted Stalin's remark to Dimitrov as bespeaking his lack of foreknowledge about Zhang's action in Xi'an, it, in fact, does not necessarily mean that Stalin was not behind this event. Stalin had special and personal agents working for him throughout the secret police and other channels. Very little is known about them, but it does not mean that they were not behind the Xi'an Incident. Certainly, Zhang's plan was known outside his entourage. For example, Tokyo knew about the incident the night before it actually took place. Zhang's adviser, William H. Donald (1875–1946), an Australian, sotto voce warned Suma Yakichirō (see p. 209 in the previous chapter), then the Japanese consul in Nanjing, that Chiang would be detained by Zhang the following day but that it would be a "performance" (or a "play" [芝居]), and not to be alarmed. Suma immediately cabled Donald's warning to Tokyo. He remained proud of this extraordinary "scoop" throughout his life.[127] Moscow also knew that the Xi'an Incident, albeit outwardly divisive, was an event Zhang engineered to force Chiang to stop fighting the CCP and form a united front against Japan.

Zhang had long been game to do Moscow's bidding and actively sought the Soviet Union's intervention. In 1929, Moscow had successfully used the Tanaka Memorial to convince Zhang that China's real enemy was Japan. Zhang then followed Moscow's lead and publicized the memorial widely (see Chapter 2, p. 176). Soon, he had fallen under the spell of the Soviet Union and craved "heart and soul" (一心) Moscow's recognition and support.[128] According to the Chinese historian Yang Kuisong (杨奎松), at the time, Zhang had been hoping "for five

[125] Georgi Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933–1949*, ed. Ivo Banac (New Haven, CT, 2003), 42. Wang Ming (王明, 1904–1974) represented the CCP to the Comintern, working in Moscow from 1931 to 1937.

[126] See for example "Sobytiia v Kitae," *Pravda*, 14 December 1936, 1.

[127] Suma Michiaki, ed., *Suma Yakichirō gaikō hiroku* (Tokyo, 1988), 246–47; Suma, *Toki (Suma nikki)*, 74.

[128] Guo Junsheng, *Zhang Xueliang shishi jianzheng* (Shenyang, 2010), 99.

years" that the Soviet Union would change its view of him.[129] This would mean that Zhang's attitude toward the Soviet Union had fundamentally changed since 1930 or 1931. While traveling across Europe in 1933, he made repeated attempts to reach the Soviet Union through various channels, to no avail.[130] He was disconsolate, fearing that Moscow still distrusted him. Soviet intelligence, however, used its agents to examine secretly what exactly Zhang's interest in the Soviet Union was. Thus, they sent someone called Yu Bin (余斌), an overseas Chinese who belonged to the British Communist Party, to Zhang, with whom he spent a month in 1933 while he was in Europe. Yu reported to Moscow that Zhang had great expectations of Moscow's support against Japan. Zhang repeatedly urged Yu to study in the Soviet Union, offering to defray all his expenses. Zhang wanted Moscow to understand his new position toward the Soviet Union.[131] Thus, by 1933 or so, Moscow had gained a firm control of Zhang's political move. Without dictating anything concrete to Zhang, Stalin guided Zhang's political moves, a quintessentially Stalinist mode of manipulation.

Zhang had long taken measures to be recognized by Moscow. After Japan's occupation of Manchuria in 1931, he created a Russian department at Northeastern (Dongbei) University (of which he was rector) and educated "pro-Russian" specialists.[132] These and other pro-Soviet and pro-CCP students from the university led the December 9 movement in 1935.[133] A year later, students at the university's branch in Xi'an led massive demonstrations to commemorate the anniversary of the December 9 movement. By then, Zhang had surrounded himself with Communists such as Li Tiancai (see Chapter 2, p. 157); Liu Ding (劉鼎, 1902–86); Pan Wenyu (潘文鬱, 1906–35); Song Li (宋黎, 1911–2002), who served as his secretary; and Dong Jianwu (董健吾, 1891–1970), a secret CCP intelligence officer masquerading as a Christian pastor. Some of Zhang's military commanders such as Gao Fuyuan (高福源, 1901–37), Wang Yizhe (王以哲, 1896–1937), and Li Du (李杜, 1880–1956) had become CCP members as well.[134]

Liu Ding is noteworthy among these men. After he studied in Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1920s, Liu became a high-ranking CCP intelligence operative.[135] He was tasked with steering Zhang Xueliang in the direction Moscow

[129]Yang Kuisong, *Xi'an shibian xintan: Zhang Xueliang yu Zhonggong guanxi zhi yanjiu* (Taipei, 1995), 55. In a revised book published in 2012, he for some reason changed "five years" to "a few years." See Yang, *Xi'an shibian xintan* (2012), 63.

[130]Moscow's concern about Japan's reaction was one reason for the rejection. See *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. III* (Moscow, 2010), 229–30.

[131]Yang, *Xi'an shibian xintan* (2012), 63, 116.

[132]Wang Zhuoran, *Wang Zhuoran shiliao ji* (Shenyang, 1992), 168. The university was in exile in Beijing after 1931. Wang was Zhang's deputy who actually ran the university. See Ding Xiaochun and Wei Xiangqian, eds, *Zhang Xueliang yu Dongbei daxue* (Shenyang, 2003).

[133]*Huiyi Zhang Xueliang he Dongbeijun* (Beijin, 2017), 294–95.

[134]These individuals are discussed in Zhang Youkun. *Zhang Xueliang shenbian de Gongchandang ren ji Xi'an shibian jishi* (Beijing, 2017).

[135]Liu's wife, Wu Xianqing (吴先清, 1904–1938), also a CCP intelligence operative, worked for the Comintern intelligence in the Far East, and was sent to Tokyo in 1934 as a spy under the

dictated by Soong Ching-ling, Sun Yat-sen's widow and a Comintern agent;[136] the American journalist Agnes Smedley (1892–1950), also a Comintern agent and a close associate of Sorge and Ozaki in Shanghai;[137] and the CCP. One issue, in particular, troubled Zhang Xueliang: whether the CCP was genuinely patriotic. During the war with the Soviet Union in 1929 (see Chapter 2, p. 166), the CCP supported the Soviet Union against China. As a "fanatic patriot," Zhang could not shed his doubts about the CCP's ultimate political loyalty. In 1929, by Moscow's order, Liu organized Communist guerrilla forces on the Soviet side to be used against the Chinese. In 1936, when Zhang questioned Liu on the 1929 war, Liu, utterly disingenuously, imputed the CCP's obsequious stance to the "radical left deviationists" in the party, stating that the CCP had learned a lesson since then and was now committed to defending China. In any case, it was Japan, Liu added, equally disingenuously, that instigated the 1929 Sino-Soviet war. Liu managed to help Zhang dispel any lingering doubts about the commitment of the CCP and the Soviet Union to China's national defense. The CCP, Liu explained to Zhang, combined the "ideals of Marxism-Leninism and the goal of national-democratic revolution."[138] Mao Zedong praised Liu for his work with Zhang.[139]

Zhang was game to do what Moscow demanded of him: to force Chiang Kai-shek into line with Moscow's strategy of a new KMT-CCP united front.[140] Zhang most likely knew a famous story from ancient China about using armed forces to "remonstrate" with its ruler: *bingjian* (兵諫). This was what Zhang actually did in Xi'an in 1936.

It was against the background of the students' boiling political anger and the growing popularity of the CCP that the Xi'an Incident took place. By detaining Chiang Kai-shek in Xi'an, Zhang believed he was carrying out Moscow's wishes: He viewed Chiang's detention as a patriotic act of exculpation for Moscow. In doing so, he wanted to make amends for the brief Sino-Soviet war of 1929 over

guise of a nursing student. Later, she moved to Moscow to study at the Institute of Marxism and Leninism. Arrested in 1937 as a "Japanese spy," she died in the Soviet Gulag the following year. See Mu Xin, *Yinbi zhanxian tongshuai Zhou Enlai* (Beijing, 2018), 41–42, 396–97.

[136] See Yang Kuisong, *Minguo renwu guoyan lu* (Guangzhou, 2009), 362–65.

[137] Their relationship in Shanghai is detailed in a memoir by Sorge's Chinese assistant: Fang Wen, *Zuoerge zai Zhongguo: Zuoerge zenyang jiaodao wo zoushang qingbao zhanxian* (Beijing, 1988). This book by Fang (1901–1995, his real name was Zhang Jinzeng [张金增], and his party name Liu Jinzhong [刘进中]) was published by China's intelligence research department for internal use only. For Soong's and Smedley's role in choosing Liu, see Li Tao and Yi Hui, eds., *Liu Ding* (Beijing, 2002), 38–39, 136; Wu Dianyao, *Liu Ding zhuan* (Beijing, 2012), 110–112; Wang Guangyuan, "Zhang Xueliang yinwei zhiji de Zhonggong daibiao Liu Ding," *Yanhuang chunqiu*, no. 11 (1999), 30–31; Mu, *Yinbi zhanxian* 40, 347. The CCP-appointed contact person for Smedley, Dong Jianwu, also played the role of an intermediary between the CCP and Zhang Xueliang in 1936. See Wang Guangyuan, *Hongse mushi Dong Jianwu* (Beijing, 2000), 112, 163–64; Dong Xiafei and Dong Yunfei, *Shenmi de hongse mushi Dong Jianwu* (Beijing, 2001), 203–14.

[138] Liu and Yi, *Liu Ding*, 237.

[139] Ibid., 65, 241, 252; Wu, *Liu Ding zhuan*, 53, 115, 129, 297, 509.

[140] Wu, *Liu Ding zhuan*, 290.

the CER. When the Soviet press reported that Zhang's action would only help Japan, he was bewildered and disconcerted.[141] Zhang's discombobulation did not concern Stalin, who knew well that Zhang had rendered Moscow invaluable service by forcing Chiang Kai-shek to accept a new united front with the CCP. Stalin's only aim was to ensure that Chiang not be killed by the revengeful Mao. Zhang was no longer of much use to Stalin, and the KMT had lost trust in Zhang. After the Xi'an Incident, Zhang was tried by Chiang's government for his "coup" attempt. Zhang spent the next half century under house arrest in China and, from 1946, in Taiwan. Zhang did not regret having sacrificed his freedom to strengthen China's unity. He did so believing that "If I don't descend into hell, who will?" (我不入地狱, 谁入地狱).[142]

Although Moscow distanced itself from Zhang's actions in Xi'an, not everyone was convinced by Stalin's assessment, including his own intelligence officers. For example, Aboltin, working in Beijing under the guise of a TASS correspondent (see Chapter 3, p. 233), wrote that the Chinese believed that even though the Soviet Union, Zhang, and the CCP had reached a secret agreement, Moscow was now publicly denying it and had denounced Zhang. China's "leftist circles" were astounded that Moscow was prepared to damage the objective of a united front and even threaten to divide the Chinese by criticizing Zhang. They believed, Aboltin wrote approvingly, that Zhang and his army genuinely supported the united front and should be commended instead of decried. Now, Aboltin wrote, some Chinese soldiers were claiming to have been deceived by the Communists. Moscow dismissed Aboltin's reports as "disinformation."[143] It should be remembered in this connection that Yang Hucheng had been in contact with the Soviet spy Richard Sorge as early as 1932 (see p. 310, footnote 124). Chiang Kai-shek, too, knew that Moscow stood behind Zhang. In summer 1941, he predicted—wrongly as it turned out—that Japan would attack the Soviet Union on August 15. In a secret meeting with the CCP, Chiang proposed the release of Zhang Xueliang from house arrest in that event,[144] thus confirming that he had taken Zhang as a hostage against Moscow.

Zhang was loath right up until his death in 2001 to discuss the details of the Xi'an Incident. What is known is that Zhang had already come to terms with the CCP well before he took this decisive action in Xi'an in December 1936. In January 1936, he had agreed to stop fighting against the CCP's Red Army, and in April and May, he secretly met Zhou Enlai, one of the CCP leaders, and reached an agreement to reorganize the Red Army into a national army for

[141] See Zhang Kuitang, *Zhang Xueliang zhuan* (Taipei, 1993), 322–23, based on the unpublished memoirs of Li Tiancai. See also Wu, *Liu Ding zhuan*, 290. The Soviet foreign commissar, Litvinov, privately consoled China's ambassador, Tsiang (see p. 342 in this chapter), by saying that he did not believe that Zhang had colluded with Japan. See Yang, *Xi'an shibian xintan* (2012), 349.

[142] Bi Wanwen, *Yingxiong bense: Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi jiemi* (Beijing, 2002), 244. See also Sima Sangdun et al., *Zhang laoshi yu Zhang shaoshuai* (Taipei, 1984), 280.

[143] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. III*, 739.

[144] *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. V.* (Moscow, 2007), 559.

the sake of fighting jointly against the Japanese. Zhang permitted Communist propaganda among his forces. By 1936, Zhang had his own representative in Moscow.[145] Zhang's exemplar was Sheng Shicai, the governor of Xinjiang. Sheng had consolidated his power with military, material, and personnel aid from the Soviet Union. This convinced Zhang to jump ship from the KMT,[146] which elated Mao, who divined that Zhang's decision represented a fundamental shift in China's middle class and foretokened a "coming big revolution."[147] Mao was right. The Comintern's chief, Dimitrov, however, did not trust Zhang completely and denied him membership, a decision personally sanctioned by Stalin.[148] Given Zhang's conspiratorial political career, Moscow played it safe. In 1936, apparently expecting to be admitted to the CCP, Zhang addressed Zhou Enlai as "Comrade Zhou." While it is not entirely clear whether the CCP had decided to admit Zhang when Moscow rejected his request, Zhang stopped using "Comrade" in addressing the CCP members after Moscow blocked his application.[149]

In 1993, when asked about his desire to join the CCP in 1936, however, Zhang responded: "It's nonsense."[150] At the same time, he did say that "I am the Communist Party" (我就是共产党). Although the exact meaning of this statement is not immediately clear, the following remarks make it clearer. Admitting that he had had contact with the CCP for a long time, and that the CCP was patriotic, Zhang stated unequivocally: "I sympathize with them [CCP]. I not only sympathize with them, I support them. That's my genuine heart" (我同情他們, 不但同情他們, 我擁護他們, 這是眞正我內心).[151] These remarks were included in his memoir written in the 1950s and published in Taiwan two years after Zhang's death in 2001. When his memoir was republished in Beijing in 2005, the Chinese editor cut the entire section that included his remarks declaring his allegiance to Communism. The editor's reason: It was "not suitable to the conditions of the country."[152] Unless Zhang's allegiance to the CCP was considered politically inconvenient to the Chinese government, this elision makes no sense.

[145] See "The Reminiscences of Tsiang T'ing-fu (1896–1965)" (Chinese Oral History Project, East Asian Institute of Columbia University, 1974), 209.

[146] Sun Guoda, "Zhang Xueliang rudang zhi mei xinkao," *Shanghai dangshi yu dangjian*, no. 10 (2014): 15–17.

[147] Quoted in Yang, *Xi'an shibian xintan* (2012), 95.

[148] *Politbiuro TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i Komintern. 1919–1943. Dokumenty* (Moscow, 2004), 736–39.

[149] Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang yigao*, comp. Dou Yingtai (Beijing, 2005), 152–55.

[150] *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)* (Beijing, 2014), 6:1920.

[151] Quoted in Zhang Xueliang and Zhang Zhiyu, *Zayi suigan manlu: Zhang Xueliang zizhuanti yizhu* (Taipei, 2002), 174. His remarks were omitted by his interviewers and family and did not make it into the publication of his interviews. See Yang Tianshi, "Zhang Xueliang koushu toulu 'shi Gongchandang'," accessed 10 November 2017, https://cul.qq.com/a/20141018/019705.htm. However, Yang refers to Zhang's remark ("I'm indeed the Communist Party") in his introduction to the publication: *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 1:21.

[152] Zhang Xueliang, *Zhang Xueliang yigao*, 9.

Clearly, Beijing still has reason to hide certain matters about Zhang. Zhang never spoke critically of the CCP and, of his many siblings, his favorite was Xuesi (see Chapter 3, p. 214, footnote 142), who became a CCP member in 1933.[153]

After Chiang's arrest, in any event, Zhang hoisted red flags all over Xi'an.[154] Simultaneously, from late 1935 and throughout 1936, Zhang met with Bogomolov several times and had secret meetings with other Soviet representatives. In a meeting with Bogomolov in November 1935, Zhang stated that in the event of a Soviet-Japanese war, he would defend the Soviet Union in every way he could. He also expressed his concern that his past hostility toward Communism might prove a bar to establishing "friendship" with Moscow.[155]

For his part, Chiang, too, had dealt with the CCP and the Soviet Union simultaneously. Chiang's request for purchase of Soviet military equipment was approved by Moscow in 1935, although his proposal of a military alliance with the Soviet Union was not.[156] In 1935, Chiang began exploring an anti-Japanese joint action with the CCP. Negotiations were carried out in China, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere in 1935 and 1936. In China, Chiang entrusted the task to T.V. Soong (Soong Tse-ven, 宋子文, 1894–1971, Chiang's and Sun Yat-sen's brother-in-law). Yet, they failed to reach a mutually acceptable compromise.[157] While Bogomolov was in Moscow in December 1936, just a few days before the Xi'an Incident took place, he reported to Dimitrov that "Chiang Kai-shek will decide on an agreement with the Communists only when brought to the brink of war with Japan and in connection with an agreement with the Sov[iet] Union."[158] Chiang wanted Soviet assurance of support to aid him politically and militarily in exchange for any reconciliation with the CCP. It is unknown whether Bogomolov met with Stalin at that time.[159] Still, it would not be surprising at all if Stalin stood behind the Xi'an Incident, which, according to S.C.M. Paine, "was the most successful act of Soviet diplomacy between 1917 and 1991, when the Soviet Union was no more."[160]

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[153] Zhang Xueliang and Tang Degang, *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi* (Taipei, 2009), 53, 300. Zhang wrote in his letter to Tang that "I'm indeed the Communist Party" (54). He was not uncritical of Soviet Communism, however. See Zhang Zhiyu, *Koushu lishi zhi wai: Zhang Xueliang shi zenyang yigeren* (Taipei, 2002), 168–172.

[154] "The Reminiscences of Tsiang T'ing-fu (1896–1965)," 208.

[155] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. III* (Moscow, 2010), 369–70, 473–75, 484–85, 569–70. See also A.Iu. Sidorov, "Chzhan Siuelian. Politicheskii portret 'Molodogo marshala'," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 2 (2008): 150.

[156] See *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1973), 18:538, 663.

[157] This is detailed in Yang Kuisong, *Shiqu de jihui?: kangzhan qianhou Guo-Gong tanpan shilu* (Beijing, 2010), 2–71. On Soong, see Wang Song, *Song Ziwen dazhuan* (Beijing, 2011), 106–8. See also Aleksandr Pantsov, *Nepobezhdennyi. Podlinnaia istoriia Chan Kaishi* (Moscow, 2019), 225.

[158] Dimitrov, *Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, 40.

[159] There is no record of Bogomolov visiting Stalin's office in the Kremlin at that time in Stalin's office visitor logs. See *Na prieme u Stalina. Tetradi (zhurnaly) zapisei lits, priniatykh I.V. Stalinym (1924–1953 gg.). Spravochnik* (Moscow, 2008). It is possible that he met Stalin elsewhere, for example, at his dacha.

[160] S.C.M. Paine, *Wars for Asia, 1911–1949* (New York, 2012), 104.

Figure 4.6. Soong Ching-ling, Sun Yat-sen's widow, who worked as a secret Comintern agent (taken in the 1930s)

In Xi'an, secret negotiations involving Chiang, Zhang, Yang, Zhou Enlai, Soong Mei-ling (Chiang's wife), Soong Ching-ling (Mei-ling's older sister and a secret agent of Moscow),[161] and T.V. Soong, took place. Zhang and Yang fought over whether Chiang should sign any agreements (Zhang was against and Yang for). In the end, Zhang participated in a direct negotiation between Chiang and Zhou. Many years later, when asked what happened there, Zhang refused to comment.[162] After this negotiation, Chiang was released. Some historians suspect that one of the conditions of his release was that Chiang agree to launch war against Japan in six months. This, they suspect, explains what happened approximately six months later, on 7 July 1937—the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Available information on the agreements discussed in Xi'an suggests that the parties involved agreed on "launching a war of resistance." One clause included "launching a war of resistance in three months" (三个月后抗战发动).[163] Various accounts exist on these "agreements," and what, if any, secret ones were reached in the end remains obscure. Chiang did not put his signature to them, in any case. When asked in 1998 whether there was any agreement on the timing for "launching a war of resistance" and whether it was six months or twelve months,

[161] What role Soong Ching-ling played in the events leading up to the Xi'an Incident still remains to be examined carefully. "Very happy" to learn that Zhang and Yang had detained Chiang in Xi'an, she told her secretary, Li Yun (李雲, 1915–2013), a CCP special intelligence operative, that Chiang was "cunning and cannot be trusted easily." Soong received a minatory letter accusing her of "colluding" (勾结) with Zhang and Yang. So, the CCP provided protection to her. See Li Yun, "Dang pai wo gei Song Qingling dang mishu, " *Yanhuang chunqiu*, no. 6 (2001): 41.

[162] NHK shuzaihan and Usui Katsumi, *Chō Gakuryō no Shōwashi saigo no shōgen* (Tokyo, 1991), 222–23.

[163] Zhou Enlai's report in *Zhou Enlai xuanji* (Beijing, 1984), 1:72.

Zhang Xueliang responded by saying that he could not discuss the question. His response convinced his Japanese interviewer that there was an agreement on the timing of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.[164]

The Soviet clout in Tokyo

Meanwhile, as noted earlier, Japan had adopted a new policy toward China. When the Hirota cabinet collapsed in February 1937, Kamei Kan-ichirō and like-minded allies had set their sights on Prince Konoe Fumimaro, the speaker of the House of Peers, whom several years earlier they had deemed capable of steering Japan in the "right" direction.[165] Konoe happily accepted their backing. In view of both Moscow's assessment of Konoe and Kamei's connections to Moscow, there is little doubt that it was Moscow that had set an eye on Konoe as a politician amenable to its influence.[166] Many other political and military operatives schemed to place their favorite candidates in position to become prime minister. Ishiwara and Asahara Kenzō (see p. 237 in the previous chapter), the latter of whom became a "rightist" as a cover for his leftist revolutionary activity, were instrumental in the appointment of Hayashi Senjūrō, an army general, as prime minister in February 1937. It was therefore rumored at the time that "Reds" stood behind Hayashi, although they failed to place other favorites in his cabinet.[167] Little was accomplished under Hayashi, however, and his cabinet lasted for a mere four months. In his place came Konoe in June 1937. He enjoyed the broad support of a population eager for a new political leader.

Prince Konoe was liked by people on both the left and the right. He was indeed somewhat of an amalgam of both. He hailed from a high noble family related distantly to the Imperial Court.[168] He entered the University of Tokyo, the top university in the country, but transferred to the University of Kyoto, where Marxism had a strong influence. Konoe was well acquainted and

[164] Furuno Naoya, *Chōke sandai no kōbō* (Tokyo, 1999), 218–19, 260.

[165] Kamei's testimony to the Occupation Forces after World War II: Kamei Kan-ichirō, "Personal History Statement," Kamei Kan-ichirō Documents, no. 332, 4–5, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo; Wada Kōsaku, *Daisensō no omote to ura. Kugurinuketa kōun na otoko no kiroku* (Tokyo, 2000), 114. It is said that Ishiwara had similar thoughts about Konoe. See Tanaka Shin-ichi, "Ishiwara Kanji no sekai kan," *Bungei shunjū* 43, no. 2 (February 1965): 203.

[166] On Troianovskii's assessment of Konoe, see Chapter 3, p. 202 His successor, Iurenev, had a similar view. Writing to Moscow on 19 February 1935 about his meeting over lunch with Konoe, Iurenev informed Moscow of Konoe's opinion that parliamentarism based on political parties had outlived itself and that it was time to create a single party from people with "salubrious thinking" in the existing parties. He emphasized, according to Iurenev, that there was significant rapprochement between "fascist elements headed by Kamei" and the military youth, whose goal was to "emancipate the Asian peoples from the Europeans." The military youth were generally well disposed toward the Soviet Union. They were hostile instead to the Anglo-Saxons. AVP, f. 0146, op. 15, p. 112, d. 114, l. 66.

[167] Maki Hisashi, *Fukutsu no shunrai. Sogō Shinji to sono jidai* (Tokyo, 2013), 2:134–56.

[168] The most useful biography of Konoe is Yabe Teiji, *Konoe Fumimaro*, 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1952).

sympathized with socialism and Marxism. A contemporary observer stated that Konoe had a "deep understanding of and sympathy with leftist thought and movements."[169] He was critical of the world order defined by Anglo-American liberalism. Troianovskii reported Konoe's anti-capitalist and pro-proletarian sentiments as early as 1932 (see Chapter 3, p. 202). Simultaneously, Konoe entertained sympathy with America. In 1934, Konoe visited the United States and met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1935, Iurenev wrote to Moscow about Konoe's pro-Anglo-American position (see p. 318 in this chapter). He sent his son, Konoe Fumitaka (近衛文隆, 1915–56), to study in America, first at the Lawrenceville School, a preparatory boarding school in New Jersey, and then at Princeton. Yet, Premier Konoe also seemed to have entertained sympathy with the army's *kōdōha*. As Ushiba Tomohiko (牛場友彦, 1901–93), a close classmate of Ozaki Hotsumi at Ikkō (now the University of Tokyo), a graduate of Oxford University, and Konoe's aid, noted, Konoe was both pro- and anti-Anglo-America: He believed that the future lay with Britain and America, but he was distrustful of them.[170] Konoe's view of Manzhouguo was unflattering to the Japanese. He told the Chinese diplomat Gao Zongwu (see Chapter 2, p. 79) in 1938 that Manzhouguo was not a real or normal state, adding that his remark was "just between you and me."[171]

When Konoe was appointed prime minister, the *New York Times* published a perceptive article:

> Army officers put an end to party government is 1932 by shooting the last party Premier, and since then Japan has been marking time under a series of stop-gap super-party Cabinets. The Emperor's advisers acted on the principle that it was wiser to bend than to break.
>
> Each of those Cabinets has been weak and shallowly rooted, and therefore easily changed. This fluidity has saved the country from civil strife, which might have developed into a revolutionary struggle.
>
> Prince Konoe's appointment as Premier was an effort to end the unstable phase and enter a more permanent, more constructive period. It accords with the people's wish. The nation is tired of stop-gap governments and transient premiers. . . . He [Konoe] does not share liberalism's confidence in economic liberty and party politics. His sympathies are with those Japanese who, disliking the names Fascist and Nazi, call themselves reformists and share half of Europe's new faith that the State controls a short cut to the millennium.
>
> His appointment guarantees moderation, but his progress will be toward the totalitarian goal. . . . Under his guidance Japan must

[169] Kazami Akira, "Konoe Fumimaro shi o megutte," *Bungei shunjū* 27, no. 11 (November 1949): 65.

[170] *Ushiba Tomohiko shi danwa kiroku* (Tokyo, 1979), 2:55.

[171] Gao Zongwu, *Gao Zongwu huiyi lu* (Beijing, 2009), 48.

> be expected to move gradually toward a greater degree of political centralization—and of economic centralization as well.[172]

Thus, while perceptive observers saw Konoe as furthering political centralization, they also viewed him as an important change in the Japanese government toward a more stable, moderate, popular, and constructive period. In certain respects, these were all valid judgments. Whatever truth there is to this perspective, however, it misses one crucial political mainstay that did *not* change and would fundamentally define the Konoe administration, perhaps even more than it had the previous ones: Stalin's secret influence.

Figure 4.7. Kazami Akira, Premier Konoe Fumimaro's chief cabinet secretary

Konoe appointed Kazami Akira (see p. 299 in this chapter) as the chief cabinet secretary (書記長), even though he had met him only once before and hardly knew him. Before his death in 1932, Mori Kaku (see Chapter 3, p. 183) met Kazami and thought highly of him. Kazami and Kuhara Fusanosuke (who met Stalin in 1927) were also close.[173] Kazami was recommended by others as well. Kamei, a close friend of Kazami's, was one of them.[174] The real reason for Kazami's appointment was that Konoe's entourage, including Kamei and Asō, selected and espoused his candidacy for the position. They and other politically active intellectuals had formed an informal study group called *Shōwa kenkyūkai* (昭和研究会) in late 1933, which in 1936 became a formal organization or brain trust. It "included some of the finest minds in the country,"[175] ranging from left

[172] Hugh Byas, "Japan Charts a New Course," *New York Times*, 6 June 1937, 71.

[173] Ōya Sōichi, *Shōwa kaibutsu den* (Tokyo, 1957), 64, 80–81.

[174] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 26. Kamei claimed that in 1934, he had conspired with Kazami to bring down the Saitō cabinet. See *Gendaishi shiryō (44). Kokka sōdōin (2). Seiji*, 18.

[175] Chalmers Johnson, *An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring*, exp. ed. (Stanford, CA, 1990), 238.

to right, although, as was the case at the time, it is difficult to distinguish between them. A "secret group" formed within this think tank, including Kamei; Asō; Fujita Isamu (see Chapter 3, p. 205); Arima Yoriyasu (有馬頼寧, 1884–1957), a nobleman who opposed noble privilege; Sengoku Yotarō (千石與太郎, 1874–1950), an organizer of agricultural cooperatives; Ikawa Tadao (井川忠雄, 1893–1947), a close associate of Konoe's; and Kazami himself. Among them, they decided on Kazami as the cabinet's chief secretary.[176]

The Kamei-Kazami connection naturally raises the question of Soviet involvement. When Kamei spoke with Raivid in June 1936, he mentioned Kazami to Raivid as someone who shared Kamei's political views, a politician who "left Fascism behind and has much contact with the peasantry."[177] This was perhaps a deliberately dissembling introduction. Kazami had been a Marxist in his youth.[178] In 1927 and 1928, while working as a journalist, he published twelve essays "On Marx" in his name as the chief editor of the provincial newspaper *Shinano Mainichi Shinbun*. In discussing "The Communist Manifesto," Kazami commended it as a declaration of historical significance which "no word could overstate." He went on to argue that it marked a new starting point in the history of humankind and allowed toilers to understand their historical mission and dignity.[179]

Kazami also happened to be a very close associate of the Soviet agent Ozaki Hotsumi, who worked then as a newspaper correspondent. Exactly when their association began is unclear, but they maintained an extraordinarily close relationship. It was Kazami who, in the summer of 1938, recommended Ozaki as a cabinet consultant (*shokutaku* 嘱託) to Konoe. Kazami even boasted about placing Ozaki so high in the Japanese political establishment.[180] Kazami's move to install Ozaki deeply discomfited a cabinet official. His fear was realized when Ozaki was arrested in 1941 as an integral member of the Sorge spy ring.[181] After World War II, Kazami wrote about Ozaki, insisting that he knew nothing about Ozaki's espionage activity. Ozaki, said Kazami disingenuously, did not purvey confidential information to Moscow, in any case. Kazami even went so far as to

[176] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 29. Arima entered the Konoe cabinet as minister of agriculture.

[177] AVP, f. 05, op. 16, p. 25, d. 143, l. 28.

[178] Probably it was Kazami who involved his friend, E. Herbert Norman (1909–57), in Marxism. Norman was the son of Canadian missionaries in Japan. He was to become a noted Japanologist and diplomat. While studying in Cambridge, England, in the 1930s, Norman associated with Communist circles. Although it is unknown whether he actually joined the Communist Party, there is no doubt that he was involved in the Communist movement. See Okabe Noburu, "Nōman to 'sengo rejīmu': kindai Nihon o ankoku ni someageta kuromaku," *Hikaku hōsei kenkyū*, No. 38 (2015): 101–122. Pursued by McCarthyism during the 1950s, he committed suicide. Among many books on him, the latest is Kudō Miyoko, *Supai to iwareta gaikōkan: Hābāto Nōman no shōgai* (Tokyo, 2007).

[179] Suda Teiichi, *Kazami Akira to sono jidai* (Tokyo, 1965), 56–61.

[180] Yatsugi Kazuo, *Shōwa dōran shishi* (Tokyo, 1971), 1:362.

[181] Yokomizo Mitsuteru, *Shōwashi henrin* (Tokyo, 1974), 206.

regret Ozaki's arrest (and execution): Without the Sorge affair, Ozaki's activity might have never become known. Kazami boldly fought his friend's corner, claiming that Ozaki wanted to create a new Marxist order in Asia: Ozaki died a martyr for Marxism.[182] These remarks by Kazami inadvertently but fully revealed that he had known Ozaki's true colors. Thus, Kazami as good as admitted that he had shared his close friend's politics.

Given his personal and official proximity to Ozaki, it is difficult to explain why Kazami was not interrogated about the Sorge-Ozaki affair. He was merely called as a witness. Clearly, his position, first as the chief cabinet secretary and later as the minister of justice in 1940 under Konoe, protected him.

Kazami also knew Himori Torao (日森虎雄, 1899–1945), a journalist who had special access to the CCP, quite well. The Japanense government and the Japanese Army, including the Kwantung Army, valued him and paid handsomely for his intelligence. Himori had become Ozaki's close friend through a Communist circle while they both worked in China in the early 1930s. When Kazami visited China in 1936, Himori was his guide. Himori also happened to be very close to Tanaka Ryūkichii. When Ozaki was arrested, Himori went to see Kazami and Tanaka for advice.[183]

After World War II, Kazami joined the Japanese Socialist Party's Marxist-oriented left wing and promoted Soviet-Japanese and Chinese-Japanese friendship.

In light of all of this, one could presume that Kazami, like his close friend, Ozaki, and Richard Sorge, was a Marxist camouflaged as a "fascist." As the Konoe cabinet's chief secretary, Kazami wrote a preface to the Japanese edition of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, stating that one could not but admire Hitler's patriotism and courage.[184] It should be remembered that Sorge had joined the Nazi Party as a cover. Kazami's colleague in the Konoe cabinet, Funada Naka (船田中, 1895–1979), later recalled Kazami's work and suspected that Kazami had disguised himself as an apostate from Communism.[185]

The list of Konoe's entourage with complicated ties to the Soviet Union does not end here. Ushiba Tomohiko, who became Konoe's personal secretary, claimed that it was he who recommended Ozaki, a "very attractive man," to Kazami as a consultant for the cabinet. Yet, Ushiba insisted that he knew nothing

[182] Kazami, "Ozaki Hotsumi hyōden," 78–80.

[183] Suda Teiichi, " 'Shanhai no kiketsu' jānarisuto Himori Torao," *Ushio*, no. 145 (October 1971): 216–20.

[184] His preface dated 20 November 1937 in Adolf Hitler, *Waga tōsō*, tr. Ōkubo Yasuo (Tokyo, 1937), 1–2.

[185] *Gendaishi o tsukuru hitobito (2)* (Tokyo, 1971), 250–51. There were quite a few disguised Communists in the *Shōwa kenkyūkai* (Konoe's brain trust) such as Katsumata Seiichi (勝間田清一, 1908–89) and Kawai Tōru (河合徹, 1911–92). After World War II, Kawai joined the JCP, while Katsumata became chairman of the Japanese Socialist Party and a Soviet agent under the code name of "Gavre." See John Barron, *KGB Today: The Hidden Hand* (New York, 1983), 174; Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the World* (London, 2005), 300, 556–67.

about Ozaki's secret activity for the Soviet Union. Like Kazami, he denied disingenuously that any state secret had been leaked to Ozaki, who wrought no harm to Japan. Asked whether Ozaki's activity targeted Premier Konoe, Ushiba sidestepped the question, muttering "it's just . . . ." He claimed that he had no contact with Ozaki after he graduated from college until 1938.[186] In this, too, he was dishonest. In 1936, he and Ozaki crossed the Pacific by boat together and attended the Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations (see Chapter 3, p. 176) in Yosemite, California.

Another important political figure joined Ushiba and Ozaki on this journey: Saionji Kinkazu (西園寺公一, 1906–93), one of Saionji Kinmochi's grandchildren (see Chapter 2, p. 133), the last of the *genrō*s, and a member of a princely family. In fact, it was Ushiba who first introduced Ozaki to Saionji (who studied at Oxford with Ushiba) in Tokyo before they traveled to Yosemite.[187]

Ozaki befriended Saionji, who embraced socialism while studying at Oxford and later renounced his noble privileges. In 1940, Saionji became a consultant for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in 1941, he accompanied Matsuoka Yōsuke, the foreign minister, to the Soviet Union and Europe. Matsuoka introduced Saionji to Molotov, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs, as a "Bolshevik from a Japanese noble family."[188] Saionji went on to provide reams of valuable information to Ozaki and was implicated in the Sorge-Ozaki spy affair but given a suspended sentence. It is known that Saionji became a JCP member after World War II, although later, he was expelled from the party. He was invited to Communist China as an "unofficial ambassador" and lived in Beijing from 1958 to 1970.[189]

When Sorge, Ozaki, and their group were arrested in 1941, a thorough investigation was *not* conducted for political reasons: The government was afraid of the political fallout. Ushiba, like Kazami, was merely questioned as a witness. Another private secretary of Konoe's, Kishi Michizō (岸道三, 1899–1962), like Ushiba, maintained a very close relationship with Ozaki, and yet did not seem to have been questioned at all. The army refused to cooperate with the prosecutors, who could not probe Mutō Akira and others, who had given information freely to Sorge. When Saionji's home was searched, stacks of classified documents that he could not have gotten through his position were found. Saionji confessed that he received them from Fujii Shigeru (藤井茂, 1900–1956), who in July 1937 was one of a group appointed to make a fundamental and compendious study of the Soviet Union's strength. Fujii was never questioned.[190] In 1941, Fujii, along with

[186] *Ushiba Tomohiko shi*, 1:166–69, 2:255–56, 3:125. The American historian Gordon W. Prange, who interviewed Ushiba after World War II, noted: "His thin mouth knew how to keep a secret, and he generally selected his friends and associates with care." See Gordon W. Prange (with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon), *Target Tokyo: The Story of the Sorge Spy Ring* (New York, 1984), 148.

[187] Saionji Kinkazu, *Kizoku no taijō* (Tokyo, 1951), 50.

[188] Ibid., 110.

[189] See his memoir, *Saionji Kinkazu kaikoroku* (Tokyo, 1991).

[190] *Ōta Taizō tsuisō roku* (Tokyo, 1972), 279–80; JACAR, C05110526800.

Saionji, accompanied Matsuoka to Europe. With Matsuoka, he met Molotov and Stalin. Stalin recognized him as a Japanese naval officer and toasted him.[191] The full scale of Moscow's penetration into Japan's power centers remains unknown to us even now.[192] It is patently clear, however, that Moscow's hidden hand reached into the very core of the Japanese government through various channels that linked left and right: Kamei, Asō, Kazami, Ozaki, Sorge, Kuhara, Tanaka Ryūkichi, Saionji, and other unknown individuals as well.

They were not necessarily connected directly to Moscow, which conducted many different, separate, and independent channels of intelligence and political operations. Soviet diplomats were largely kept out of them. Soviet agents and influencers in one channel did not know their counterparts belonging to different channels. One informer with the code name "Economist" is a good example. In the tense period following the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, Sorge and Ozaki were not the only ones who provided critical information on Japan's decision not to attack the Soviet Union. The "Economist" was likely Takamore Shigeru (高毛礼茂, ca. 1900–?), who worked for a Japanese oil company in Sakhalin (Kita karafuto sekiyu kabushiki kaisha) from ca. 1927 to 1940.[193] Like Komatsubara, he began to cooperate with the Soviet intelligence when he was caught in a Soviet "honey trap." He returned to Tokyo in 1940. In 1944, he worked at the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo. When Iurii A. Rastvorov (1921–2004), a Soviet spy stationed in Tokyo, defected to the United States in 1954, Takamore was one of the thirty-six Japanese agents Rastvorov divulged. Many of the spies seem to have been recruited by the Soviet Union either before World War II in Japan or in the Soviet Union.[194] Significantly, the Soviet extensive espionage network in Japan did not suffer much from the busting of the Sorge-Ozaki spy ring in 1941. It remained robust throughout WWII, during which Soviet moles operated among the highest ranks of the Japanese government.[195] In the summer of 1937, the Japanese government reckoned that in Japan and Manzhouguo, there were approximately two thousand Soviet spies and fifty thousand intentional

[191] Hasegawa Shin-ichi, "Matsuoka Yōsuke to NiSso chūritsu jōyaku," *Chūō kōron*, 80, no. 5 (1965): 382.

[192] A memoir by Sergo Beriia (1924–2000), the son of Lavrentii P. Beriia, Stalin's secret police chief after Ezhov, is probably wrong to claim that Matsuoka was Moscow's "agent of influence." See his *Moi otets—Lavrentii Beriia* (Moscow, 1994), 135. Matsuoka may have been a Freemason, however. Beriia likely confused Matsuoka with his entourage such as Saionji and Fujii.

[193] Miyake Masaki, *Sutārin no taiNichi jōhō kōsaku* (Tokyo, 2010), 180–228. Takamore married a Russian woman who was a Soviet secret police operative, and provided reams of valuable information to Moscow. See Iurii Rastvorov, "Nihon o kōshite supai shita," *Bungei shunjū* 58, no. 3 (March 1980): 118. Takamore appears in Soviet documents related to the Japanese embassy in Moscow. See for example AVP, f. 146, op. 20, p. 47, d. 5, l. 116 and d. 6, l. 88 (letters from Takamore, 1937).

[194] Hiyama Yoshiaki, *Sokoku o Soren ni utta 36 nin no nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1982). Many real names were not named in this book. The Japanese police record, whose title is said to vary slightly from one copy to another (so that in the case of a leak, its source could be identified) cannot be cited here but contains real names.

[195] See an account by Sergo Beriia in *Moi otets*, 135–36.

and unintentional Soviet agents.[196] Needless to say, it is impossible to verify such an estimate. It signified the rank inadequacy of Japan's counterespionage, however.

There was definite concern in Japan regarding the political orientation of Konoe's entourage. It is said that Ozaki and Kazami regarded the Konoe cabinet as a "Kerenskii regime," a reference to the transitional government in 1917 in Russia that led to the Bolshevik Revolution.[197] Referring to the second Konoe cabinet formed three years later, in the summer of 1940, Ōta Tamekichi (太田為吉, 1880–1956), a former ambassador to the Soviet Union, stated that many people were exercised about the Konoe cabinet, and the situation was grave: The new government resembled very much that of Aleksandr Kerenskii (1881–1970) in Russia in 1917.[198] Evidently, there was an awareness of Soviet influence and intrigue in and around Konoe, even at that time.

In a personal history drafted in awkward English to the Occupation Forces in Japan after World War II, Kamei Kan-ichirō tried to put daylight between himself and the Ozaki-Sorge ring. He spoke of Ozaki as the most noted of "the disguised Communists who mingled among the nationalists [*sic*] group." He even informed Abe Genki (安倍源基, 1894–1989), then director of the Public Safety Bureau in the Home Ministry, that there had been "disguised communists and among them was Ozaki. The suggestion was again turned down [by Abe] saying that Kamei was trying to oust from the side of Prince Konoe Kamei's competitors for Prince Konoe's favour and Kamei wanted to monopolize the patronage of Konoe."[199] Understandably, Abe's memoir, published after World War II, does not mention this episode.[200] Whether Kamei was being truthful or not is debatable. Seeking to justify to the American occupiers his pro-Soviet political stance before World War II, he called it an "appeasement."[201] In a dialogue he had with a Japanese journalist in 1974, Kamei scorned the Japanese rightists as being so "simple" as to be "readily taken in" (手もなくやられちゃう) by Sorge. They funneled secret information to Sorge and ended up falling right into Stalin's conspiracy trap (謀略).[202] Here, he could not have been referring to Ozaki, who he knew was a Communist. Kamei may well have meant Mutō Akira, although it is not easy to characterize him simply as a rightist.

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[196] See Awaya Kentarō and Chadani Seiichi, eds., *Ni Tchū sensō tai Chūgoku jōhō sensō shiryō* (Tokyo, 2000), 1:405.

[197] See for example Kawai Sadakichi, *Aru kakumeika no kaisō* (Tokyo, 1983), 480; *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)*, 161, 337, 528, 532; *Gendaishi shiryō (24). Zoruge jiken (4)* (Tokyo, 1971), 63.

[198] Harada Kumao, *Saionji kō to seikyoku* (Tokyo, 1952), 8:329.

[199] Kamei Kan-ichirō, "Personal History Statement (Draft)," Kamei Kan-ichirō Documents, Kokkai Toshokan, no. 333, 7.

[200] Abe Genki, *Shōwa dōran no shinsō* (Tokyo, 2006).

[201] Kamei, "Personal History Statement (Draft)," 4.

[202] Kusayanagi Daizō, "Jōhō no kōsaten. Konohito ni kiku. Kamei Kan-ichirō shi," *Chūō kōron* 89, no. 6 (1974): 218.

Elsewhere, Kamei claimed, referring to the late 1930s, that a spy had been working in Japan, one who was "more famous than Sorge."[203] Who could it have been? The only one who could conceivably have been considered more famous than Sorge is Kawashima Yoshiko (see Chapter 2, p. 147). If she were indeed a Soviet agent, the link between Tanaka Ryūkichi, Kōmoto Daisaku, and Soviet intelligence becomes clearer.

The mystery of Kawashima Yoshiko

It is possible that Kamei, as a political ninja, was simply muddying the waters. Nevertheless, it is important and worthwhile to examine Kawashima's true identity in order to understand how Moscow influenced Japanese politics, if only because she had unfettered access to the highest circles of Japan's political, military, and financial establishments, including Konoe himself. Kawashima was arrested by the KMT government in Beijing after Japan's defeat in World War II in 1945. She was tried as a Japanese collaborator and traitor to the Chinese people (*hanjian* [漢奸]) and was reportedly executed in March 1948.[204] Immediately thereafter, however, rumors began circulating that it was not she but her double who was executed. Many arguments in support of her survival have been presented ever since, and Chinese and Japanese historians and journalists have gathered considerable evidence that under an assumed name, she may have led a quiet life in Changchun (formerly the capital of Manzhouguo, Xinjing) until her death in 1978 or 1979.[205] If she survived in Communist China, she could only have done so with the CCP's protection. No indisputable proof has surfaced. Yet, tantalizing hints do exist.

Kawashima stated in her prison notes, somewhat gnomically, that until the very end, "no one understood my true colors."[206] She was suspected by the Chinese of being a Japanese/Manchu spy and by some Japanese of being a Chinese (KMT) spy. (Kawashima had been critical of Japan's policy toward China. Yet, she never lost her clout in Japan's establishment.) No one seems to have suspected her of being a CCP/Soviet spy. During her trial, she denied that she

[203] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 116.

[204] Niu Shanseng, comp., *Chuandao Fangzi de jingren miwen: Guomin zhengfu shenpan Jin Bihui mimi dang'an* (Hong Kong, 1994), 580–611.

[205] See for example Li Gang, *Chuandao Fangzi shenpan dang'an da jiemi* (Hong Kong, 2012); Li Gang and He Jingfang, *Chuandao Fangzi shengsi zhi mi jiemi* (Changchun, 2010); Wang Qingxiang, *Chuandao Fangzi shengsi da jiemi* (Tianjin, 2010). Based partly on these authors' work, Chinese and Japanese TV programs were produced: "Chuandao Fangzi shengsi zhi mei da jiemi" (in seven parts broadcast in 2012 and 2015), the last two parts accessed 15 January 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOEYuGR9ybg and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dx3ApFOompk; "Shōwashi saidai no sukūpu: dansō no reijin Kawashima Yoshiko wa ikiteita," broadcast on Terebi Asahi, Japan, on 13 April 2009.

[206] Kawashima Yoshiko, *Kawashima Yoshiko gokuchū ki*, ed. Hayashi Mokubee (Tokyo, 1949), 152.

had spied for Japan and said she was happy that China had bested Japan.[207] A number of Chinese, whom Kawashima had rescued from the Japanese terror, submitted petitions to the court in an effort to save her life. One letter, from "Guyue Shanren" (古月山人),[208] an obvious pseudonym, implied that the writer was making efforts to rescue her from death row. Somehow, this letter was preserved in the archive: Even though Guyue told Kawashima to destroy it upon reading, clearly, she did not.[209] According to Kawashima's nephew Lianshen (愛新覺羅連紳), "Guyue" was Hu Egong (胡鄂公, 1884–1951).[210] Hu, a CCP operative, engaged in clandestine work in Suiyuan and Chahar against the Japanese in 1935–37 under the direction of Pan Hannian (潘漢年, 1906–77) and Zhou Enlai.[211] If so, Kawashima would appear to have had contact with the CCP. It also points to a possible connection between Tanaka Ryūkichi and the CCP in creating the Suiyuan Incident in late 1936.

There is another subtle hint at the CCP's links to Kawashima. After Kawashima's execution, someone called Liu Fengzhen (劉鳳貞), sent grievance letters to the court and the press saying that her mother had agreed with prison officials that her sister, Liu Fengling (劉鳳玲), who was terminally ill and resembled Kawashima, be executed as her double in exchange for ten ingots of gold, but that the family had received only four. A family friend, a man with a prison record, had arranged the deal. He stole the six ingots due to her mother and bought off the prison officials, who found an office job for him. He told Liu's mother that it was the "Northeastern Communist Zhou Baozhong" (周保中, 1902–64) who had bribed the prison officials with as many as 100 gold ingots to bail out Kawashima (who then fled to the Soviet/CCP-controlled "Northeast," i.e., Manchuria). When Liu's mother complained to them, they beat her.[212] Although the authorities investigated the matter and dismissed the complaint as baseless,[213] suspicions of vast corruption die hard. If Zhou Baozhong actually saved Kawashima, it is highly significant, for Zhou was a noted military commander who had secretly joined the CCP in 1927 and studied in the Soviet Union. In 1948, at least one Chinese publication mentioned Zhou's alleged role

[207]On the complex issue of Kawashima's self-identity/identities, see Dan Shao, "Princess, Traitor, Soldier, Spy: Aisin Gioro Xianyu and the Dilemma of Manchu Identity," in *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed. Mariko Asano Tamanori (Honolulu, 2005), 82–119.

[208]Niu, *Chuandao Fangzi*, 574–75.

[209]Ibid.

[210]Terao Saho, *Hyōden Kawashima Yoshiko: dansō no etoranze* (Tokyo, 2008), 249.

[211]Wang Fan, *Hongse tegong: Pan Hannian zhuan* (Hong Kong, 2011), 107, 239–40; Yin Qi, *Pan Hannian de qingbao shengya* (Beijing, 2018), 69–71; "Zhou Enlai youguan zhishi Hu Egong cucheng kang-Ri tongyi zhanxian de zhongyao tongxin," accessed 3 November 2017, http://sh.people.com.cn/n/2015/0420/c134768-24567405.html.

[212]See "Ji Bihui shengsi zhi mei," *Da gongbao*, 22 May 1948, 3. On a Japanese report, see Kamisaka Fuyuko, *Dansō no reijin Kawashima Yoshiko den* (Tokyo, 1984), 233. Only a few Chinese newspapers reported on this episode at the time. See for example "Chuandao Fangzi shengsi zhi mei," *Xinminbao*, 15 May 1948, 1; 18 May 1948, 1.

[213]See "Ji Bihui shengsi zhi mei."

in Kawashima's escape from death, but almost no Chinese publications since have named Zhou in the Kawashima saga,[214] possibly owing to censorship.[215] One wonders why Zhou would rescue someone widely known as a spy for Japan?

Of Kawashima's many siblings who studied in Japan, at least three became Communist sympathizers in Japan: Xianrong (憲容, [?]–[?]), Xiandong (憲東, 1914–2002), and Xianqi (顕琦, 1918–2014). Xianrong stayed in Japan and taught at a college. Xiandong studied at the Japanese Military Academy, after which, in agreement with Xianrong, he returned to Manchuria. In Manzhouguo, he worked as a secret CCP operative against the Japanese while serving in the Japanese Army. Only after Japan's defeat in 1945 did Xiandong come out openly for the CCP.[216] Kawashima's husband, Ganjurjab, a Mongolian whom she had known when he studied at Japan's Military Academy, was sympathetic to Communism.[217] So, it would not be surprising at all if Kawashima, already exposed to Communism in Japan, became a sympathizer. Kawashima herself repeatedly expressed her sympathy with the simple folk (老百姓) of China.[218] Furthermore, it should be noted that in 1940, a CCP publication praised "in the most glowing terms" Kawashima the spymaster as a role model for Chinese women.[219]

Zhou Enlai knew something of Kawashima. In 1955, a Japanese politician sought out Zhou Enlai with a question entrusted to him by Yoshizono Shūzō (吉薗周蔵, 1894–1964), formerly a secretive Japanese Army intelligence operative who had known Zhou Enlai when the latter had studied in Kyoto from 1917 to 1919. The question Yoshizono had for Zhou Enlai was whether Kawashima was alive. Zhou responded by saying that of course he could not answer that sort of question. Zhou asked the Japanese politician to let Yoshizono know that it was "this," and drew a circle by his finger. The circle may have meant that she was alive or that the whole case had long been closed.[220] What Zhou could have said was that she had long ago been executed by the KMT government and that the CCP had nothing to do with it. But Zhou did not say that, which is very odd and suggests that he was hiding something.[221]

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[214] See for example Li, *Chuandao Fangzi*, 124; Li and He, *Chuandao Fangzi shengsi zhi mi jiemi*, 12–13; Wang, *Chuandao Fangzi shengsi da jiemi*, 187–88.

[215] Apart from Qiu Shangzhou, *Fuhua yu cangliang: hongse wangzi Aixinjueluo Xiandong de jiazu wangshi* (Wuhan, 2011), 204, the only mention of Zhou that I have found in connection with Kawashima's flight is Wu Jimin, "Pushuo mili de Chuandao Fangzi," *Tongzhou gongjin*, no. 5 (2019): 55. However, Wu fails to mention that Zhou was a powerful Communist military commander.

[216] See Qiu, *Fuhua yu cangliang*, 222-28, 257; Aishinkakura Kenki/Aixinjueluo Xianqi, "Ane Kawashima Yoshiko o 'oniichan' to yonda hibi," *This Is Yomiuri*, October 1998: 236, 237.

[217] Suematsu Tahei, *Watashi no Shōwashi* (Tokyo, 1963), 239. He and his brother Jonjurjab also associated with some of the (right-wing) radicals in Japan. In 1945, when the Soviets declared war against Japan, Ganjurjab jumped ship and joined the Soviet-Mongolian forces.

[218] See for instance Niu, *Chuandao Fangzi*, 463.

[219] Louise Edwards, *Women Warriors and Wartime Spies of China* (Cambridge, 2016), 105.

[220] Ochiai Kanji, "Inbō shikan," *Gekkan Nihon*, no. 3 (2009): III.

[221] It is possible that Kawashima was intimately familiar with the ways in which Japan,

There are other subtle hints as well. In her prison notes, Kawashima criticized the KMT for losing so much ground to the CCP. The CCP gained ground, she stated, because, unlike the KMT, it was not consumed by nationality (whether one was Chinese or Japanese), and because the members and the organization worked in unison.[222] This seems to suggest that her sympathy was with the CCP. On three occasions at the court, Kawashima was asked whether she knew the Russian language, among others. She replied that she knew English and French. On one occasion, she answered that in Beijing, she had studied Russian "out of boredom" and could speak a little. She must have felt her admission to have been unwise or politically inconvenient. On two subsequent occasions, her response was that she had not studied Russian and could not speak the language.[223] Did she fear a revelation of her Soviet connections?

There is more. One of her brothers, Xianli (憲立, 1903–?), testified in 1956 that during Kawashima's trial, the "Russians" sent two airplanes to Beijing to fetch her. He suspected that she might still (i.e., in 1956) be alive in Russia.[224] A former underground CCP member who during World War II had worked under cover with Kawashima and Shao Wenkai (邵文凱, 1890–1987), her lover at that time, testified that Kawashima appeared to know that he was connected to the CCP but did not seem to be alarmed. As for Shao, he was later sentenced to death as a *hanjian*, but he was not executed.[225]

In China, official publications continue to emphasize Kawashima's clandestine activities for the Japanese.[226] It is said that Kawashima sexually seduced Yin Jukeng and helped set up the East Hebei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government in 1935.[227] Kawashima's various and mysterious activities in north China from 1935 to 1938 can indeed be confirmed by Chinese archival documents,

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Manzhouguo, the KMT, and the CCP all secretly traded opium to finance their work. On Kawashima's close relationship with Manchuria's "opium king," Satomi Hajime (里見甫, 1896–1965), see Sano Shin-ichi, *Ahen ō: Manshū no yoru to kiri* (Tokyo, 2005), 152, 159–60, 275–76.

[222] Niu, *Chuandao Fangzi*, 463. Kawashima's notes written in Japanese were often difficult to read, with some sentences incomplete and occasionally incoherent. Her notes remain to be deciphered and analyzed carefully. The Chinese translation (477) may not be quite accurate.

[223] Ibid., 248, 269, 292.

[224] Aixinjueluo Xianli, "Kawashima Yoshiko wa dokoni iru," *Tokushū bungei shunjū*, no. 2 (1956): 227–28. Xianli obfuscated his statement by referring to the Russians as "White [émigré] Russians," but by then, the White Russian groups had disintegrated and were incapable of mobilizing two airplanes to Beijing. These "Russians" certainly were Soviets.

[225] Xing Hansan, "Chuandao Fangzi zai Henan," *Wenshi ziliao xuanbian*, no. 41 (1991): 219. Shao seems to have been given twelve years of imprisonment, according to one account. See Xing, *Ri weitongzhi Henan jianwen lu* (Zhengzhou, 1986), 269. Whether he actually served the sentence is unknown.

[226] See for example Yang Yukun, "Hanjian zuilian zhaoran ruojie: 'Qiqi shibian' qianxi Chuandao Fangzi zai Ping-Jin yidai de tewu huodong," *Beijing dang'an*, no. 6 (2017): 53. She smuggled gold ingots from Manzhouguo to north China. When caught by the Chinese, she was let go with the help of the Japanese authorities. See Araki Kazuo, *Rokōkyō no ippatsu: jūgun kenpei no shuki* (Tokyo, 1968), 60.

[227] See Cai Dengshan, ed., *Taiyangqi xia de kuilei: Manzhouguo. Huabei zhengquan yu Chuandao Fangzi mihua* (Taipei, 2014), 332, 339–40.

including one that suggests her role in the Suiyuan operations in 1936 (see p. 308 in this chapter).[228] Yet, for whom she actually worked still remains unclear. The general, condescending view is that she ran wild and rushed around "like a headless fly" and let people use her politically.[229] Yet, she may have been playing her own game secretly and determinedly. In her prison notes, she says: "To 'Live by *demogogy* and die by *demagogy*,' that's been my whole life."[230] Although Kawashima's connections to the Soviet Union and/or the CCP cannot be definitively proven at this stage of research, there is substantial, indirect evidence. She is a critical key to solving the many political mysteries of the time discussed in this book.

Japan's hardliners, 1937

As Japan's new, conciliatory China policy formed in 1937, it inevitably invited resistance from hardliners. In April 1936, before the Suiyuan Incident, Tokyo increased Japan's China Garrison Army (based in Tianjin, just over 100 km to the southeast of Beijing) from 1,771 to 5,774 soldiers. This measure is described in many history books as another step by Japan to control China. In fact, it was meant to strengthen the Garrison Army in order to deter interference in north China (Tianjin, Beijing, and Hebei Province) from the far larger Kwantung Army, which had, since 1931, consistently resisted subordination to Tokyo. The reinforcements invited the ire of the Chinese, however, further escalating anti-Japanese sentiment. Some contingents of soldiers were emplaced not in Tongzhou, as planned originally, but in Fengtai (just outside Beijing, and today, like Tongzhou, a district of Beijing), where the Marco Polo Bridge (*Lugou Qiao*) was located. Ishiwara later regretted this move.[231] Tokyo's decision in spring 1937 to do away with the policy of "severing north China" and to dissolve the East Hebei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government, however, met with stiff resistance from the Kwantung Army. Tanaka Ryūkichi and Tominaga Kyōji (富永恭次, 1892–1960), then the Kwantung Army's chief of intelligence, spearheaded the resistance.[232]

Like Tanaka Ryūkichi, Tominaga had a questionable past. He was the assistant military attaché in Moscow from December 1928 to December 1930, overlapping with the tenure of Komatsubara as military attaché and Koyanagi

[228]Academia Sinica: https://ahonline.drnh.gov.tw/, Docs. 002-090200-00016-117, 002-080103-00020-150, 002-080200-00253-060 (October 1935), 002-090200-00021-194, 002-090200-00021-176 (May 1937), 008-010701-00085-080, 008-010701-00085-021 (October 1937), 002-080200-00507-004 (May 1938), 144-010104-0002-076 (September 1938). On Kawashima and the Suiyuan operations, see Doc. 002-090200-00020-206.

[229]Qiu, *Fuhua yu cangliang*, 235.

[230]Niu, *Chuandao Fangzi*, 453.

[231]Ishiwara's own account in Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 78.

[232]Ibid., 134.

Kisaburō (小柳喜三郎, 1886–1929) as naval attaché. Komatsubara found himself sexually compromised and was subsequently blackmailed into working for Moscow. Koyanagi was also compromised but took his own life as a result.[233] Tominaga "officiated" at Koyanagi's hara-kiri by serving him a glass of water just before the act.[234] It would not be surprising to find that both Tanaka (in China) and Tominaga (in the Soviet Union) had been compromised as well. Their subsequent activity suggests as much. Meanwhile, in Tokyo, Tominaga's close friend and classmate at the Military Academy, Tanaka Shin-ichi (田中新一, 1893–1976), the chief of the Bureau of Army Affairs, and Mutō Akira, the chief of the Operations Section and successor to Ishiwara, who had been promoted to the chief of the First Department (Operations Bureau), stood in opposition to the new China policy.[235] Both of them had suspicious Soviet connections. Mutō trusted Sorge and freely passed military information to him. Tanaka Shin-ichi worked in Moscow from February 1930 to August 1931, apparently as a special operation specialist—that is, neither as military attaché nor his assistant. He must have attracted extraordinary attention from Soviet intelligence. In 1934, after a stint in Japan, he was dispatched to Germany and Poland, where he engaged in conspiratorial operations with émigrés from the Soviet Caucasus. Tominaga traveled with Tanaka Shin-ichi to Europe and worked in Paris, engaging in similar operations against the Soviet Union.[236] Tominaga returned to Tokyo in late 1934, while Tanaka Shin-ichi returned in the spring of 1935.[237]

These same men took a hard line on the new China policy, demanding more aggression from the Japanese military. As we will see, Stalin would soon take advantage of these attitudes. Yet, it is worth noting now that both Tanaka Shin-ichi and Tominaga had worked with émigrés and were fed Soviet disinformation about the existence of strong anti-Soviet forces within the Soviet Union: Once the Soviet Union was attacked from outside, anti-Soviet forces would rise up against the Soviet regime from within. Assailed from without and within, the Soviet Union would collapse. If they believed this, their views were utterly naive and misguided. Either they were fooled by Soviet disinformation, as were many

[233] Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Mystery of Nomonhan, 1939," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 24, no. 44 (December 2011): 662–63.

[234] "Koyanagi taisa ga Roto de funshi shita shinsō," *Kokumin shinbun*, 2 April 1929 (evening edition), 2.

[235] Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 134.

[236] In Paris, he had an episode of wasting an extraordinarily large sum of operational funds (50,000 German marks) on an "agent" who, according to Polish intelligence, used it on "revelries" (*hulanki*). The loss may amount to as much as 2.5 million U.S. dollars today. See Sergiusz Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw, 1971), 266. There is no record that Tominara was held accountable.

[237] Tanaka Shin-ichi and Matsushita Yoshio, comps., *Sakusen buchō, Tōjō o batō su* (Tokyo, 1986), 378; *Iwakuro Hideo shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1976), 116; Matsumura Tomokatsu, *Kantōgun sanbō fukuchō no shuki* (Tokyo, 1977), 15; Hata Ikuhiko, ed., *Nihon rikukaigun sōgō jiten* (Tokyo, 1991), 382. On Japan's Caucasian operations, see Hiroaki Kuromiya and Georges Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, The Caucasus, and Japan, 1904–1945* (Warsaw, 2016).

Japanese militarists and politicians, or they were active in purveying this disinformation behind the scenes. In either case, Tanaka Shin-ichi's and Tominaga's attempts to thrust Japan into full-bore military aggression against China would prove lethal to Japan.

In early 1937, Stalin, according to one account, admitted that the Soviet Far East was in a "state of semi-war" ("состояние полувойны") with Japan.[238] This is a statement in sharp variance with Japan's policy at that particular moment in time. Obviously, Stalin's admission betrayed his resolve to thwart Japan's new policy toward China and provoke Japan into a mortal military escapade. There were many Japanese hardliners, some in the highest position of responsibility, willing to take his bait.

The Kanchazu Island Incident, 1937

On 19 June 1937, Soviet forces crossed the Manchu-Soviet border and landed on the Kanchazu Island on the Amur River near the small village of Ganchazi (乾岔子), some 100 km downstream from Blagoveshchensk/Heihe (see Figure 3.7, p. 222, for its location), and expelled the citizens of Manzhouguo. The Soviet forces then occluded the passage of the Manzhouguo fleet. Japan's protests led nowhere. On June 30, Japan exchanged fire with three Soviet boats; one sank and another was disabled. Diplomatic negotiations in Moscow followed, and by July 5, the conflict came to an end with the withdrawal of the Soviet forces.[239] At the time, the Soviet press remained silent about the incident, in sharp contrast to their response to other, earlier border clashes. Only when the disputed border areas reverted to Manzhouguo did the press report on the ceasefire agreement. Today, Russian and Chinese historians concur that it was the Soviet forces that violated the border.[240] Indeed, in the 1990s, Russia acknowledged in Russia's parliament (Дума) session that in the mid-1930s, Moscow unilaterally moved the border on the Amur River to its advantage.[241]

The question, then, is why did they move the border only to withdraw? The answer, of course, is that it was a deliberate Soviet ploy. One would be hard-pressed to find any other reason for the Soviet Union to cause this sort of conflict. It was in 1935 and 1936, when Japan's military inferiority had become

[238] N.I. Dubinina, "Tragediia lichnosti," *Dal'nii Vostok*, no. 7 (1989): 130.

[239] See a contemporary Japanese account in: JACAR, A06031020100; Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan against Russia, 1939* (Stanford, CA, 1985), 104–119.

[240] See for example Kirill Cherevko, *Rossiia na rubezhakh Iaponii, Kitaia i SShA (2-ia polovina XVII–nachalo XXI veka)* (Moscow, 2010), 465–69; Alekseev, *"Vernyi Vam Ramzai,"* 475; Li Yushu, "Dongbei Zhong-E guojie beiduan yanjiu (2)," *Zhongshan xueshu wenhua jikan*, no. 22 (1978): 41 (577).

[241] "Stenogramma zasedaniia 12 maia 1995 g.," accessed 19 June 2016, http://transcript.duma.gov.ru/node/3060; G.V. Kireev, *Rossiia–Kitai. Neizvestnye stranitsy pogranichnykh peregovorov* (Moscow, 2006), 51; Slavinskii, *SSSR i Iaponiia na puti k voine*, 99–100. The Japanese side knew this fact at the time. See Nakamura Satoshi, *ManSo kokkyō funsō shi* (Tokyo, 1939), 237–51.

irrefutable, that the number of border clashes dramatically spiked. The Japanese counted "152 disputes during the two-and-a-half years between the outbreak of the Manchurian Incident [in 1931] and 1934 but in 1935 the number soared to 136 and in 1936 to 203."[242] This suggests Moscow deliberately caused many of them, if not all, to provoke the Japanese. Even more remarkable was that during the Kanchazu Incident, Moscow purposefully used simple cipher codes. The Soviet military communication was always encrypted carefully and was difficult to crack; yet, in this case, it was encrypted in plain codes, as if Moscow *wanted* it to be known to the Japanese. Some communication was even transmitted openly. The Japanese intercepted messages, among others, from Voroshilov from Moscow and Vasilii Bliukher from Khabarovsk, which indicated that Moscow had no intention to fight back or escalate the conflict it had started. Indeed, the Soviets ordered their forces to withdraw after the sinking of the boat.[243] In response, Tokyo suspended attack plans—from the beginning, Ishiwara had insisted on *not* widening the conflict.[244] Yet, the intelligence "success" should have alerted the Japanese to the Soviet ulterior motive. Instead, they were convinced that the Soviets were so weak-kneed that they chose not to fight on.[245]

Such a view makes no sense in light of the vast military superiority of the Soviet armed forces in the Far East. Incomprehensibly, Tōjō Hideki (東條英機, 1884–1948), then the chief of staff of the Kwantung Army, stated that as long as Japan's military forces were adequate (which was not the case), the Soviet Union would not start a war.[246] More incomprehensible were the reactions of Tanaka Ryūkichi and Tominaga to the Kanchazu Incident: They were furious at the order to suspend attack plans and insisted on defending the Manzhouguo borders, even in opposition to Tokyo. A Kwantung Army General Staff member, Tsuji Masanobu (辻政信, 1901–ca. 1968), a one-time admirer of Ishiwara who had turned into an agent provocateur par excellence, attacked the army leadership as spineless and advocated insubordination.[247]

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[242] Hata Ikuhiko, "The Japanese-Soviet Confrontation, 1935–1939," in James William Morley, ed., *Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany, and the USSR, 1935–1940* (New York, 1976), 133.

[243] See the recollection of a Japanese cryptographer who actually decoded these messages: Obara Yotaka, "Manshū ni okeru jōhō kinmu (sono ichi)," Kaikō Bunko, Tokyo. See also Coox, *Nomonhan*, 108, 115.

[244] *Gendaishi shiryō (12): NiTchū sensō (4)*, 499 (recollection of Nishimura Toshio [西村敏雄, 1898–1956], a Soviet expert).

[245] Ibid., 500.

[246] Quoted in *Takebe Rokuzō nikki*, 206.

[247] Coox, *Nomonhan*, 118–19; Tsuji Masanobu, *Nomonhan hishi* (Tokyo, 2009), 59. In 1936, Tsuji, open to both leftist and rightist ideas, sought to transform the *Kyōwakai* (協和会) in Manzhouguo into an organization similar to a Communist Party. See Ushijima Hidehiko, *Mō hitotsu no Shōwashi (3): bōryaku no hizu Tsuji Masanobu* (Tokyo, 1978), 21; Furumi Tadayuki, *Wasure enu Manshūkoku* (Tokyo, 1978), 147–48. The *Kyōwakai* was designed as a mass sovereign party to bring harmony to different ethnic groups in Manzhouguo and replace the sovereign monarchy and the parliament. It ended up as a mass mobilization organ. See Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, CA, 1998), 289–90.

Stalin's terror operations

It was precisely at this time, in the spring and summer of 1937 (when Japan was no longer a threat), that Stalin's murderous operations began in earnest.[248] Just before the Kanchazu Incident, Stalin decimated the Soviet Red Army high command. Mikhail Tukhachevskii and seven other Red Army commanders (including Vitovt Putna, who was a military attaché in Tokyo in the 1920s) were tried in camera as foreign spies, sentenced to death, and executed. Kamei stated in his unpublished memoir that Tokyo had been receiving information about the alleged disloyalty of Tukhachevskii to the Soviet government, which led some in the Japanese Army to believe that Stalin's power was fleeting and the Soviet Union moribund. Kamei reasoned otherwise, however: Stalin was consolidating his power through terror. Konoe was kept informed of the matter.[249] Indeed, the Soviet secret police fed such disinformation through many channels to sow confusion abroad about the Soviet Union. Operation "General" discussed earlier (p. 195 in the previous chapter) continued into 1937. Plenty of people took Soviet disinformation at face value, believing that not just military leaders but the disaffected masses and national minorities were ready to stand up against the Soviet regime. Some urged military intervention, while others wrote off the Soviet Union as a potential threat for now. In contrast to competent Japanese observers who insisted that the terror strengthened Stalin's power, Tanaka Ryūkichi, Tominaga, Tanaka Shin-ichi, and others apparently thought differently—at least, so they professed. For them, the Soviet Union was now paralyzed, and therefore, it appeared safe for Japan to "deal with" north China without fearing Soviet intervention. Combined with the feint of Kanchazu, Moscow's disinformation had worked very well. This constitutes the direct background to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in July 1937.

Stalin did not stop with his terror against the Red Army commanders. In June 1937, he started the first mass terror operation, the ROVS Operation, in West Siberia.[250] In July, August, and the following months, the Soviet secret police, instructed by Stalin, launched numerous mass terror operations against the former members of the political opposition, the "kulaks," the priests, and the national minorities, particularly ethnic Poles, Germans, Greeks, Koreans,

[248] Germany's threat is a different question. Based on accessible Soviet intelligence data, however, Valdimir Khaustov and Lennart Samuelson have concluded that on the eve of the Great Terror, no "threat of direct military attack on the Soviet Union" existed. See their *Stalin, NKVD, i repressii 1936–1938 gg.* (Moscow, 2009), 326.

[249] Kamei, "Kaisō (sōkō)," 8, 32. The same disinformation was received by the Germans as well. See Sorge's discussion of German information on Tukhachevskii and Putna: *Gendaishi shiryō (1). Zoruge jiken (1)*, 194–95.

[250] Natal'ja Ablažej, "Die ROVS-Operation in der Westsibirischen Region," in *Stalinismus in der sowjetischen Provinz 1937–1938: Die Massenaktion aufgrund des operativen Befehls No. 00447*, ed. Rolf Binner, Bernd Bonwetsch, and Marc Junge (Berlin, 2010), 287. The ROVS refers to the *Русский Общевойнский Союз* (Russian General Military Union), an émigré military organization that Japan and Germany secretly supported. Both Japan and Germany maintained consulates in Novosibirsk, the capital of West Siberia, until 1937.

and others. In the two years of the "Great Terror," according to official data, almost seven hundred thousand were executed as foreign spies, enemies of the people, anti-Soviet elements, and on other false charges. Stalin exported the Great Terror to the Mongolian People's Republic, where, proportionately speaking, far greater numbers of people were killed than in the Soviet Union, mainly as Japanese spies.[251] Moscow did not trust even the pro-Soviet regnant party, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, suspecting that 90 to 95 percent of its members were actually Buddhist believers susceptible to Japanese influence.[252] In addition, almost all ethnic Koreans were deported from the Far East as potential Japanese spies. At the time, there were at most only a few dozen ethnic Japanese in the Soviet Union (including those married to Soviet citizens). Yet, as many as 52,906 people were arrested as "Japanese spies," more than those arrested as "German spies" (39,000), though smaller than the number of "Polish spies" (101,965).[253] True, the Japanese figures included ethnic Koreans and Chinese as well as many of those repressed "Kharbintsy" (returnees from Manchuria after the sale of the CER to Manzhouguo in 1935).[254] Still, the number was extraordinarily large, given that at the time, in sharp contrast to the tiny Japanese population, more than 600,00 ethnic Poles and well over one million ethnic Germans lived in the Soviet Union. In this regard, it can be said that the scale of Stalin's anti-Japanese operations eclipsed all other operations.

By the same token, Stalin's terror affected the Red Army in the Far East harder than in any other Soviet military district, much harder than those stationed in the west facing Poland and Germany. In the Far East, 11 percent of the high

[251] See a good, concise account: D. Dashdavaa, *Choĭbalsan-Stalin-Mongol dakh' ikh iargalal* (Ulaanbaatar, 2012).

[252] GKhTA, f. 2, sh. 579, khudaas 245.

[253] *Lubianka. Stalin i Glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD 1937–1938* (Moscow, 2004), 660. The way the Soviet secret police manufactured Japanese spies was wickedly imaginative and depraved. The following example relates to the post–Great Terror period. In 1941, the police created a fake Manzhouguo (Japanese) border post some fifty km from Khabarovsk near the Soviet-Manchu border. The police singled out those Soviet citizens whom they regarded as politically unreliable or suspect and entrusted them with special tasks to be carried out on the other side of the border. On their way to Manzhouguo, they were caught by the fake Manchu (Japanese) guards at the border post (in fact staffed by Soviet secret police officials). The Soviet detainees were interrogated by fake "anti-Soviet White-Guard Russian émigrés" working for Manzhouguo (also Soviet secret police officials). Interrogated, they were psychologically and physically tortured into confessing that they were sent across the border with special tasks of the Soviet secret police. Then, they were "recruited" by the fake "Japanese intelligence" and were sent back to Soviet territory with special tasks. Thereupon, they were arrested by the Soviet secret police. All of this took place on Soviet territory. From 1941 to 1949, in this way, 150 people were arrested as "Japanese spies." They never realized that the whole operation was a Soviet ruse. See Vladimir Bukovskii, *Moskovskii protsess* (Moscow, 1996), 78–79; Vladimir Voronov, *Rassekrecheno. Pravda ob ostrykh epizodakh sovetskoi epokhi* (Moscow, 2018), 93–97. Similar methods were used on the western, northern, and southern borders of the Soviet Union as well.

[254] Most of them were suspected of links to Japan. According to the "Kharbintsy" operation, as many as 49,470 people were repressed. Available data remain incomplete, however. See N.A. Potapova, *"Kharbinskaia" operatsiia NKVD SSSR 1937–1938 gg.* (Spb., 2020), 153.

command was arrested during 1937 and 1938, the highest of any military district, with the Kyiv military district (7.68 percent) a distant second.[255] It is difficult to know why this was the case. Did Stalin actually fear Japan's subversive presence within the Red Army in the Far East? Definitely not. Stalin understood that both Poland and Japan were weak and meant to subdue them. Whatever the case, Stalin was obsessed with Japan, seemingly more so than with Hitler's Germany. This obsession was due, in part, to Japan's unpredictability. Unlike Germany, Japan had no dictator. Japan's cabinet changed hands frequently: In the ten years from Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, Japan counted thirteen prime ministers, on average more than one prime minister a year. Although Stalin was confident that he could deal with dictators such as Hitler or Mussolini, he had no Japanese dictator with whom to strike a deal, and therefore, he was exceedingly prudent in this regard. Although Stalin placed agents in the highest ranks of the Japanese political establishment, he did not, or could not, trust them easily.

If Stalin's bacchanalia of terror led foreign observers to conclude that the Soviet Union was immensely weakened, others welcomed it. Ozaki Hotsumi, for instance, who knew very little about actual life in the Soviet Union, admired Stalin's killing of the Red Army commanders. When the international situation was tense, Ozaki reasoned, Stalin took bold measures. The Soviet Army may have been hamstrung, but it would rally around Stalin. Without this action, the Soviet Union would have become a military dictatorship in the event of war. He said he had to admire the "courage and greatness of Stalin," who foresaw it and took decisive measures.[256]

Stalin fooled many in the world into believing that the Soviet Union was weakened, while convincing the political left of the need for the terror. Extraordinarily confident, he went on the offensive on many fronts. Japan and Poland were his first major targets for destruction.[257]

4.4 The Shadow Master

In retrospect, Stomoniakov's warning in October 1936 that Japan's "prospect of a real, big war with China is becoming ever more real" (see p. 300 in this chapter) was oracular. On 7 July 1937, a minor skirmish near the Marco Polo Bridge just

[255] V.S. Mil'bakh, *Osobaia Krasnoznamennaia Dal'nevostochnaia armiia (Krasnoznamennyi Dal'nevostochnyi front). Politicheskie repressii komandno-nachal'stvuiushchego sostava, 1937–1938 gg.* (Spb, 2007), 164. The Polish historian Jakub Wojtkowiak had reached the same conclusion: *Polowanie na "dalniewostoczników": represje wobec korpusu oficerskiego dalekowschodniego zgrupowania radzieckich sił zbrojnych w latach 1936–1939* (Poznań, 2007), 327.

[256] Kawai, *Aru kakumeika no kaisō*, 463.

[257] The ethnic Poles were the national minority hardest hit by the Great Terror. In addition, Stalin killed most of the leaders of the Communist Party of Poland and in 1938 dissolved the party itself as a nest of foreign spies. In 1939, in collusion with Hitler, Stalin destroyed Poland, ending its fleeting independence.

outside Beijing erupted into all-out war between Japan and China. Though undeclared, the war left Japan totally ostracized, while China won the assistance of the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, and others, including Germany (at least initially). Japan had played right into Stalin's hands. Japan's eight-year war against China was responsible for the deaths of millions of Chinese soldiers and civilians, with estimates ranging widely from three to four to twenty million, and ultimately led to the Pacific War (1941–1945). In August 1945, Stalin finished Japan off; from the beginning, it should have been obvious that Japan had a snowball's chance in hell of winning the war.

Stalin, Chiang, and Mao against Japan

In 1936 and 1937, Stalin carefully strategized ways to pin down Japan in China once and for all. The Xi'an Incident of December 1936 would appear to have finally forced Chiang Kai-shek to accept a united front with the CCP. Yet, as expressed in his slogan "Wipe out Communism and Resist Japan" (剿共抗日), Chiang continued to hesitate, frustrating Stalin. Nevertheless, Chiang drew up contingency plans in the event of war with Japan and gave top-secret directives to his trusted intelligence chief, Chen Lifu: First, negotiate with the CCP to issue, in the event of war with Japan, a joint declaration on resistance; second, negotiate with the Soviet Union to form, in the event of China's war with Japan, a united front. Chen carried out these negotiations.[258]

In March 1937, Stalin summoned both Bogomolov, the Soviet ambassador to China, and Iurenev, the Soviet ambassador to Japan. Stalin saw Iurenev on March 13 for two hours and Bogomolov two days later for an hour and twenty minutes.[259] Though it is unrecorded, Bogomolov saw Stalin before that meeting as well. Writing to Stalin on 9 March 1937, Bogomolov told Stalin that he had neglected to pass on to him Chiang's best regards and asked him whether he wanted to reply. Stalin's answer was "Send gratitude and greetings."[260] "Gratitude" for what, one wonders. After consulting Bogomolov, in April 1937, Stalin allowed Chiang's eldest son, Chiang Ching-kuo, a Communist sympathizer who had studied and lived in the Soviet Union since 1924, to return to China with his Belarusian wife, Faina S. Vakhreva (1916–2004), and their young son, Hsiao-wen (蔣孝文, 1935–89). Chiang Ching-kuo understood that he was returning to China because "*a Sino-Japanese war would start soon* [emphasis added]." Once in China, he would have to carry out Moscow's "special mission" to influence his father to turn decisively against Japan.[261] The Suiyuan and Xi'an Incidents did help prevent China from nudging closer to Japan and to Germany (where

[258]Chen's interview to a Japanese journalist in 1996: Chen Lifu, "Kokumintō sai chōrō ga kataru: Chūgokujin no kokoro o shiranai 'Taiwan dokuritsu ron'," *Chūō kōron* 111, no. 9 (August 1996): 66.

[259]*Na prieme u Stalina*, 205, 206.

[260]RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 324, l. 3.

[261]See Aleksandr Pantsov, *Mao Tszedun* (Moscow, 2007), 442.

Chiang Kai-shek's half-Japanese adopted son, Chiang Wei-kuo [蔣緯國, 1916–97], was training in the Wehrmacht). Distrustful of Moscow, Chiang Kai-shek surrounded himself with German military advisers and, with their help, rapidly modernized China's military. Chiang sought to emulate Germany, which had successfully united a divided nation in the nineteenth century. In March 1937, before Stalin sent Chiang Ching-kuo home, Stalin drew up a plan offering China vast military aid to counter the German influence.[262]

Chiang Kai-shek negotiated for a pact of mutual assistance with Moscow, but Moscow rejected it on the grounds that such a pact would implicate the Soviet Union directly in a Sino-Japanese war. Stalin's goal was to have China engage Japan and for the Soviet Union to stay out of the conflict. Moscow pressed instead for a pact of non-aggression or friendship, while also pursuing a Pacific pact of mutual alliance that would involve the United States. Meanwhile, Chiang continued to hope that a united front with the Communists would prove superfluous if Japan's new, conciliatory policies under Premiers Hayashi and Konoe were actually carried out. A concern emerged within the CCP that Chiang would renege on his promise wrought by Zhang Xueliang in Xi'an in December 1936. The tensions were threatening to divide China once again. Edgar Snow, an American journalist who sympathized deeply with and had privileged access to the CCP and Mao Zedong, wrote that "Chiang's negotiations with the Communists had by June 1937 reached a stalemate." Chiang wanted to "reorganize" the Red Army and disperse it among other armies as separate elements. "Late in June," Snow continued,

> I received a confidential letter from Mao Tse-tung which expressed 'anxiety and dissatisfaction' with the ominous trend of events. Destruction or advance into the northern provinces once more seemed to be their alternatives. In July they were extricated from their precarious position by Japan's 'providential' major invasion of China, which gave Chiang Kai-shek no choice but to shelve any and all plans for another annihilation drive [against the CCP].[263]

Snow presented a mundane military skirmish on July 7 at the Marco Polo Bridge as a "providential" event, one that saved the CCP. On Japan's invasion in July 1937, Snow wrote suggestively:

> Was it not reckless gambling to pivot a *strategy on the central inevitability of an early Sino-Japanese war* [emphasis added]? Now that internal peace was established in China [in the wake of the Xi'an Incident],

[262] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1976), 20:701–02; *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV: Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia. 1937–1945 gg. Kn. 1: 1937–1944 gg.* (Moscow, 2000), 40.

[263] Lois Wheeler Snow, ed., *Edgar Snow's China: A Personal Account of the Chinese Revolution* (New York, 1981), 150.

Figure 4.8. China's Communist leader, Mao Zedong, with Zhang Guotao

> now that the Reds had ceased their attempts to overthrow the Kuomintang, Japan was really turning a conciliatory face to Nanking, it was argued. Japan's imperialists realized that they had pushed the Chinese bourgeoisie too far and too fast along the road of surrender to fascist reaction, with the result that China's internal duel was cancelled in the universal hatred of Japan. They now saw the wisdom of enforcing a new and friendly policy towards the Chinese bourgeoisie, in order to renew the freedom of internal antagonism in China. And such a Tokyo-Nanking *rapprochement* would destroy the Communists' political influence, which was too heavily based on *k'ang jih*—the "resist Japan" movement. . . . The Communists understood that Japan could not revert to a static policy in China even though Japan's ablest leaders realized the imperative necessity for a halt. And this *Red prescience* [emphasis added] seemed fully vindicated with the outbreak, on July 8 [*sic*], of the Liukochiao [Marco Polo Bridge] Incident.[264]

Snow's analysis suggests the CCP depended, ultimately, on war with Japan, for survival.

The option of provoking war with Japan was in Mao's mind. In an interview Mao gave in March 1937 to the American journalist Agnes Smedley, he hinted at this option obliquely by denying it. Asked whether war against Japan had become inevitable, Mao said, "It is unavoidable." Mao continued, adding:

> When Japan attacks China, no matter when this happens, China should immediately initiate its war of resistance. But we do not

[264] Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China* (New York, 1938), 491–92.

> advocate making any *provocations* [emphasis added] against Japan; our principle is to fight a war of self-defense. Therefore we should make swift and feasible preparations in every possible way so that China is able to deal with any contingency at any time.[265]

This interview was published in translation in a Japanese journal a month before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.[266]

Mao was confident. China's size surely favored its ultimate victory over Japan, which could not "isolate all of China": "China's North-west, South-west and West cannot be blockaded by Japan, who continentally is still a sea power." "China is a big country," Mao continued,

> and it cannot be said to be conquered until every inch of it is under the sword of the invader. If Japan should succeed in occupying even a large section of China, getting possession of an area with as many as one hundred or even two hundred million people, we would still be far from defeated. We would still have left a great force to fight against Japan's warlords, who would also have to fight a heavy and constant rear-guard action throughout the entire war.[267]

The Japanese strategist Ishiwara Kanji thought likewise and categorically opposed Japan's interference in north China. "It's impossible," he reasoned, "to have a decisive battle [in China]. If the Chinese retreat to the hinterland, there is no way to pursue them." There would be no means to supply the Japanese Army, and even if Japan spent an unlimited amount of money on the war against China, there would be little effect. Ten years of war would lead nowhere, and Ishiwara reckoned that it would take thirty years to placate China, even if it was conquered: "The attacker would be the loser."[268]

Stalin's and Japan's "China Problem"

The Army General Staff in Tokyo were sharply divided over whether China could ever be vanquished by force: Some believed it was simply impossible, while others were optimistic. Before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, no consensus had emerged. As a result, contrary to widely accepted views, no plan to occupy China as a whole had ever been made. Japan, however, did prepare plans for the

[265] Stuart R. Schram and Nancy J. Hodes, eds, *Mao's Road to Power. Revolutionary Writings, 1912–1949* (Armonk, NY, 1999), 5:616, 618.

[266] Yukiko Koshiro, *Imperial Eclipse: Japan's Strategic Thinking about Continental Asia before 1945* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), 93–94.

[267] Snow, *Red Star over China*, 94–95. Views on Japan as a sea power that failed as a continental power have been revived by S.C.M. Paine, *The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War* (Cambridge, 2017).

[268] Quoted in Kiriyama Keiichi, *Hangyaku no shishi. Rikugun ni fusen kōsaku o shikaketa otoko Asahara Kenzō no shōgai* (Tokyo, 2003), 26–27, 167.

occupation and administration of north China.[269] Based on two cases of the conquest of China, one by the Mongols in the thirteenth century and another by the Manchus in the seventeenth century, Ozaki Hotsumi, a sinologist and Soviet agent, reckoned that it would take Japan forty-five years to conquer China.[270] In the conception of Ozaki and other Japanese sinologists, China resembled an "amoeba": Even if it was mutilated, it would not die but survive.[271]

According to a Soviet calculation, Japan would need four million soldiers to occupy China militarily, but Japan could not afford such forces.[272] Japan reckoned initially that it could deploy in China at most 14 divisions (hundred fifty thousand or so soldiers), or less than 4 percent of the Soviet estimate! Eventually, Japan deployed approximately one million soldiers in China, but that still led nowhere. Even in 1941, when Japan started the Pacific War, it had only about two million army personnel (including civilian employees of the army), although the number soared three-fold by its end in 1945.[273]

It would have been surprising had Stalin *not* tried to induce Japan deeper into China, as Stalin did in Manchuria in 1931. In 1934, the Soviet Union's nominal president, Kalinin, following a conversation with Stalin, insisted, against the skepticism of Soviet specialists of the Far East, that Japan would take Beijing. He admitted, we may recall, that "If they [the Japanese] took Beijing, this would be beneficial to us" (see Chapter 3, p. 277). Stalin's strategy that had been in the works for years was now being put into action. Almost certainly, Stalin gave Mao some assurance of Moscow's intention. In a July 1936 interview with Mao, Edgar Snow quoted him as follows:

> Of course the Soviet Union is also not an isolated country. It cannot ignore events in the Far East. It cannot remain passive. Will it complacently watch Japan conquer all China and make of it a strategic base from which to attack the U.S.S.R.? Or will it help the Chinese people to oppose their Japanese oppressors, win their independence, and establish friendly relations with the Russian people? We think Russia will choose the latter course.[274]

Just a fortnight before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Mao told an American visitor, Thomas A. Bisson, that the "sympathy of the Soviet Union with China

[269] *Gendaishi shiryō (12): NiTchū sensō (4)*, 413, 415–16, 462; Nagai Kazu, "Nihon rikugun no Kahoku senryōchi tōchi keikaku ni tsuite," *Jinbun gakuhō* (University of Kyoto), no. 64 (1989): 103–152.

[270] Ozaki Hotsumi, "Minzoku kōsen no yukue," in *Ozaki Hotsumi chosaku shū*, 2:102.

[271] Ozaki quoted in Saionji, *Kizoku no taijō*, 32; *Gendaishi shiryō (12): NiTchū sensō (4)*, 415 (Kawabe Torashirō's testimony).

[272] Quoted in Ishidō Kiyonori et al., *Jūgonen sensō to Mantetsu chōsabu* (Tokyo, 1986), 49. Ishido translated the Soviet estimate into Japanese.

[273] *Naikaku seido shichijūnenshi* (Tokyo, 1955), 565.

[274] Snow, *Red Star over China*, 95.

in its struggle against Japanese aggression may be taken for granted."[275] Interestingly, Bisson was proven later to have been a Soviet agent (see Chapter 5, p. 430), raising questions as to the nature of his visit.

Meanwhile, in November 1937, after the Sino-Japanese War was well underway, Stalin informed the Chinese general Yang Jie (楊傑, 1889–1949) that in his opinion, China was strong enough to survive the Japanese attack, and therefore, the Soviet Union would not enter into the war against Japan any time soon. He cited the example of Napoleon's expedition to Spain, where the strongest army in the world was bested by the incessant partisan war of the Spaniards. China today, Stalin exhorted the Chinese, was stronger than Spain then. He added, however: "If Japan begins to triumph, the Soviet Union will enter into the war."[276] Although Stalin's speech was published in Russian in 2000, the original archival file shows this comment to be a handwritten addition to the typed record of the speech. The issue was so sensitive that Stalin (or his record keeper) took care not to reveal it to his typist, fearing a possible leak.[277] The 2000 Russian publication makes no mention of this significant fact. It is interesting to note that Ishiwara, too, cited the example of Napoleon's failure in Spain when he tried but failed to dissuade his colleagues from getting mired in China.[278]

General Yang Jie understood Stalin to mean that he would enter the war with Japan if Nanjing, China's capital, fell. The Chinese ambassador to the Soviet Union, Tsiang T'ing-fu (Jiang Tingfu) (蔣廷黻, 1895–1965), took issue with Yang's interpretation (although Tsiang was not present at the Stalin-Yang meeting). He related his prudence to Chiang Kai-shek. When Nanjing was about to fall in December 1937, Chiang reminded Stalin of his remark to Yang and asked for succor. Stalin, however, rebuffed him, saying that the Soviet Union could not join the war against Japan: To do so would make the Soviet Union the aggressor and would be of no help to either China or the Soviet Union. If the Nine-Power Treaty countries (see Chapter 1, p. 61) or the major ones among them agreed to fight alongside the Soviet Union against Japan, Moscow would send troops immediately to China. Stalin did promise to ramp up Soviet aid to China, however.[279] Almost immediately, disinformation, obviously of Chinese

[275] T.A. Bisson, *Yenan in June 1937: Talks with the Communist Leaders* (Berkeley, CA, 1973), 50.

[276] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV, kniga 1*, 152, 156. A much shorter Chinese record of this meeting is in *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi. Di-3 bian, zhanshi waijiao* (Taipei, 1981), 2:335–36. Zhang Chong (張沖, 1900–1980), who was present in the Yang-Stalin meeting, reported that Stalin considered it "possible" to deploy his forces against Japan. See Zhou Fohai, *Zhou Fohai riji quanbian* (Beijing, 2003), 1:101.

[277] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 321, l. 27.

[278] *Saigo no sanbō sōchō Umezu Yoshijirō* (Tokyo, 1976), 310; *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 202.

[279] "The Reminiscences of Tsiang T'ing-fu (1896–1965)," 211; *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi. Di-3 bian, zhanshi waijiao*, 2:339–40. Stalin's reply does not seem to have been published in Russia. The Chinese translation is used here. In early February 1938, Stalin told Sun Ke (see p. 367 later in this chapter) that Moscow could not declare war on Japan for the same reason. He added, however, that the Soviet military forces in the Far East

provenance, began to circulate that the Far Eastern Soviet military commander, Bliukher, had issued a statement to the effect that "the Soviet Union, when it was necessary to preserve world peace, would not hesitate to cross her own boundaries to wage war."[280]

In December 1937, Ambassador Tsiang took his dissatisfaction with Moscow to Loy W. Henderson (1892–1986), an American diplomat in Moscow, complaining that the Soviet Union had not kept its promise. According to Tsiang, Bogomolov and others, "during the spring and summer of 1937" continued to "endeavor to make the Chinese Government believe that if it would undertake to offer armed resistance to Japan it could confidently expect the armed support of the Soviet Union." And now, added Tsiang, Bogomolov has been arrested.[281] Tsiang's bitterness had reason. A month earlier, in November 1937, when Chiang publicized the receipt of secret Soviet military aid in an effort to draw the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, Stalin's reaction was: "To hell with him."[282] Obviously, Stalin's intent was to have China fight the Japanese until China's complete rout, which he deemed tantamount to squaring the circle: Japan on its own could not mobilize four million soldiers against China. The loss of countless numbers of Chinese and Japanese lives was of no interest to Stalin. The Sino-Japanese War coincided in the Soviet Union with Stalin's Great Terror, during which his own people were dying en masse by his own hand. His interest focused on expanding his sphere of power at all costs.

Moscow clearly sought to instigate war between Japan and China. As Ambassador Tsiang noted later, in 1936–1937, the Soviet Union "wanted war in the Far East to break out as soon as possible. Such a war would bog down the Japanese, thus freeing the Soviet Far East from the possibility of invasion by Japan."[283] The Soviet ambassador to China, Bogomolov, according to Tsiang, "adroitly fanned the war fever" with promise of aid from the Soviet Union: "It was obvious that Mr. Bogomolov wished China to fight Japan as soon as possible."[284] If Tsiang is correct in his assessment, and there is ample evidence to believe so, then Bogomolov's report to Moscow in June 1937 that "by and large Japanese policy in the northern provinces [of China] will be the maintenance of

were "actively rehearsing [yanxi 演習] [for war] and ready for action when opportunity arises." In May, Stalin and Voroshilov disingenuously told Sun that the Soviet military forces would be increased to seven hundred thousand by the end of the year. See *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian*, 2:407, 496. Stalin's remark on "actively rehearsing [for war] . . ." was *omitted* from the Russian record of the meeting. See *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV. Kniga. 1*, 198–200. In the beginning of 1939, there were about four hundred fifty thousand Soviet soldiers deployed in the Far East. See E.A. Gorbunov, *Vostochnyi rubezh. OKDVA protiv iaponskoi armii* (Moscow, 2010), 282.

[280] Quoted in Hollington K. Tong, *China and the World Press* (N.p., 1948), 47.

[281] United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1937. Vol. III. The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1954), 827.

[282] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV. Kniga 1*, 180.

[283] "The Reminiscences of Tsiang T'ing-fu (1896–1965)," 210.

[284] Ibid., 201.

the status quo" (see pp. 302–303 in this chapter) was tantamount to an admission that he had failed to induce Japan into war.

China was long unhappy with Bogomolov, who avoided official diplomatic channels to carry out Stalin's orders. When Gu Weijun complained to Litvinov in October 1936, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs responded by saying that he had "full confidence" in Bogomolov. A year later, in November 1937, Litvinov told Gu that he, Gu, poorly understood China in his belief that China would not be able to withstand war with Japan for long. Asked when Bogomolov would return to China, Litvinov answered, "Soon," even though he must have known that Bogomolov had been arrested in Moscow in October.[285] Six months later, when Gu reported that China had recently executed some traitors, Litvinov responded that those Chinese who promoted peace with Japan were traitors and should be shot.[286] It was not just Japan, in the end, that was seduced into war; Moscow had successfully led China into war as well, and it had no interest in concluding it quickly.

Omens

A few weeks before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Ishiwara had a foreboding that something untoward was brewing in north China, specifically near the Marco Polo Bridge. On 14 June 1937, he dispatched an investigator, Okamoto Kiyotomi (岡本清福, 1894–1945), to Beijing with the instruction that all subversive activities by Japan be strictly prohibited. Okamoto reported back with no concrete information. Yet, a fatalistic sense had already settled in China that something big was about to happen.[287] A Kwantung Army officer who toured north China in May and June 1937 was struck by the provocative mood of the Chinese (which was too febrile to be described simply as "anti-Japanese") even as far as Baotou, Suiyuan, Inner Mongolia.[288] Among the Japanese in north China, rumor had long circulated that there would be a new incident on July 7.[289] Just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Himori Torao, who was very close to the CCP (see p. 322 earlier in this chapter), foretold a major incident: "The situation is ominous. The Chinese youth now frequently speak of a 'reverse

[285] Gu Weijun, *Gu Weijun huiyi lu*, 2:356–57, 634–35.

[286] Ibid., 3:101. Gu appears to refer to the execution of Huang Jun (黃濬, 1891–1937), Huang's son, and others.

[287] *Shōwashi no tennō 16* (Tokyo, 1971), 63–67. Chinese historians remain skeptical of Okamoto's report. For example, Li Yunhan questions whether Okamoto was not aware of Tanaka Ryūkichi's activity in the Beijing-Tianjin region. See his *Lugouqiao shibian* (Taipei, 1987), 302.

[288] Imoto Kumao, *Shinajihen sakusen nisshi* (Tokyo, 1998), 68.

[289] See for instance Satō Kenryō, *Satō Kenryō no shōgen* (Tokyo, 1976), 127–28; Gong Debo, *Yuren yuhua* (Taipei, 1964), 48–50. Hata Ikuhiko, *Rokōkyō jiken no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1996), 74–75 lists the source of numerous rumors to this effect. 7 July was and is a quaint holiday (七夕) in both China (*qixi*) and Japan (*tanabata*) that celebrates the mythological annual rendez-vous of a cowherd and weaver girl.

Mukden Incident.' We won't let the Japanese control us. It's our turn."[290] An Austrian/American employee of the Ford Motor Company in China, Otto Robert Urbach (1913–76), wrote to his mother in Vienna on July 25 that a sense of inevitable war had long been in the air in Beijing. Both the Chinese and the Japanese Armies wanted to buy as many trucks as possible from Ford. Just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, he delivered fifty lorries to the Chinese.[291] The rumors and the premonition of impending war reflected the actual yet secret preparations. Provocateurs also deliberately bruited rumors about various conspiratorial schemes, making it difficult to get a coherent picture of the situation. Clearly, however, there were many straws in the wind to suggest that something fateful was about to hit China and Japan.

The CCP, backed by Moscow, prepared for war against Japan. In anticipation of Japan's actions in north China, from late 1936 to the spring of 1937, the CCP allowed its members immured in prison in north China to forswear Communism (反共自首) in order to be released. They were then deployed against the Japanese.[292] On 4 July 1937, three days before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, as if in anticipation of war, Zhou Enlai, Mao's chief negotiator with the KMT, drafted a proclamation of the CCP's united front with the KMT. In it, Zhou Enlai declared that only the unity of the Chinese people could best Japanese imperialism and that the party had reached an agreement with the KMT on this matter. He added that the CCP would call off the Communist movement (赤化運動) and the forcible confiscation of land from landowners and, further, abolish the CCP's Soviet organizations. This was sent to the KMT on 15 July 1937 and was announced by the KMT on September 22.[293] The day after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Zhou Enlai was dispatched to see Chiang to discuss the united front.[294]

Japanese right-wing radicals in China, in turn, insisted that Japan should deliver the first strike if, as they sensed, conflict was inevitable. Some of them schemed to upend Tokyo's new, conciliatory policy toward China by provoking the Chinese. Two Japanese members of the CCP testified to this process after World War II: Nakanishi Tsutomu (Isao or Kō) (中西功, 1910–73) and Nishizato Tatsuo (西里龍夫, 1907–87). The complicated process of the provocation needs a careful analysis.

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[290] Quoted in Hatano Kan-ichi, "Shinajihen zen-ya no gunzō," *Bungei shunjū* 32, no. 11 (July 1954): 106.

[291] Urbach, *Das Buch Alice*, 95–96.

[292] This episode was later, at the time of the Cultural Revolution, used against Liu Shaoqi, then the head of the CCP North China Bureau. See Hu Xuechang, "Nankaidaxue hongweibing yu 'liushiyiren an'," *Bainian chao*, no. 2 (2008): 73–78.

[293] *Zhou Enlai xuanji*, 1:76–78. According John Toland, the "Central Chinese Communist Party of Inner Mongolia announced several years ago that the original [signed] document had been found in Mongolia and was dated July 5." See John Toland, *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire 1936–1945* (New York, 2003), 41, 907.

[294] See "1937 nian Guo-Gong tanpan zhong Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Luo Fu deng de yizu laiwang dianwen," *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, no. 2 (2007): 4. On the Zhou-Chiang discussion following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, see Yang, *Shiqu de jihui?*, 71–79.

Nakanishi was a staunch Marxist whom Ozaki Hotsumi protected in his house in Shanghai in 1930 from the Japanese authorities. He maintained underground contact with the CCP while working from 1934 as a researcher at the South Manchurian Railway Company. Under the guidance of the CCP, Nakanishi organized clandestine political organizations of Japanese workers in Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Tianjin, Dairen, Xinjing, and elsewhere in China.[295] Following Ozaki's detention in 1941, Nakanishi was arrested in 1942 in Shanghai and sentenced to life imprisonment. (He was released in 1945.) Nishizato, Nakanishi's schoolmate in Shanghai and Ozaki's colleague who joined the CCP in 1934, engaged in clandestine operations while working as a journalist. In 1942, he was arrested by the Japanese police in Nanjing, tried in Tokyo, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Like Nakanishi, he was saved by Japan's defeat and was released from prison in 1945.[296] In 1946, Nakanishi and Nishizato published a book about the CCP activity against the Japanese in the 1930s.[297]

In it, they detailed the CCP's efforts to organize students and soldiers against Japan. Following the 1 August 1935 declaration from Moscow by the CCP calling for a united front in China, the CCP dissolved its youth organization, a Chinese Komsomol, and merged it with other youth organizations (including the KMT youth groups). They evolved into mass organizations in north China, particularly in Beijing and Tianjin. The CCP also organized youth volunteer armies, which students active in the anti-Japanese December 9 Movement (see p. 294) joined. In 1937, they demanded weapons and began to merge with the Twenty-Ninth Army led by Song Zheyuan (who headed the *Jicha zhengwu weiyuanhui* created against Japan's encroachment on north China).[298] Song, while working with the CCP, was not himself a member and did not feel the same yearning for war. By then, the Twenty-Ninth Army was heavily penetrated by the CCP, whose members occupied important positions, including those of military intelligence.[299] Its assistant chief of staff, Zhang Kexia (張克俠, 1900–84), was a secret member of the CCP (which he joined in 1929 as a special member under the direct remit of the party's central organs) who had studied in Moscow in 1927–28 and actively prepared for military actions against the Japanese. He had set his eye on the Marco Polo Bridge as a point to defend at all costs.[300]

[295] On Nakanishi's relations with Ozaki, see Nakanishi Tsutomu, "Ozaki Hotsumi ron," *Sekai*, no. 4 (1969): 244–49, no. 5 (1969): 218–27, no. 6 (1969): 281–88. For Ozaki's sheltering of Nakanishi, see Ōta Unosuke, "Shanhai jidai no Ozaki kun," in Ozaki Hotsumi, *Ozaki Hitsumi chosaku shū*, 3:4 (Supplement).

[296] Nishizato Tatsuo, *Kakumei no Shanhai de* (Tokyo, 1977).

[297] Nakanishi Tsutomu and Nishizato Tatsuo, *Chūgoku kyōsantō to minzoku tōitsu sensen* (Tokyo, 1946).

[298] Ibid., 144.

[299] Ka (Xia), *Kōjin banjō*, 103; He, "Qiqi shibian jishi," 15–17; Bao, "Qiqi shibian," 102–103.

[300] See his memoir, "Zhang Kexia tongzhi tan canjia geming he ershijiujun kang-Ri de jingguo," in *Beijing diqu kangzhan shiliao: jinian weida de kang-Ri minzu jiefang zhanzheng wushi zhounian, 1937–1987* (Beijing, 1986), 35–41. For his entry into the party, see also *Peijian jiangjun: huiyi Zhang Kexia* (Beijing, 2015), 2, 28, 34–36, 63, 67, 78, 355.

Zhang Kexia's determination was shared by the Twenty-Ninth Army's rank and file. The old soldiers of the Twenty-Ninth Army whom the Chinese journalist and writer Fang Jun (方军) had interviewed sixty to seventy years after the event all remembered their active preparations for battle.[301] These preparations were ordered and approved by the CCP's North Bureau and its leader, Liu Shaoqi (劉少奇, 1898–1969).[302] Following the strategy of "attack as defense" (*yigong weishou* 以攻为守), the plan was to annihilate the Japanese forces (twenty thousand strong) in north China with the Twenty-Ninth Army (one hundred thousand strong). It was not carried out, however, because of Song Zheyuan's indecision: he was "resting" ("an unusually protracted" trip to "sweep the tombs of his forebears," according to Edgar Snow)[303] in his home town of Laoling, some 300 km to the south of Beijing. Following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Zhang Kexia had to bring Song back and goad him to action.[304] This "rest" of Song's was clearly a deliberate move to avert the risky offensive plan against the Japanese.[305] It may also have been that Zhang and other CCP members wanted Song out of the way on the days leading up to their planned actions. It was the Twenty-Ninth Army headed not by Song but by Zhang Kexia, in any case, that led a skirmish with the Japanese on 7 July 1937. On July 6, those stationed in the Marco Polo Bridge area were ordered by Brigadier He Jifeng (何基灃, 1898–1980) of the Twenty-Ninth Army, who was an underground CCP operative, to fight back "resolutely" (坚决) if provoked by the Japanese.[306] When a skirmish took place the following day, Zhang again proposed to extirpate the

[301] See Fang Jun, *Zuihou yici jijie* (Shenyang, 2012).

[302] Zhang Kexia, *Peijian jiangjun Zhang Kexia junzhong riji* (Beijing, 1988), 2 (introduction), 369.

[303] Snow, *Scorched Earth*, 21. According to one Chinese account, however, Song had approved the attack plan enthusiastically and ordered preparations. See Wu Yuexing et al., *Lugouqiao shibian fengyun pian* (Beijing, 1987), 120, 169.

[304] Zhang, *Peijian jiangjun Zhang Kexia junzhong riji*, 3, 369; "Zhang Kexia tongzhi tan canjia geming," 42. See also *Peijian jiangjun: huiyi Zhang Kexia*, 2, 68–69, 74; He, "Qiqi shibian jishi," 23–27. One of Song's biographers has characterized him as "paralyzed" at the time. See Chen Shisong, ed., *Song Zheyuan zhuan* (Changchun, 1992), 295.

[305] It is possible, as some Chinese historians claim (see for example Qin Dechun, *Qin Dechun huiyi lu* [Taipei, 1967], 6, 176), that Song retreated to Laoling to avoid contact with the Japanese. According to a Chinese account, the Japanese army official Ikeda Sumihisa (池田純久) traveled to Laoling to press him for economic concessions. Song left Beijing on May 3 and did not return until July 19. See Li Yunhan, *Song Zheyuan yu qiqi kangzhan* (Taipei, 1973), 185, 190, 194; Li, *Lugouqiao shibian*, 273. According to Ikeda's account, he went to see Song not in Laoling but in Beijing (which, if true, means they met before Song left for Laoling). They discussed the restive Sino-Japanese situation, confirming that they would avert any conflict by all means. Ikeda stated that Song feared Communist intrigues aimed at inciting Sino-Japanese war. See Ikeda Sumihisa, *Nihon no magarikado. Gunbatsu no higeki to saigo no gozen kaigi* (Tokyo, 1968), 94–95.

[306] Jin Zhenzhong, "Qiqi shibian qinlizhe koushu shilu," *Qianxian*, no. 7 (2007), 60. Jin's oral testimony on this matter cannot be found in Jin's written memoir reproduced in Fang, *Zuihou yici jijie*, 38–49. Wu et al., *Lugouqiao shibian fengyun pian*, 121, identified He Jifeng as an underground CCP operative. In 1939, He formally joined the CCP as a special member. See Chen Liren and Lin Wan, *Baizhan jiangxing He Jifeng* (Beijing, 1988), 241.

Figure 4.9. Prominent Chinese communists, Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai

Japanese forces before they were reinforced. However, Song again "lacked the pluck" and accepted the Nanjing government's policy of "retreat as defense" (以退为守).[307]

Although Song Zheyuan may have been dithering and prone to evasion and equivocation, he was sanguine about China's eventual triumph over Japan. While in Laoling, he recruited 800 young soldiers and trained them. When asked about Japan's threat during his "rest" in his hometown, Song answered that China had far more soldiers and much more battle experience under its belt than did Japan and that China was a vast foreign territory to Japan. Even if the Japanese soldiers were better equipped and better trained, China had an advantage in every other respect. Song was confident that China would wipe the floor with Japan.[308]

Before the July 7 incident, the Chinese Communist student units had not just merged with the Twenty-Ninth Army but had sent organizers to the countryside and recruited the peasants into the armed forces. They procured arms in May and June 1937.[309] At the same time, according to Nakanishi and Nishizato, in mid-June, the "Japanese Army" (by which they meant right-wing firebrand conspirators in the Japanese military forces) used Japanese independent political operators and conspirators (tairiku rōnin, 大陸浪人) to stir up a major riot (大暴動) in Beijing. They schemed to expel the Twenty-Ninth Army from the Beijing region and take over the capital city by claiming that the riot was a

[307] *Peijian jiangjun: huiyi Zhang Kexia*, 71–72.
[308] Fang, *Zuihou yici jijie*, 8, 245.
[309] Nakanishi and Nishizato, *Chūgoku kyōsantō to minzoku tōitsu sensen*, 152.

Communist disturbance. Before this scheme could be fully carried out, the Chinese security forces declared martial law to forestall it. Under the circumstances, Nakanishi and Nishizato concluded, a military clash was inevitable.[310]

Almost certainly, Tanaka Ryūkichi was involved in planning the riot. Sasakawa Ryōichi (笹川良一, 1899–1995), like Tanaka an intriguer noted for his radical nationalism, testified after World War II that it was Tanaka who caused the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.[311] It is to be remembered that Tanaka was the schemer behind both the Shanghai Operation in 1932 (see Chapter 3, p. 227) and the Suiyuan Operation in 1936 (see p. 308 earlier in this chapter). Tanaka had also opposed the dissolution of the East Hebei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government. He and Tsuji Masanobu, another shadowy intriguer, insisted, utterly disingenuously, that if war broke out, Japan could easily trump China within a few months. When asked, "what if the Soviet Union joined the war," they claimed confidently that the Soviet Union would not.[312] Sugiyama Gen (杉山元, 1880–1945), the minister of the army, had long been concerned that Tanaka might start another provocation, following his failure in Suiyuan.[313] When war broke out in July 1937, Tanaka went to stay in Tianjin "for a long time" in order to agitate the Japanese soldiers there.[314] Miyagi Yotoku (宮城与徳, 1903–43), a member of the American Communist Party who was sent to Japan and worked closely with Sorge and Ozaki, left an interesting testimony regarding Tanaka. Interrogated after his arrest in 1941, Miyagi said that Tanaka Ryūkichi was a known supporter of the *left*.[315] At almost every step, it appears that Tanaka, very close to Himori (see p. 322), who, in turn, was close to Ozaki Hotsumi, carried out Moscow's plans. Incredible as it seems, for a few months in 1941, Tanaka became the principal of the Nakano School, a spy-training school founded by the Japanese Army in 1938.[316]

Tanaka's ruthless use of his subordinate, Shigekawa Hidekazu (茂川秀和, 1896–1977), further revealed his conspiratorial scheme in 1937. Tanaka used Shigekawa for various operations (including operations aimed at Chinese Muslims). Two days after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Tanaka went to Tianjin and told Shigekawa he knew that it was he, Shigekawa, who had started the fighting at the Marco Polo Bridge. Shigekawa was so taken aback that he did not think of contradicting him. Tanaka proceeded to spread the idea that Shigekawa was the instigator. Thus, Tanaka made Shigekawa the culprit. Shigekawa told a

[310] Ibid., 153–54. Part of the Nakanishi-Nishizato book was submitted to the Tokyo War Crimes Trial as a defense document (No. 1016) but was dismissed by the court. A Chinese account of this plan is also in Zhang, *Peijian jiangjun Zhang Kexia junzhong riji*, introduction, 2; 369; *Peijian jiangjun: huiyi Zhang Kexia*, 71, 357.

[311] Sasakawa Ryōichi, *Sugamo nikki* (Tokyo, 1997). 173.

[312] Ikeda, *Nihon no magarikado*, 86.

[313] Harada Kumao, *Saionji kō to seikyoku* (Tokyo, 1951), 6:28.

[314] Teradaira Tadasuke, *Rokōkyō jiken: Nihon no higeki* (Tokyo, 1970), 452.

[315] *Gendaishi shiryō (3). Zoruge jiken (3)* (Tokyo, 1962), 304.

[316] Saitō Michinori, *Nihon no supai ō* (Tokyo, 2016), 60.

friend to step prudently around Tanaka.[317] After World War II, Tanaka revised his story. Shigekawa, a Japanese intelligence officer, was, according to Tanaka, a military adviser to Song Zheyuan's government, who repeatedly told Tanaka that the incident was provoked by Chinese Communist students who opened fire on both sides. Tanaka asked Shigekawa whether it was he who started the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Shigekawa blushed and confirmed it, according to Tanaka. In his book first published in 1948, Tanaka claimed that after Japan's defeat, Shigekawa threw his lot in with the CCP, but was caught and executed.[318] In fact, Shigekawa did not throw his lot in with the CCP, nor is there any evidence that he was Song's military adviser. More importantly, Shigekawa was not executed. After World War II, Shigekawa was arrested and tried by the KMT as a war criminal. He was sentenced to death in July 1947 for condoning torture against civilians by his subordinates and for aiding Japan's war of invasion against China. In November 1947, however, the latter charge was dropped, and his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.[319] Later, he was released and served his sentence in Japan. He was released in 1953 and able to tell his version of the events to historians. When Tanaka stated that Shigekawa was executed in his book, Shigekawa's commutation was probably not known to Tanaka.

Obviously, Tanaka's aim was to link Shigekawa to the Chinese Communists and lay the provocation at his door. According to some accounts, Shigekawa was, in fact, a "very good man" who organized intelligence posts disguised as Japanese-language schools and engaged in cultural and ideological education of Chinese students and youth. Shigekawa testified after the war that he had operated an anti-KMT youth party with twenty thousand members in north China at the time.[320]

In addition to Tanaka's activities and the developments described by Nakanishi and Nishizato, friendly and direct warnings reached Japanese officers that portended of a looming trouble. Imai Takeo (今井武夫, 1898–1982), the assistant military attaché in China based in Beijing at the time, testified that on July 6, the day before the incident, Shi Yousan (石友三, 1891–1940), a Chinese security officer, visited Imai and told him that Chinese and Japanese troops had clashed on that day at the Marco Polo Bridge and were still fighting. He wanted Imai to see to it that the Japanese forces not attack his units, because they were friendly to the Japanese. Imai knew nothing about the clash and did not understand what Shi meant. When a clash actually occurred the following day, Imai understood that it had been a friendly warning.[321] Shi delivered the same request

[317] Teradaira, *Rokōkyō jiken*. 432–33.

[318] Tanaka Ryūkichi, *Sabakareru rekishi: haisen hiwa* (Tokyo, 1985), 26–27.

[319] See "Shigekawa Hidekazu zhanfan shenli an," National Archive (Taiwan), Kuofang pu shihcheng pienichu, 0035/013.81/4425.

[320] Hata, *Rokōkyō jiken no kenkyū*, 57–58.

[321] Imai Takeo, "Rokōkyō jiken boppatsu no shinsō," *Hanashi* 6, no. 8 (July 1938): 43. See also Imai Takeo, *Shōwa no bōryaku* (Tokyo, 1967), 111–12; Imai, *NiTchū wahei kōsaku: kaisō to shōgen 1937–1941* (Tokyo, 2009), 12–13, 38, 41, 392–93. Another similar case of an advance warning by the

to Shigekawa as well just before the incident.[322] Clearly, Shi knew the plan of Chinese conspirators in advance.

Who caused the Marco Polo Bridge Incident?

The question of who shot first on the night from 7 to 8 July 1937 near the Marco Polo Bridge has never been answered to everyone's satisfaction: Each side blamed the other, and no clear evidence of either version has surfaced. As this chapter has shown, the nature of the situation is deeply obfuscated by the motivation of the CCP and Japanese radicals. Still, many have determined that Japan was the guilty party, based largely on Japan's past record of intrigue and provocation. The world saw the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as just another step by Japan toward conquering China, the realization of the infamous Tanaka Memorial (see Chapter 3, p. 176). The "Commander of the British forces in the Tianjin area" wrote that if the Japanese had not actually created the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, "they almost certainly aggravated it as an excuse to tighten their grip in north China."[323] Until Russia and China fully open their secret archival collections, however, no convincing case may be made for or against Japan's guilt. A lack of conclusive evidence, however, is not a reason to abandon the question; whether one assigns singular blame for such a complex sequence of events or abandons the question for its deep ambiguities, one risks leaving other facets of the history in the shadows. This was, of course, part of Stalin's game. The presence of Stalin and the CCP's power grabs in the Marco Polo Bridge Incident do not absolve Japan's militarism, but they do reveal the full scope of the issues at the heart of this conflict.

Part of what makes it hard to evaluate Japan's intentions is the fact that the Japanese government and the Japanese Army had no advance plan to cause such an incident or vanquish China as a whole. As with many other incidents in China, however, this does not mean that some Japanese provocateurs were not behind the incident or that some, or even many, Japanese did not welcome the incident as an opportunity to solve the "China Problem" once and for all. Indeed, the Army General Staff in Tokyo were deeply divided between those who believed the incident to be a serious danger to Japan and China and those who thought it presented a golden opportunity to subjugate China to Japan. Mutō Akira took strong issue with Ishiwara's position to contain the conflict by all means. Tanaka Shin-ichi stood on Mutō's side.[324]

Chinese side about a "reverse Mukden Incident," see Araki, *Rokōkyō no ippatsu*, 73–74. Araki also states that before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, rumors about Kawashima Yoshiko's "coup d'état plan" in Tianjin were widespread in north China (62, 72).

[322] Hata, *Rokōkyō jiken no kenkyū*, 172.

[323] Quoted in Aron Shai, *Origins of the War in the East: Britain, China and Japan 1937–1939* (London, 1976), 23.

[324] On Mutō, see Jōhō Yoshio, ed., *Gunmu kyokuchō Mutō Akira kaisō roku* (Tokyo, 1981), 76, 92–100, 106–111. On Tanaka, Mutō, and Ishiwara, see for example Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 152, 155, 157, 163, 182–83.

In China, Japan's Kwantung Army took a hard line position. Tanaka Ryūkichi and Tsuji Masanobu in particular went immediately to Tianjin and sought to impose their aggressive position on Japan's China Garrison Army.[325] As if baying for blood, Tsuji then headed to Beijing, where he schemed to escalate the conflict by bombing Guang'anmen.[326] Tsuji insisted on the use of Kwantung Army airplanes to bomb the Chinese soldiers. He justified his plan on the grounds that Tokyo was too pusillanimous, while he was fearless. Tsuji retreated only when told that the Kwantung Army bombers would be shot down by Japan's Garrison Army fighters in Tianjin.[327] After World War II, Tanaka Ryūkichi was proud to acknowledge privately to a Japanese historian that it was the Kwantung Army (namely, he, Tsuji, Tominaga, and other hardliners) who escalated the conflict.[328] In public, however, Tanaka continued hypocritically to present himself as a peacemaker. There were other vainglorious provocateurs such as Sakai Takashi (酒井隆, 1887–1946), a Kwantung Army commander, eager to gain fame through military exploits.[329]

Japanese provocateurs were not the only actors on the scene. The CCP transferred its special operatives from Manchuria to the Beijing-Tianjin areas to "expand arson and bombing activity against Japan" (发展对日放火爆破活动).[330] After his release from prison in China, Shigekawa acknowledged that following the initial Sino-Japanese skirmish on July 7 and 8, he used Chinese students to escalate the conflict: He was a hardliner. Shigekawa added, however, that strangely, other groups were doing the same, and he suspected that they were Chinese Communist groups.[331] Again, the motivations of the CCP and the Japanese radicals make it difficult to pull apart the origins of the incident. When a group of students was caught exploding petards, they protested that they were doing so by the order of the CCP's North Bureau.[332] Yet, it was not simply certain factions of the Japanese and Chinese military. Kawabe Shōzō (Masakazu) (河辺正三, 1886–1965), then stationed with Japan's Garrison Army in Tianjin, gave the following testimony at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial:

> After the outbreak of the incident on 7 July, while the Japanese and the Chinese were facing each other, there frequently was unlawful firing every night. Every time such unlawful firing took place, we investigated the situation, but there was no sign that either the Japanese or the Chinese unit had opened fire. It almost seemed that a third

[325] Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Shinajihen rikugun sakusen 1*, 154, 159; Teradaira, *Rokōkyō jiken*, 209, 452.

[326] Takahashi Masae, *Shōwa no gunbatsu* (Tokyo, 1969), 225.

[327] Ikeda, *Nihon no magarikado*, 87–88.

[328] Hata, *Rokōkyō jiken no kenkyū*, 240.

[329] Hatano, "Shinajihen zen-ya," 101. After World War II, Sakai was tried and executed as a war criminal in China.

[330] See Zhang Xioahong and Xu Wenlong, *Hongse guoji tegong* (Harbin, 2006), 220.

[331] Quoted in Hata Ikuhiko, *Shōwashi no nazo o ou. Jō* (Tokyo, 1999), 147, 161–62.

[332] Imai, *Ni Tchū wahei kōsaku*, 39.

> party which did not belong to the Japanese unit nor to the Chinese were firing from the intermediate area between the Japanese and Chinese which were facing each other. And we could assume that it was an intrigue by someone."[333]

Suzuki Teiichi, who knew Stalin's strategy, "The armed forces are the last resort" (see Introduction, p. 3), became convinced that the Marco Polo Bridge Incident was engineered by Stalin as a means to use the Chinese against the Japanese. When asked whether the General Staff in Tokyo knew this, Suzuki answered, "It's not clear."[334]

Stalin did not have to create forces to help him. He only had to support and strengthen existing forces. Suzuki Teiichi knew that this was the essence of Stalin's strategy. Wittingly or unwittingly, plenty of Japanese militarists and politicians did Stalin's bidding. Suzuki's cryptic answer reflects his suspicions that some in Tokyo wittingly participated in Stalin's game.

Stories exist that Liu Shaoqi, who led the CCP in north China in 1936–37, had directed the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. According to Kasai Jun-ichi (葛西純一, 1922–[?]), a Japanese officer in the CCP troops who fought in the Chinese civil war that followed World War II, the CCP boasted about Liu's involvement in a pocket edition of the People's Liberation Army propaganda book published in 1949: *Zhanshi zhengzhi keben* (戰士政治課本). He read the book in Luoyang, Henan Province.[335] This testimony regarding the pamphlet was confirmed by a Chinese journalist, Sun Yuxiang (孫玉祥). According to the pamphlet, "our party leader Liu Shaoqi took part in the fight against Japan during the 'July 7 Incident' " (俺黨領袖劉少奇曾在「七七事變」時, 在盧溝橋參加打日本). Sun insists, however, that Liu Shaoqi was not, in fact, there at the time of the incident. The story, Sun claims, was made up in order to inspire the people, such inventions being a Chinese tradition.[336] All the same, the question arises: What was Liu doing during the incident?

In fact, Chinese and Japanese accounts do emphasize the role that Liu Shaoqi played in the events in north China leading up to the July 7 Incident. Zhang Kexia, for example, noted that after World War II, Liu wanted him to return his, Liu's, secret offensive instruction he had issued just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.[337] Whatever the contents of the secret instructions, the CCP's maneuvering proved highly effective. After World War II, an acute Japanese observer of China's political scene, Hatano Kan-ichi (波多野乾一, 1890–1963),

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[333] IMTFE transcripts, 20,535.

[334] *Suzuki Teiichi shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1974), 2:14–16.

[335] Kasai Jun-ichi, *Shinshiryō Rokōkyō jiken* (Tokyo, 1975), 5–6. On this pamphlet, see Yasui Sankichi, "Rokōkyō jiken saikō: Chūgoku ni okeru 'nihongun keikaku' setsu o megutte," *Tōyōshi kenkyū* (Kyoto University) 55, no. 4 (1997): 783.

[336] Sun Yuxiang, "Ribenren de 'genju' " *Yangcheng wanbao*, 15 September 2009, B4. This point on the Chinese tradition is not new and was discussed by Li Yunhan, for instance, in 1987. See his *Lugouqiao shibian*, 322–23.

[337] "Zhang Kexia tongzhi tan canjia geming," 42.

reminisced about the events leading up to the incident, calling them a "brilliant" political operation by the CCP.[338] Many years after the incident, Mao made suggestive remarks on numerous occasions. To the Japanese who apologized to him for Japan's actions during the Sino-Japanese war, Mao expressed his gratitude for their help in awakening the political consciousness of the Chinese people. He explained his thinking to Edgar Snow: "The Japanese had been of great help. They had physically occupied and burned villages over large parts of eastern China. They educated the people and quickened their political consciousness. . . . He said that he had hoped they would go so far as Sian [Xi'an] and even Chungking [Chongqing, China's wartime capital]. Had they done so the guerrillas' strength would have grown even more rapidly."[339] Mao welcomed the Japanese. After the CCP's takeover of China, he repeatedly said that China was grateful to the Japanese warlords and the Japanese Imperial Army.[340] As ruthless as it may have been, the CCP would have been saving itself if it did manage to help instigate the July 7 Incident.

As discussed earlier in this chapter (see p. 317), suspicions exist that the timing (late June–early July) of starting the war against Japan had been negotiated and agreed upon in Xi'an in December 1936. It may well be true, judging from Zhang Xueliang's reaction to the events following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. He cried with joy and said, quite revealingly,"My wishes have been realized. Even if I die now, I can die with a smile."[341] He wanted to fight against the Japanese, begging Chiang to grant him the opportunity to "kill the enemy" and professing to accept whatever position or rank and be ready to die.[342] Chiang, distrustful of Zhang, did not allow him out of house arrest. More than half a century later, Zhang stated that it was his greatest regret that he could not take part in the war against Japan, which had been his most important life goal.[343]

Even if the CCP or Moscow was not behind the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, once the incident broke out, the CCP swiftly moved in to mobilize the country against Japan. Suspicions remain that the CCP prepared in advance three famous telegrams sent on 8 July 1937, as it had the CCP's proclamation of a united front with the KMT (see p. 345). While the situation was still uncertain and fluid, on 8 July, the party demanded that all hope for peace be abandoned and called for a determined counterattack against the Japanese by the formation of a united front with the KMT.[344] As if they had been waiting for the signal, the CCP

[338] Hatano, "Shinajihen zen-ya," 106.

[339] Edgar Snow, *The Long Revolution* (New York, 1972), 198–99.

[340] *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy* (Beijing, 1998), 336, 353. For a discussion of what Mao meant, see Zhang Zhenkun, " 'Ganxie' jiushi ganxie: 'Mao Zedong shuo yao ganxie Riben qinlüe' pingyi," *KangRi zhanzheng yanjiu*, no. 4 (2009): 123–25.

[341] Wang Shujun, *Zhang Xueliang shiji chuanqi* (Jinan, 2002), 2:816.

[342] See his letter of 18 July 1937 in Zhang, *Zhang Xueliang yigao*, 158–59.

[343] Zhang's 1991 interview in *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (Beijing, 1992), 2:1187.

[344] See "Zhongguo gongchadang wei Rijun jingong Lugouqiao tongdian," in *Zhonggong zhongyang kang-Ri minzu tongyi zhanxian wenjian xuanbian* (Beijing, 1986), 3:1–2. The telegram

dispatched the three telegrams on the same day. The first telegram was to the CCP party organization in north China, calling for establishing a united front, guerrilla war against the Japanese, and a fight that would last "to the last drop of blood." The second telegram went to Chiang Kai-shek, pledging that every CCP member would fight to protect the country under his leadership. Finally, the third telegram went to Song Zheyuan and other leaders of the Twenty-Ninth army, praising the army's "heroic resistance" at the Marco Polo Bridge and declaring that the CCP's Red Army would "fight to the death" with them.[345]

By drawing Japan deeper into military conflict, the CCP made sure that the KMT and Japan would not reach another politically disastrous compromise for the CCP. Its maneuvers were assisted by Japanese conspirators such as Tanaka Ryūkichi, Tsuji Masanobu, and Shigekawa Hidekazu. A number of military incidents followed the July 7 clash: in Langfang (a city 60 km from Beijing) on July 25 and 26, Guang'anmen in Beijing on July 26, and Tongzhou (Tungchow) on July 29. The incident in Tongzhou was an anti-Japanese mutiny by the security forces of the East Hebei Autonomous Anti-Communist Government, Japan's puppet government. Some 200 Japanese soldiers, officials, and civilians (including Koreans) were killed. The security forces had been penetrated and agitated by Communists sent by Liu Shaoqi.[346]

In spite of his call for a united front with the KMT, Mao's ultimate goal was the takeover of China. When Japan's aggression spread, Mao was elated, openly saying, "At long last this torrent of misfortune, Chiang Kai-shek, is heading in the direction of the Japanese."[347] Mao, according to Wang Ming, was convinced that China, even with the CCP-KMT united front, would still not be able to defeat Japan.[348] As it turned out, Mao was proved right, although it should be noted that Japan could not conquer China after eight years of war. Using the war against Japan to his advantage, he meant to strengthen the CCP against the KMT: Mao let the KMT bear the brunt of the war against Japan while preserving his forces as much as possible for an eventual showdown with the KMT. Thus, using the war, Mao prepared for the eventual destruction of the KMT. In 1938, Stalin advised Wang Jiaxiang (王稼祥, 1906–74), a CCP leader visiting Moscow, that the Chinese should not carry out frontal attacks against the Japanese but engage in guerrilla warfare.[349] That is exactly what the CCP had done. It is said

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was published on 12 July, after Japan's announcement that it would dispatch additional military forces to China. It is possible that the telegram was predated.

[345]"Zhongguo gongchandang wei Rijun jingong Lugouqiao tongdian"; "Zhongyang guanyu Lugouqiao shibian hou Huabei gongzuo fangzhen wenti gei Beifangju de zhishi"; "Hongjun jiangling wei Rikou jingong Huabei zhi Jiang weiyuanzhang dian" in *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji. Di-shiyi ce (1936–1938)* (Beijing, 1991), 276–79.

[346]Hironaka Issei, *Tsūshū jiken: NiTchū sensō doronuma ka e no michi* (Tokyo, 2016), 110–11.

[347]Quoted in Chang Kuo-t'ao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party 1928–1938: Volume Two of The Autobiography of Chang Kuo-t'ao* (Lawrence, KS, 1972), 528.

[348]Van Min (Wang Ming), *Polveka KPK i predatel'stvo Mao Tsze-duna*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1979), 187.

[349]Quoted Xu Zehao, "Wang Jiaxiang dui liujie liuzhong quanhui de gongxian," *Wenxian he*

that in September 1938, Mao told the CCP that the party should use 70 percent of its energy to strengthen itself, 20 percent to maintain the compromise with the KMT, and 10 percent to fight the Japanese.[350] Mao was hard-nosed to the core: He told party members that "they must not be deceived by patriotism, nor should they go to the front to be anti-Japanese heroes." Instead, he suggested that they avoid "frontal conflict with the Japanese Army" and choose to meet the enemy "where it was weak."[351] Yan Xishan, Shanxi's warlord, failed to read through the CCP strategy when he supported a united front with the Communists in 1936. He said:

> There *is* some risk in a united front, but if we don't collaborate with the CCP, what else can we do? For now, using the Communists is the only way, for otherwise we cannot hold off the Japanese and Chiang Kai-shek. I will use the Communists as a way of weakening the Communists.[352]

Instead of weakening the Communists, the united front strengthened them. (In 1949, Yan would abandon his fief to the Communists.) In May 1941, four years after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Mao struck the same note as in 1938: If the CCP did not fight hard enough, the KMT would take issue. If the CCP were to fight too well against Japan, it could also be dangerous, because, Mao continued, Japan would direct its attack against the CCP, thus benefiting the KMT.[353] Petr Vladimirov (Petr P. Vlasov, 1905–1953), the Soviet representative in Yan'an, wrote that Mao's strategy during the war against Japan was *not* to engage in an active struggle against it: "The country was being ravaged by the occupationists, the people suffered and died of hunger, but Mao was waiting for his hour when he would fling all his military forces into the bid for power."[354] Later, during the war, Mao even maintained regular secret contacts with the Japanese Army in China to gain advantage over Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT (see Chapter 5, p. 429).

None of this discussion provides a conclusive answer to the origins of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. What one finds in examining the full scope of events is the struggle for power at the heart of the conflict; it was a wrestling

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yanjiu, no. 4 (43) (1986): 35.

[350] *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi. Di-5 bian, Zhonggong huodong zhenxiang* (Taipei, 1985), 1:357–58. See also Mei Liangmei, *Dui-Ri kangzhan qijian Zhonggong tongzhan celüe zhi yanjiu (1937–1945 nian)* (Taipei, 1972), 42; Xie Youtian, *Zhonggong zhuangda zhi mi: bei yangai de Zhongguo kang-Ri zhanzheng zhenxiang* (Carle Place, NY, 2002), 129.

[351] Quoted in Chang, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party*, 535.

[352] Quoted in Lyman P. Van Slyke, "The Chinese Communist Movement during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945," *The Nationalist Era in China 1927–1949*, ed. Lloyd E. Eastman et al. (Cambridge, 1991), 206.

[353] Yang Kuisong, "Kang-Ri zhanzheng shiqi Sulian, Gongchanguoji he Zhongguo gongchandang guanxi de jige wenti," *Dangshi yanjiu*, no. 6 (1987): 145.

[354] Peter Vladimirov, *The Vladimirov Diaries. Yenan, China: 1942–1945* (New York, 1975), 517.

match, between the CCP/Stalin and the Japanese militarists, to gain control of China. The victims, of course, were the millions of individuals who died in the process.

The Second Shanghai Incident, August 1937

As in 1932, the conflict spread apace to Shanghai, the center of foreign economic activities in China. There followed three months of fighting from August 13 to November, involving almost a million soldiers and sailors and hundreds of airplanes and tanks. Japan, in the end, beat back the Chinese and proceeded to Nanjing, the capital of China. From December 1937 to January 1938, the Japanese fought and conquered the city. It was nothing but a Pyrrhic victory for Japan, as subsequent events would demonstrate. The Japanese went on to commit the infamous Nanjing Massacre. Estimates of the number of casualties range widely from forty thousand to more than two hundred thousand.[355]

Oddly, from today's point of view, the foreign press were often charitable to the Japanese when it came to the Battle of Shanghai. The *New York Times*, for instance, reported on August 31:

> "Opinions may differ regarding the responsibility for the opening of hostilities in the vicinity of Peiping [Beijing] early in July," said one foreign officer who was a participant in the conferences held here [in Shanghai] before Aug. 13, "but concerning the Shanghai hostilities the records will justify only one decision. The Japanese did not want a repetition of the fighting here and exhibited forbearance and patience and did everything possible to avoid aggravating the situation. But they were literally pushed into the clash by the Chinese, who seemed intent on involving the foreign area and foreign interests in the clash."[356]

The reporter seems overly generous to the Japanese. Yet, he was not wrong in suggesting that the Chinese wanted to involve the foreigners in the conflict.

There is little doubt that Chiang Kai-shek went on the offensive in Shanghai.[357] On 9 August 1937, he wrote in his diary, with much satisfaction: "Ever since the Japanese bandits occupied Beijing and Tianjin, their political and military strategy has fallen into a state of extreme helplessness. Until now we were not in a position to fight a war, but now the time has come. We can expect victory."[358] Stalin's strategy of miring Japan in China was reaping its rewards.

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[355] See the classic work: Joshua A. Fogel, ed., *The Nanjing Massacre in History and Historiography* (Berkeley, CA, 2000); the more recent Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, ed., *The Nanking Atrocity, 1937–38: Complicating the Picture* (New York, 2008).

[356] Hallett Abend, "Japan May Start Drive on Nanking," *New York Times*, 31 August 1937, 2.

[357] See for example Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China 1925–1945* (London, 2003), 196–98.

[358] Chiang Kai-shek, *Jiang Zhongzheng riji* (N.p., 2015), 1:94; *Jiang Zhongzheng xiansheng nianpu changbian*, ed. Lü Fangshang (Taipei, 2014), 5:372.

Figure 4.10. Zhang Zhizhong, China's military commander and secret CCP member

Commander Zhang Zhizhong (張治中, 1890–1969) of China's Ninth Army, which bore the brunt of the Japanese forces in Shanghai, had been agitating and organizing resistance to the Japanese before the August 13 clash. He proposed to Chiang Kai-shek that the Chinese strike the Japanese first (*shouxian fadong* [首先发动]). On July 30, Chiang agreed with Zhang's proposal, but told him to wait for now.[359] Zhang Zhizhong, a Communist sympathizer, had met Zhou Enlai at the Whampoa Military Academy in 1925, and they had become close comrades. He was influenced by Zhou Enlai and other Chinese Communists, as well as Soviet military advisers in the academy. Like Sheng Shicai and Zhang Xueliang later, he had wanted to join the CCP but was persuaded by Zhou Enlai, who worked in the academy's political department, that it would be politically inexpedient to do so at that time. Zhou Enlai promised to support Zhang Zhizhong secretly, however.[360] In 1949, Zhang officially joined the CCP.

In their book on Mao, Jung Chang and Jon Halliday claim that Zhang Zhizhong kept in close contact with the Soviet embassy, although they reveal no source to support their claim.[361] They also claim that Zhang Zhizhong "can arguably be considered the most important [Communist] agent of all time":

[359]Zhang Zhizhong, *Zhang Zhizhong huiyi lu* (Beijing, 1985), 117–19; Yang Tianshi, *Zhaoxun zhenshi de Jiang Jieshi: Jiang Jieshi riji jiedu* (Taiyuan, 2008), 223. Zhang's secret telegram of 30 July 1937 is in *Kang-Ri zhanzheng zhengmian zhanchang* (Nanjing, 1987), 259.

[360]Zhang, *Zhang Zhizhong huiyi lu*, 664–665. See also Zhang Zhizhong, "Liushi sui zongjie," *Wenshi zhilia xuanji* (Beijing), no. 70 (1980): 95.

[361]Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London, 2005), 208.

He "quite possibly altered the course of history virtually single-handedly."[362] This is a vast overstatement. It completely ignores the role played by Japanese hardliners. It also neglects the Japanese Navy, which was spoiling for battles in Shanghai so as not to be overshadowed by the Japanese Army in military exploits and budget competitions. Moreover, it was Chiang and his German military advisers who, having told Zhang to wait, accepted Zhang's proposal to "strike first," shifted the conflict to Shanghai from north China, and made preparations for battle by dispatching German-trained Chinese military forces there. Both Russian and Chinese historians agree on this matter.[363] Chinese accounts also confirm that the specific incident that led to the battle in Shanghai—the murder of two Japanese soldiers on August 9 (Ōyama jiken [大山事件] or Hongqiao shijian [虹橋事件])—was committed by Chinese soldiers disguised as guardsmen. After the murders, they brought a Chinese prisoner held on death row, dressed him in a guard unit uniform, shot him, and insisted that he had been killed by the murdered Japanese soldiers.[364] On that day, August 9, Zhou Enlai and the Chinese Red Army leaders Zhu De (朱德, 1886–1976) and Ye Jianying (葉劍英, 1897–1986) flew to Nanjing for coordination with the KMT.[365] A few days later, Chiang took military actions to spread the conflict to Shanghai. Japan responded in kind.

In Japan, the Stygian mood was exacerbated by the fatalistic belief that the forces unleashed by the Marco Polo Bridge Incident could not be contained. Ishiwara Kanji and Ozaki Hotsumi both had the premonition that this minor conflict at the Marco Polo Bridge, unless quickly contained, would inevitably grow into all-out war. Wachi Takaji (和知鷹二, 1893–1978), a veteran conspirator who was, at the time, the chief of staff for Japan's China Garrison Army, had resigned himself to an all-out war. According to him, the CCP had deeply penetrated the Twenty-Ninth Army. The party controlled the action of many military units and provoked one conflict after another. However much Tokyo wanted to de-escalate the conflict, it had reached the point of no return. Wachi warned that discussions within the Japanese cabinet had been leaked to the Chinese side and that the divisions within the Japanese Army, too, were well known to the Chinese.[366]

If cabinet discussions were leaked, the most likely source was Konoe's entourage: his secretaries, Ushiba and Kishi, and the chief cabinet secretary, Kazami,

[362] Ibid., 210

[363] Pantsov, *Nepobezhdennyi*, 264–65; Yang, *Zhaoxun zhenshi de Jiang Jieshi*, 224; Huang, *Jiang Jieshi yu Riben*, 299–301.

[364] Shi Shuo, "Bayisan Songhu kangzhan jilüe," *Bayisan Songhu kangzhan: yuan Guomindang jiangling kang-Ri zhanzheng qinli ji* (Beijing, 1987), 91; Dong Kunwu, "Hongqiao shijian de jingguo," *Wenshi ziliao xuanji* (Beijing), no. 2 (1960): 132. Zhang's secret telegrams to Chiang Kai-shek on the Hongqiao shijian falsely stated that the Japanese opened fire first and kept silent about who killed the Chinese victim. See *Kang-Ri zhanzheng zhengmian zhanchang*, 251–53.

[365] *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1898–1949* (Beijing, 1989), 375.

[366] Nakatani Takeyo, "Rokōkyō no hibuta kiraru," *Bungei shunjū* 33, no. 16 (August 1955): 171.

a close friend of Ozaki Hotsumi's.[367] As discussed earlier, when Ozaki was arrested, Kazami and Ushiba were questioned only as witnesses. Kishi was not interrogated at all. So, virtually nothing is known about their (if any) clandestine work. Kazami left diaries, but he edited them heavily before his death. After an initial determination not to escalate the conflict, the Konoe cabinet soon became alarmed by its spread and the danger posed to Japanese residents in north China. On 11 July 1937, concerned about the danger of escalation, Ozaki went to see Kazami, who appeared unable to understand Ozaki's concern and sought to reassure him that the cabinet was firmly determined. (Ozaki did not spell out "determined not to escalate the conflict," but from the context, it seems clear.) Therefore, there was no need for alarm. Ozaki also conveyed his concern to Ushiba.[368] Although Kazami's diary entry for July 11 is extensive, there is no mention of Ozaki's visit.[369] On the surface, Ozaki, a Sinophile, stood against escalation at this point. Kazami, on the other hand, apparently was unconcerned. Soon, he supported Japanese military reinforcements to China, against the wishes of the minister of the army.[370]

Needless to say, China reacted to the news violently. At the same time, however, China strategically spread the conflict to Shanghai.

Tokyo's weak command

Ishiwara was adamantly against the escalation: He knew that it spelled doom for Japan. (At some point, Ishiwara proposed that all Japanese forces be withdrawn from China, to the universal disapproval of the Japanese Army and government.) Premier Konoe feared that if the cabinet refused to send reinforcements, the armed forces would rebel (even if the minister of the army urged restraint). Ishiwara demanded whether Konoe preferred an external disturbance to an internal one, but Konoe did not answer.[371] Ishiwara then proposed that Konoe go to Nanjing and speak in person with Chiang Kai-shek. Konoe agreed, but Kazami dissuaded him.[372] Germany, too, became concerned. Ernst von Weizsäcker (1882–1951), the "ministerial director" of the German Foreign Ministry, warned Tokyo in late July that its actions would hinder China's unification, *allow the spread of Communism in China*, and drive it into the arms of the Soviet Union.[373] The German military attaché in Tokyo, Eugen Ott, told the Japanese General

[367] It is true that Chiang was briefed daily on decrypted Japanese diplomatic messages. It is unknown whether they included cabinet discussions.

[368] *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)*, 221.

[369] Kazami Akira, *Kazami Akira nikki kankei shiryō, 1936–1947* (Tokyo, 2008), 21–24.

[370] See the testimony of Funada Naka, Konoe's cabinet member, in *Gendaishi o tsukuru hitobito (2)*, 248–49, 255.

[371] Quoted in Kiriyama, *Hangyaku no shishi*, 166.

[372] Kazami, *Kazami Akira nikki kankei shiryō, 1936–1947*, 24–26. Ishiwara's account is in *Gendaishi shiryō (9). NiTchū sensō (2)* (Tokyo, 1964), 308.

[373] Quoted in Sommer, *Deutschland und Japan*, 60.

Staff that he "regretted the Sino-Japanese conflict *in every respect*."[374] Meanwhile, numerous formal and informal negotiations between China and Japan, some with the mediation of Germany, were held, but none of them led anywhere.[375] In January 1938, Kazami took a measure that astonished nearly every observer. He had Konoe declare that no further negotiations would be held with the Chinese government, and Japan's ambassador to China would be recalled. Kazami penned this so-called Konoe Declaration. Even Kamei (who had schemed to place Kazami in Konoe's entourage) blamed him for this inexplicable action, which irreparably damaged the already execrable relations between China and Japan.[376] Moreover, Kamei accused Kazami of inciting divisions within the cabinet.[377]

Ozaki soon openly expressed his support for the Sino-Japanese War,[378] apparently influenced by Kazami. In May 1938, Ozaki penned several essays in which he apotheosized the war against China: The only way for Japan to proceed was to beat China.[379] He pressed for the capture of Hankow (now part of Wuhan), which some of his friends found unaccountable. Later, in 1941, Ozaki also advocated for war against Burma and British Malaya, but stopped when Ishiwara angrily rebuked him.[380] Ozaki's politics and his emotion were at odds. Kozai Yoshishige (古在由重, 1901–90), a Communist friend of his, understood this very well. Just a week or so before Ozaki's arrest, Kozai asked Ozaki how he felt about the Chinese who read his essays advocating Japan's complete military victory over China. Ozaki answered, "It pains me."[381] Ozaki's ultimate goal was to defend the Soviet Union, and the only information that had "absolute value" to him was Japan's war plans against the Soviet Union.[382] Ozaki's support of the war against China made sense in that it turned Japan's aggression away from the Soviet Union. Ozaki, who grew up in Taiwan, a Japanese colony, loved China. It pained him to advocate the conquest of China. However, to his mind, his loyalty to the Soviet Union made it politically imperative.

Love for China aside, many Japanese leftists followed Lenin's position during World War I and assumed defeatism. They knew perfectly well that Japan

[374] Erich Kordt, "German Political History in the Far East During the Hitler Regime," Hoover Institution Archives, E-1903, 8.

[375] Some of them are discussed in Gerald E. Bunker, *The Peace Conspiracy: Wang Ching-wei and the China War, 1937–1941* (Cambridge, MA, 1972).

[376] See Funada's testimony in *Gendaishi o tsukuru hitobito (2)*, 248; *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 74, 102; 200–201. After World War II, Kazami denied his authorship. See Kazami Akira, *Konoe naikaku* (Tokyo, 1982), 102 (this book was first published in 1951). For a detailed discussion of this incident and Kazami's evasive explanation, see Yokomizo *Shōwashi henrin*, 177–217.

[377] *Gendaishi shiryō (44). Kokka sōdōin (2). Seiji*, 187.

[378] Tanaka Etsuko, "Ozaki Hotsumi no Chūgoku jōsei no bunseki," *Nihon rekishi*, no. 557 (1994): 67–69.

[379] "Chōkisenka no shomondai," *Ozaki Hotsumi chosaku shū*, 2:106.

[380] See an eyewitness account in Sakai Saburō, *Shōwa kenkyūkai* (Tokyo, 1992), 246–47.

[381] Kozai Yoshishige, "Sonohi no zengo," *Ozaki Hotsumi chosaku shū*, 2: (geppō) 2, 6.

[382] *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)*, 275.

would never conquer China by fire and sword. The longer the war lasted, the more exhausted Japan would become, and the more possibilities there would be for revolution or at least for radical permutation. Indeed, Ozaki's friend, Kazami, was explicit in 1941. The significance of the war against China, Kazami proclaimed, was to "construct a new era and wash away and destroy what stands in the way of this construction." He deplored that after three and a half years of war, Japan had not reached the stage of construction yet.[383] This suggests that it was Kazami who occasioned Ozaki's change in position regarding the war with China.

In the autumn of 1941 when Sorge, Ozaki, and other Soviet spies were arrested, Konoe was greatly shaken. Konoe himself was questioned as a witness. Nothing in his life agitated him more than this espionage affair. Konoe reportedly shuddered at the thought, complaining that at every step, his policies had been subverted, but he could never uncover who it was.[384] Konoe suspected that there were others in his entourage (in addition to Ozaki) who were Communist or pro-Soviet conspirators. Toward the end of World War II, he submitted a memorandum to the emperor in which he accused Communists disguised as nationalists of subverting his policies since 1937. They did not want to abort the Sino-Japanese War. Japan was in danger of Communist revolution.[385] If Ozaki was a Communist disguised as a nationalist, then his close friends who recommended him were naturally suspect. Many years later, as if to deflect suspicion, Ushiba, who had praised Ozaki as a very "attractive man" and feigned "great surprise" at Ozaki's espionage, blamed Sano Manabu (佐野学, 1892–1953). Sano was an important Japanese Communist who knew Zhou Enlai personally. Arrested in 1932, he publicly abjured Soviet Communism and became an anti-Soviet democratic socialist. He spent more than ten years in prison and was released in 1943. Ushiba inculpated Sano, accusing him of infusing Konoe with anti-Communism fervor.[386] After World War II and Konoe's suicide in 1945, Kazami penned an essay on the Konoe cabinet, obviously in response to Konoe's accusations, blaming the Japanese Army for sabotaging the cabinet policies.[387] From the safety of the post–World War II era, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Kazami defended Ozaki as a martyr (see p. 322).

Although those whom Konoe suspected of being Communists were not all Communists or Marxists, some had been willing to support the Soviet Union, if not unconditionally, then with certain political goals in mind.[388] Kamei

[383] His dialogue with Ozaki is in Ozaki, *Ozaki Hotsumi chosaku shū*, 5:342.

[384] Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shōwa no dōran. Ge* (Tokyo, 2001), 111.

[385] *Kido Kōichi kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 1966), 495–98.

[386] *Ushiba Tomohiko shi*, 2:122.

[387] Kazami Akira, "Konoe Fumimaro," 60.

[388] Araya Takashi, *Shūsen to Konoe jōsō bun: Ajia Taiheiyō sensō to kyōsan shugi inbō setsu* (Tokyo, 2016) is an important work to explore whether Konoe's suspects were actually Communists. His answer is negative, but he ignores the deals they sought with the Soviet Union. Likewise, Mitamura Takeo, *Dai Tōa sensō to Sutārin no bōryaku: sensō to kyōsan shugi* (Tokyo, 1987), blames

Kan-ichirō and Asō Hisashi are good examples (assuming that they were neither Soviet agents nor Japanese spies). They were against capitalism and wanted to "sublate" (they used the German word *aufheben*) liberalism and democracy. Their goal was socialism, which would abolish class differences but not nations or peoples (民族). They were "Asianists" who sought to liberate the Asians from the white Europeans. (For this reason, they were ready to let Taiwan and Korea become independent.) The only nation that could liberate Asia, according to them, was Japan. Therefore, Japan had to be transformed first in order to lead Asia into a true commonwealth of Asians. Clearly influenced by the Russian Revolution, they wanted a revolutionary change and imagined that war would be the only means by which to achieve their goal. They constantly spoke of "war's progressive [革新的] significance."

The Marco Polo Bridge Incident created a real war for hegemony over China among the Soviet Union, CCP, KMT, and Japan. Kamei and Asō were truly conflicted; the Sino-Japanese war was a golden opportunity for a revolutionary change in Japan, but it clearly signified a Sino-Soviet united front against Japan. They agonized over it, having long played the sorcerer's apprentice. Kamei later recalled that they were tied up in knots, feeling that they were caught in the mud and could not escape.[389] They still clung to the illusion that Japan, the Soviet Union, and Germany could combine to form a force with which to deal with the Anglo-American world. They worked, with Fujita Isamu (see Chapter 3, p. 205), to muster the Japanese armed forces to support their view.[390]

Kamei was a self-styled conspirator or ninja on a global scale. Obviously, he was outmaneuvered by the Soviet conspirators. In his memoir, Kamei claimed that in August 1937, he received notes from Karl Haushofer and Hermann von Raumer (1893–1977), an assistant of Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1946) who ran the Nazi Party's foreign office (*Dienststelle Ribbentrop*), about new political sentiments in the Nazi Party favoring reconciliation with Europe, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy in the Nazi Party, supported this thinking, Kamei was told. Sensing the possibility of forging a German-Soviet-Japanese alliance, according to Kamei, Konoe sent him to Europe. In Germany, he claimed that he was received by both Hitler and Ribbentrop, in addition to von Raumer, Hess, and Haushofer.[391] He claimed

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the "crypto-Communists," failing to discuss the fact that the rightists and ultranationalists, too, sought a deal with the Soviet Union.

[389] This explains why Kamei, who worked with Raivid in the study group discussed earlier, called the Suiyuan event a Soviet operation to mobilize anti-colonial Asian sentiment against Japan. *Kanpō gōgai. Shōwa 12-nen 7-gatsu 29-nichi. Dai 71-kai teikoku gikai shūgiin giji sokkiroku dai 4-gō* (Tokyo, 1937), 44. In his memoir, Kamei also noted that the Suiyuan Incident was created by the Soviet Union/CCP. See Kamei, "Kaisō (sōkō)," 12.

[390] See Kamei's and Asō's letters to Konoe: *Gendaishi shiryō (44). Kokka sōdōin (2). Seiji*, 14–21, 151–56, 535–575; Asō Hisashi, *Gendai sensō no igi* (Tokyo, 1938). On Fujita, see Takahashi Masanori, *Kaisō no Kamei Kan-ichirō. Gekidō no Shōwashi o kage de sasaeta eiketsu* (Tokyo, 2000), 249.

[391] Takahashi, *Kaisō no Kamei Kan-ichirō*, 251. In his memoir, he did not say he was received by Hitler and Ribbentrop. He said so, however, to the German historian Gerhard Krebs in a

also that he met Otto Kuusinen and his son in Warsaw and discussed the matter of German-Soviet-Japanese relations.[392] This story stretches credulity, however. Kuusinen does not seem to have had a son. (He may have presented someone as his son, but why?) More importantly, it would have been extremely difficult for such a prominent Comintern leader to travel to Warsaw. Even had he traveled under an assumed identity, he would have been closely watched by the Polish counterintelligence. Warsaw was simply not a good place for such a meeting. Was it all a tall tale by Kamei?

This story makes Kamei's mysterious life even more difficult to disentangle. Kuusinen had befriended Richard Sorge in 1924 when Sorge was put in charge of the security of the Comintern delegation attending the Ninth Congress of the German Communist Party. To avert police surveillance, Sorge even made his own flat available for Kuusinen, one of the delegates. Kuusinen liked Sorge. Because Sorge wanted to work for the Comintern, Kuusinen gladly sponsored his work in Moscow.[393] Kamei also claimed that he met Kuusinen in Manchuria in 1934 (see Chapter 3, p. 269). The Kamei-Kuusinen-Sorge link becomes even more suspicious when one reads a draft of Kamei's memoir: He said that his political position at the time was to be friendly with the Soviet Union "to the end" (どこまでも).[394] In August 1940, Kamei heard from Germany that the influence of the Haushofer-von Raumer group had diminished. In April 1941, Kamei received information that von Raumer was dead, Hess had been dislodged from Hitler's inner circle, and Hitler had decided to attack the Soviet Union. Kamei's proposal that Japan withdraw from the Tripartite Pact (see p. 394 in the next chapter) when Germany attacked the Soviet Union was not accepted by the Japanese government.[395]

Whether Kamei actually believed that an alliance with the Soviet Union would save Japan is unknown. Kamei's stated plan was to use the alliance to pressure Washington into mediating peace with China. This would allow Japan to withdraw its troops from China. So, it appears at least that Kamei, in the end, came to support peace, not war. It is also possible that he was a pawn in Moscow's game. Kamei was either influenced by disinformation or he himself was in charge of spreading disinformation. Von Raumer, for instance, did not

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1978 interview. See Gerhard Krebs, "The German Nazi Party: A Model for Japan's 'New Order' 1940–1?," in *Japanese-German Relations, 1895–1945: War, Diplomacy and Public Opinion*, eds. Christian W. Spang and Rolf-Harald Wippich (London, 2006), 184, 196. Haushofer spoke of Kamei's "important messages." See Christian W. Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan. Die Rezeption seiner geopolitischen Theorien in der deutschen und japanischen Politik* (Munich, 2013), 646. Spang thinks that this was somewhat mysterious.

[392] Takahashi, *Kaisō no Kamei Kan-ichirō*, 251.

[393] Julius Mader, *Dr.-Sorge-Report: Ein Dokumentarbericht über Kundschafter des Friedens mit auswählten Artikeln von Richard Sorge* (Berlin, 1984), 61–63, 552. *Delo Rikharda Zorge. Neizvestnye dokumenty* (Spb-Moscow, 2000), 28–29 includes Sorge's thank you letter to "Comrade Kuusinen" (November 1924).

[394] Kamei, "Kaisō (sōkō)," 42.

[395] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 204–9.

die in 1940.[396] Ozaki's position for the war in China was useful to Moscow; in a different sense, so, too, was Kamei's for peace.

Moscow's hidden role

Part of what allowed Stalin to outmaneuver Japanese politicians and conspirators was that, unlike their plans, which were constantly shifting to adjust to Japan's deteriorating geopolitical situation, Stalin's intentions to pin Japan down in China remained consistent and unwavering. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident marked a crucial step in this process. To ensure Japan's aggression, Moscow let it be known to Japan that it would not intervene in the Sino-Japanese conflict and that China had no intention of escalating any conflict into an all-out war.[397] It appears that Moscow leaked similar information to Japan by way of Germany.[398]

Simultaneously, Moscow deployed provocation and disinformation to sow confusion among the Japanese. In August 1937, shortly after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Grigorii Semenov, the leader of the anti-Bolshevik émigrés in the Far East who was, in fact, a Soviet agent, forwarded to the Kwantung Army a note purportedly from Vasilii Bliukher, the commander of the Soviet Far Eastern military forces. Bliukher stated in the note that he had created an anti-Soviet party in the Far Eastern Army (OKDVA) and was preparing for the overthrow of the Stalin government. He asked whether the Japanese Army and the émigré groups had completed preparations. Given the difficulties in the Soviet Union, Bliukher continued, the Soviet government had no intention to respond to hostile foreign actions and would retreat up to the Ural mountains if attacked from the east. If a "foreign country" (namely, Japan) took action, the Soviet government would collapse, and the anti-Soviet movement in the country would triumph. He urged the Japanese Army to make a swift decision.[399] Obviously, this was pure Soviet provocation. Semenov proposed a similar measure to Araki in 1932 (see Chapter 3, p. 229).[400]

Meanwhile, Moscow was exceedingly pleased with Japan's misadventure in China. Within a few weeks after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, on 21 August 1937, a Sino-Soviet pact of non-aggression was signed. This pact, to be in force

[396] After World War II, von Raumer wrote a 106-page typescript memoir on his work in the Ribbentrop office. See Sommer, *Deutschland und Japan*, 26–27, 517.

[397] See the report of the Naval Attaché in Moscow to Tokyo, mentioned in Maki, *Fukutsu no shunrai*, 2:198.

[398] See the information the Navy received from Germany, quoted in Tamura Shinsaku, *Orokanaru sensō* (Osaka, 1950), 25.

[399] A note, dated 31 August 1937, from the governor of Nagasaki to the foreign minister, the army minister, and others: JACAR, B02032146800.

[400] In 1938, Bliukher, like so many other Red Army commanders, was arrested and executed on false charges of espionage for Japan. See Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Battle of Lake Khasan Reconsidered," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 1 (2016): 106–9. On the repression of Bliukher and numerous other Soviet military personnel in the Far East, see Wojtkowiak, *Polowanie na "dalniewostoczników."*

for five years, included an oral agreement that China would not sign any so-called anti-Communist treaty with any government for five years. The Soviet Union, in turn, was obliged not to conclude a non-aggression pact with Japan until normal relations between China and Japan had been restored. This was expressed only in a strictly secret, oral declaration that "should never be published officially or unofficially."[401]

With the agreement in place, the Soviet Union embarked on an extraordinary scale of military aid to China to fight the Japanese. From 1937 to 1942, the Soviet Union sent 1,285 airplanes (777 of which were fighter airplanes), 110,000 rifles, 14,000 machine guns, 1,850 automobiles, and more, the total value of which amounted to 450 million U.S. dollars.[402] In addition, some 4,000 Soviet military specialists were stationed in China, as well as over 1,000 airmen, more than 200 of whom were killed in action in China.[403] (As early as November 1937, Japan knew that Soviet airplanes and Soviet pilots were actually taking part on the Chinese side.)[404] Land, sea, and air were used to transport the Soviet aid to China. The most substantive route was "Route Z" from Saryozek in Kazakhstan to Lanzhou in Gansu via Urumqi, Xinjiang, a military road nearly 3,000 km long. Thousands of Soviet citizens toiled on its construction.[405] This route was extended in 1938 to Xianyang (near Xi'an) and to Chongqing via Chengdu (approximately 3,700 km). In addition, in 1937, Moscow directly assisted the CCP with almost 2 million U.S. dollars (in today's value, more than 36 million dollars).[406] The stupendous aid to China was a sacrifice Stalin was willing to make to keep the Japanese mired in China. In January 1938, Stalin accused Japan of trying to plant its agents "everywhere and particularly in the USSR" and

[401] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV: Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia. 1937–1945 gg. Kn. 2: 1945 g.* (Moscow, 2000), 583; B.N. Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete mezhdu SSSR i Iaponiei: diplomaticheskaia istoriia, 1941–1945 gg.* (Moscow, 1995), 69–70.

[402] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV. Kn. 2*, 473.

[403] Slavinskii, *SSSR i Iaponiia na puti k voine*, 131. About their experience, see Iu.V. Chudodeev, *Na zemle i v nebe Kitaia: sovetskie voennye sovetniki i letchiki-dobrovol'tsy v Kitae v period iapono-kitaiskoi voiny 1937–1945 gg.* (Moscow, 2017). Frederic Wakeman, Jr. claims that the Soviet military advisers were sent according to a "joint Soviet (GRU)-Chinese (MSB) intelligence project," created after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. See his *Spymaster: Dai Li and the Chinese Secret Services* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), 465–66. The source of this important information is not cited, however. Aleksandr I. Kolpakidi gives a Russian account of this joint intelligence operation in his "Zuoerge zhihou Sulian zai Hua qingbao hudong," *Zuoerge zai Zhongguo de mimi shiming*, ed. Su Zhiliang (Shanghai, 2014), 121.

[404] See "Waga gun gekiha no tekki wa shinrai no Sorenki to hanmei," *Tokyō Asahi shinbun*, 24 November 1937, evening edition, 1.

[405] B. Gorbachev, "Vneshniaia pomoshch' Kitaiu v gody voiny s Iaponiei (1937–1945 gg.)," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 3 (2015): 125. The route lay in the restive Muslim regions of China. In addition, there was a sizable Mongol population. Although the Japanese had plans to utilize the Chinese Muslims against the Han authorities, these schemes did not go very far. In a truly Stalinist spirit, Moscow exhorted the Chinese to "liquidate" the anti-Han Muslims as pro-Japanese enemy insurgents. See RGVA, f. 33987s, o. 3a, d. 1209, l. 28.

[406] Yang Kuisong, "Gongchanguoji wei Zhonggong tigong caizheng yuanzhu qingkuang zhi kaocha," in *Zhong-E guanxi de lishi yu xianshi*, ed. Luan Jinghe (Kaifeng, 2004), 264.

Figure 4.11. China was assisted by the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States in its war against Japan from the north through Mongolia, the west (Route Z), the south (Burma Road), and the east (from the sea).

extolled "our fighters in China who are trying to teach the Chinese how to beat their enemies." Then, he revealed his true colors: "It's better to fight the Japanese fascists in China than in the Soviet Union."[407] In early February 1938, Stalin candidly told Sun Ke, son of Sun Yat-sen and the then president of China's Legislative Yuan, that China was "fighting Russia's battle as well as her own."[408] The Chinese were made to shed blood to help the Soviet Union. Japan took Moscow's bait and fell into the "China Quagmire."[409]

Writing in September 1937 to Mikhail M. Slavutskii (1898–1943), the new Soviet ambassador to Japan, Stomoniakov, the Soviet deputy commissar of foreign affairs in charge of Far Eastern affairs, could not hide his excitement. Japan had made its biggest mistake by starting battles in Shanghai, which complicated its international position. Japan, Stomoniakov said, was experiencing its "biggest crisis since the Russo-Japanese War."[410] In October 1937, William Bullitt, now the American ambassador to France, conveyed to Washington an account of

[407] RGASPI, op. 558, op. 11, d. 1121, ll. 13, 16–17.

[408] As reported to Bullitt by Sun in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1938. Volume III: The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1954), 165.

[409] The "China Quagmire" is taken from James W. Morley, ed., *The China Quagmire: Japan's Expansion on the Asian Continent, 1933–1941* (New York, 1983).

[410] AVP, f. 0146, op. 20, p. 177, d. 13, l. 55.

what Litvinov, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs, had recently told Léon Blum (1872–1950), the premier of France until June 1937:

> He [Litvinov] and the Soviet Union were perfectly delighted that Japan had attacked China. He believed that Japan would be so weakened financially and economically and would have such enormous difficulty in digesting a conquered China that the Soviet Union was now *completely* [emphasis added] assured of peace in the Far East for many years to come. Litvinov had added that the Soviet Union hoped that war between China and Japan would continue just *as long as possible* [emphasis added] and would result in an attempt by the Japanese to swallow just as much of China as possible. This would leave the Soviet Union free for operations in Europe.[411]

Blum was so deceived by Soviet propaganda that he told Litvinov that he ought not to gloat just yet, as Japan's goal was "to capture Vladivostok and to establish the Japanese frontier at Lake Baikal." Litvinov was pleased with how effective the Soviet propaganda was:

> Litvinov had laughed at this [remark by Blum], proving that no matter how long the war in China might endure and no matter how much of China Japan might conquer, the Soviet Union would remain *passive* [emphasis added]. Litvinov said that whereas before the Japanese attack on China, Japan had been most hostile and aggravating, today the Japanese were all politeness and butter in their relations with the Soviet Government.[412]

In May 1938, Robert Coulondre (1885–1959), the French ambassador to the Soviet Union, reported to Paris: "Mr. [Vladimir] Potemkin [Litvonov's first deputy] calls the situation in China splendid. He is counting on resistance by this country for several years, after which Japan will be too enfeebled to be capable of attacking the USSR. This opinion appears to be shared by the Soviet leadership."[413]

In November 1937, Stalin urged the Chinese Communists to continue to fight: "The main thing now is the *war* [emphasis added], not an agrarian revolution, not confiscation of land."[414] By February 1938, Stalin was triumphant. He exhilarated in telling visiting Chinese delegates that:

> History is fond of a joke. It sometimes chooses a fool as a stick to drive the historical process. The Japanese military leaders think that

[411] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. 1937. Vol. III: The Far East*, 636.

[412] Ibid.

[413] Quoted in Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933–41: Moscow, Tokyo and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (Pittsburgh, PA, 1992), 94.

[414] Dimitrov, *Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933–1949*, 67.

> they can conquer China. In fact, they have turned out to be just such fools. They don't understand [that they cannot conquer China], but they will be forced to.[415]

It appears that in 1937 or 1938, both Voroshilov, the people's commissar of defense, and Georgii K. Zhukov (1896–1974), a Red Army high commander, the latter of whom would become a Soviet military hero in the battle against Japan in 1939 (Khalkhain Gol/Nomonhan [see p. 383 in the next chapter]) and during World War II, visited China to study the military situation.[416] Meanwhile, Stalin did not stint on aid to China to fight Japan. In May 1939, when Sun Fo requested 150 million U.S. dollars of loan, Stalin responded: "You may have a loan of *any amount* [emphasis added] you require without putting forward any reasons."[417]

Stalin and FDR

Stalin had other reasons to be pleased with the "historical process" being driven by "fools." The United States stood four-square with China against Japan. In his famous "Quarantine Speech" on 5 October 1937, without naming Japan explicitly, FDR condemned the "definite violations of agreements, and especially of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Briand-Kellogg Pact and the Nine Power Treaty." He went on to say:

> War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared. It can engulf states and peoples remote from the original scene of hostilities. We are determined to keep out of war, yet we cannot insure ourselves against the disastrous effects of war and the dangers of involvement. We are adopting such measures as will minimize our risk of involvement, but we cannot have complete protection in a world of disorder in which confidence and security have broken down.[418]

As Radek pointedly discussed in 1933 (see Chapter 3, p. 259), American isolationism was never more than a mask. Even that mask of isolationism was, as an American historian once put it, "far more compromising on Asian issues than on European ones."[419] Since 1933, Stalin had expected close collaboration with FDR

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[415] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV. Kniga 1*, 199. Stalin's remark, given during an informal dinner in the Kremlin, cannot be found in the Chinese records of the meeting. See *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi. Di-3 bian, zhanshi waijiao*, 2:407–8.

[416] Percy Chen, *China Called Me: My Life Inside the Chinese Revolution* (Boston, 1979), 288–89. Their visits, which must have been highly confidential, cannot be confirmed by Soviet sources, however.

[417] Quoted in Aitchen K. Wu, *China and the Soviet Union: A Study of Sino-Soviet Relations* (London, 1950), 269.

[418] FDR, "Quarantine Speech," accessed 10 February 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20120509132052/http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3310.

[419] Travis Beal Jacobs, "Roosevelt's 'Quarantine Speech'," *Historian* 24, no. 4 (1962): 483.

against Japan. Now, Stalin got what he wanted. The United States and the USSR started consulting one another in both Moscow and Washington on extending military aid to China.[420] Preparing to propitiate the West, Stalin adopted in 1936 the so-called Stalin Constitution, which, among others, guaranteed religious freedom. It was merely a cover, however: During the years of the Great Terror in 1937–38, Stalin perpetrated the mass murder of priests. At the same time, the American ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph E. Davies (1876–1958), whitewashed Stalin's terror, reporting from Moscow that Stalin's show trials against the alleged German, Polish, and Japanese "spies" were "fair and just."[421] Davies reported what FDR wanted to hear: that Stalin was an estimable political partner. Davies went to Moscow under FDR's mandate—that is, "his main mission in Moscow was to *win the confidence of Stalin* [emphasis added]."[422] Without making any of the expected concessions to Washington (such as repayment of the tsarist-era debt and the guarantee of religious freedom), Stalin managed to seduce FDR to his side against Japan. As a demonstration against Japan, shortly after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the U.S. naval cruiser *August*, accompanied by four destroyers, paid an official visit to the closed port of Vladivostok.[423] Many of those Soviet citizens mobilized to welcome the Americans were subsequently arrested and executed, however.[424] Washington finally granted the favor Stalin had requested of Washington in 1933 (see Chapter 3, p. 275).

Favor or not, it did nothing to help the American diplomats working in Moscow. Stalin's "anti-foreign campaign" banished many Americans in the Soviet Union into the Gulag and interfered "with the proper functioning of the American Embassy in Moscow." As Loy Henderson bitterly complained, the Vladivostok visit did not spark "an increase of understanding between the hosts and guests and did not arouse feelings of mutual esteem."[425] These and other complaints had no impact on FDR and his administration. Stalin continued to enjoy the American benefit of the doubt and would do so throughout World War II.

Meanwhile, regarding Far Eastern affairs, American public opinion had turned overwhelmingly pro-China and anti-Japan. In a September 1937 response to the question, "In the present fight between Japan and China, are your sympathies with either side?," 55 percent answered "Neither," 43 percent "China," and only 2 percent "Japan." A month later, to the same question, the "Neither"

[420] Pavel Sudoplatov, *Raznye dni tainoi voiny i diplomatii. 1941 god* (Moscow, 2001), 150.

[421] Dennis J. Dunn, *Caught between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow* (Lexington, KY, 1998), 79.

[422] G.W. Baer, ed., *A Question of Trust: The Origins of U.S.-Soviet Diplomatic Relations. The Memoirs of Loy W. Henderson* (Stanford, CA, 1985), 417.

[423] Iu.M. Zaitsev, "Vizit Aziatskoi eskadry SShA vo Vladivostok (1937 g.)," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 7 (2017): 47–52.

[424] Ilya S. Okunev and Victor M. Frank, "Vengeance in Vladivostok," *Naval History* 10, no. 3 (1996): 43.

[425] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. The Soviet Union, 1933–1939* (Washington, DC, 1952), 391, 440.

response tumbled to 40 percent, 59 percent favored China, and only 1 percent favored Japan.[426] Still, most people did not support American intervention in foreign affairs. The mood was about to change, however. FDR was not anti-Japanese enough for some Americans. A year and a half later, in February 1939, when Japan's ambassador, Saitō Hiroshi (斎藤博, 1886–1939), died in Washington, the American government returned his ashes on an American cruiser *USS Astoria* to Japan. Some were enraged. According to an article in *Harper's Magazine*, "A middle-aged man riding in a day coach out of Spokane [in Washington State] was certain President Roosevelt was secretly in cahoots with Tokyo": "Look how the Japs cheered that stuff. When we fight those devils, Roosevelt had better not try to hold us back."[427] "Two of the most popular books of 1937–1938" in the United States were written about China: Carl Crow's *400 Million Customers* and Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China*, both strongly anti-Japan and pro-China.[428] They demonstrated that Japan had lost in the court of world opinion.

Stalin the provocateur

Once again, the question inevitably arises as to whether Stalin and the CCP, in fact, engineered the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in order to entrap Japan in the "China Quagmire." What I have discussed in this chapter suggests that it was quite likely. It should be remembered that when Stalin let Chiang Ching-kuo return home, Chiang was told that a "Sino-Japanese war would start soon" (see p. 337). Clarifying Stalin's provocation is, again, not to minimize the role of Japan; rather, it is to bring into relief the critical roles that the Soviet Union and the CCP played in Japan's self-immolation. The Soviet Union drew Japan into a futile and fatal war with China, thereby weakening Japan as a geopolitical rival in the Far East. Chen Lifu, Chiang's intelligence chief who carried out negotiations with both the CCP and the Soviet Union in 1936–37, was interviewed in 1990 for the first time since World War II by a Japanese journalist. In his interview, he was unambiguous: Moscow engineered the Sino-Japanese war. Moscow "agitated the Chinese students" and influenced the radical young Japanese militarists into aggression against China. Chen said he knew this because at that time, he was negotiating with the CCP and the Soviet Union about forging a united front against Japan.[429] Chen also acknowledged that he had helped gain Chiang's release in Xi'an through direct contact with

[426] Francis Sill Wickware, "What We Think about Foreign Affairs," *Harper's Magazine*, 1 June 1939, 405.

[427] Richard L. Neuberger, "What the Home Folks Say about Events Abroad," *Harper's Magazine*, 1 June 1939, 408.

[428] Jerry Israel, " 'Mao's Mr. America': Edgar Snow's Images of China," *Pacific Historical Review* 47, no. 1 (February 1978): 107.

[429] Hosaka Masayasu, *Shōwa rikugun no kenkyū. Jō* (Tokyo, 2006), 198–201. He repeated the same point in another interview he gave to a Japanese historian in 1995: Kikuchi Kazutaka, "Chen Lifu shi e no intabyū," *Chūgoku kenkyū geppō*, no. 592 (June 1997): 31.

Moscow in December 1936.[430] There is witness testimony that immediately after the initial clash at the Marco Polo Bridge, some twenty Soviet operatives emerged and secretly but energetically agitated the Chinese students.[431] At the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, the American-led defense team argued that the Marco Polo Bridge Incident was planned and caused by the CCP, the Soviet Communist Party, and the Comintern.[432] Needless to say, their argument fell on deaf ears.

Stalin had pulled strings in China and Japan to "drive the historical process," as he said in February 1938. Neither Sorge nor Ozaki knew of Stalin's operations behind the scenes. Their function was intelligence, and they were not allowed to engage in political operations. In 1941, Sorge did ask Moscow for permission to use Ozaki's influence to advocate for peace between Japan and the Soviet Union. He was told that there was no such need (clearly, because Japan no longer posed a serious threat to the Soviet Union), although he was not prohibited. All the same, Ozaki did exercise his influence and engage in politics in the interest of the Soviet Union. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, for instance, Ozaki and Sorge worked to influence the prime minister's inner circles by emphasizing the futility of war with the Soviet Union and the advantage of war against Britain and the United States.[433] In this sense, as Chalmers Johnson has argued, Ozaki was more than just a spy.[434] Ozaki's politics were not the same as Moscow's, and Moscow remained suspicious of both him and Sorge until 1941. After all, as is well known, Sorge disobeyed the order to return to Moscow in 1937, an annus horribilis for the Soviet people. And while Sorge and Ozaki provided accurate and invaluable information to Moscow, Stalin did not trust the information.[435] The reason was simple: Stalin and Stalin alone controlled political operations.

As has been indicated throughout this book, Stalin even treated his own diplomats with distrust. One by one, he defenestrated diplomats as soon as their utility expired. Each of their stories reinforces the way Stalin organized and protected his power and control over the political landscape. Litvinov, the honcho of the Soviet diplomatic service, was left uninformed of Stalin's political intrigue in 1931 and, as discussed earlier, was then reprimanded for saying the wrong thing. In 1939, Stalin removed Litvinov to pave the way to strike a deal with Hitler. In August 1939, Ivan Maiskii, the Soviet ambassador to Britain,

[430] See his memoir: Ch'en Li-fu, *The Storm Clouds Clear over China: The Memoir of Ch'en Li-fu, 1990–1993*. eds Sidney H. Chang and Ramon H. Myers (Stanford, CA, 1994), 125–26. Chen also wrote that the "Soviet Union wanted our war with Japan to be protracted" (130).

[431] Imai, *NiTchū wahei kōsaku*, 40. See also another witness account, "Kazen kyōsantō akuyaku NiSshi ryōgun shōtotsu o sakusu," *Tokyō Asahi shinbun*, 5 July 1938, morning edition, 2.

[432] Its summary: IMTFE transcripts, 20,494–20,497.

[433] See Sorge's account in Katō Tetsurō (ed.), *Zoruge jiken shiryō shūsei: Ōta Taizō kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 2019), 2:50; *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)*, 187. 258–59, 548.

[434] Johnson, *An Instance of Treason*, 161–62, 248.

[435] Alekseev, *"Vernyi Vam Ramzai,"* examines this issue in detail.

learned about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of Non-Aggression from a British journalist. Raivid, Iurenev, Bogomolov, and other Soviet diplomats would have known nothing of Stalin's secret operations. After rendering what would appear to have been invaluable service to Moscow, Raivid was recalled from Tokyo, arrested, and executed on 8 October 1937. Bogomolov, Iurenev, Stomoniakov, and many other diplomats were alive but on borrowed time.

In November 1937, Stalin told the Chinese government delegates who came to Moscow for military aid that Bogomolov had been arrested as a "Trotskyite." (He was arrested on 14 October 1937 in Moscow after he was recalled from Nanjing.) He had, alleged Stalin, misinformed Moscow that Shanghai would not last even two weeks, China would not last more than three months, and Chiang Kai-shek was wavering.[436] It was for Chinese consumption only. Internally, Stalin alleged that Bogomolov had failed to foresee Japan's plans for an attack on China (see his report to Moscow dated 18 June 1937 discussed on p. 303 earlier in this chapter), an issue Stalin avoided raising when he spoke to the Chinese delegates in November. Bogomolov had no knowledge of such Japanese plans—because there were none.

Stalin removed Bogomolov, because he had simply outlived his utility. Under Moscow's order, Bogomolov had successfully promoted anti-Japanese sentiment and warmongering in China. His oral assurances to China that the Soviet Union would step in should the Japanese attack were obviously sanctioned by Stalin.[437] The Chinese ambassador, Tsiang, took such assurances with reservation, cautioning Chiang Kai-shek not to take them at face value. For his part, Bogomolov was not privy to the secret scheming in Moscow aimed at inciting the Japanese attack. In internal discussions, Moscow studiously avoided mention of any such oral promises made by Bogomolov to China. And yet, there is evidence that Stalin floated just such a promise in November to the Chinese delegation: "If Japan begins to triumph, the Soviet Union will enter into the war" (see p. 342 in this chapter). When Nanjing fell the following month, Stalin claimed that no such definite promise had been made. Tsiang complained to Henderson about the broken promise. By conveying such false promises to the Chinese, Bogomolov had rendered invaluable service to Stalin in China, but he was a spent force. Under interrogation, Bogomolov admitted that he was a Trotskyite and British spy. However, on 7 May 1938, at his trial in camera without the presence of prosecutors, defense lawyers, or witnesses, he retracted his earlier confessions. He insisted that in China, he had carried out Moscow's anti-Japanese policies.

[436] *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV. Kniga 1*, 155.

[437] Bogomolov did commit the indiscretion of suggesting a pact of mutual assistance to China, a position not officially sanctioned by Moscow. For his indiscretion, he was reprimanded by Litvinov. See Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Struggle for Collective Security in Europe, 1933–1939* (New York, 1984), 143. This does not exclude the likelihood that in order to entice the Chinese, Stalin suggested such a pact orally to Bogomolov. Once Stalin achieved his goal, Bogomolov became a political liability. So, Stalin put him to death, a method he used countless times.

The trial took only fifteen minutes to hand down the sentence of death. He was executed that same day.[438]

Iurenev, the Soviet ambassador to Japan until 1937, fared no better. He was a Trotskii supporter from 1913 to 1917, which almost certainly doomed him in 1937. When he was called to the secret police office on 22 September 1937, he took a revolver with him. When he realized how grave the accusations against him were, he took out the revolver and tried to kill himself. The revolver did not fire. He had forgotten that he had unlocked it before he entered the office of Nikolai Ezhev (the secret police chief) and by mistake locked it when he tried to shoot himself. He was arrested and accused of trying to kill Ezhev.[439] Iurenev was sentenced to death and executed on 1 August 1938.

In particular. Iurenev's case reveals an important pattern to Stalin's operations. Iurenev was forced to admit that by Trotskii's order, he had worked to provoke Chinese Trotskyites into armed attacks against the Japanese so as to give the Japanese the opportunity to "realize their predatory tendencies in China." In collaboration with Bogomolov, he had carried out the policy of "making it easier for Japan to expand its military operation to north China." Together, they created a provocative environment in China, spreading leaflets calling for war against Japan. Iurenev implicated Raivid in his "Trotskyite conspiracy."[440] Iurenev's case fits perfectly into Stalin's mode of operation, whereby he used someone else to do the dirty work and, once the job was done, used the person's dirty work as an excuse for disposing of him.

Given this mode of Stalin's political operation, the "confessions" of Bogomolov and Iurenev essentially amount to Moscow's admission that the Soviet Union used the Chinese to attack the Japanese in order to start a war. The accusations against Bogomolov and Iurenev meant that Stalin dumped the responsibility for the provocation at the Marco Polo Bridge on them (and other "Trotskyites"). Their secret police files discussed here are the most convincing evidence we have of Moscow's responsibility for the Marco Polo Bridge Incident.[441]

The lives of Bogomolov, Iurenev, and others represented a typical Stalinist political operation of obfuscation and camouflage. It suggests that when their

[438]TsA FSB, f. R-23403, ll. 224–224 ob. Much of his file is sealed, however, and one cannot know what else is in his file. Bogomolov's successor, I.T. Bovkun-Luganets (1899–1939), too, was killed by Stalin. Apparently deeming it politically inexpedient to arrest and execute two ambassadors in a row, Stalin instead ordered him to be killed under the guise of a traffic accident. See Nikita Petrov, *Palachi* (Moscow, 2011), 54–61. Bovkun-Luganets, a secret police official, was accused of engaging in opium trade. See Françoise Thom, *Beria. Le Janus du Kremlin* (Paris, 2013), 775–76. This almost certainly means that he employed opium traders in China as agents and informers.

[439]TsA FSB, f. R-23508, t. 1, ll. 14–18.

[440]Ibid., t. 1, ll. 79, 82, 95, 311, 319. The Iurenev file, too, is largely sealed, and its full content cannot be read.

[441]Generally, the secret police files of the Stalinist era, when read carefully, are an excellent source to unlock its many mysteries. See Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven, CT, 2007).

utility expired, those Chinese provocateurs who actually engaged in the July 1937 operation were physically destroyed as "Trotskyites." Stalin thus cleverly hid his hand. He employed the same sort of dissembling political operations within the Soviet Union. After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, some Chinese in the Soviet Union organized or sought to organize protests at Japan's diplomatic posts in the country. This was politically inconvenient to the Soviet government. As a specious peace gesture to Japan, Stalin arrested them as foreign spies and agents intent on provoking war between Japan and the Soviet Union.[442]

Meanwhile, in Moscow, Stomoniakov, Litvinov's deputy who dealt with Chinese and Japanese affairs, survived a little longer than Raivid, Iurenev, or Bogomolov, but he, too, was arrested in December 1938. Like Iurenev, he tried to kill himself, but was unsuccessful. Accused of having spied for Poland, Germany, and Britain, he was executed in October 1941.[443]

Two prominent Japanese, Kuhara Fusanosuke and Kōmoto Daisaku, who played critical roles in earlier events, are conspicuously absent from the drama of 1937. Kuhara was implicated in the February 26 coup attempt and forced out of the political scene until 1938, when he was acquitted. Then, he returned to politics. Absent though he was from the political scene of 1937, Kuhara carefully followed it and, significantly, understood that Stalin and Moscow stood behind the Marco Polo Bridge Incident that led to the Sino-Japanese War. In 1938, he also alluded to Stalin as being responsible for initiating the Battle of Lake Khasan (see Chapter 5, p. 381). Kuhara cautioned the Japanese against the wishful thinking that Stalin would be overthrown by popular rebellion if he went to war.[444] These views, which Kuhara expressed publicly, concerned Stalin, who, in view of the

[442] Evgenii G. Kalkaev, " 'Provokatsionnye deistviia' i 'terroristicheskie namereniia.' K voprosu o nachale 'kitaiskoi operatsii' NKVD (1937–1938)," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 12 (2018): 66–84. Moscow went further in China: It also branded as "Trotskyites" those Chinese who opposed the united front of the KMT and CCP. In November 1937, Stalin told the Chinese that "Trotskyites must be hunted down, shot, destroyed. These are international provocateurs, fascism's most vicious agents"(*Diary of Georgi Dimitrov 1933–1949*, 67). The CCP and the KMT followed Stalin's instruction. One of those hunted down and shot was Zhang Mutao (張慕陶, 1905–41). Accused of having opposed the united front, he was arrested in 1938 as a Trotskyite and Japanese agent. Although Zhang broke out of jail with a friend's help, he was soon caught. He was executed in 1941 by Chiang Kai-shek. See *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV. Kniga 1*, 325; *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. V.*, 277, 743; *Zhang Xueliang koushu lishi (fangtan shilu)*, 3:792; V.N. Usov, *Kitaiskii Beriia Kan Shen* (Moscow, 2004), 79. Ren Jianshu, *Chen Duxiu dazhuan* (Shanghai, 1999), 615 denies Zhang's belonging to the Trotskyite group, while Zhang Kexia claimed he was a Trotskyite. See "Zhang Kexia tongzhi tan canjia geming," 40. In September 1937, Wang Gongdu (王公度, 1895–1937) and other members of the KMT in Guangxi were executed as Trotskyites. In 1938, a Korean Communist working in China, Kim San (Jang Jirak, 1905–38), made famous by Helen Foster Snow's book, *Song of Ariran* (1941), was executed as a Trotskyite and Japanese spy.

[443] Georgi I. Kolarov, "Boris Spiridonovich Stomoniakov: bolgarskii revoliutsioner, sovetskii bol'shevik," *Arkhont* 1 (4), 2018, 48–54; V.V. Sokolov, "Zamestitel' Narkoma inostrannykh del Boris Stomoniakov," *Otkryvaia novye stranitsy. . . . Mezhdunarodnye voprosy: sobytiia i liudi* (Moscow, 1989), 257–93.

[444] Kuhara Fusanosuke, *Zenshin no kōryō* (Tokyo, 1939), 143, 245–46.

Stalin-Kuhara secret deal, apparently ordered that Kuhara's political moves be closely monitored (see Chapter 2, p. 113).

Kōmoto Daisaku, following Ishiwara's lead, would appear to have been critical of Japan's invasion of north China, evidenced by his claim that Japan had its hands full in Manchuria.[445] At the time, he was in charge of running the Manchurian railways and coal mines. Notwithstanding his objection to the occupation of north China, he subsequently moved to Taiyuan, Shanxi, to the southwest of Beijing, which was occupied by Itagaki Seishirō in the autumn of 1937. (It was Tsuji Masanobu who insisted on and planned the offensive on Shanxi. He personally took part in it.) In Taiyuan, Kōmoto ran a semi-national industrial concern. Under Chinese detention after World War II, Kōmoto characterized the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as another manifestation of Japan's imperialist ambition. All the same, he praised Ishiwara and Itagaki, the masterminds of the Mukden Incident, as outstanding men, while dismissing Tanaka Ryūkichi as inferior and vulgar (*dijiyongsu* 低级庸俗).[446] What he actually implied by this expression about Tanaka is unknown. Kōmoto died under Chinese captivity in 1955. Unfortunately, he left no clues to his mysterious life.

The period of 1935 to 1938 in Japan marked a disastrous run of military blunders in China. It is well-nigh impossible to chart with certitude the full range of forces that influenced these decisions. Certainly, Japan's political instability yielded any purposeful direction impossible. As one can observe throughout this chapter, Tokyo's direction fluctuated wildly and often irrationally from military aggression to pacification. Decisions were often made unilaterally, reflecting the myriad of responses to the worsening prospects for the Japanese on the world theater. Yet, this fluctuating and incoherent political climate is precisely what makes understanding the complexity of the time so important; observers, simplifying the story, easily miss this complexity and fail to see the presence of Stalin—who was so adept at disguising his hand in such climates—and his secret maneuvering. This chapter, like the previous two, exposes how fundamentally important Stalin is to understanding China's and Japan's fate. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident, viewed in the context of Japan's developing political and geopolitical situation, reveals far more about the military powers in Asia than the imperialist interests of one country; it is an impediment to our collective historical knowledge not to understand it as such.

[445] Kimura Takeo, *Kōmoto Daisaku* (Tokyo, 1978), 206; Hirano Reiji, *Manshū no inbō sha: Kōmoto Daisaku no unmei teki na ashiato* (Tokyo, 1961), 188–89.

[446] Zhongyang dang'anguan, Zhongguo di-er lishi dang'anguan, Jilinsheng shehuikexueyuan, *Heben Dazuo yu Rijun Shanxi "canliu"* (Beijing, 1995), 702, 735.

CHAPTER 5

Dénouement (1938–1945)

In his unpublished memoir written after World War II, Kamei Kan-ichirō attributed Japan's defeat in the Pacific War to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. According to Kamei, Japan had engaged in battle without recognizing the danger posed by the rise of Chinese nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s.[1] Before World War II, Kamei had referred to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident as "inevitable historical progress" (必然なる歴史の進行). The Sino-Japanese War, Kamei asserted, could only have been forfended through the creation of a new world order. This new world order would be neither democracy nor dictatorship nor the abolition of class distinctions, but a "totalitarian organization of nation states," which would form part of an East Asian supra-state governing body or condominium.[2] It is difficult to determine whether this was Kamei's true intention or whether it was a cover for ultimate sovietization.

After World War II, Kamei blamed Moscow for engineering the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. If so, his insistence at the time that it was inevitable makes little sense. Although he may have known at the time, he certainly did not openly accuse Moscow of being responsible for the July 1937 incident. Rather, he had insisted that Japan maintain a friendly relationship with the Soviet Union "to the end" (see Chapter 4, p. 364). With some hesitation, Kamei and his like-minded colleagues welcomed the Sino-Japanese War as a catalyst to bring about a change in Japan's body politic (i.e., to create a revolution in Japan). Indeed, the voluntary dissolution of all major political parties and the creation instead of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (大政翼賛会) in October 1940 was the culmination of the various "one nation one party" or "new regime" movements in which Kamei, Asō, Kazami, Kuhara, Ozaki, Arima Yoriyasu (see Chapter 4, p. 321), Gotō Ryūnosuke (後藤隆之助, 1888–1984),[3] and many others had been involved. True to the ambiguity between the right and left, the association resembled both the Nazi Party and the Soviet Communist Party. There had long been suspicions

[1] Kamei Kan-ichirō, "Kaisō (sōkō)," Kamei Kan-ichirō kankei bunsho, no. 340, 7, Kokkai Toshokan, Tokyo.

[2] Kamei's letter to Konoe, 29 September 1938, in *Gendaishi shiryō (44). Kokka sōdōin (2). Seiji* (Tokyo, 1974), 16.

[3] He was Kamei's close associate and the founder of the *Shōwa kenkyūkai* (see Chapter 4, p. 320), Konoe's brain trust.

that these movements rested on Communist ideals,[4] although such branding was a common practice in the face of any new ideas or movements at the time. Konoe, who formed a new cabinet in July 1940, was probably uncertain as to the need for the formation of such an association. When he announced its creation, he did not even bother to proclaim the program of the association and seems to have hollowed it out from the beginning.[5] Three days later, Ozaki was arrested. The association was not destined to become the kind of revolutionary and dynamic political body that its designers had hoped would transform Japanese political life. It became nothing more than a propaganda tool for the government during World War II. It is noteworthy, if mysterious, that in June 1940, Kuhara made no bones about his wishes to "go to Russia" once his "one nation one party" proposal was realized.[6] He did not succeed in going to "Russia," however.

Meanwhile, Japan became inextricably mired in China, with the blessing of Ozaki, Kamei, Kazami, and other similar-minded "revolutionaries." Ishiwara, who was strongly opposed to the escalation of the conflict with China, was unable to put up an effective resistance to the argument that the dispatch of Japanese troops was vitally important for the protection of Japanese nationals in China. Soon after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Ishiwara was relieved of his position as the head of the General Staff First Department and transferred to Manchuria as the Kwantung Army's deputy chief of staff. Ishiwara disagreed vehemently with the chief of staff, Tōjō Hideki, and his successor, Isogai Rensuke (磯谷廉介, 1886–1967), and within a year, he quit his post and returned to Tokyo. In 1941, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, he left active duty. After World War II, Ishiwara was questioned by the Tokyo War Crimes Trial but was not charged. Itagaki Seishirō, an early collaborator of Ishiwara's, who masterminded the Mukden Incident with Ishiwara and supported the Suiyuan Incident, to Ishiwara's ire (see Chapter 4, p. 306), endorsed and took part in the Sino-Japanese War. He worked as the minister of the army in 1938 and 1939, and served in the Pacific War. When the war ended, he was detained by the British in Singapore. Itagaki was sentenced to death by the Tokyo War Crimes Trial and hanged in December 1948.

Timeline: *1938*: Battle of Lake Khasan (USSR and Japan) ‖ *1939*: Battle of Nomonhan (Japan and USSR); Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; Winter War (Finland and USSR); Expulsion of USSR from League of Nations ‖ *1939–45*: War

[4]See for example the entry for 1 November 1939 in the diary of Hatoyama Ichirō (鳩山一郎, 1883–1959), *Hatoyama Ichirō, Kaoru nikki. Jōkan. Hatoyama Ichirō hen* (Tokyo, 1999), 201. This was in response to the Hanzawa lecture (see Chapter 3, p. 271).

[5]The American historian Gordon W. Prange, who was the chief historian under the SCAP after World War II, noted that if Konoe had established a system according to the plan, in which Kazami "put in his effort most enthusiastically," he "would have accomplished a good three-quarters of Moscow's work for it." See Gordon W. Prange (with Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon), *Target Tokyo: The Story of the Sorge Spy Ring* (New York, 1984), 221, 287.

[6]Quoted in Harada Kumao, *Saionji kō to seikyoku* (Tokyo, 1952), 8:256.

in Europe ‖ *1940*: Tripartite Alliance (Germany, Italy, and Japan) ‖ *1941*: Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality ‖ *1941–45*: War in the Pacific ‖ *1943*: Tehran Conference ‖ *1944*: Stalin's order to prepare for war with Japan ‖ *1945*: Yalta and Potsdam Conferences (Britain, USSR, and USA); Germany's surrender; two U.S. atomic bombs on Japan; Soviet entry into war against Japan; Japan's surrender ‖ *1946–48*: Tokyo War Crimes Trial (IMTFE) ‖ *1949*: CCP victory in China.

5.1 New Provocations

Ozaki Hotsumi, an acute observer of the China scene, analyzed the Sino-Japanese War from a Marxist perspective and, like Kamei, reached the conclusion that it was a historical inevitability. Writing in August 1937, Ozaki claimed that, as he had expected, the minor clash near the Marco Polo Bridge had indeed turned into an all-China event. The reason was clear: The July incident was not adventitious but reflected the impasse of Japan's China policy and therefore demanded an all-China solution. Ozaki admitted that the current war was not what Japan had planned, but one that had arisen inexorably from a minor incident owing to the "objective state of affairs" that reflected the force of Chinese nationalism.[7]

Interestingly, in mid-1938, when Japan's deep embroilment in China had become a fact of life, the Soviet military journal *Военная мысль* (*Military Thought*) put forth a similar analysis of the war, inadvertently divulging Moscow's hidden hand in it. The journal contended, predictably, that Japan's imperialist policy dictated its army's "adventurist-minded march into the depths of Chinese territory." But, the article gloated, Japan was *not* prepared for it: In "the first months of the war Japanese troops neglected the elementary requirements of combat service: intelligence, security, and camouflage."[8] This flatly contradicted the endless barrage of Soviet propaganda warning of Japan's plans to conquer all of China and its elaborate and ubiquitous espionage. According to another article published in the journal in 1939, approximately one million anti-Japanese partisans were operating in China.[9] By all measurements, the war in China was an enormous success for Stalin.

A minor setback Stalin suffered in mid-1938 in the Far East made no difference in his offensive strategy toward Japan. On 29 May 1938, Major German F. Front (or Ialmar Frantsevich), the commander of the Thirty-Sixth Motor Rifle Division stationed near the border of the Mongolian People's Republic and Manzhouguo, defected to Manzhouguo/Japan. Front gave what appears to be generally accurate information on the Soviet military presence in Mongolia and the Great Terror that Stalin and Kh. Choibalsan (1895–1952) were carrying out

[7]Ozaki Hotsumi, "Nisshi sensō no tenkai (hachigatsu)," *Ozaki Hotsumi chosaku shū* (Tokyo, 1977), 1:247.

[8]P. Grebnev, "Iaponskaia aggressiia v Kitae," *Voennaia mysl'*, no. 6 (1938): 10.

[9]N. Zamiatin, "Nekotorye vyvody iz opyta voiny v Kitae," ibid., no. 5 (1939), 62.

there.[10] A fortnight later, on June 14, Genrikh S. Liushkov (1900–45), the chief of the Soviet secret police in the Far East who carried out the Great Terror there, defected to Manzhouguo/Japan in fear for his own life. He is said to have been the head of the Soviet Military Intelligence (GRU) in the Far East as well. Soon transported to Tokyo, Liushkov provided vital information in spades.[11] Liushkov warned Japan that Moscow was actively preparing for war against Japan, stationing four hundred thousand soldiers (including twenty-five rifle divisions) east of the Baikal, more than twice the combined forces of Japan's Kwantung Army and Korean Army. Stalin was forcing Japan to exhaust its forces in China, and then would attack Japan. Moreover, Stalin was using China as a weapons laboratory and a training ground for Soviet military commanders. Stalin's Great Terror, said Liushkov, was designed as preparation for war.[12] Moscow knew at least part of the information Liushkov provided to Tokyo, because Sorge stole it from the German Embassy in Tokyo and transmitted it to Moscow. Liushkov gave sometimes contradictory assessments of the Soviet Union and its military forces. All the same, it is surprising that the warning by a high-ranking Soviet secret police official familiar with the essence of Soviet politics had little impact on those Japanese who dreamed of peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union.

As Liushkov testified, Moscow was indeed preparing the Far East for war. From 1937 on, the Soviet intelligence in the Far East (including in Manchuria, Korea, and Japan) worked at full tilt, taking note of every detail of the military moves by Japan.[13] In February 1938, Stalin and Molotov (in the name of the Soviet Communist Party and the Government) issued a top-secret order that obliged the secret police to raise, within three months, the staffing of its special departments to "war-time levels" in the Far Eastern and Trans-Baikal (i.e., east of the Baikal) military districts. It also obliged the secret police in the Far East region, Chita Province, and Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Republic to recruit the best personnel from other provinces and regions. The order also instructed that forbidden border zones be created in these areas from which to expel "anti-Soviet and undesirable elements."[14] Simultaneously, it sanctioned an additional twelve thousand people to be executed in the Soviet Far East (in addition to some ten thousand already executed). It then prohibited the secret police from sending to the labor camps in the Far East those who were charged with the crimes of "espionage, terror, sabotage, treachery of the motherland, insurgency, and banditry as well as professional criminals." It imposed the same prohibition on the ethnic Japanese, Korean, Chinese, German, Polish, Latvian, Estonian, and

[10] Hayashi Saburō, *Kantōgun to kyokutō Sorengun* (Tokyo, 1974), 152–54; E.A. Gorbunov, *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom: Tainaia voina na Dal'nem Vostoke* (Mosocw, 2002), 346–50.

[11] There is considerable literature on Liushkov in various languages. The most detailed is Nishino Tatsukichi, *Nazo no bōmeisha Ryushikofu* (Tokyo, 1979).

[12] "Ryushukofu taishō dasshutsu shuki," *Tokyō Asahi shinbun*, 2 July 1938 (special edition), 1–2; "Ryushukofu taishō kishadan to kaiken," ibid., 14 July 1938 (morning edition), 2.

[13] Gorbunov, *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom*, 388, 394.

[14] MUÙTA, f. 445, d. 9, khn. 6, khudaas 2–3.

Finnish, as well as the returnees from China (*kharbintsy*), without regard to the crimes for which they were charged.[15] This resolution, apparently too sensitive to be published, remains classified in Russia, where only a small section (on the political repression) was published.[16] Moscow deemed these ethnic groups too "dangerous" to be kept in the Soviet Far East, even in the labor camps. By this time, the Japanese had already concluded that the Soviet military positioning in the Far East adumbrated an "all-out attack plan."[17] The Polish historian Jakub Wojtkowiak has written that the Soviet forces stationed in Mongolia in 1939 were an offensive force.[18] Likewise, the Russia historian E.A. Gorbunov has discussed convincingly that the Soviet military presence in the Far East in the latter half of the 1930s was not defensive but offensive.[19]

The Battle of Lake Khasan, 1938

After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, China repeatedly requested that Moscow distract Japan's attention from China by military maneuvers in the Manzhouguo-Soviet border regions. By China's calculations, if that were to lead to war between Japan and the Soviet Union, it would be all the better. In September 1937, when Gu Weijun pressed Litvinov in Geneva for Soviet action, the Soviet commissar of foreign affairs sought to equivocate, answering that Japan was not aggressive toward the Soviet Union at that moment. Two months later, however, when pressed by Gu again, Litvinov told Gu that preparations were in progress under Bliukher, the Soviet Far Eastern military commander.[20]

A new conflict did take shape between Soviet and Japanese forces in July and August 1938 in the Lake Khasan region (where the Soviet Union, Manchuria, and Korea meet: see Figure 3.7, p. 222, for its location). According to the U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew, Soviet forces "had, by moving into an area the ownership of which has been for some time in controversy, initiated [a] dangerous situation."[21] Indeed, this move by the Soviet forces served as the instigating force behind the Battle of Lake Khasan.[22] Zhang Yixian (張逸仙,

[15] Ibid., khuddas 4.

[16] *Lubianka. Stalin i Glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD 1937–1938* (Moscow, 2004), 470. In the published version, three groups ("German, Polish, and Latvian") are omitted.

[17] Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Kantōgun 2. TaiSo senbi, Nomonhan jiken* (Tokyo, 1969), 239–41.

[18] Jakub Wojtkowiak, "Kontyngent Armii Czerwonej w Mongolii w latach 1936–1938," *Dzieje najnowsze* 40, no. 3 (2008): 9. Since 1936, Moscow had been feverishly reinforcing its military presence as if to prepare for war. See *Rossiisko-mongol'skoe voennoe sotrudnichestvo (1911–1946)*, 2nd ed., part 2 (Moscow, 2019).

[19] E.A. Gorbunov, *Vostochnyi rubezh. OKDVA protiv iaponskoi armii* (Moscow, 2010), 385. See also his *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom*, 392.

[20] Gu Weijun, *Gu Weijun huiyi lu* (Beijing, 1985), 2:541, 637.

[21] United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1938. Vol. III: The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1954), 466.

[22] Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Battle of Lake Khasan Reconsidered," *Journal of Slavic Military*

1894–1958), a Chinese Comintern agent trained in Moscow in sabotage operations, left recollections about his part in preparations for the battle.[23] It was a deliberate provocation concocted by Stalin's special emissaries to the Far East, which Bliukher tried to stop—to no avail. (After the battle, Stalin had Bliukher arrested and beaten to death in prison.)[24] Ishiwara, who at the time was serving as the Kwantung Army deputy chief of staff, was loath to take strong action against the Soviet incitement.[25] Ozaki Hotsumi, whose position warranted a wave through security at the premier's office, was well aware that Japan did not start the conflict and reported to Moscow on Tokyo's lack of interest in escalating it. In due course, according to Ozaki, as soon as the hardliners began to gain the upper hand in Tokyo, Moscow agreed to a ceasefire.[26] More than one thousand soldiers died in the battle on both sides combined. By testing Japan's response, Moscow appears to have wanted to verify what military secrets Liushkov might have divulged to the Japanese side. Moscow was fully apprised that Japan had no intention of escalating the conflict. Tokyo forbade the crossing of the borders. It also prohibited the deployment of airplanes, for example, even though the Soviet side used bombers.[27] The brief military conflict was resolved diplomatically with the status quo ante restored. In the end, more than one thousand lives were lost for nothing, save that both sides were able to plumb their opponent's strength.

Both Tsuji Masanobu and Tanaka Ryūkichi took part in this battle. The Kwantung Army dispatched Tsuji, along with Ōkoshi Kenji (see Chapter 3, p. 269), to inspect the battlefront. Tsuji later blatantly distorted the event, insisting that the Soviet side had invaded deep into Manzhouguo—almost 4 km (in fact, the border violation amounted to several meters). In this battle, as in Kanchazu a year earlier, Tsuji was a hardliner who sought to escalate the battle and bitterly complained about Tokyo's "lack of resolve to fight."[28] Tanaka commanded an artillery regiment in the battle.[29] After World War II, the Soviet prosecutors for the Tokyo War Crimes Trial asked Takagi Sōkichi (高木惣吉, 1893–1973), a naval officer and the chief of the Naval Investigation Section, whether he knew that Tanaka and Chō Isamu (長勇, 1895–1945, a "right-wing" hardliner like Tsuji

Studies 29, no. 1 (2016): 99–109. Even some Russian historians such as Aleksei A. Kirichenko (1936–2019) acknowledge, based on Soviet documents, that Japan did not start the conflict. Aleksei Kirichenko, *Shirarezaru NichiRo no nihyakunen*, trans. from the Russian by Kawamura Suguru and Nagochi Yōko (Tokyo, 2013), 79; Kirichenko, "Na dalekom ozere Khasan," *Moskovskaia pravda*, 11 August 1998, 3.

[23] See Zhang Xioahong and Xu Wenlong, *Hongse guoji tegong* (Harbin, 2006), 194–97.

[24] Kuromiya, "Battle of Lake Khasan," 106.

[25] Hoshino Naoki, *Mihatenu yume: Manshūkoku gaishi* (Tokyo, 1963), 278–79.

[26] *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)* (Tokyo, 1962), 165, 340, 343.

[27] See the testimony of Hashimoto Gun (橋本群, 1886–1963), then the chief of the General Staff Operations Bureau, in *Gendaishi shiryō (9). NiTchū sensō (2)* (Tokyo, 1964), 354.

[28] Tsuji Masanobu, *Nomonhan hishi* (Tokyo, 2009), 59–62; Tsumoto Yō, *Hachigatsu no hōsei: Nomonhan to Tsuji Masanobu* (Tokyo, 2005), 21–25.

[29] Tanaka Ryūkichi and Tanaka Minoru, *Tanaka Ryūkichi chosaku shū. Fuki chichi no koto domo* (Tokyo, 1979), 484–87.

and Tanaka) were in the Lake Khasan Battle. He said he did. The Soviets then asked him, "After hearing that these two were members [of the Sniper Group], didn't you expect a *big clash* [emphasis added] to occur?"[30] Takagi was reluctant to speak about Tanaka, who was the favorite of the prosecutors, including those from the Soviet Union, at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial (see Introduction, p. 6). Takagi: "Am I permitted to speak ill of TANAKA who, at present, is so popular and useful in the International Prosecution Section? I don't want to be accused and taken into custody for speaking ill of TANAKA." Takagi was assured that the matter was about a "historical event which occurred around 1938." Then, Takagi said: "CHŌ was involved in conspiracies within the country, whereas Tanaka did not touch domestic problems, but as his actions in China and Manchuria were out of the ordinary, the Navy kept an eye on him." Takagi added that both Tanaka and Chō stood in the way of a "Soviet-Japanese understanding."[31] Why did the Soviets show such an odd interest in Tanaka and Chō? (Oddly, there is no record to show that the Soviets interrogated Tanaka.) Takagi's interrogation appears to have been a smokescreen to cover Tanaka's secret life as a Soviet agent by extracting testimonies from Takagi that Tanaka was anti-Soviet and wanted to incite a "big clash" with the Soviet forces in 1938.

Moscow was supremely confident. Shortly after the conflict was resolved, Litvinov was asked by the Chinese ambassador to France, Gu Weijun, whether the Soviet Union was prepared for any surprises in the Far East. Litvinov firmly stated that the Soviet position in Siberia had strengthened greatly.[32] Clearly, Moscow anticipated no surprise attack by the Japanese.

The Battle of Nomonhan, 1939

There may have been an additional reason for the Battle of Lake Khasan; it appears to have been a trial run for the much larger conflict at Nomonhan (Khalkhin Gol) (see Figure 3.7, p. 222, for its location). Moscow knew well that Tokyo was preoccupied with the war with China and had no interest in starting a new battlefront, as was evident in the Battle of Lake Khasan. Naturally, Moscow was tempted to harry Japan from the rear and test its military mettle. If the Soviet forces were successful, the victory would push Japan more clearly in a southward direction. Moscow indeed achieved this goal with the Battle of Nomonhan. Moreover, the Chinese wanted a repetition of the Battle of Lake Khasan. On 22 October 1938, the day after Canton fell to the Japanese, Guo Taiqi (郭泰祺, 1888–1952), China's ambassador to Britain, told his Soviet counterpart, Ivan Maiskii, that China needed not just arms and aircraft from the Soviet Union: "More effective means are needed." When Maiskii asked Guo what he meant, he replied, "[W]e need another Zhanggufeng [or Chōkohō in

[30] Awaya Kentarō and Yoshida Hiroshi, eds., *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho* (Tokyo, 1993), 51:441.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Gu, *Gu Weijun huiyi lu*, 3:203.

Japanese, referring to the Battle of Lake Khasan]! Otherwise, the movement for peace with Japan among the Chinese population will become irrepressible."[33] Guo's wishes were met the following year. As if to prepare for the battle, in the first few months of 1939, Choibalsan, the Mongolian dictator, followed Stalin's instruction and continued the Mongolian Great Terror by removing Premier A. Amar (1886–1941) and others suspected of being soft on Japan.[34] Simultaneously, just before the Nomonhan battle broke out, Stalin instructed Chinese partisans to be sent to Manchuria for subversion.[35]

The Battle of Nomonhan was fought on the Manchu-Mongolian border between the Soviet/Mongolian and the Japanese/Manzhouguo forces from May to September 1939 (to wit, to the eve of the Soviet invasion of Poland). It involved tanks and aircraft on both sides. Although the number of casualties (killed and missing in action) were close to ten thousand on each side (if anything, the Soviet casualties were probably larger than the Japanese), it is generally accepted that it was a thumping Soviet victory. The battle was almost certainly a Soviet provocation that used Komatsubara Michitarō (see Introduction, p. 3), the commander of the Japanese Army's Twenty-Third division who had been trapped in a Soviet "honey trap" while he was Japan's military attaché to Moscow in the late 1920s and subsequently blackmailed into serving the Soviets.[36] The division, formed anew in July 1938 and stationed in Hailar, northern Inner Mongolia, was meant to be used for rear defense (and therefore, unlike other divisions, was not sent to the battlefield in China). Its soldiers were mainly recent recruits who were poorly trained and lightly equipped.[37] It was simply not fit for a real battle. Nevertheless, in the weeks leading to the outbreak of hostilities, Komatsubara took many provocative actions that seemed to invite a military clash with the Soviet/MPR forces.[38] It would have been absurd for Japan to plan a battle in Nomonhan using this motley division against Soviet forces that were offensive units. From the Soviet point of view, however, the Twenty-Third division's presence in Hailar, Inner Mongolia, not very far from Nomonhan, was irresistible. Indeed, as soon as the division settled in the Hailar region, border skirmishes surged markedly. The spike does not seem to have been a mere aleatory episode.[39] Clearly under

[33] *The Complete Maisky Diaries*, ed. Gabriel Gorodetsky (New Haven, CT, 2017), 1:372. Earlier, in July 1938, China's premier, Kong Xiangxi (孔祥熙, 1881–1967), better known as H.H. Kung, told a Soviet diplomat that China and the Soviet Union could combine their forces to smash Japan's military power, which had been weakened by the war with China. See *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1977), 21:410.

[34] L. Bat-Ochir, *Choĭbalsan (Namtryn n' balarkhaĭg todruulakhuĭ. . . .)* (Ulaanbaatar, 1996), 122–29.

[35] Gorbunov, *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom*, 336–37.

[36] Hiroaki Kuromiya, "The Mystery of Nomonhan, 1939," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 24, no. 4 (December 2011): 659–77; Kuromiya, "New Questions on the Battle of Khalkhin Gol (Nomonhan)," *Mongolian Journal of International Affairs*, no. 19 (2014): 49–55.

[37] See Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Kantōgun (1)*, 438.

[38] Tsumoto, *Hachigatsu no hōsei*, 33–38.

[39] Ochi Harumi, *Nomonhan jiken* (Tokyo, 1993), 29, 30, 47.

the thumb of the Soviets, Komatsubara was almost certainly traumatized by the position in which he found himself, aiding and abetting the Soviets. He must have felt he had no choice but to cooperate or be exposed as a Soviet agent. Toward the end of the battle, by which time his division had been thoroughly routed, Komatsubara said to a former classmate at the Military Academy, "Hey Sawada, there is a limit to a human being's psychological strength."[40] His command was so paralyzed that his forces fell into disarray. The rank and file beat up their officers, high and low, in retaliation for their poor command. The soldiers came within a whisker of mutiny.[41]

As was the case in the Kanchazu Incident in 1937, Moscow remained silent on the military clash in Nomonhan. Only in late June, seven weeks into the battle, did the Soviet press begin reporting. This suggests that Moscow was not caught off guard by Japan. Kamei Kan-ichirō intimated after World War II that Nomonhan was a Soviet "conspiratorial tactic."[42] Some recent Russian historical studies, albeit covertly, address the same point. Comparing the military buildup by Japan and the Soviet Union in the Far East in the 1930s, E.A. Gorbunov admits "We, too, made offensive plans, we also built a powerful bridgehead on our border territory and strengthened our OKDVA [Far Eastern Army]." By 1945, the Soviet forces were ready to "invade Manchuria and take all and everything" (which they actually did). On the other hand, Gorbunov argues, Japan was preoccupied with China and had therefore deployed far larger forces to the south than it did in Manchuria from 1937 to August 1945. Gorbunov criticizes his Russian colleagues for ignoring this fact, clearly reminding them that Japan had not intended to fight against the Soviet Union and in 1939 had had no plan to stage war against the Soviet Union. To think otherwise, he concludes, is "risible."[43] He seems to propose that the time has come for Russia to acknowledge that the Soviet Union was strong and that it overwhelmed Japan with its superior military power in 1938, 1939, and 1945. Aleksei Kirichenko offers a more straightforward view: Japan did not provoke the incident. His book, however, has not been published in Russia.[44]

The Soviet Union's tactics were undoubtedly assisted by Japanese beyond Komatsubara. In the Nomonhan battle, as in the Battle of Lake Khasan, Tsuji

[40] Quoted in Sawada Shigeru, *Sanbō jichō Sawada Shigeru kaisōroku* (Tokyo, 1982), 24.

[41] Sorge's statement based on the information given by one of his assistants in Tokyo, Branco Vukelich (1904–45), who visited Nomonhan during the battle: *Gendaishi shiryō (24). Zoruge jiken (4)* (Tokyo, 1971), 157.

[42] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku* (Tokyo, 1969), 116.

[43] Gorbunov, *Vostochnyi rubezh*, 271–72, 395–96; *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom*, 395–96, 422. Mikhail Alekseev argues likewise that "at that time there existed no danger of war in the East." See *"Vernyi Vam Ramzai." Rikhard Zorge i sovetskaia voennaia razvedka v Iaponii. 1939–1941 gody* (Moscow, 2017), 64.

[44] Kirichenko, *Shirarezaru NichiRo no nihyakunen*, 87. Kirichenko's argument is not unknown in Russia, however. See for example A.A. Kirichenko, "Nekotorye stranitsy man'chzhurskoj kampanii," *Ot Versal'nogo mirnogo dogovora do kapituliatsii Iaponii v 1945 g. Logika mezhdunarodnogo razvitiia. Biulleten'* no. 4 (2012): 86–87.

Masanobu played a critical role in escalating the conflict, a position that coincided with, or possibly reflected, Moscow's position. Moscow knew from Sorge's reports from Tokyo that Tokyo did not want to heighten the conflict and that the Japanese public did not want any more trouble on the continent. Sorge complained at the time that Moscow was so distrustful of Japan that it remained skeptical of his information. Such was the case at the time of Nomonhan, as Sorge admitted to his Japanese interrogator after his arrest in 1941.[45] Tsuji, however, was so insistent on taking on the Soviet forces that he even forged military orders and reports. Already on the first days of the conflict (May 13 and 14), Tsuji was surveying the Nomonhan area by airplane.[46] Disobeying Tokyo's order, Tsuji invaded Mongolian air space to bomb the airbase in Tamsag on 27 June 1938. His actions deserved punishment by death according to the military code. Yet, as with so many of the acts of military disobedience at the time, the higher command seemed to have little power or will to punish him properly.[47] Komatsubara justified his unauthorized ground invasion of Mongol territory by citing Tsuji's insistence.[48] It appears that Tanaka Ryūkichi, too, was involved in the Battle of Nomonhan.[49]

Tsuji, like the Nazi-turned-Communist Richard Scheringer of Germany (see Introduction, p. 8, footnote 14) and Kōmoto Daisaku's protégé, Tōmiya Kaneo (see Chapter 2, p. 146), was a Russophone, and he was an extraordinarily outlandish and dangerous figure. After Nomonhan, he became a perfervid upholder of the march southward (war against Britain, United States, and the Netherlands). During the Pacific War, he instigated the massacre of at least several thousands of Chinese civilians in Singapore. He was also implicated in the infamous Bataan Death March. Incredulously, in 1943, when Germany and the Soviet Union were fighting to the death, Tsuji dreamed of uniting Japan with Germany and the Soviet Union against Britain and the United States.[50] After World War II, he feigned suicide and became a fugitive in Thailand, disguising himself as a Buddhist monk. Pursued by the British authorities, he escaped to China, where he served the Nationalist Government under Chiang Kai-shek. In 1948, he returned to Japan and went underground to avoid prosecution as a war criminal. In 1950, he emerged from underground, published books about his life and military "exploits" (including an account of Nomonhan), and became, in 1952, a conservative member of the Diet. As such, he traveled to the Soviet Union

[45] *Gendaishi shiryō (1). Zoruge jiken (1)* (Tokyo, 1962), 50, 191, 381, 387; *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)* (Tokyo, 1962), 86, 141, 169; *Gendaishi shiryō (24). Zoruge jiken (4)*, 155–57.

[46] Tsumoto, *Hachigatsu no hōsei*, 41.

[47] Tatamiya Eitarō, *Sanbō Tsuji Masanobu* (Tokyo, 1986), 49–53. There were other Japanese hawks on the battlefield, however, who supported Tsuji's unauthorized action. See Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan: Japan against Russia, 1939* (Stanford, CA, 1985), 268–75.

[48] Sawada, *Sanbō jichō Sawada Shigeru*, 24.

[49] Tanaka and Tanaka, *Tanaka Ryūkichi chosaku shū*, 497 speaking of Tanaka as a negotiator for a truce. It would be interesting to know exactly what role he played in the negotiations.

[50] Testimony by Zhou Fohai, *Zhou Fohai riji quanbian* (Beijing, 2003), 2:830. Zhou characterized Tsuji as "rude and absurd" (荒唐粗暴) (899).

and met sub rosa with Georgii K. Zhukov (1896–1974), the Soviet commander at the Battle of Nomonhan. In 1961, he went to Laos disguised as a Buddhist priest and evanesced. It seems that he sneaked into China, after which his trace disappears altogether. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency was so interested in him that it compiled a vast file on him, some six hundred pages of which have been released.[51]

Almost all of Tsuji's actions were precisely those Moscow would have wanted to happen. It is hard to imagine that this was a mere coincidence. Tellingly, Asaeda Shigeharu (朝枝繁春, 1912–2000), Tsuji's right-hand man who was as guilty of the Singapore massacre as Tsuji, turned out to be a Soviet agent. He worked in the Soviet Union for three months from 1943 to 1944 (exactly what he did there is unknown), after which he was placed in the General Staff Operations Section and charged with strategic planning regarding the Soviet Union.[52] He was detained by the Soviet forces in Manchuria at the end of the Pacific War and interned in the Soviet Union until 1949. In 1954, Iurii A. Rastvorov (1921–2004), a Soviet intelligence officer, defected in Tokyo to the United States and revealed Asaeda's secret work for the Soviet Union.[53] Asaeda remained close to Tsuji throughout. When Tsuji traveled abroad in 1957 (meeting Zhou Enlai, Gamal Abdel Nasser [1918–70], Josip Tito [1892–1980], and Jawaharlal Nehru [1889–1964], among others), Asaeda accompanied him as his secretary.[54] It is suggestive that Tsuji's actions and thinking are reminiscent of Communist sympathizers, just as Ozaki's "nationalistic" writing is reminiscent of the Marxist dialectic. Marshall Sugiyama Gen (see Chapter 4, p. 349) once commented on Tsuji: "He would have joined the Communist Party had he not become a soldier."[55] The history of Tsuji and Asaeda raises questions as to their allegiance before, during, and after World War II.

Meanwhile, the Battle of Nomonhan enraptured Stalin. As Kalinin stated in 1934, we may recall, Moscow wanted to "fight with Japan and beat it soundly. If we beat Japan, then no bastard in the West would poke his nose in" (see Chapter 3, p. 277). By early July 1939, the Battle in Nomonhan had developed into a full-bore air and ground battle, from which Stalin was certain the Soviet forces would emerge victorious. On 9 July 1939, in the middle of the Battle of Nomonhan, the elated Stalin and Voroshilov sent a handwritten letter to Chiang Kai-shek:

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[51]NARA, RG 263, box 130, 230/86/24/5 (Second Release of Name Files, Tsuji Masanobu, 3 vol.).

[52]JACAR, C13010215500.

[53]See the Japanese police record on the Rastvorov affair in Chapter 5, p. 324.

[54]Ushijima Hidehiko, *Mō hitotsu no Shōwashi 3. Bōryaku no hizu: Tsuji Masanobu* (Tokyo, 1978), 25–27. The fact that Zhou, a CCP leader, even met Tsuji, who had escalated Japan's war in China and committed numerous war crimes, is in itself astounding. On Tsuji's outlandish life in general, see Tatamiya, *Sanbō Tsuji Masanobu*.

[55]Quoted in Murakami Hyōe, "Jigoku kara no shisha Tsuji Masanobu," *Chūō kōron* 71, no. 5 (1956): 235. Another commentator also noted that Tsuji's political activity after World War II only profited the Communist Party. See Ōkoshi Kenji, "Tsuji Masanobu no 'ano kuse'," *Jinbutsu ōrai*, 4: 10 (1955), 29.

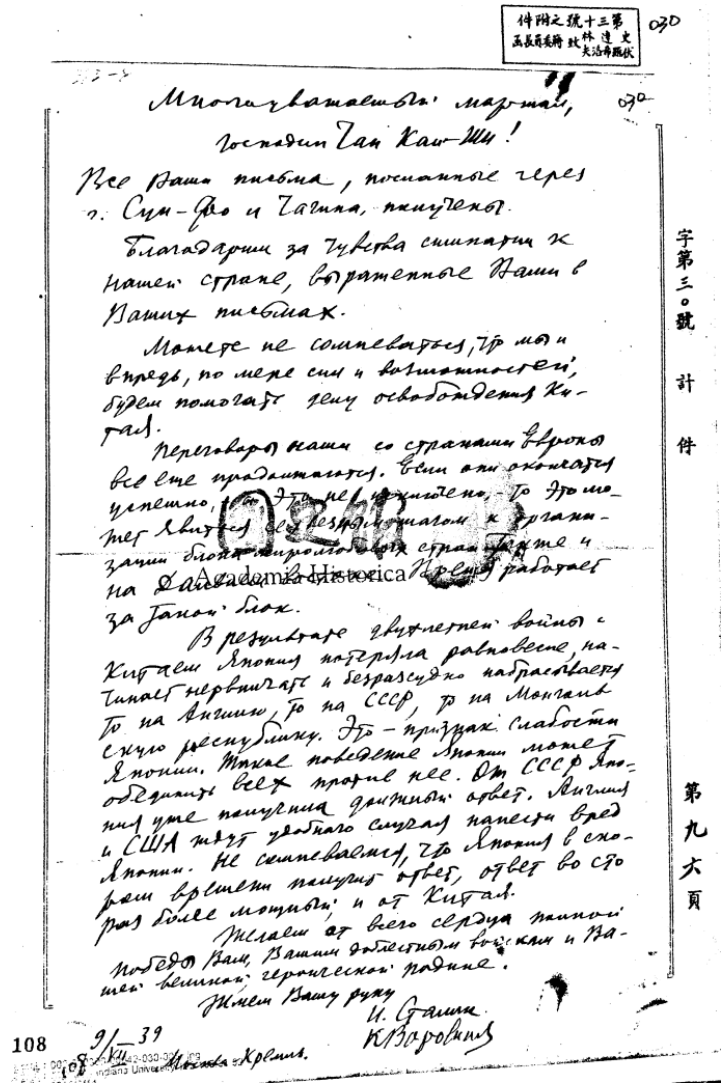

Figure 5.1. Handwritten letter from Stalin and Voroshilov to Chiang, 9 July 1939

As a result of the now two-year-old war with China which hasn't been won, Japan has lost its balance and is acting recklessly [*безрассудно* (*sic*)], now attacking Britain, now the Soviet Union, and now the Mongolian People's Republic. This has revealed Japan's weakness. Its conduct will unite all others against her. From the USSR Japan has already received an appropriate response. Britain and the USA are waiting for a convenient occasion to attack Japan. There is no doubt

> that Japan will soon receive an answer, one hundred times mightier, from China as well.[56]

Stalin and Voroshilov concluded their missive by saying, "wishing you, your valiant troops, and your great, heroic motherland a complete victory."[57] In August, Stalin confidently told Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, that "If Japan desired war, it could have it. The Soviet Union was not afraid of it and was *prepared for it* [emphasis added]."[58]

Indeed, in 1941, two years after the Soviet Army struggled to take Finland (see p. 391 in this chapter), Stalin warned that many in the Red Army had overstated Nomonhan's significance. The Japanese Army, Stalin asserted, was not a modern army but an obsolete one.[59] Its defeat was therefore not a reflection of the strength of the Red Army so much as Japan's weakness. All the same, Stalin continued to issue warnings exaggerating Japan's threat to the Soviet Union.

5.2 Road to Neutrality

Toward the end of the Battle of Nomonhan, on 23 August 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany surprised the world by announcing a non-aggression pact ("Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact"). This pact included a secret protocol that divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. It was such a blatantly imperialistic agreement that the anti-imperialist Communist Molotov, the Soviet signer, remained embarrassed about it. Indeed, he felt so awkward that he denied up until his death in 1986 the existence of the secret protocol. The Soviet Union revealed itself as a "Red imperialist" power.

This pact was an anti-Anti-Comintern pact, in effect violating the Anti-Comintern Pact Germany had signed with Japan in 1936 (and later with Italy). Indeed, in Moscow, Ribbentrop joked that Stalin would soon join the Anti-Comintern Pact.[60] In a sense, the Nazi-Soviet pact was a culmination of Mos-

[56]The Russian original in Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan, Doc. no. 002-020300-00042-030-005x. The letter, as far as we know, was first published in Russian by the author of this book in 2021. See Hiroaki Kuromiya, " 'Sovetskomu Soiuzu pridetsia voevat' s Iaponiei': dva pis'ma Stalina Chan Kaishi (1939 i 1941 gg.)." *Klio*, no. 171 [March 2021]: 29–30. Even the publication of correspondence between Stalin and Chiang omits this letter (see "Perepiska Chan Kaishi s I.V. Stalinym i K.E. Voroshilovym, 1937–1939 gg," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*„ no. 4 [1995], 80–87). The letter is accurately translated into Chinese and published in *Zhonghua Minguo zhongyao shiliao chubian: dui-Ri kangzhan shiqi. Di-3 bia, zhanshi waijiao (2)* (Taipei, 1981), 425. The Chinese translation has added "Its action has no reason" (皆爲毫無理智之擧動) after "now the People of Republic of Mongolia," probably referring to *безрассудно* in the original.

[57]Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan, Doc. no. 002-020300-00042-030-005x.

[58]Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939–1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office* (Washington DC, 1948), 72. See also Erich Kordt, *Wahn und Wirklichkeit. Die Aussenpolitik des Dritten Reiches: Versuch einer Darstellung* (Stuttgart, 1948), 180.

[59]O.V. Vishlëv O.V., "Rech' I.V. Stalina 5 maia 1945 g. Rossiiskie dokumenty." *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, no. 4 (1998), 81.

[60]Kordt, *Wahn und Wirklichkeit*, 180.

cow's long-held interest in collaborating with fascists and Nazis against the imperialists, about which Karl Radek spoke as early as 1923 (see Introduction, p. 7). Just a few years earlier, while killing numerous innocent Soviet citizens as German spies, Stalin unsuccessfully sought a deal with Hitler.[61] During negotiations with Stalin in August 1939, Ribbentrop suggested a similar pact between Moscow and Tokyo. (The Battle of Nomonhan was still going on at the time.) Stalin replied that he was open to it, declaring that if the Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan banded together, the rich nations (Britain, France, and the United States) would not be able to overcome them. This, of course, would give the Soviet Union yet another way to avert war and wear down Japan by pitting Japan and Germany against the Western powers. Then, Stalin disingenuously told Ribbentrop: "It is said that I support China, but I give few weapons in exchange for the raw materials I need. England, America, and other countries give considerably more."[62]

The Japanese cabinet, already fragile, collapsed four days after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was announced, declaring that it destroyed the foundation of Japan's foreign policy based on the Anti-Comintern Pact. In his resignation speech, the premier declared that the European world defied comprehension and that Japan needed to review its policy fundamentally.[63] European Communist leaders, too, were embarrassed and befuddled by the pact, which negated their central political platform. Mao Zedong, in contrast, followed the Soviet line unerringly and presented it as an anti-imperialist pact. Giving an interview to a newspaper on 1 September 1939, Mao welcomed it: "In the East it deals a blow to Japan and helps China; it strengthens the position of China's forces of resistance to Japan and deals a blow to the capitulators." Then, Mao blamed Britain and France:

> Britain and France flatly rejected the Soviet Union's repeated proposals for a genuine front against aggression; standing on the side-lines, they took a "noninterventionist" position and connived at German, Italian and Japanese aggression. Their aim was to step forward and intervene when the belligerents had worn each other out. In pursuit of this reactionary policy they sacrificed half of China to Japan, and the whole of Abyssinia, Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia to Italy and Germany. Then they wanted to sacrifice the Soviet Union. . . . In the meantime, Germany indicated her willingness to stop her activities

[61] From 1935 to 1937, Stalin made a serious effort to this effect through the Soviet trade representative in Berlin David B. Kandelaki (1895–1938). Although there is much controversy about the secretive Kandelaki mission, there is no doubt that Moscow pursued Soviet-German secret diplomacy for rapprochement, although at the time, it did not succeed. See *Ocherki istorii Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossii. Tom vtoroi 1917–2002 gg.* (Moscow, 2002), 194.

[62] Ibid., 226–27.

[63] "Hiranuma naikaku sō jishoku," *Tokyō Asahi shinbun*, 29 August 1939 (evening edition), 1.

> against the Soviet Union and *abandon the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact* [emphasis added].[64]

Thus, Japan, stuck in China, again found itself completely isolated in a fluid international situation.

The outbreak of war in Europe, 1939

Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, which triggered a Europe-wide war. In accordance with the agreement with Germany, Stalin invaded Poland on September 17, the day after reaching a ceasefire with Japan. Stalin and Hitler did not stop at Poland. They proceeded to carve up Eastern Europe in 1939 and 1940, with Stalin annexing by force eastern Poland (which Moscow called "eastern Belarus" and "eastern Ukraine"), the Baltic states, and Moldavia. When Finland rejected Soviet demands for territorial concession, Stalin invaded the country in late November 1939 (the "Winter War"). After six months of difficult battles and casualties far greater than those incurred by Finland, Stalin managed to grab chunks of Finnish territory. In doing so, Moscow blatantly violated its non-aggression pact with Finland, as it had with Poland in September.

Unlike Mao, Chiang Kai-shek did not criticize Britain and France, whose support he needed to fight Japan. Still, Chiang could not rebuke Moscow, for he also depended on the Soviet Union in the war with Japan. When the League of Nations voted in December 1939 to expel the Soviet Union for its invasion of Finland, China abstained. In this new political environment, Chiang began to see the "China problem" as a part of the "global problem," and China's war as part of a global war encompassing Europe and Asia. He came to be convinced that China's problem and its war would be resolved only as part of a global process,[65] a view not unlike that of the Japanese Marxist Ozaki Hotsumi.[66] In other words, Chiang understood that China's war against Japan would inevitably evolve into a war involving other powers, which would favor China's eventual victory.[67] He foresaw the end of Western imperialism (and its imitator, Japanese imperialism) as a result of this war. He did not openly criticize Soviet imperialism, but he obviously saw it as such, as would become abundantly clear after World War II.

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[64] *Mao Zedong on Diplomacy* (Beijing, 1998), 16–17. This interview was translated into Russian, German, and French and published in Comintern journals. Mao's reasoning invigorated the European Communists, enervated by the news about the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, who "admired Mao Zedong's penetrating insight" (敬佩毛泽东的真知灼见). See Shi Zhe, *Zai lishi juren shenbian: Shi Zhe huiyi lu* (Beijing, 1991), 132.

[65] This is analyzed convincingly in Lu Xijun, *Shō Kaiseki no "kokusaiteki kaiketsu" senryaku: 1937–1941: "Shō Kaiseki nikki" kara miru NiTchū sensō no shinsō* (Tokyo, 2016), 111–14.

[66] S.C.M. Paine, *Wars for Asia, 1911–1949* (New York, 2014), also views the Sino-Japanese War as intertwined with a global war.

[67] Youli Sun has written that "without these beliefs in and hopes for an internationalization of the war, it would have been next to impossible for China's war efforts to last as long as it did." See his *China and the Origins of the Pacific War 1931–1941* (New York, 1993), 158.

In the United States, President Roosevelt signally failed to decry Moscow's aggression against Poland. Nor did he go much beyond calling for a "moral embargo" of the Soviet Union when it invaded Finland, although in this case, he was outraged by the Soviet action. Because FDR had invested so much in Stalin, it is understandable that the autumn and winter of 1939–40 marked the "one crisis in Roosevelt's career when he was completely at a loss as to what action to take—a period of terrible, stultifying vacuum."[68] The U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, Laurence A. Steinhardt (1892–1950), recommended in December 1939 that Washington sever diplomatic relations with Moscow in protest, expel all Soviet citizens from the United States, embargo all exports to the Soviet Union, and take "other steps of similar severity." FDR refused.[69] Disappointed, Steinhardt wrote: "It was rather unfortunate that there was so much talk at the outset about 'helping the Finns' and so little done, since then, for it added weight to the charge so frequently made throughout Europe that the United States encourages a certain course of action, promises support, and then 'fades out.' "[70]

One can imagine what impact the U.S. inaction against the Soviet Union had on the Japanese public, ever ready to see hypocrisy in Washington's every move. Earlier, in July, Washington had given notice of the termination of the 1911 commercial treaty between the United States and Japan, a step toward eliminating legal obstacles to an embargo against Japan.

The Tripartite Pact, 1940

Kamei Kan-ichirō viewed the matter differently. American imperialism and hypocrisy were a given for him. He promoted a German-Soviet-Japanese alliance.[71] He claimed that he had kept the Japanese cabinet informed of the Soviet-German negotiations underway in 1939 before the announcement of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In any case, it was a welcome sign for Kamei. The new cabinet led by Abe Nobuyuki (阿部信行, 1875–1953) failed to find a way out of Japan's isolation, distrusting both the Soviet Union and the United States, not to mention Germany. It did not last even five months. A new cabinet formed in January 1940 with Yonai Mitsumasa (米内光政, 1880–1948), a naval admiral, as prime minister. At this time, Kamei claimed that he had been informed

[68] Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, rev. ed. (New York, 1950), 123.

[69] Dennis J. Dunn, *Caught between Roosevelt and Stalin: America's Ambassadors to Moscow* (Lexington, KY, 1998), 113–14.

[70] Quoted in Travis Beal Jacobs, *America and the Winter War, 1939–1940* (New York, 1981), 236.

[71] Shiratori Toshio (白鳥敏夫, 1887–1949), a diplomat who, like Kamei, experienced Japan's "humiliation" at the Washington Conference, abandoned his erstwhile radical anti-Soviet stance, welcomed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and advocated for a German-Soviet-Japanese alliance against the Anglo-American order. See Vasilii Molodiakov, *Epokha bor'by. Siratori Tosio (1887–1949): diplomat, politik, myslitel'* (Moscow, 2006), 304–5.

by Germany that the reformist group within the Nazi Party led by Hess, von Raumer, and Haushofer (see Chapter 4, p. 363) had lost ground completely to Ribbentrop. Kamei, Asō, and Akiyama Teisuke (秋山定輔, 1868–1950), the latter of whom was a murky string-puller who belonged to Konoe's entourage, conferred with Konoe and agreed to continue to pursue a German-Soviet-Japanese alliance so long as the Nazis maintained an amicable relationship with the Soviet Union. If Nazi Germany were to begin hostilities against the Soviet Union, Japan would withdraw from the German-Soviet-Japanese alliance and *support the Soviet Union*. Kamei went so far as to suggest that Japan then cease the war with China through the mediation of the United States, withdraw from China, and assist in the independence of Asian colonies. This plan served, in Kamei's fancy, as the first step of a "two-stage" revolutionary strategy for transforming the country; such a radical shift in Japan's geopolitical position would overturn the government and incite the need for profound, revolutionary change.[72]

It is easy to imagine that Moscow would have accepted this strategy without demur. While Moscow made every effort to mire Japan in China, it may not have abandoned a different route altogether: the expulsion of all imperialist powers from China and Asia without war, which would have immeasurably enhanced the influence of the Soviet Union there. There is little evidence, however, that Moscow considered Kamei's plan realistic. It is likely that Kamei oversold his plan, which Moscow merely tolerated. At the time, Kamei was still a member of the Army General Staff Second (Intelligence) Department (see Introduction, p. 18). Soon after the ceasefire at Nomonhan, the Japanese Army began working on plans for a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. In February 1940, it had drafted a plan for a Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact. It was revised and submitted to Moscow on 1 July 1940.[73]

The Yonai Cabinet lasted only six months, however. Reflecting the navy's skepticism about the army's German/Soviet orientation, Yonai resisted the idea of a German-Soviet-Japanese pact. However, once the so-called eight-month "*Sitzkrieg*" had ended and Germany had vanquished much of Europe, with Paris falling on 14 June 1940, Japan's German orientation overruled all other options. Yonai's vehement opposition to an alliance with Germany, the country that many Japanese believed betrayed Japan so flagrantly only a year earlier, in August 1939, alienated the army. Such an alliance, Yonai's argument ran, would avail Japan little, only jeopardizing Japan's chances to reach peace with China—which received aid from Britain and the United States—and leading inevitably to war with them.[74] This was the argument Yonai had mounted against the army already in 1939. That such a person was appointed the premier at all suggests that Japan's highest authorities in and around the emperor were not in favor

[72] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 202–3.

[73] Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Kantōgun 2. Kantokuen, shūsenji no taiSo sen* (Tokyo, 1974), 69–70.

[74] Ogata Taketora, *Ichi gunjin no shōgai. Teitoku Yonai Mitsumasa* (Tokyo, 1983), 42–46.

of the army's German (and Soviet) orientation. Even so, while in 1936, Mao still called Japan a "sea power," by 1939, the army's power in Japanese politics had become decisive. Joseph C. Grew noted at the time: "The Japanese Army is no protuberance like the tail of a dog which might be cut off to prevent the tail from wagging the dog: it is inextricably bound up with the fabric of the entire nation; its ramifications are far too deep for any effective amputation, or of any effective withering through discredit."[75] In the end, the army overthrew the cabinet, ushering in a new cabinet led by Konoe on 22 July 1940. (Kazami Akira was appointed the minister of justice in this cabinet.) Two months later, on September 27, Tokyo signed the "Tripartite Pact" of Germany, Italy, and Japan, a defensive military alliance. Kamei despaired at the outcome, according to his account, because he had expected that Japan would sign the pact with the proviso that it would withdraw in the event of a German attack on the Soviet Union. Even though Kamei had urged this on Mutō Akira, his close contact in the army, Japan did not insist on such a proviso.[76]

Significantly, by design, the pact excluded the Soviet Union as a potential adversary. Article III stipulated that Germany, Italy, and Japan "undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three Contracting Parties is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European War or in the Sino-Japanese Conflict." Although this was ambiguous, Article V made it explicit that the pact was not directed against the Soviet Union: "Germany, Italy and Japan affirm that the aforementioned terms do not in any way affect the political status which exists at present as between each of the three Contracting Parties and Soviet Russia."[77] By combining the strengths of the three powers, the pact was meant to intimidate Washington into staying out of the conflict in Europe and Asia. Apart from this signal to the United States, little united Germany, Italy, and Japan. The pact was, as the German historian Theo Sommer aptly noted, a "mere sham front" (*bloß Scheinfront*) and an "alliance with no backbone" (*eine Allianz ohne Rückgrat*).[78] The three powers were wholly mistaken to think that they could browbeat the mighty United States.

Joseph C. Grew understood that the "victories of Germany [over France] have intoxicated them [Japanese] like strong wine." Grew could not understand what advantages would accrue to Japan from the pact. It was Japan's "tremendous gamble on Great Britain's defeat by Germany." He vaticinated that "Japan, by tying up with Germany, would become merely the tail to a kite; that Germany, whatever her promises, could not and would not furnish effective support to Japan." Moreover, Grew contended, Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke

[75] Joseph C. Grew, *Ten Years in Japan: A Contemporary Record Drawn from the Diaries and Private and Official Papers of Joseph C. Grew* (London, 1944), 263.

[76] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 205.

[77] Theo Sommer's classic: *Deutschland und Japan zwischen den Mächten 1935–1940. Vom Antikominternpakt zum Dreimächtepakt* (Tübingen, 1962), 514–15.

[78] Ibid., 448–49. This book details the negotiations leading up to the pact.

knew it. Thus, Grew questioned the pact. Japanese officials explained at the time, despaired Grew, that "the pact is aimed directly against the United States, which ever since the Immigration Act of 1924 and the Manchurian Incident has hampered Japan's necessary expansion; that world totalitarianism will take the place of Anglo-Saxonism, which is bankrupt and will be wiped out, and that Japan has to ally herself with the other camp which is not intransigently set on preserving the *status quo*." The political rhetoric was a complete transformation from what Grew had heard when he arrived in Japan in 1932. The voices of the embittered right-wing, the desperate Soviet sympathizers, and the mysterious Japanese secret intelligence agents had irrevocably shaped Japan's perspective. Grew wrote: "This is not the Japan which I have known in times past." He came to the conclusion that "appeasing" Japan was no longer possible. In September 1940, he wrote the "most significant message to Washington in all the eight years of my mission to Japan": no more "patience and constraint" by Washington toward Tokyo. He knew that war between Japan and the United States was now ineluctable.[79]

While Japan had entered the Tripartite Pact, there was still hope for more productive negotiations with the United States as well. The American-educated foreign minister, for example, was neither inherently anti-American nor pro-German and rather believed that the pact would allow Japan to use Moscow as leverage in Washington. Ultimately, in addition to keeping the United States out of the war, he hoped the pact would encourage the United States to negotiate with Japan regarding China. In this regard, Matsuoka was in agreement with Konoe and his backers such as Kamei and Asō (which explains why he was appointed the foreign minister to begin with). Washington had no stomach for dealing with Tokyo, however. Matusoka's requests for direct negotiations with Roosevelt were not even forwarded to him by Secretary of State Cordell Hull.[80]

The Tripartite Pact pleased Chiang Kai-shek, who saw that by joining Germany and Italy, Japan had immediately antagonized Britain and the United States. He was contemptuous of Japan ("a nation with no policy") and its politicians (particularly Konoe Fumimaro), who lacked the ability and the courage to formulate policies without being bullied by the militarists.[81] Chiang understood that the Soviet Union would become a crucial factor in the new international alignment.

On September 29, Chiang wrote to Stalin for his views of the situation. Stalin's observation was similar to Grew's and Chiang's. Writing back to Chiang

[79]Grew, *Ten Years in Japan*, 281, 288–89, 290, 293.

[80]David John Lu, *Agony of Choice: Matsuoka Yōsuke and the Rise and Fall of the Japanese Empire 1880–1946* (Lantham, MD, 2002), 209. When Matsuoka was in Moscow in the spring of 1941, he frequently met with the U.S. ambassador to Moscow, Steinhardt.

[81]See Lu Xijun, "Jiang Jieshi dui Ri-De-Yi sanguo tongmeng de fanying," *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 3 (2013), 10–11. Lu's full-fledged work on Chiang in 1937–41 is written in Japanese: *Shō Kaiseki no "kokusaiteki kaiketsu" senryaku: 1937–1941: "Shō Kaiseki nikki" kara miru NiTchū sensō no shinsō* (Tokyo, 2016), 176.

on 16 October 1940, Stalin admitted that it was a setback for both China and the Soviet Union because Japan had now acquired allies. He added quickly, however, that the pact could turn against Japan, because it would undermine the neutrality of Britain and the United States. Indeed, Stalin wrote with pleasure, the U.S. embargo on the export of scrap iron to Japan (which took effect on that date in response to Japan's invasion of northern French Indo-China after the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact) and the opening of the Burma Road (more than 1,000 km long, which Britain used to supply war materials to China) were an eloquent testimony to this. Stalin exhorted Chiang to strengthen China's national army as the "bearer of China's destiny, freedom, and independence."[82] The international consensus thus quickly emerged that the Tripartite Pact would work to Japan's disadvantage. Kamei and his group were distressed that the proviso whose inclusion they had demanded was missing from the pact. They had miscalculated the conception of such a pact in the first place.

It should be noted that while Japan broke American and Soviet diplomatic cipher codes (though the exact extent is still unknown), the Soviet Union and the United States were, in all likelihood, far more successful in breaking Japanese diplomatic codes. In 1936, the United States had already broken the "RED machine," and in autumn 1940, they broke the more powerful "PURPLE machine."[83] Although the extent of the Soviet Union's codebreaking is less known, it is clear that in 1938, the Soviets had recruited the Japanese diplomat Izumi Kōzō (泉顯蔵, 1890–1956), then stationed in Prague, to work for Soviet intelligence and acquired Japanese code books from him, with which Moscow read Japanese diplomatic codes. Japan's diplomacy thus became an "open diplomacy" for the United States and USSR.[84]

Meanwhile, in September 1940, distrustful of Western democracies, Stalin weighed accepting an invitation from Hitler to join the Tripartite Pact, provided that Hitler met Stalin's conditions regarding a continental bloc and Soviet security. In the end, however, Stalin turned his nose up at Hitler's inane proposals.[85] Soon after, in December, Hitler decided to attack the Soviet Union.[86] In spite

[82] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR* (Moscow, 1995), 23 (1):672–73.

[83] Carl Boyd, *Hitler's Japanese Confidant: General Ōshima Hiroshi and Magic Intelligence, 1941–1945* (Lawrence, KS, 1993).

[84] See Hiroaki Kuromiya and Andrzej Pepłoński, "Kōzō Izumi and the Soviet Breach of Imperial Japanese Diplomatic Codes," *Intelligence and National Security* 28, no. 6 (2013): 769–84.

[85] On this aborted Berlin-Moscow-Tokyo axis, see V.E. Molodiakov, *Nesostoiavshaiasia os': Berlin–Moskva–Tokio* (Moscow, 2004). According to Wang Ming, Mao's political rival, Mao Zedong supported the Soviet Union's joining the Tripartite Pact, as it was poor countries' alliance against the rich countries (Britain, France, and the United States). See Van Min (Wang Ming), *Polveka KPK i predatel'stvo Mao Tsze-duna*, 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1979), 187. Wang wrote and published this exposé in the Soviet Union. In 2004, it was translated into Chinese and issued for internal and limited circulation only, with "and Mao Zedon'g Treachery" elided from the title. See Wang Ming, *Zhonggong wushi nian* (Beijing, 2004), 186–87.

[86] Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia* (New Haven, CT, 1999), chap. 4.

of being a signatory of the Tripartite Pact, Tokyo seems to have had no official advance warning of Hitler's decision. Rather, Berlin offered to mediate between Moscow and Tokyo in reaching some kind of rapprochement. Yet, Germany did little in this regard, notwithstanding Japan's repeated requests.[87] Japan did offer a neutrality pact on its own to Moscow repeatedly, in July, October, and November 1940. Although Moscow rejected some conditions Japan attached to its offer, Molotov was pleased with Japan's move, assessing it as a "serious step" toward improving Soviet-Japanese relations. Such a pact, claimed Molotov, would include "everything necessary to free Japan's hands in the *south* [namely, against Britain and America, emphasis added]."[88]

While the Soviet Union was not quite prepared for a neutrality pact at the time, the change in Moscow's rhetoric toward Japan was striking. For the last several years, Moscow had been amplifying its aggression toward Japan and was prepared to defeat it. It is clear, however, that the Western front complicated matters. Moscow was increasingly suspicious of and preparing for war with Germany, for despite their non-aggression pact, both countries could sense an ineluctable conflict. Stalin's position was not necessarily precarious, but the heightened tensions in the West made the increased aggression in the East no longer sensible—far better to leave the battle in the East to Japan, China, and the Allied powers, where Stalin knew well that Japan was doomed. Molotov's comment makes this strategy crystal clear. Indeed, several months later, and not long before Germany would invade, the Soviet Union would conclude a neutrality pact with Japan.

In general, Japan's policy thinking at the time was sclerotic, devoid of any innovative or even flexible outlook, as if immutably stuck in the past. As a result, it appeared to lack sincerity and transparency; it was simply unworkable. Japanese maneuvers involving Wang Jingwei (see Chapter 3, p. 207), who in 1940 founded Japan's puppet government in Nanjing against Chiang's in Chongqing, are a good example.[89] Japanese liberals, buffeted from the left and right, were not silent, however. For example, Ishibashi Tanzan (石橋湛山, 1884–1973), a journalist for the newspaper *Tōyō keizai shinpō*, was truculent on the subject of a Soviet-Japanese agreement on China, a subject that the army, Kamei, Asō, Konoe, and many others promoted. Although Ishibashi supported normal Soviet-Japanese relations, he argued that solving the "China problem" by way of a Soviet-Japanese agreement would lead to the partition of China, just as Moscow partitioned Poland with Nazi Germany. It would inevitably antagonize Britain, France, and

[87] See Sommer, *Deutschland und Japan*, 462–63, 472.

[88] B.N. Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete mezhdu SSSR i Iaponiei: diplomaticheskaia istoriia, 1941–1945 gg.* (Moscow, 1995), 59. See also Vasilii Molodiakov, *Rossiia i Iaponiia: mech na vesakh. Neizvestnye i zabytye stranitsy rossiisko-iaponskikh otnoshenii (1919–1948)* (Moscow, 2005), 216–26. A classic work on the subject is George Alexander Lensen, *The Strange Neutrality: Soviet-Japanese Relations during the Second World War 1941–1945* (Tallahassee, FL, ca. 1972).

[89] Gerald E. Bunker, *The Peace Conspiracy: Wang Ching-wei and the China War, 1937–1941* (Cambridge, MA, 1972).

the United States. The only way for Japan to survive, Ishibashi emphasized, was to ensure China's independence at all costs and maintain Japan's proper place in Asia. True, arguments for a Japanese-Soviet understanding might sound reasonable in light of the fact that neither Britain nor the United States was likely to understand Japan's position in Asia, but such an accord would open a path to Japan's destruction.[90]

This argument had no effect on Japan's policymakers, to Stalin's relief. His focus was on keeping Japan trapped in China. In autumn 1940, Stalin told Vasilii V. Chuikov (1900–82), appointed as military attaché to China (and military adviser to Chiang Kai-shek): "Your task, Comrade Chuikov, and the task of all our people in China, is to tightly bind the hands of the Japanese aggressor. Only when the Japanese aggressor's hands are bound, can we avoid war on two fronts if the German aggressors attack our country."[91]

The Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, 1941

In October 1940, in an effort to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union within the framework of the Tripartite Pact, Japan had a top-secret proposal for Moscow to divide the Eurasian continent into their respective spheres of influence. First, Tokyo would recognize the recent Soviet territorial acquisitions in Europe in exchange for Moscow's recognition of Manzhouguo. Second, Tokyo would acknowledge Moscow's traditional interests in Outer Mongolia and Xinjiang in return for Moscow's acknowledgment of Japan's traditional interests in Inner Mongolia and three provinces in north China. Third, Japan would accept Soviet advances to Afghanistan and Persia, provided that the Soviet Union would accept Japan's possession of French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies.[92] It has been argued that Moscow and Tokyo agreed on these matters,[93] but no such record exists. Clearly, Moscow did not want to commit itself to the Japanese plan.

Matsuoka did present a similar idea (about India) to Stalin orally in April 1941 in Moscow. As noted earlier (see Chapter 4, p. 323), Saionji Kinkazu, Ozaki Hotsumi's collaborator, accompanied Matsuoka on that trip.[94] Whereas Stalin was a study in patience, caution, and discipline, Matsuoka was impetuous, garrulous, and prolix. At his meeting on 3 April 1941 with Molotov and Stalin,

[90] Ishibashi Tanzan, "Kiken naru NiSso teikei ron," *Tōyō keizai shinpō*, 16 December 1939, 14–15.

[91] V.I. Chuikov, *Missiia v Kitae* (Moscow, 1983), 53. There is an abbreviated English translation of Chuikov's memoir: *Mission to China: Memoirs of a Soviet Military Adviser to Chiang Kaishek*, trans. David P. Barrett (Norwalk, CT, 2004).

[92] JACAR, B04013480200, frames 77–79.

[93] Bruce A. Elleman, "The 1907–1916 Russo-Japanese Secret Treaties: A Reconsideration," *Ajia bunka kenkyū*, no. 25 (1999), 39.

[94] Matsuoka also spoke with Hitler and Mussolini during his trip to Europe, but Hitler was silent on his decision to enter a war against the Soviet Union. Many observers believe, however, that Matsuoka knew Hitler's plan from other sources.

Matsuoka was unctuously loquacious. The following record of the Japanese ambassador, Tatekawa Yoshitsugu, given to his U.S. counterpart, Steinhardt, is available:

> Molotov greeted us and a few moments later Stalin walked into the room. The meeting lasted exactly one hour. Matsuoka at once started to talk about Japanese ideology and became more and more enthusiastic as he proceeded. His lecture continued for 58 minutes. He began with the status of the Emperor, continued through the structure of Japanese political and economic life and concluded by stating that the Japanese were not Communists politically or economically but that there was a close parallel between communism and Japanese family life. When Matsuoka had finished Stalin remarked that in spite of the difference between Soviet and Japanese ideology he could see no reason why "we cannot be friends" and turning to Molotov asked him whether he shared that opinion. Molotov agreed. That was the end of the interview.[95]

It is characteristic that Stalin tolerated such behavior and in the end (ten days later) reached an agreement with him. Stalin knew that he was on far stronger ground than was Matsuoka. Japan was on the back foot, and Stalin acted accordingly and confidently.

On April 13, after Matsuoka's second meeting with Stalin, Tokyo and Moscow signed a neutrality pact, which allowed the Soviet Union to avoid the possibility of a double-front war and allowed Japan to strike the south without worries from the north (the Soviet Union). Stalin was ready to destroy Japan, but with the war in the West, he was perfectly happy to strike a pact and continue the plan of letting Japan destroy itself in battles against China, Britain, and the United States. In negotiations with Moscow, Matsuoka repeatedly emphasized Japan's rejection of the Anglo-Saxon world and its ideology (the war with China was actually war against Britain and the United States), at the same time emphasizing that it was Japan and the Soviet Union that controlled the destiny of Asia.[96] Stalin, in turn, proclaimed complaisantly that he, too, was an Asiatic,[97] just as he had in 1925 to Fuse. At the signing ceremony, Stalin declared again that he was "Asian," adding that "The setting sun of the Great British Empire will not rise again. Soviet-Japanese cooperation will be invincible throughout

[95] *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941. Vol. 4. The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1941), 929. The Soviet record of this meeting is in *Arkhiv vnesheni politiki SSSR*, 23 (2):499–502. Having been stationed as a young diplomat in St. Petersburg in 1912–13, Matsuoka learned to speak Russian. Even nearly thirty years later, in 1941, according to a German diplomat, Matsuoka "spoke Russian not too badly." See Erich Kordt, "German Political History in the Far East during the Hitler Regime," Hoover Institution Archives, E-1903, 32.

[96] *Arkhiv vnesheni politiki SSSR*, 23 (2):561.

[97] See for example Saionji Kinkazu, *Kizoku no taijō* (Tokyo, 1951), 110.

the world."[98] At the reception that followed, Stalin said to Matsuoka, "You are an Asiatic [*aziuam*], so am I." Matsuoka responded: "We are all Asiatics. Let's toast the Asiatics."[99] Although no explicit mention was made of spheres of influence in Manchuria, Xinjiang, Mongolia, and other parts of the Eurasian continent, the Soviet-Japanese joint declaration noted that the Soviet Union respected the territorial integrity and inviolability of Manzhouguo, and Japan respected that of the MPR.[100] Moreover, Stalin did say that the Soviet Union considered it "possible in principle to work with Japan, Germany, and Italy" on "big problems" and making the tripartite pact into a quadripartite. In any event, Stalin acknowledged that the Soviet-Japanese pact was a "serious step" toward such a collaboration.[101] It is possible that the neutrality pact for Stalin was not only a measure to avert a possible double-front war but also "an avenue for the revival" of talks with the Germans, and of the idea that the Soviet Union might join the Axis powers.[102] Yet, it is equally possible that he was just paying lip service to the agreement with Japan.

This new Soviet-Japanese alignment was in line with what Tanaka Giichi and Kuhara Fusanosuke had pursued privately with Stalin in 1927. In 1932, Matsuoka, too, had explored, albeit in vain, a political accommodation with Moscow (see Chapter 3, p. 261). It is also in line with what Araki Sadao (see Chapter 3, p. 264), Hanzawa Gyokujō (see Chapter 2, p. 87), and many other Japanese had been advocating regarding the bloc of "non-propertied" peoples against the "capitalist conquerors" (the Anglo-American world). They got what they wanted. It was also in line with what Karl Haushofer had long advocated, a "continental bloc." Indeed, he welcomed the neutrality pact as Matsuoka's "far-sighted statesmanly masterwork" (*ein weitsichtiges staatmännisches Meisterwerk*).[103] Both Tokyo and Moscow were pleased. Stalin toasted Japan's emperor and Premier Konoe, as well as Matsuoka and Tatekawa.[104] When Stalin took the extraordinary step of seeing Matsuoka off at the rail station, Tatekawa, overwhelmed emotionally, "cried in a strident voice, '*Spasibo! Spasibo!* (Thank you! Thank you!).' "[105] *Pravda* proclaimed that the whole Soviet nation approved of the pact. Recounting the long history of Soviet-Japanese attempts at rapprochement (the Soviet proposal of a non-aggression pact in late 1931, Japan's proposals of a neutrality/non-aggression pact in 1940, the German/Japanese proposal for the Soviet Union to join the

[98]Quoted in a first-hand account by Kase Shun-ichi: "Matsuoka Yōsuke to Sutārin," *Bungei shunjū* 51, no. 9 (June 1973): 330.

[99]Quoted in Molodiakov, *Rossiia i Iaponiia*, 240 (the source of the quote is not given, however).

[100]"Deklaratsiia," *Pravda*, 14 April 1941, 1.

[101]*Dokumenty vnesheni politiki SSSR*, 23 (2): 562.

[102]Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion*, 199, 320.

[103]Christian W. Spang, *Karl Haushofer und Japan. Die Rezeption seiner geopolitischen Theorien in der deutschen und japanischen Politik* (Munich, 2013), 633.

[104]Hasegawa Shin-ichi, "Sutārin shushō no egao," *Kaizō* 23, no. 11 (1941): 150.

[105]An eyewitness account by the Romanian ambassador, Grigore Gafunce (1892–1957), *Prelude to the Russian Campaign*, trans. Fletcher Allen (London, 1945), 158.

Tripartite Pact in 1940 and 1941, and others), the Soviet newspaper praised the pact as the natural outcome of Stalin's "peace-loving" foreign policy.[106]

It saved the Soviet Union but not Japan. The day before Matsuoka signed the neutrality pact, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (1874–1965) handed a note to Matsuoka via the British ambassador to the Soviet Union, Stafford Cripps (1889–1952). Dated April 2 and meant to be given to Matsuoka earlier, Churchill reminded Matsuoka that Germany was far from invincible and that Britain and the Anglophone world would triumph. He cautioned Matsuoka against "a serious catastrophe" and appealed for "a marked improvement in the relations between Japan and Great Britain, the great sea Power of the West."[107] Matsuoka responded only after he returned to Tokyo:

> Your Excellency may rest assured that the foreign policy of Japan is determined upon and after an unbiased examination of all the facts and a very careful weighing of all the elements of the situation she confronts, always holding steadfastly in view the great racial aim and ambition of finally bringing about on the earth the conditions envisaged in what she calls Hakkoichiu, the Japanese conception of a universal peace under which there would be no conquest, no oppression, no exploitation of any and all peoples. And, determined, I need hardly tell Your Excellency, it will be carried out with resolution but with utmost circumspection, taking in every detail of changing circumstances.[108]

Matsuoka snubbed Churchill. Neither the Soviet Union nor Germany cared for Japan's "racial" feelings. Yet, by specifically mentioning "racial aim and ambition," Matsuoka made the point that he (and Japan) still harbored a grudge against Britain's treatment of Japan in the post–World War I era. As a foreign minister and statesman, as we shall see, he bit the dust in the end.

Tokyo and Washington

What Kamei Kan-ichirō thought of the neutrality pact with the Soviet Union is unknown. It was to be no balm to soothe him, in any case: In April, Kamei received news from Germany that Hitler had issued an order opening hostilities against the Soviet Union. Kamei jumped into action. He proposed to Konoe, Matsuoka, and others, while in the middle of negotiations with the United States, that to avert war, Japan should withdraw from the Tripartite Pact when Germany attacked the Soviet Union and accelerate negotiations with Washington. Konoe,

[106] "Sovetsko-iaponskii pakt v osveshchenii inostrannoi pechati," *Pravda*, 19 April 1941, 5.

[107] This was submitted to the Tokyo War Crimes Trial as Exhibit no. 1062, a digital copy of which is available at: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10270566.

[108] This was also submitted to the trial as Exhibit no. 1063. A digital copy is available at https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10270567.

according to Kamei, was responsive to his proposal.[109] None of this would materialize before the Germans attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Mutual distrust between Matsuoka and Roosevelt was intense. In July 1941, FDR, who had been secretly assisting China in its war against Japan, authorized preventive air attacks on Japan by U.S. bombers. "Two days later FDR declared a trade embargo with Japan, knowing full well this by itself would mean war."[110] The preventive air attacks were not carried out, in part owing to the lack of appropriate bombers.

The plan for a U.S. air strike was submitted by Lauchlin Currie (1902–93), FDR's administrative assistant and special envoy to China, now suspected of having been a Soviet agent code-named "Page." Currie appears multiple times in "Venona" messages of Soviet intelligence communication intercepted and decoded by U.S. counterintelligence that began in 1943 and continued to 1980.[111] Pavel Sudoplatov, a Soviet "master spy," identified Currie as a "member of a secret apparatus of the Communist Party of the USA" who, he recalled, was the most influential person in the formation of U.S. policy toward Japan and the Far East. According to Sudoplatov, Currie worked with Harry Dexter White (1892–1948), the assistant secretary of the Treasury under Henry Morgenthau, Jr. (1891–1967) and a "member of a secret apparatus of the Communist Party of the USA."[112] It was Currie who in 1941 recommended Owen Lattimore (1900–89) to FDR, resulting in Lattimore's appointment as a personal American adviser to Chiang Kai-shek. Lattimore was a Sino-Mongolian specialist and the editor of *Pacific Affairs* (the organ of the Institute of Pacific Relations [see Chapter 3, p. 176]), and he had defended Stalin's show trials. He took an uncompromising stand on Japan, boasting that it was he who had insisted that Japan return Manchuria to China as a precondition for the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions against Japan (and avoiding war), a condition he knew Japan would not accept.[113]

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[109] *Kamei Kan-ichirō shi danwa sokkiroku*, 208. Kase, "Matsuoka Yōsuke to Sutārin," 333 maintained that in view of Moscow's failure to join the Tripartite Pact, Konoe negotiated with the United States to back out of it. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union, Konoe wanted to dissolve the pact, but he failed due to pressure from the army.

[110] Don McLean, "Tigers of a Different Stripe: FDR's Secret Plan to Torch Japan Before Pearl Harbor," *Soldier of Fortune*, January 1989, 90.

[111] On Currie and the Soviet Intelligence, see John E. Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven, CT, 2000), 145–150. V.V. Pozniakov, *Sovetskaia razvedka v Amerike 1919–1941* 2nd ed. (Moscow, 2015), 467 explicitly identifies Currie as a Soviet agent.

[112] Pavel Sudoplatov, *Raznye dni tainoi voiny i diplomatii. 1941 god* (Moscow, 2001), 369.

[113] Owen Lattimore, *China Memoirs: Chiang Kai-shek and the War Against Japan*, comp. Fujiko Isono (Tokyo, 1990), 75–76, 89–91; Harvey Klehr and Ronald Radosh, *The Amerasia Spy Case: Prelude to McCarthyism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1996), 168, 171. On Lattimore's boast, see A.S. Paniushkin, *Zapiski posla: Kitai 1939–1944 gg.* (Moscow, 1981), 158. (I am grateful to Professor David P. Barrett for a copy of Paniushkin's memoir.) It is to be noted that there is sworn testimony that in 1933, the Soviet military intelligence referred to Lattimore and Joseph Fels Barnes (1907–70), an American journalist, as "our men." See *Institute of Pacific Relations. Report of the Committee of the Judiciary. Eighty-Second Congress Second Session Pursuant to S. Res. 366 (81st*

Moscow was confident that any threat from Tokyo was limited. Even *before* Hitler attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, Stalin had begun to move troops from the Far East to the west.[114] The Japanese quickly noticed the development,[115] which was also duly noted by the U.S. military attaché in Moscow, Ivan D. Yeaton (1908–79). In June 1941, shortly before the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, he later noted: "Troop trains from the Far East" had been passing through to the White Russian front "*for weeks* [emphasis added], and I was sure zero hour was at hand."[116]

Moscow's "Operation Snow"

Meanwhile, Moscow made extensive efforts to ensure that Washington would not succumb to isolationist pressure and reach a compromise with Tokyo. This covert operation, sanctioned by the secret police chief, Lavrentii P. Beriia (1899–1953),[117] was called "Operation Snow" (*Операция Снег*) and targeted Harry Dexter White. Much debate has ensued over whether or not White was a Soviet agent. Like Lauchlin Currie, he appears in the "Venona" messages multiple times, with code names such as "Richard" and "Jurist," from which it is known that he rendered valuable assistance to Soviet intelligence numerous times. Vitalii Pavlov (1914–2005), a Soviet secret police officer, traveled to Washington in the spring of 1941 to meet White. Pavlov stressed to him how important it was for the United States to treat Japan as an irreconcilable nemesis. Pavlov contended that White was instrumental in Washington's decision to put an ever greater squeeze on Japan, to the point where Japan would declare war on the United States in response.[118]

Pavlov's account, however, has incurred skepticism as being the mere tall tale of a braggart, due to some factual inaccuracies. Moreover, whether the operation changed White's mind is debatable, considering that his strategic thinking about Japan had been the same as or similar to that of Moscow. Yet, the operation was not Pavlov's invention but ordered by the highest authorities in Moscow. In return for his service, the Soviet secret police approached White with the promise to protect his Jewish relatives in Lithuania, now occupied by the Soviet Union. In fact, the Soviet secret police could not or did

Congress). Resolution Relating to the Internal Security of the United States. Hearing Held July 25, 1951–June 20, 1952 by the Internal Security Committee (Washington, DC, 1952), 25 (testimony by Alexander Barmine [1899–1987], a former Red Army official and diplomat who defected to the West in 1937).

[114] Sudoplatov, *Raznye dni tainoi voiny i diplomatii*, 368.

[115] Miyasugi Hiroyasu, "Nihon no taiSo jōsei handan to jōhō katsudō, 1939–1941," *Seiji keizai shigaku* 55, no. 2 (2019): 10–14.

[116] Ivan D. Yeaton, *Memoirs of Ivan D. Yeaton, USA (Ret.) 1919–1953* (Stanford CA, 1976), 30.

[117] K.E. Cherevko and A.A. Kirichenko, *Sovetsko-iaponsaia voina. 9 avgusta–2 sentiabria 1945. Rassekrechennye arkhivy* (Moscow, 2006), 122.

[118] See Vitalii Pavlov, *Operatsiia "Sneg." Polveka vo vneshnei razvedke KGB* (Moscow, 1996).

not succor them: They were killed in Kaunas by the Nazis at the beginning of the war.[119] Interestingly and significantly, Kamei hinted at his knowledge of the secret Soviet Operation Snow in an interview in 1974, about which virtually no one else knew at the time. He said that a "Soviet operation" led to the hardening of Henry Morgenthau's position toward Japan.[120] Pavlov reinforced White's strategic thinking with whatever information and disinformation about Japan he provided. White did not betray the Soviet interest in ensuring war between Japan and the United States, and his Soviet handlers were very satisfied with his accomplishments.[121]

Stalin's blunder, June 1941

Numerous warnings and his own continued suspicions notwithstanding, Stalin seems to have been caught off guard by Hitler's attack on 22 June 1941. One of the warnings came from a source little discussed in the literature: Yan Baohang, "China's Sorge" (see Chapter 3, p. 176), who had been accepted into the CCP with Zhou Enlai's personal endorsement.[122] Ignoring the Cassandran warnings is said to have been the greatest miscalculation of Stalin's life, although recent works doubt if he was entirely caught flat-footed.[123] According to a Chinese account, on June 23, the day after the German attack, Stalin sent a telegram to the CCP and Zhou Enlai. He thanked them for the valuable information on the German attack, which had provided the Red Army with twenty-four hours to make preparations.[124] In any event, Stalin quickly rallied from the initial shock and fought back. He paid close attention to intelligence reports and almost

[119] Sudoplatov, *Raznye dni tainoi voiny i diplomatii*, 150–51. Sudoplatov, a Soviet master spy, stated that White was a "trusted person of the Soviet government."

[120] Kusayanagi Daizō, "Jōhō no kōsaten. Konohito ni kiku. Kamei Kan-ichirō shi," *Chūō kōron* 89, no. 6 (1974): 219.

[121] See Jerrold Schecter and Leona Schecter, *Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed American History* (Washington, DC, 2003), 43–44.

[122] Under Zhou Enlai's personal direction, Yan penetrated Chiang Kai-shek's entourage. From the German information conveyed to Chiang, Yan knew of Hitler's imminent attack on the Soviet Union and informed Moscow via Yan'an. It is said that subsequently, Moscow expressed gratitude to the CCP for its intelligence, which turned out to be accurate, and that Stalin himself knew of Yan's brilliant work. See Wang Lianjie, *Yingxiong wuming: Yan Baohang* (Beijing, 2018), 168, 215–17; Jin He, *Yan Baohang zhuan* (Shenyang, 2008), 328–29, 386–87, 392–94; *Yan Baohang jinian wenji* (Shenyang, 1995), 54–55, 100. Likewise, Yan provided critical intelligence to Moscow on the Kwantung Army in 1945, for which Moscow commemorated Yan in 1995 on the fiftieth anniversary of the victory over Japan. See Yan Mingfu, *Yan Mingfu huiyi lu* (Beijing, 2015), 77–79. On Yan Baohan, see also Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (New Haven, CT, 1996), 43, 289–90. Like the governments of Japan, the United States, Britain, and other countries, the Chinese government, too, was deeply penetrated by Soviet and CCP spies. Ji Chaoding (冀朝鼎, 1903–63) is another prominent example. See Klehr and Radosh, *Amerasia Spy Case*, 21–22.

[123] See McMeekin, *Stalin's War*; Aleksandr Gogun, *Oshibka 1941* (Kherson, 2021).

[124] Yin Qi, *Pan Hannian de qingbao shengya* (Beijing, 2011), 138–39.

certainly came to appreciate accurate and timely reports from Tokyo, Yan'an, and elsewhere.

When Germany struck the Soviet Union, Matsuoka went so far as to suggest that Japan attack the Soviet Union as well. He was rebuffed by the emperor, who responded that it would violate "international faith." The emperor recommended that Konoe fire Matsuoka, which he did.[125] To the concerned Soviet diplomats in Tokyo, Matsuoka gave evasive and contradictory responses.[126] Matsuoka's successor, Toyoda Teijirō (豊田貞次郎, 1885–1961), a naval admiral who had studied at Oxford University, assured the Soviet ambassador of Japan's unequivocal commitment to the pact.[127] Matsuoka's strategy of a quadripartite alliance to negotiate with Washington failed. When Japan attacked the United States in December 1941, Matsuoka lamented that the Tripartite Pact was the "gravest blunder in his life."[128] Contrary to Haushofer's assessment, Matsuoka's statesmanship proved an arrant failure, a failure that ultimately stemmed from Tokyo's unrequited political romance with Moscow following the Washington Conference of 1921–22.

Among the Japanese Army General Staff, some groups (particularly Tanaka Shin-ichi, now the chief of the Operations Bureau) were inspired by the Germans and insisted that Japan launch an attack on the Soviet Union. Yet, they never carried much weight, and their enthusiasm quickly died down.[129] The General Staff Russian Desk mustered all its forces to study whether the Soviet Union could withstand the German onslaught. By early August, it concluded that Stalin's downfall could not be expected, that the German Blitzkrieg would not succeed, and that even were Moscow lost, the Soviets would not surrender.[130] Meanwhile, on 2 July 1941, Japan made a momentous decision, which accorded with the general line set in 1935 or so: to march to the south, this time into southern French Indo-China (in agreement with Vichy France). In response, Washington froze Japanese assets in the United States and levied an oil embargo on Japan. Britain followed suit with similar measures. Tokyo did not entirely

[125] Terasaki Hidenari and Mariko T. Miller, *Shōwa tennō dokuhaku roku* (Tokyo, 1995), 68. After World War II, Matsuoka explained his suggestion as a political trick: "By way of trick, I said that rather than going to the southwest with the danger of increasing[ly] coming into clash with Great Britain, I would rather see Japan joining the Soviet-German war, but I said so by way of [a] trick. That is, because I knew full well then that both the navy and army would not, absolutely not, fight Russia, and particularly the navy hated to do so." See Lu, *Agony of Choice*, 256.

[126] Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete*, 116–24.

[127] Even before Hitler's attack, the Japanese Army intended to stay neutral in the event of war between Germany and the Soviet Union. See Ozaki Hotsumi's intelligence quoted in *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)*, 146,234, 365.

[128] Saitō Ryōe, *Azamukareta rekishi: Matsuoka Yōsuke to sangoku dōmei no rimen* (Tokyo, 2012), 11.

[129] Interestingly, Tanaka's biographer could not explain why Tanaka was such a hardliner. See Tanaka Shin-ichi and Matsushita Yoshio, comp., *Sakusen buchō Tōjō o batō su* (Tokyo, 1986), 153.

[130] See the entry for 9 August 1941 in Sanbō Honbu dai nijū han (dai jūgo ka), "Kimitsu sensō nisshi sono 3," BBK; Bōeichō bōei kenshūjo senshibu, *Senshi sōsho: Kantōgun (2)*, 64–65, 71–72; Tanemura Sakō, *Daihon-ei kimitsu nikki* (Tokyo, 1995), 92.

abandon the northward march against the Soviet Union, however. The July 2 decision stipulated that secret preparations for war be made just in case the situation turned auspicious for Japan.

The hardliner Tanaka Shin-ichi was responsible for forcing the government to make war preparations against the Soviet Union. Camouflaged as military maneuvers (*Kantokuen* [関特演] or Kwantung Army Special Maneuvers), the preparations began soon after the July 2 decision. By late July, however, they had lost steam. On August 9 the northern march was abandoned at least for 1941. From the beginning Tanaka was uncertain that even these preparations under the guise of *Kantokuen* would be enough against the full force of the Soviets. Japan still mobilized up to five hundred thousand soldiers in Manchuria. Some, however, were not retained in Manchuria and were either sent back to Japan or sent to the south. Ozaki Hotsumi traveled to Manchuria in September and saw no sign of war preparations.[131] Ozaki and other Soviet agents clearly knew that the *Kantokuen* was no more than a consolation prize for those Japanese radicals who had been baying for war against the Soviet Union. From the first, the Japanese Army leaders as a whole had no intention of attacking the Soviet Union.[132] They claimed that they had had no other choice because of Japan's military inferiority (弱物ノ戦法ニ甘ンゼザルベカラザル帝国).[133] After World War II, Tanaka Shin-ichi was interrogated by Soviet prosecutors for the Tokyo War Crimes Trial. In his replies, he was less than scrupulous about his role in implementing the maneuver. Yet, he was honest in one respect: When asked to "recall the operational plans against RUSSIA," Tanaka replied, "There was no operational plan. JAPAN did not have that much power."[134]

Richard Sorge obtained Tokyo's decisions (and indecisions) from Ozaki and Miyagi Yotoku and faithfully dispatched them to Moscow.[135] Other Soviet moles in Japan supplied the same information to Moscow. Even then, Moscow remained cautious until it received further, definitive confirmations of Tokyo's determination to go to war against Britain and the United States and not against the Soviet Union. The CCP spy Yuan Shu, working in Japan in autumn 1941, provided critical information to Moscow via his boss, Pan Hannian, that corroborated the Sorge-Ozaki dispatches. Moscow thanked the CCP for its intelligence on Japan.[136] By late October 1941, Stalin became convinced that Japan would not attack and began a massive transfer of Soviet military forces from the Far East to

[131] *Gendaishi shiryō (24). Zoruge jiken (4)*, 169.

[132] Tanemura, *Daihon-ei kimitsu nikki*, 91.

[133] See the entry for 9 August 1941 in Sanbō Honbu dai nijū han (dai jūgo ka), "Kimitsu sensō nisshi sono 3," BBK.

[134] Awaya Kentarō and Yoshida Hiroshi, eds., *Kokusai kensatsukyoku (IPS) jinmon chōsho*, 32:29.

[135] *Gendaishi shiryō (2). Zoruge jiken (2)*, 90, 91, 146–47, 179, 182, 236–37, 371–72, 507; *Gendaishi shiryō (24). Zoruge jiken (4)*, 165–67.

[136] Hu Zhaofeng, Feng Yuehua, and Wu Min, *Jiandan qinxin: hongse qingbaoyuan Yuan Shu chuanqi* (Chengdu, 1999), 205; Zeng Long, *Wo de fuqin Yuan Shu: huanyuan wumian jiandie de zhenshi yangmao* (Taipei, 2016), 13, 255. On Pan's dispatches to Moscow, see Wang Fan, *Hongse tegong: Pan Hannian zhuan* (Hong Kong, 2011), 260–61; Yin, *Pan Hannian*, 140–41. Pan

the west to defend Moscow. From July 1941 to June 1942, as many as twenty-two fully-equipped divisions were moved.[137]

Stalin successfully defended Moscow. Simultaneously, he sought to ensure that Japan would advance southward and clash with Britain, the United States, and the Netherlands. Ozaki, his circles, and other unknown figures in Japan, dedicated to the defense of the "socialist motherland," helped Stalin in this regard. As with other important events, one could argue that there was no historical inevitability to Japan's war against Britain and the United States. Much has certainly been written, in minute detail, on the subject of the fateful decision made by Japan in late 1941. What is missing from the literature is the impact of longitudinal Soviet strategic actions—the subject of this book. From the beginning, with the Washington Conference of 1921–22, Moscow made every effort to ensure that the United States and Britain assumed an intransigent stance toward the Japanese imperialists' attempts to monopolize China's vast market. Ultimately, Moscow proved successful in its efforts.

5.3 War and Tribunal

Japan's attack on the United States on 7/8 December 1941 ("Pearl Harbor"), along with coordinated attacks on British, American, and Dutch territories in Southeast Asia, makes little sense from a rational point of view. The U.S. economy was far bigger than that of Japan (five times as great in terms of GDP), and Britain was the largest empire in the world at the time. In a sense, the attacks were Japan's attempt to break out of its international impasse. With the possibility of a quadripartite pact lost forever by the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Japan was on its own. It knew full well that neither Germany nor Italy would come to its rescue. All the same, Japan went to war, hoping against hope that it might force the enemy into surrender by initial, devastating victories. This was, in an odd way, the logical conclusion of Japan's disorientation.[138] At least from the mid-1930s, Stalin knew that Japan presented no serious threat to the

and Sorge knew each other when Sorge worked in Shanghai from 1930 to 1932, as did Sorge and Zhou Enlai. See Yang Guoguang, *Gongxun yu beiju: hongse diewang Zuoerge [Sorge]* (Beijing, 2012), 64–65, 68–69. See also M. Alekseev, *"Vash Ramzai." Rikhard Zorge i sovetskaia voennaia razvedka v Kitae 1930–1933 gg.* (Moscow, 2010), 368.

[137] Kirichenko, *Shirarezaru NichiRo no nihyakunen*, 138–39.

[138] Later, after Japan's defeat, Americans were simply amazed to know that Japan had declared war, even though it knew it had little hope for victory. When questioned in November 1945, Konoe told Americans that Yamamoto Isoroku (山本五十六, 1884–1943) and other military men of the highest ranks knew the hopelessness of a war against the United States, but went ahead in any case. The U.S. interrogators had to confirm several times whether Konoe was telling the truth. At Konoe's firm reply, they said: It was "most amazing." Present at his questioning were Thomas A. Bisson, apparently a Soviet agent (see p. 430 in this chapter); and Paul A. Baran (see p. 431, footnote 236 later in this chapter), a Marxist friend of Tsuru Shigeto (see p. 430 in this chapter); and Konoe's interpreter Ushiba Tomohiko (see Chapter 4, p. 319), Ozaki Hotsumi's close friend. See Konoe's interrogation record: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/4011785, 1, 13, 21.

Soviet Union. Out of desperation and disorientation Japan acted irrationally and unpredictably, unable to make sense of or resolve its ever increasing international isolation. Stalin cultivated Japan's disorientation with disinformation, camouflage, and provocation. After miring Japan in China in 1937, Stalin needed only to push Japan southward and to self-destruction. Japan obliged.

Stalin's elations

There is suspicion that Harry Dexter White played a central role here. The so-called Hull Note, delivered to Japan on 26 November 1941, was an ultimatum that included an uncompromising demand Japan could not possibly stomach: "The Government of Japan will withdraw *all* [emphasis added] military, naval, air and police forces from China and from Indo-China."[139] White had been pressing this demand hard in the U.S. government, but it was considered too drastic and unrealizable by Hull, Morgenthau, and FDR. (Owen Lattimore demanded the same condition from the U.S. government [see p. 402].) In the end, however, Hull, Morgenthau, and FDR accepted the issuance of ultimatum. "The influence of White's thinking" was evident, according to a historian who examined this process.[140] If this ultimatum was the casus belli, as some historians argue, it was exactly what Stalin had schemed for.

Much has been discussed about whether Washington knew of Japan's plan of attack beforehand. No conclusive evidence exists to show that it did. What is clear is that if war were to start, Washington wanted Japan to be the aggressor. Famously, Henry L. Stimson, the U.S. secretary of war, noted in his diary for 25 November 1941:

> He [President Roosevelt] brought up the event that we were likely to be attacked perhaps (as soon as) next Monday [1 December], for the Japanese are notorious for making an attack without warning, and the question was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves. It was a difficult proposition.[141]

When the Japanese did attack the United States on 7 December, Stimson's "first feeling was of relief that the indecision [of Washington] was over and that a crisis had come in a way which would unite all our people."[142]

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[139] United States Department of State, *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931–1941* (Washington, DC, 1943), 811.

[140] David Rees, *Harry Dexter White: A Study in Paradox* (New York, 1973), 126.

[141] United States Congress, *Pearl Harbor Attack. Hearing before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack* Part 11. (Washington, 1946), 5,433. On what Stimson meant by "maneuver," see Richard N. Current, "How Stimson Meant to 'Maneuver' the Japanese," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (June 1953): 67–74.

[142] U.S. Congress, *Pearl harbor Attack*, 5,438.

A few days earlier, on 3 December 1941, Japan notified its allies of its intention to open fire against the United States and Britain and requested them to honor the obligations of the alliance. According to Galeazzo Ciano (1903–43), Italy's foreign minister, the Japanese "interpreter who was taking down these requests was trembling like a leaf." Ciano saw Japan's declaration of war as America's success: "Now that Roosevelt has succeeded in his maneuver, not being able to enter the war directly, he has succeeded by an indirect route—forcing the Japanese to attack him."[143]

Japan's declaration of war pleased almost every political leader from Stalin to FDR. The U.S. president and his entourage were joyful that the United States was finally in the war. At the news of the Pear Harbor attack, Joseph E. Davies, the former U.S. ambassador to Moscow, said to the new Soviet ambassador to Washington, Litvinov, "Thank heaven." Litvinov thought Davies's utterance "curious" (любопытно).[144] In view of the neutrality pact with Tokyo, Moscow politely declined Washington's requests that the Soviet Union join the United States against Japan.[145] Chiang Kai-shek had long wanted the Soviet Union to enter into the war against Japan. Responding to Chiang on December 12, Stalin likewise politely turned down his pleas. Stalin justified his unwillingness by insisting that the Soviet Union's fight against Germany was part of the united front against the Axis powers. The Soviet Union did not want to divert its forces from the German front to the Far East; to do so would make the war easier for the German forces. Stalin asked Chiang not to press the Soviet Union to declare war on Japan:

> Of course *the Soviet Union will have to fight with Japan* [emphasis added], because Japan will undoubtedly violate the Pact of Neutrality. We have to be prepared for it, but preparations demand time. It's also necessary for us to be done with Germany first. Therefore I ask you once again not to press the Soviet Union to declare war against Japan immediately.[146]

If Matsuoka held the Pact of Neutrality in bad faith, so did Stalin. Perhaps for this reason, as far as is known, Stalin's letter to Chiang was not published in Russia until 2021, when the author of this book published it in the original Russian.[147]

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[143]Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries 1939–1943*, ed. Hugh Gibson (New York, 1946), 414.

[144]Quoted in G.N. Sevost'ianov, *Diplomaticheskaia istoriia voiny na Tikhom okeane. Ot Pirl-Kharbora do Kaira* (Moscow, 1969), 21.

[145]V.P. Safronov, *Voina na Tikhom okeane* (Moscow, 2007), 271–73.

[146]Academia Historica, Taipei, Taiwan, Doc. no. 002-020300-00016-011-004x.

[147]See Kuromiya, " 'Sovetskomu Soiuzu pridetsia voevat' s Iaponiei'," 30. In his memoir, Aleksandr S. Paniushkin (1905–74), a secret police official who served as the Soviet ambassador to China between 1939 and 1944, discussed this letter but not Stalin's statement about Japan. See his *Zapiski posla: Kitai 1939–1944 gg.*, 162–63. Paniushkin's discussion is reproduced in *Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia v XX veke. T. IV: Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia. 1937–1945 gg. Kn. 1: 1937–1944*

A few days later, Anthony Eden (1897–1977), Churchill's envoy, asked Stalin for his views on the situation in the Far East. Stalin told him that he was not ready for war with Japan. Then, he reflected, echoing Roosevelt's sentiments just before Pearl Harbor,

> I think it would be far better for the Soviet Union if Japan were left to attack us. This would create a better political and psychological atmosphere amongst the Soviet people. War would be unpopular with our people if the Soviet Government were to take the first step. If, on the other hand, we were attacked, the feelings of the Soviet people would be very strong. We have seen this in the present war in the West. Hitler attacked us, and because we were attacked, the Soviet people have shown a wonderful unity and great heroism and readiness to sacrifice themselves. We would prefer that Japan should attack us, and I think it very probable that she will do so—not just yet, but later. If the Germans are hard pressed it is likely that they will urge the Japanese to attack us, in which case the attack may be expected about the middle of next year.[148]

Unless Stalin meant to provoke the same kind of "attack" by Japan as he did in Lake Khasan and Nomonhan, it is difficult to believe that Stalin was honest in saying that Japan would attack the Soviet Union at some point. Stalin knew the respective strengths of Japan, on the one hand, and the United States and Britain, on the other. He was fully aware that Japan was incapable of fighting on so many fronts. Indeed, Stalin told Eden with much aplomb that initial successes notwithstanding, Japan would lose steam in a few months. Somewhat skeptical, Eden asked Stalin whether he indeed thought so. Stalin responded by saying that he did and that Japan would not last long, adding that if Japan violated the Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality, "the end of Japan would come sooner."[149]

Stalin's frustrations with Japan

Stalin was confident that Japan would violate the Pact of Neutrality. Japan did not, or at least not in any egregious way. Japan committed minor violations, and, as Boris N. Slavinskii has argued, so did the Soviet Union.[150] Certainly, Moscow lodged no complaint about any violation of the pact.[151] Stalin's wishful thinking

gg. (Moscow, 2000), 673. The CCP's massive publication of documents on the Soviet Communist Party, the CCP, and the Comintern (which is mostly a translation from Russian) also omits this important letter written by the Soviet Communist Party leader. See *Gongchan guoji, Liangong (bu) yu Zhongguo geming dang'an ziliao congshu*, vol. 19 (Beijing, 2012).

[148] Quoted in *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden: The Reckoning* (Boston, 1965), 349.

[149] *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki*, 24:523–24. Eden does not mention this discussion in his memoir.

[150] Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete*, 303.

[151] C. Hosoya, N. Andō, Y. Ōnuma, and R. Minear, eds., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial: An International Symposium* (Tokyo, 1986), 61.

was a contradiction: If Japan were exhausted, it would simply not be able to take on another enemy. Eden was correct to tell Stalin that if the Japanese attacked the Soviet Union, it would betoken that they were "deranged."[152] Neither side abrogated the pact on the grounds of violation. Thus, Stalin was in a bind: He could not find a reason to justify war against Japan. Nevertheless, by 1942, Stalin had teed up for an eventual military action against it. In 1942–43, he had a 400 km railway connection secretly built between Baian Tümen (now Choibalsan) in the MPR to the Manzhouguo border, the sole purpose of which was military transport. Indeed, in 1945, Stalin used it to stage war against Japan.[153] In addition, in May 1943, he ordered the construction of a 475-km-long railway from Komsomolsk-na-Amure to Sovetskaia gavan', on the opposite side of Southern Sakhalin across the Strait of Tartary. This was a backup line in case the Trans-Siberian Railway was cut off. The actual decision to begin hostilities was made on 16 August 1944.[154] In late September and early October 1944, Stalin ordered preparations for war in the Far East.[155] Then, on the eve of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin gave a signal, proclaiming that Japan, like Nazi Germany, was an aggressive nation.[156]

Perspicacious Japanese observers, including Kazami Akira and Kamei Kanichirō, understood that Stalin was signaling war, although these two may have had their own special channels of communication with the Soviet Union. Others, as will be discussed shortly, still entertained the illusion that on the basis of the Pact of Neutrality, Moscow would mediate peace between Japan and the Allied powers. Moscow disingenuously reassured the Japanese alarmed by Stalin's speech that it referred to Japan's past wars and not to the present one.[157] As is well known, Stalin pledged first at the Tehran Conference in November-December 1943 and then at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 to join the war against Japan after Germany's surrender.

At the Yalta Conference, in extracting territorial and other gains in the Far East, Stalin implicitly used the neutrality pact with Japan as a bargaining chip. Stalin said at the Yalta Conference that "it would be difficult for the Soviet peoples to understand why Russia was going to war with Japan. They clearly understood the war against Germany, which had threatened the very existence of the Soviet Union, but they would not understand why Russia should attack

[152] Quoted in O.A. Rzheshevskii, *Stalin i Cherchill'. Vstrechi. Besedy. Diskussii. Dokumenty, kommentarii 1941–1945* (Moscow, 2006), 63.

[153] See Stalin's writ of 5 June 1942: RGASPI, f. 644, op. 1, d. 39, l. 44. On Mongolians' testimonies to its actual use in 1945, see Nagai Yasuji, "Mongoru hōmonki: Sutārin no taiNichi kōryakusakusen no konseki o motomete," *Sever*, no. 32 (March 2005): 6, 10–12.

[154] Kirichenko, "Nekotorye stranitsy man'chzhurskoj kampanii," 88–89; Cherevko and Kirichenko, *Sovetsko-iaponsaia voina*, 181.

[155] See S.M. Shtemenko, *General'nyi shtab v gody voiny. V dni ogorchenii i pobed. Kn. 1* (Moscow, 2014), 427.

[156] "Doklad Predsedatelia G.K.O. tovarishcha I.V. Stalina," *Pravda*, 7 November 1944, 2.

[157] Molotov's statement to Japan's ambassador, quoted in Ōki Misao, *Ōki nikki: shūsenji no teikoku gikai* (Tokyo, 1969), 125–26.

the Japanese."[158] According to Sergo Beriia, Lavrentii Beriia' son who attended the Yalta Conference,

> Stalin had dwelt on the fact that he would be obliged, not without reticence, to *violate* [emphasis added] the Soviet-Japanese Pact of April 1941, whereas Japan has scrupulously respected it. Roosevelt had even felt compelled to calm Stalin's scruples by recalling the treacherous attack on Pearl Harbor. Stalin, however, observed that that attack had not been so unexpected as had been made out, and Roosevelt did not pursue the matter.[159]

In the end, in exchange for his pledge to enter into war against Japan, Stalin had Churchill and Roosevelt accept a protocol on the Far East that was "written verbatim by the Russians."[160] It included the clause: "The former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack by Japan in 1904 shall be restored."[161] This characterization of the Russo-Japanese War should have given pause to London and Washington, because in 1904, both stood on the side of Japan (which was in alliance with Britain at the time). The clause was, of course, dictated by Stalin, who feigned scruples to extract maximum concessions from Britain and the United States.

To clear the ground for war against Japan, on 5 April 1945, Molotov notified the Japanese government that, in view of new international relations, the Soviet government would renounce the Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality. Molotov implied that the pact would end with the Soviet declaration of annulment. Japan's ambassador to the Soviet Union, Satō Naotake, to whom Molotov read the declaration, pointed out to Molotov that according to the stipulation of the pact, it was to be annulled one year after one party notified the other of its intention for annulment. This placed Molotov in a difficult and awkward position. Molotov tried to be evasive but was forced to admit that Satō was right, that the pact had not expired, and that Moscow would follow the law of the pact. Subsequent Soviet explanations of the renunciation explicitly acknowledged that the pact remained in effect until April 1946.[162]

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[158] W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941–1946* (New York, 1975), 398.

[159] Sergo Beriia, *Beria, My Father: Inside Stalin's Kremlin*, ed. Françoise Thom and trans. Brian Pearce (London, 2001), 105. Beriia admitted that, in light of the pact, the Soviet pledge to enter into war against Japan was "ethically not so simple." See Beriia, *Moi otets—Lavrentii Beriia* (Moscow, 1994), 216.

[160] M. Stanton Evans and Herbert Romerstein, *Stalin's Secret Agents: The Subversion of Roosevelt's Government* (New York, 2012), 207.

[161] United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers. Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945* (Washington, DC, 1945), 984.

[162] Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete*, 266–67, 304–5; Kirichenko, "Nekotorye stranitsy man'chzhurskoj kampanii," 89.

Stalin's war against Japan, 1945

Stalin had long bided his time and finally drew his sword against Japan on 8 August 1945. He deliberately prevented the war declaration from being delivered to Tokyo in time.[163] In it, the Soviet government was reticent about the Pact of Neutrality. On the following day, the government official newspaper, *Izvestiia*, published the text of the declaration, with an accompanying editorial. The daily argued that Japan did not take seriously the Soviet declaration of the annulment of the Pact of Neutrality, although it failed to mention the Soviet government's ealier admission that the pact was still in force. Japan aided Germany against the Soviet Union, claimed the editorial, forcing the Soviet government to renounce the pact, which had "lost all meaning."[164] The justification made little sense: Japan could be said to have helped Germany, but only to the extent that the Soviet Union assisted China, Britain, and the United States in the war against Japan. More than anything, then, the editorial was meant to lend the pretense of legitimacy to the Soviet argument. Neither side dared to abrogate the pact until Moscow decided to do so on the verge of routing Germany. As Boris Slavinskii, Aleksei Kirichenko, and other Russian (and many Japanese) historians have argued, Moscow violated the pact just as Germany had the Pact of Nonaggression four years earlier.[165] Japan did *not* declare war in return.

After two U.S. atomic bombings, Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945. It came too early for Stalin, who was well apprised of the fact that the United States had already taken the Philippines and Okinawa. He ignored the surrender and kept on fighting, pushing Japan back through Manchuria until the beginning of September. Uncharacteristically, Stalin was blinded by his "Red imperialist" cupidity. His greed created a myriad of problems, including the question of the sovereignty over the so-called Northern Territories of Japan, a question that still bedevils Russian-Japanese relations today. It is little wonder, then, that Lavrentii Beriia, Stalin's secret police chief in his last years, entertained a fundamental change to Soviet policy, one that would improve the international standing of the Soviet Union. It spanned a wide gamut of issues, ranging from the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) to the return of the Southern Kuril Islands to Japan.[166] Soon after Stalin's death in 1953, however, his successors arrested and executed Beriia as a foreign spy.

[163] See Safronov, *Voina na Tikhom okeane*, 374–75; B.N. Slavinskii, *SSSR i Iaponiia na puti k voine: diplomaticheskaia istoriia, 1937–1945* (Moscow, 1999), 470.

[164] "Zaiavlenie Sovetskogo Pravitel'stva Pravitel'stvu Iaponii"; "Voina s Iaponiei," *Izvestiia*, 9 August 1945, 1.

[165] Slavinskii, *Pakt o neitralitete*, 300; Kirichenko, "Nekotorye stranitsy man'chzhurskoj kampanii," 89–90. For a convoluted and unconvincing argument by a Russian scholar that Moscow did not violate the pact, see Andrey I. Kravtsevich, "Soviet-Japanese Relations during World War II: The Origins of Territorial Dispute," *A History of Russo-Japanese Relations Over Two Centuries of Cooperation and Competition*, ed. by D.V. Strel'tsov and Nobuo Shimotomai (Leiden, 2019), 264–68.

[166] Françoise Thom, *Beria. Le Janus du Kremlin* (Paris, 2013), 735.

Concerned though Washington was about Moscow's intrusion into what Washington considered its own political territory in Asia, no issue was taken with Moscow's move. On the contrary, the United States invited Moscow to take part in the planned Tokyo War Crimes Trial, even though it was the Soviet Union and not Japan that initiated the war by violating the neutrality pact. Whatever military conflicts had occurred before World War II between Japan and the Soviet Union had been diplomatically settled. It was Moscow that had caused major military clashes, in any case. Therefore, Moscow knew that it had no prima facie reason to take part in condemning Japan. Whereas Moscow called the shots in bringing the Nazis to justice at Nuremberg, it took no initiative in Japan's case. Moscow feared that the trial would underscore its violation of the Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality and its many camouflaged military operations against Japan. Moscow had to ensure that no secrets would be divulged and no inconvenient facts discussed. For this reason, George F. Kennan (1994–2005), a U.S. diplomat working in Moscow, did not receive a straightforward answer from the Soviet Union to the invitation to join the trial. Kennan wrote back to Washington on 13 January 1946: "He [Solomon A. Lozovskii, 1878–1952, the Soviet deputy commissar of foreign afffairs] referred to our invitation to participate in trial of Japanese war criminals and said that Sov[iet] Govt [Government] was not adequately informed about this trial. They wished to have copy of indictment and also a list of leading criminals." Kennan explained the Soviet point of view:

> May I point out that Russian interest in details of indictment and of list of criminals is more than formal. Russians will not have failed to note press stories such as one which recently appeared in certain American papers concerning document allegedly published by Konoye's [Konoe Fumimaro's] son on Jap-Russian agreement for division of Asia; and they will no doubt wish to make certain that no such document, or indeed any evidence mentioning Matsuoka's 1941 Moscow talks and resultant Neutrality Pact or other Jap-Russian exchanges, is adduced in trial by any party in connection with Jap plans for aggression.[167]

Regarding the Soviet-Japanese "division of Asia," in April 1941, Matsuoka and Stalin may have agreed orally on some arrangement, but, like the Stalin-Kuhara "agreement" of 1927, it was not put on paper. (It is also possible, of course, that Matsuoka misled the Konoe cabinet upon returning from Moscow.) As Kennan states, U.S. newspapers reported on the Soviet-Japanese division of Asia. The *New York Times*, for instance, wrote on 19 December 1945:

> Russia in late 1940 agreed "in principle" to join members of the Tri-Partite Alliance in a four-power entente which assigned the Eastern

[167] United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946. Volume VIII. The Far East* (Washington, DC, 1946), 388–89.

> world between them, Prince Fumimaro Konoye posthumously revealed in a special document defending the Axis.
>
> Iran and India were to be Russia's "future sphere of influence" under a secret agreement accompanying the proposed entente. Japan was to receive the South Seas area; Germany would have taken Central Africa, and Italy Northern Africa, said a document released today by Prince Konoye's son, Michitaka, who stated that it was prepared by his father preceding his Sunday suicide.
>
> Prince Konoye said, however, the plan failed to progress and that three months after the agreement in principle was reached, German officials openly talked about the inevitability of a Nazi-Soviet war.
>
> Japan once officially requested Berlin to avoid war with Russia, but the overture was brushed aside with the contention "it will be possible to terminate operations in two or three months."[168]

Some details of Konoe's account may be wrong, but it is absolutely true that as late as April 1941, Stalin agreed "in principle" to the division of the world among the four countries.

Washington had few scruples about ignoring inconvenient facts. The Yalta Conference agreements, for example, which included the Soviet Union's pledge to participate in the war against Japan in return for territorial gains from Japan, violated the Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality. This awkward fact did not trouble Washington or London. To avoid accusations of complicity, in June 1945, they adopted the United Nations Charter that permitted its signatories to overrule existing international agreements "for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security." Japan was not a signatory of the charter. Although the Soviet Union was, it did not ratify the charter before it entered into the war against Japan.[169] Nor did Moscow cite the charter as a justification for its entry into the war. It cannot be said that Moscow broke the pact for "the purpose of maintaining international peace."

After some equivocation, Stalin accepted the American invitation to the Tokyo trial (International Military Tribunal for the Far East, or IMTFE). The Soviet Union took part as a full member, with two prosecutors and a judge but with no defense counsel; its full team included some seventy people.[170] The main objective of the Soviet participation, as articulated by Stalin, was "to expose the systematic Japanese aggression against our country" from the Russo-Japanese War to World War II.[171] However, Moscow could not get everything it wanted

[168]"Konoye Letter Says Russia Joined Plans." *New York Times*, 19 December 1945, 3.

[169]See Kravtsevich, "Soviet-Japanese Relations during World War II," 267–68.

[170]Valentyna Polunina, "The Soviets at Tokyo: International Justice at the Dawn of the Cold War," in *Transcultural Justice at the Tokyo Tribunal: The Allied Struggle for Justice, 1946–1948*, ed. Kirsten von Lingen (Leiden, 2018), 128.

[171]Aleksei Kirichenko, "Behind the Scenes at the Tokyo Tribunal, 3 May 1946–12 November 1948." *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 22, no. 2 (2009): 256.

(for example, the prosecution of the emperor and the individuals involved in Japan's bacteriological warfare research).

The Tokyo War Crimes Trial (IMTFE)

It has to be acknowledged that the IMTFE went out of its way not to offend the Soviet Union. A quarrel erupted at the trial on 22 April 1947 when the U.S. defense lawyer Aristides G. Lazarus (1913–1994), a Marine Corps Reserve lawyer, attempted to use the spread of Communism to China in the 1920s and 1930s as the reason for Japan's military action ("It will be shown that Japan had reason to fear, and in fact did fear, the spread of Communism in China, and then in Japan itself [the spread of Communism] meant Japan's destruction").[172] The president of the IMTFE, William Flood Webb (1887–1972), an Australian judge appointed by the supreme commander for the Allied powers (SCAP), U.S. General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964), took offense. In response, Lazarus quoted the menace of Communism raised by U.S. President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972) in a recent speech to the U.S. Congress: "President Truman we feel has said exactly what those people [Japanese defendants] have been saying all along, and we want to introduce President Truman's address as justification, even at this late date, for what they themselves foresaw beginning in 1937 when the China Incident broke out." Webb snarled: "As American counsel, do not take advantage of the great tolerance displayed by this Allied Court to indulge in what might be termed *enemy propaganda* [emphasis added]."[173] (The Dutch Justice at the IMTFE, B.V.A. Röling, later remarked on Webb: "Our President was a dictator.")[174] After trading biting barbs with Lazarus, Webb adjourned the court for fifteen minutes to manage the situation behind the scenes.

When the court resumed, Lazarus spoke: "Mr. President, the defense is at a loss as to how to interpret the President's closing remark just before the recess, so we must state that we never expected that evidence of the remark by the President of the United States to the Congress of the United States would be called enemy propaganda." Taken aback, Webb retorted: "Nor was it so called. That is utter nonsense you are putting to us now." Webb went on to say that the court has allowed him, Lazarus, to attack the "great United States of America" and Britain, "but you appear to take a sheer delight in insulting Allied countries. That is how it appears to me at all events, and I am not going to take back a thing I have said about this attitude of yours." Webb's point was that Lazarus would not be allowed to insult the Soviet Union: "And," said Webb, "I will not

[172] IMTFE transcripts, 20,479.

[173] Ibid., 20,479–480.

[174] B.V.A. Röling and Antonio Cassese, *The Tokyo Trial and Beyond: Reflections of a Peacemonger* (Cambridge, 1993), 39. According to Röling, compared with the U.S. chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, Robert H. Jackson (1892–1954), the chief prosecutor at the IMTFE, Joseph B. Keenan (1888–1954), was a "mediocre man" who was "clearly unqualified to lead the prosecution." See Hosoya, Andō, Ōnuma, Minear, *Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, 16.

stand for *gratuitous insults* [emphasis added] to my country or any other country represented in this Court."[175] Lazarus shot back, saying that he had attacked neither the United States nor Britain but that he was merely introducing relevant evidence:

> As for taking delight, sir, in abusing Russia, as you seem to think, I want to assure you that I have the most cordial relations, outside of this court, with General Vasiliev [Aleksandr N. Vasil'ev, 1902–1985, jurist] and General Smirnov [Lev N. Smirnov, 1911–1986, jurist]. There is no such thing in my mind. I never forget that we fought on the same side and that it may be due to the fact that some Russian officers and soldiers fought as hard as they did that I, today, am alive to answer in this courtroom; I never forget that.
>
> You must remember, please, sir, that much of this might be distasteful to us personally; but, as attorneys appointed by the United States at the request of this Tribunal to help defend these people, we have a high duty: We must present all the evidence available. Please understand that, sir.[176]

In the end, Webb ruled that "no evidence of the existence or spread of communism or of any other ideology in China is relevant in the general phases."[177] Lazarus's argument for admissal of the threat of Communism in defense of his clients was not entirely correct. Such evidence would not necessarily have favored the Japanese defendants. After all, the Japanese politicians and military leaders, even liberals such as Shidehara, had deliberately discounted the threat of Communism by decoupling it from the Soviet Union. Lazarus apparently did not know that the Japanese had dealt sub rosa with the Soviet Union against Britain and the United States. Divulgence of such dealings would have been terribly inconvenient to Moscow as well. Stalin must have been very pleased with both Webb's handling of the trial and the Japanese defendants' reticence.

Lazarus later argued that the Battle of Lake Khasan was started by the Soviets. He was correct in stating that "tanks, long-range artillery and airplanes were used by the Soviet troops, not by the Japanese, Soviet airplanes bombing non-military objectives far within the border of Korea." The 1938 incident was solved diplomatically, and, he declared, "it cannot now be alleged as aggression." Lazarus also pointed out, again correctly, that in declaring war against Japan in violation of the Pact of Neutrality, Moscow "did not charge of violation [of the Pact] by Japan." He even suggested that the presence of the Soviet representatives in the court was preposterous:

> [The Soviet Union,] without having or professing to have any reason therefor[e] except the request of America and Britain, suddenly

[175] IMTFE transcripts, 20,481–482.

[176] Ibid., 20,482–483.

[177] Kirsten Sellars, *"Crimes against Peace" and International Law* (New York, 2013), 217–18.

> attacked Japan in August 1945 at a time when there was no pending issue of magnitude between the two countries, but when there was pending Japan's request to the USSR to mediate on its behalf for a termination of the Pacific war. Despite repeated German demands after June 1941, Japan had consistently refused to enter the war against the USSR.[178]

Later in the trial, another U.S. defense counsel, George A. Furness (1896–1989), was devastatingly direct: He stated that " 'it cannot even be contended that Japan ever, at any time, in any place, initiated or waged a war against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' and that the only war that had occurred between the two nations was the one initiated by the Soviet Union 'in disregard of a Neutrality Pact then in force and of innumerable and unequivocal subsequent assurances that it would be respected.' "[179] The court deemed these arguments irrelevant and immaterial and willingly accepted the Soviet counterarguments.

In comparison with the Nazi defendants at the Nuremberg Trial, the Japanese counterparts at IMTFE were at a clear disadvantage. The judges and prosecutors at the IMTFE were more accommodating to Soviet demands than were their counterparts at the Nuremberg Trial. Ribbentrop, who signed the infamous secret protocols with Molotov in 1939, and his defense lawyers, for example, were allowed to speak in detail about the protocol, arguing that it showed that Moscow was as responsible as Berlin for the "crime against peace." In Tokyo, however, both Matsuoka (who signed the neutrality pact) and Konoe (the prime minister at the time of the signing of the pact) were dead (Konoe killed himself before the trial [see p. 431 later in this chapter]).

The IMTFE, like Joseph Davies earlier in the Moscow show trials, uncritically accepted spurious Soviet jurisprudence. It ignored the principle of estoppel and allowed Moscow to resurrect cases of, as it were, res judicata (such as the Russo-Japanese War and the Battles of Lake Khasan and Nomonhan). Moscow culled as witnesses individuals from among the Japanese interned in the Soviet Union after World War II. Carefully coached, they gave, willingly or unwillingly, incriminatory testimonies against the defendants. After their testimonies, they were sent back to the Soviet Union for further internment. Testimonies taken under such untoward circumstances should not have been accepted, but they were. Among these witnesses was Sejima Ryūzō (瀬島龍三, 1911-2007), whose life, as one Russian historian described in 2007, was "full of riddles that he carried with him to his grave." This seems to be a euphemism for his suspected connections to Soviet intelligence.[180] As a member of the Army General Staff Operations

[178] IMTFE transcripts, 22,415, 22,418–419, 22,423.

[179] Quoted in Sellars, *"Crimes against Peace" and International Law*, 230.

[180] Kirichenko, "Behind the Scenes at the Tokyo Tribunal," 272. Sejima was involved in many scandals throughout his life and somehow weathered all of them. See Hosaka Masayasu, *Sejima Ryūzō. Sanbō no Shōwashi* (Tokyo, 1991); Kyōdō tsūshin sha shakaibu, *Chinmoku no fairu* (Tokyo, 1996).

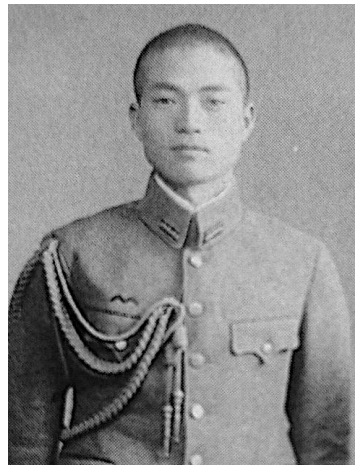

Figure 5.2. Sejima Ryūzō, a Japanese military official and suspected Soviet operative

Bureau from 1939 to 1945, Sejima was familiar with Japan's war planning, which was not directed against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, Sejima insisted at the trial that Japan had long intended to attack the Soviet Union, shrewdly parrying the questioning of defense lawyers. The Soviet side was pleased and reported to Moscow that the witnesses "gave not the slightest hint of anything resembling coercion, although the defense, using all possible direct and indirect questions, [tried] to force them to give the answers that the defense wanted."[181]

One witness failed to return to the Soviet Union, however. Kusaba Tatsumi (草場辰巳, 1888–1946) committed suicide, or was killed, before he testified. According to some accounts, Americans conducted an autopsy and found his head crushed, but noted the cause of death as "unknown."[182] The U.S. defense lawyer Ben B. Blakeney (1908–63) stated that, "to oblige his captors, [Kusaba] bestowed what was intended to be the kiss of death upon Generals MINAMI, DOIHARA, ITAGAKI, TOJO [Tōjō], OSHIMA [Ōshima], ARAKI and UMEZU. KUSABA himself is author of the ultimate commentary upon his testimony: The affidavit written, signed and sealed, the witness brought to Tokyo to testify, he realized that he must face the inquisition of cross-examination, and he could not face it—he took cyanide."[183] The Russian archive in Moscow that holds his file and the file on another witness, Matsumura Tomokatsu (松村知勝, 1899–1979), a Russian hand at the Army General Staff,[184] still refuses to de-classify them. The reason, according to the archivists, is that the files contain information that "cannot be revealed to anyone ever."[185]

[181] Kirichenko, "Behind the Scenes at the Tokyo Tribunal," 269.

[182] "Kudakareteita atama," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 30 December 1952 (morning edition), 7.

[183] IMTFE transcripts, 23,802–803.

[184] Matsumura worked in Poland as a Soviet intelligence officer and then as an assistant military attaché from 1993 to 1936.

[185] Evgenii Zhirnov, "Samurai ochen' ne liubili russkii sneg," accessed 21 October 2018, https:

The Soviet prosecutors provided many other "incriminating" (in fact false) affidavits by captives such as Grigorii Semenov, and Tominaga Kyōji, who were "imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain." As Blakeney stated, "in our view, it is a vain hope and a futile endeavor to attempt the eliciting of favorable testimony, adverse to his captors, from a man with a gun in his back." Vasil'ev protested Blakeney's "insolent attacks on the Soviet Union." The court requested that the affiants be summoned to the court. The Soviets promised, but never kept their word. When it became known that Semenov had already been executed, it caused a stir at the court, which rightly rejected his (and most other) affidavits given by Soviet captives whom Moscow failed to bring to Tokyo. Unfortunately, some of those arguments, introduced as exhibits, crept into both the final judgment and works by professional historians. In court, Webb attacked Blakeney for suggesting that "duress was employed to secure the evidence." Webb reminded him that "The Tribunal issued and repeats its warning against such *unwarranted* [emphasis added] assertions by counsel."[186]

Kusaba, already dead, could not give false testimony against his former colleagues, now in the dock for war crime. The "Last Emperor," Puyi, who like Kusaba, was sent to Tokyo from Soviet captivity to testify at the IMTFE, gave numerous false testimonies. By perjury, he survived and subsequently was repatriated to Communist China, where he died in 1967. Looking back at his perjury, he confessed that "I have considerable regrets about my testimony."[187] Tanaka Ryūkichi, whom Russian historians have acknowledged as a Soviet agent, had no problem with perjury. The prosecutors' star witness, Tanaka unperturbedly incriminated many of his former colleagues. In return, he was provided for very well, with his mistress living with him in his place of "detention." Tanaka reciprocated by providing alcohol and women to the U.S. chief prosecutor, Joseph B. Keenan (1888–1954) (with whom Tanaka spoke French).[188] Courtney Browne, a British soldier in Tokyo, often witnessed "unfortunate occasions when Keenan's naturally florid complexion was flushed more than usual and when he might charitably have been described as being unfit to be in court."[189] Apparently, Keenan promised Tanaka asylum in the United States after the trial, but that promise was not kept. After the trial, Tanaka was haunted by the ghosts of those whom he helped send to the gallows.[190] Mental malaise may have run in his family: Both his father and grandfather committed suicide.[191] He himself had

//www.kommersant.ru/doc/170355.

[186] IMTFE transcripts, 23,791, 24,518.

[187] Puyi, *The Last Manchu: The Autobiography of Henry Pu Yi, Last Emperor of China*, ed. Paul Kramer (New York, 1987), 216.

[188] Kojima Noboru, *Tōkyō saiban (jō)* (Tokyo, 1971), 203, 245; David Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* (New York, 1971), 176.

[189] Courtney Browne, *Tojo: The Last Banzai* (London, 1967), 207.

[190] Hata Ikuhiko, "Jisshō shigaku e no michi (1): moto shōshō sainamu dōryō no bōrei," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 27 March 2017 (morning edition), 8.

[191] Awaya Kentarō, Adachi Hiroaki, and Kobayashi Motohiro, eds., *Tōkyō saiban shiryō: Tanaka*

mental breakdowns following the Suiyuan Incident in 1936 and again in 1942. Tanaka died in 1972.

In other respects, too, the IMTFE leaned over backward to accommodate the Soviet Union. When the defense mentioned the name of Richard Sorge in court, for example, the Soviets prosecutors made every effort to strike it from the discussion. When the U.S. defense counsel Owen Cunningham (1900–87) asked a German witness whether he knew that Sorge was a "Russian spy," Vasil'ev objected to the question, and Webb disallowed it. Then, Webb said: "This Zorge [Sorge] issue is purely a collateral side issue, introduced probably for the purpose of wasting our time." Cunningham still sought to pursue the question. The court adjourned for a few minutes, apparently for secret consultation with the Soviet team. When the court resumed, Webb made an announcement: "We have decided to disallow any cross-examination in relation to these matters, collateral matters."[192]

Although the Soviet Union should have had no place at the tribunal, the United States invited its wartime ally. Over time, the tribunal continued, and the Cold War became a fact of life; Truman may have regretted his invitation. Yet, the tribunal carried on in the spirit of the Grand Alliance. It took Soviet disinformation as fact and dismissed any challenge out of hand.

The Soviet-American coalition was nothing new. It had been forged already in 1933 against Japan, not against Nazi Germany. Truman inherited it from FDR. Whatever the tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States following the Bolshevik Revolution, the two countries were more or less united against Japan throughout the period. For this reason, FDR was quick to overlook Stalin's rule by iron fist all along. Moreover, as discussed earlier, FDR allowed himself, unwittingly, to be surrounded by Soviet agents. FDR's connivance in Stalin's crimes even intensified during World War II. In 1944, it became known through British and American investigations that the more than twenty thousand Polish officers who disappeared after the Soviet occupation had been killed by Moscow (Katyn Massacre). Roosevelt rejected the conclusion of the investigations and prohibited its publication.[193] During World War II, Washington (under FDR) and Moscow began sharing intelligence on Japan.[194]

The U.S. diplomat Charles E. Bohlen (1904–74), a Soviet hand, deplored Washington's undignified ingratiation of the Soviet dictator during World War II: "Roosevelt and his advisers in the White House, including, I am sorry to say, Hopkins [Harry Hopkins, 1890–1946, FDR's closest adviser], were head-down

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Ryūkichi jinmon chōsho, trans. Okada Ryōnosuke (Tokyo, 1994), 311–12.

[192] IMTFE transcripts, 38,485–487.

[193] Benjamin B. Fischer, "The Katyn Controversy: Stalin's Killing Field," *Studies in Intelligence*, Winter 1999–2000, accessed 15 September 2018, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter99-00/art6.html.

[194] John R. Deane, *The Strange Alliance: The Study of Our Efforts at Wartime Co-operation with Russia* (New York, 1947), 227, 238–39; Bradley F. Smith, *The Shadow Warriors: O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.* (New York, 1983), 348.

in their desire to make the Soviets happy."[195] (Hopkins, according to the Soviet reckoning, was the "most important of all Soviet wartime agents in the United States.")[196] In 1943, when FDR traveled to Tehran for a conference with Stalin and Churchill, he had a special request for the Soviets: He wanted "to stay in the same place with Marshall Stalin."[197]

Truman, too, was charmed by the Soviet dictator when he met him in Potsdam, Germany, in July 1945. Truman wrote to his wife toward the close of the Potsdam meeting: "I like Stalin. He is straightforward. Knows what he wants and will compromise when he can't get it. His foreign minister [Molotov] isn't so forthright."[198] The IMTFE was tainted forever by Moscow's unwarranted participation. Even though the weight of the verdict was not about Japan's conflict with the Soviet Union but about the atrocities Japan had perpetrated in Asia, Moscow's participation created in Japan a sense of the unfairness of the IMTFE. It gave Japan a prima facie pretext for not confronting squarely its numerous war crimes in China, the Philippines, Singapore, and elsewhere.

When the judgments were announced at the IMTFE in November 1948, they had adopted in toto the Soviet version of events involving Japan and the Soviet Union. The 1928 murder of Zhang Zuolin was committed by "certain members of the Kwantung Army" without naming Kōmoto Daisaku.[199] The judgment's chapter four, "Japanese Aggression against the U.S.S.R.," is sixty-seven pages long, albeit it is dwarfed by chapter five, "Japanese Aggression against China," which is two hundred sixty pages. Japan did intervene in Russia during Russia's Civil War, but the court was silent on British and American interventions. Japan did prepare plans for war against the Soviet Union, just as both the Soviet Union and the United States likewise did against Japan. Yet, the court failed to acknowledge that it was not Japan but the Soviet Union that initiated war in 1945. The judgments declared that since 1928, the Japanese conspirators (the defendants) "had long been planning and preparing a war of aggression which they prepared to launch against the U.S.S.R. The intention was to seize that country's Eastern territories when a favourable opportunity occurred."[200] The 1931 Mukden Incident was a plan to transform Manchuria and Korea "into

[195]Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History 1929–1969* (New York, 1973), 124. Bohlen noted further: "It was characteristic of Stalin that in some things he wished to appear to be scrupulously honest while in others he would utilize deception, or '*la ruse*,' as de Gaulle was later to call it, as a diplomatic weapon" (219).

[196]Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York, 1999), 287.

[197]David Reynolds and Vladimir Pechatnov, eds., *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt* (New Haven, CT, 2018), 340.

[198]His letter, 29 July 1945 in *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910–1959* (New York, 1983), 522.

[199]IMTFE Judgments, 89. The judgments are more than one thousand two hundred pages long and divided into ten chapters and two annexes. They were digitized and available at: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9884328.

[200]Ibid., 1,140: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9884333.

a military base for attacking the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in a number of years." The Battles of Lake Khasan and the "Halkin-Gol River (Namanhan [*sic*])" were examples of Japan's "systematically organized armed clashes" with the Soviet Union and the Mongolian People's Republic.[201] (This section was written entirely by the Soviets, judging from the spelling of "Namanhan" for Nomonhan, a reflection of the north Russian phonetic practice of pronouncing unaccented o's like a's, i.e. *аканье*. Clearly, no IMTFE staff bothered to proofread this section of the verdict.) The Tripartite Pact had as its aim "joint aggressive action of these countries [Germany, Italy, and Japan] against democratic powers, among them the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."[202] Astonishingly, the Soviet Union, a country of one-party Communist dictatorship, was treated at the IMTFE as a "democratic" country. At any rate, the verdict marked a total victory for Stalin. It contrasted sharply with the Nuremberg Trial, which failed to reach a consensus on who was responsible for the Katyn Massacre and simply omitted the crime from its verdict.[203]

The IMTFE concluded, against all the evidence, that Japan "signed the Neutrality Pact to facilitate her plans for an attack upon the U.S.S.R."[204] The judgments denounced Japan's violations of the pact (sharing intelligence with Germany, for instance),[205] but they were silent about Soviet violations of the pact (Soviet-American cooperation against Japan in intelligence and other areas). For example, the following was evidence that was presented and read to the court: Court Exhibit No. 2706 by U.S. Army Major General John R. Deane.[206] Moscow alleged that Tokyo violated the pact by deliberately hindering the Soviet transfer of military forces from east to west by conducting the *Kantokuen* or Kwantung Army special maneuvers (see p. 406 in this chapter). Although many Russian historians still make much of it, this was a red herring. Having understood that Tokyo had no serious intention of attacking the Soviet Union, as discussed earlier, Stalin decided to move at least some Soviet troops from the Far East *before* Hitler's attack began on 22 June 1941 (see p. 403 in this chapter). Now, some Russian historians argue, correctly, that the *Kantokuen* was only intended

[201]Ibid., 792, 828–40: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9884330; Annex A, 76–77: https:dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9884335.

[202]Ibid. (Annex A), 78.

[203]Francine Hirsch, *Soviet Judgment at Nuremberg: A New History of the International Military Tribunal after World War II* (New York, 2020), chap. 12.

[204]IMTFE Judgements, 823: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9884330.

[205]Ibid., 824–825.

[206]The digitized version of this exhibit is available at: https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10279577. In addition, before it notified Japan of its intention to cancel the Pact of Neutrality, Moscow demanded and accepted material assistance from the United States for the purpose of war against Japan, most notably "Project Hula," "the largest and most ambitious transfer program of World War II" under Lend-Lease, whose purpose was "to equip and train Soviet amphibious forces for the climactic fight against Japan." It "satisfied President Roosevelt's enduring objective to link American and Soviet interests in the North Pacific in opposition to Japan." See Richard A. Russell, *Project Hula: Secret Soviet-American Cooperation in the War Against Japan* (Washington, DC, 1997), 1, 36.

to be fully realized if and when the Soviet Union was destroyed by the Germans and thus the pact lost its power.[207] Moreover, Matsuoka's suggestion that Tokyo break the neutrality pact with Moscow resulted in the Japanese government firing him and reassuring Moscow that it would abide by the pact. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1941, secret discussions were carried out concerning the pact between the Soviet ambassador to Japan, Konstantin A. Smetanin (1898–1969), and Japan's foreign minister, first, Toyoda, then, from October, Tōgō Shigenori (東郷茂徳, 1882–1950). Preparing in late 1941 to open hostilities against Washington and London, Tokyo repeatedly sought reassurances from Moscow that the Kremlin would observe the pact. The Kremlin "resolutely confirmed" its loyalty to the pact, thus allowing Japan to start the war against the United States and Britain.[208]

While fully accepting the self-serving Soviet accounts of history, the IMTFE had nothing to say about Soviet aggression against China, Mongolia, Poland, Finland, the Baltic states, and other countries. Now, remarkably, a Russian historian argues that if the IMTFE had known of the secret operations carried out by the Soviet Union in the 1930s, "some judges" might have had different views of the accusations against the Japanese defendants.[209]

Rubber-stamping the Soviet claims against Japan, the IMTFE's absurd judgments marked a resounding Soviet victory.[210] During the Nuremberg Trial, Moscow had the gall to lay the Katyn Massacre at Germany's door, presenting manufactured evidence, but it failed to convince the judges. Moscow repeated an equally brazen act in Tokyo regarding the Zhang murder, the Battles of Lake Khasan and Nomonhan, and other incidents involving Japan and the Soviet Union. The IMTFE imprudently accepted at face value the sophistry, disinformation, and deception Stalin had perfected through the show trials during his reign. It should be noted that after Stalin's death, the Soviet judge at IMTFE, Ivan M. Zarianov (1894–1975), who himself had taken part in Stalin's show trials, was accused of unlawful legal practice, stripped of his rank ("Major General of Justice"), and expelled from the Soviet Communist Party.[211] The Dutch judge at the IMTFE, Röling, contended that these settled events (Battles of Lake Khasan and Nomonhan) were outside the tribunal's jurisdiction. He and two other judges (French and Indian) were not even consulted by the majority of judges (American, British, Soviet, Chinese, Canadian, New Zealand, and Filipino judges), who "just decided among themselves to write the judgement," a "serious violation of the [tribunal's] Charter." The majority, as Röling later recalled, "apparently lacked the readiness or perhaps—due to the postwar climate—the will to disagree

[207] Cherevko and Kirichenko, *Sovetsko-iaponsaia voina*, 129.

[208] Sudoplatov, *Raznye dni tainoi voiny i diplomatii*, 373, 377–78; Safronov, *Voina na Tikhom okeane*, 262–63.

[209] Gorbunov, *Skhvatka s Chernym Drakonom*, 501.

[210] For a contrary view emphasizing a Soviet "failure of propaganda," see Polunina, "The Soviets at Tokyo," 145.

[211] Ibid., 130.

with the accusations set forth by the prosecution." By contrast, the Nuremberg judges "assumed an attitude of greater independence from the prosecutors as well as the states they represented."[212]

In 1977, the U.S. historian Alvin Coox examined the way the IMTFE treated the case of the Battle of Lake Khasan and cast doubt on its judiciousness: "Unless some effort was made to study the affair more thoroughly, posterity would be burdened by the flimsy verdict."[213] Now, almost fifty years later, it appears that the verdict was a travesty of justice.

It should be noted, however, that the Indian judge at IMTFE, Radhabinod Pal (1886–1967), submitted a dissenting opinion more than one thousand pages long. He dismissed the Soviet accusations against Japan as irrelevant, unconvincing, and unproven. He even questioned the sincerity of the Soviet prosecutors, stating that it was the Soviet Union that violated the Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality and attacked Japan: "Till the U.S.S.R. declared war on Japan on the 8th August 1945, the relations between the two countries, in the eyes of International Law, were completely friendly."[214] Pal's dissenting opinion was not read at the trial. Nor was it made available until 1953.

5.4 The Day of Reckoning

Stalin was euphoric when Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945, although he ignored the surrender for more than two weeks while he gained ground by force. It turned out that he had an axe to grind with Japan. On 2 September 1945, with a feather in his cap, he addressed the nation, listing the history of what he called Japan's aggression from the Russo-Japanese War to World War II, even including the Battles of Lake Khasan and Khalkhin Gol. He must have been thrilled that his camouflage had worked so beautifully. In a truly unwonted display of vindictiveness (against which Stalin always advised as being baneful to political life), he delivered a full-throated exaltation:

> The defeat of the Russian forces in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War left painful memories in the people's consciousness. It left a black stain on our country. Our people waited, believing that the day would come when Japan would be beaten and the stain removed. We, the people of the older generation, waited forty years for this day. And now this day has come.[215]

[212] Röling and Cassese, *Tokyo Trial and Beyond*, 62–63, 65; Hosoya, Andō, Ōnuma, Minear, *Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, 17–18.

[213] Alvin Coox, *The Anatomy of a Small War: The Soviet-Japanese Struggle for Changkufeng-Khasan, 1938* (Westport, CT, 1977), xxi.

[214] "Judgement of Justice Pal": https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/9884339, 1019; International Military Tribunal for the Far East, *Dissentient Judgment of Justice Pal* (Tokyo, 1999), 579.

[215] Iosif V. Stalin, *Sochineniia* (Stanford, CA, 1967), 2:214. Gorbunov, *Skhvatka s Chernym*

Stalin admitted, inadvertently, that the Soviet Union had long planned for war against Japan.

The Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch, Aleksii I (1877–1970), took vindictive pleasure no less openly. When Moscow started the war against Japan, the Patriarch could not repress his joy: It would eliminate the consequences of the Russo-Japanese War that had been "galling to our national pride."[216]

The IMTFE refused to question Stalin's version of the history of Japan's aggression against the Soviet Union. The defendants and their defense at the IMTFE fought hard against what they considered Soviet disinformation. Their battle was largely in vain, however, because the court protected the Soviet Union by accepting Moscow's disinformation.

The Japanese maintained silence on one cardinally important matter: Japan's political romance with the Soviet Union. As was discussed throughout this book, many Japanese politicians, military leaders, and right-wing ideologues sought in the Soviet Union a countervailing power against Britain and the United States. They did so generally behind the scenes, prudently distinguishing the Soviet government from the Comintern. Even those Japanese touted as thoroughly liberal such as Shidehara and Debuchi were no exceptions. The "Rightists" such as Tanaka Giichi, Kuhara Fusanosuke, Araki Sadao, Kōmoto Daisaku, and Tanaka Ryūkichi, were no different. Nor were the "Leftists" such as Kamei Kan-ichiro, Kazami Akira, and even Konoe Fumimaro or the Communists like Ozaki Hotsumi. There were many Japanese such as Suzuki Teiichi, Ishiwara Kanji, and Tsuji Masanobu who could not be easily classified as left or right. Moscow used them all in one way or another. This was a sort of open "secret" that neither Japan nor the Soviet Union was willing to discuss at the time. Japan and Russia today are still loath to enter such muddy waters.

With Japan's surrender, the Soviet forces controlled Manzhouguo. This vast land became a fortress of Communist forces, which became a critical staging ground for the Communist takeover of China in 1949.

Japan's delusions about Stalin

Few of the Japanese officials involved in the covert dealings understood Moscow's modus operandi. Nor did Communists such as Ozaki Hotsumi. Some Japanese like Kamei, Konoe, and Ishiwara, for instance, may have come to some understanding in the end. Yet, many more remained clueless or perhaps utterly opportunistic. Kuhara Fusanosuke is a good example. He lauded Stalin until Stalin was fighting what seemed to be a losing battle against Hitler. Then, at the time of the Battle of Stalingrad, he proposed a peace settlement between

Drakonom, 323 emphasizes the retaliatory nature of Moscow's action: "Moscow wanted very much to take revenge both for the defeat in the Russo-Japanese war and, particularly, for Japan's intervention in the Far East in 1918–1922."

[216]Quoted in V.S. Khristoforov, *Istoriia strany v dokumentakh arkhivov FSB Rossii* (Moscow, 2013), 574.

Germany and the Soviet Union. Soon, as the Soviets rolled back the Germans, he abandoned peace talks, promoting instead friendship between Japan and the Soviet Union. In 1944, the Japanese Army began entertaining the idea of using Moscow to mediate a ceasefire between Japan and the United States. Kuhara was chosen as an emissary to Moscow. Gratified, he contended that the Americans did not understand the "Orientals," whereas Stalin did. Kuhara's idea was again to work with Moscow to exclude Britain and the United States from Asia, especially the United States from China. He was convinced that he could cut a deal with Stalin again.[217] Kuhara appeared stuck in his thinking of 1927, but the Stalin of 1944 was no longer the Stalin of 1927. Moscow rejected Tokyo's proposal to send Kuhara to Moscow as an emissary.

Not all Japanese officials agreed with these stale policies. Ambassador Satō warned Tokyo repeatedly that Moscow was intransigent and that Soviet mediation was unlikely. Matsuoka was equally skeptical. In September 1944, he argued that Stalin would not even listen to Japan unless Japan was willing to give the Kuril Islands, Hokkaido, Manchuria, and half of Korea to the Soviet Union.[218] All the same, many in the army still hoped to strike a deal with Moscow. Moscow kept such hopes alive by using its agents or influencers holding high-ranking positions in the Japanese Army. Witnesses have raised suspicions that Sejima Ryūzō and Tanemura Sakō (種村佐孝, 1904–66) were such pawns in Moscow's game.[219] Both worked in the most prestigious and elitist Operations Bureau of the General Staff. Both traveled to Moscow as diplomatic couriers (Tanemura in February and March 1944 and Sejima in January and February 1945), an event unusual for high-ranking military officers. The fact that files on Sejima, unlike those on other Japanese officers and officials interned in the Soviet Union, are not held in the Soviet military archive is an eloquent testimony to the very special role he played for the Soviet Union.[220] It is now known that while interned in the

[217] Higashikuni Naruhiko, *Ichi kōzoku no sensō nikki* (Tokyo, 1957), 147. See also Morishima Gorō, *Kunō suru chūSo taishikan* (Tokyo, 1952), 82. Gotō Ryūnosuke (see p. 377 in this chapter) and others reasoned likewise (Higashikuni, 184).

[218] *Kido Kōichi kankei bunsho* (Tokyo, 1966), 617.

[219] Sejima was married to a niece of Okada Keisuke's, a former naval admiral and Japan's prime minister from 1934 to 1936. The Chinese historian Tuo Tuo contended that Okada had been recruited by the Soviet spy Richard Sorge. This cannot be confirmed, as discussed earlier (see Chapter 2, pp. 117–118, footnote 181). After World War II, however, Okada's family members appear to have said that the family had some form of connection with Sorge, whose work among Japan's military forces was never investigated (because they flatly refused any investigation). Tuo must have picked up these family stories from somewhere. It would have been surprising had Sorge not targeted Sejima for recruitment. Okada's brother-in-law was Sakomizu Hisatsune (迫水久常, 1902–77), a high-ranking government official who upheld the radical transformation of Japan reminiscent of Nazism and Communism. He, too, was almost certainly targeted for recruitment. A Japanese historian claims that in December 1941, Sejima purposefully delayed transmitting Japan's war declaration against the United States. See Iguchi Takeo, *Kaisen shinwa. Taibei tsūkoku wa naze okuretanoka* (Tokyo, 2008), 167–81, 204–21, 235–57.

[220] Zhirnov, "Samurai ochen' ne liubil russkii sneg." Certain files of his interrogation records that were made available at some point appear to be intended to show that Sejima was a Japanese

Soviet Union, Tanemura was, in fact, recruited to serve the Soviet intelligence. Upon returning to Japan in 1950, he was interrogated by the U.S. occupation forces, confessed to his recruitment by the Soviets, and appears to have been recruited subsequently by the U.S. intelligence.[221]

Delusions about Moscow were widespread. So was realism. Sejima and Tanemura aside, there was a recognition among the Japanese government and the military forces that Moscow would declare war against Japan after Germany's surrender. Some Japanese strategists may have welcomed this as something that would provide a counterbalance to the U.S. domination of Japan and Asia after the war. In November 1944, Shigemitsu Mamoru (重光葵, 1887–1957), Japan's foreign minister, argued that "Japan's pan-Asianism was ready to endorse the Soviet principle of liberating the oppressed peoples of East Asia and to join the Soviet endeavor against Anglo-American imperialism."[222]

The romance with Russia affected the emperor and his entourage as well. In February 1945, Konoe formally advised the emperor about the danger of Communism to Japan: The "so-called Right is actually Communism clothed in national polity [国体]". It is said that the emperor responded skeptically, noting that earlier, the chief of the Army General Staff, Umezu Yoshijirō (梅津美治郎, 1882–1949), had told him that "Russia is the most trustworthy [country] [ロシヤが最も信頼するに足る]."[223] Kido Kōichi (木戸幸一, 1889–1977), at the time Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and one of the most powerful political men in Japan, shared Umezu's view and flatly contradicted Konoe. Like Shidehara in 1927 (see Chapter 2, p. 96), Kido stated in March 1945 that Communism was not something to be feared. He seemed to share the feeling that Japan did not want to surrender to Britain and the United States, so it should link up with the Soviet Union. Tanemura Sakō had spoken to Kido upon his return from the

spy against the Soviet Union. See Vladimir A. Bobrenëv, *Shiberia yokuryū hishi: KGB no mashu ni torawarete* (Tsuruoka, 1992), 17–77. Sejima is reported as having said in a Soviet labor camp, 'Down with the Emperor System! Long Live the Japanese Communist Party!" (see Ivan Kovalenko [Iwan Kowarenko], "Soren taiNichi kōsaku saikō sekininsha ga shōgen suru—Sejima Ryūzō: Shiberia no shinjitsu," *Bungei shunjū* 70, no. 2 [February 1992]: 134.) To complicate the matter, in 1955, while still under Soviet detention, Sejima was accused by his fellow Japanese internees of being the ringleader of a protest strike in the Gulag in Khabarovsk (see, *Iaponskie voennoplennye v SSSR 1945–1956* [Moscow, 2013], 176). While other Japanese regarded as ring leaders were detained, Sejima was not. In his memoir, Sejima described the behind-the-scenes role he played in the strike in what appears to be a self-serving manner. (See his *Sejima Ryūzō kaisō roku* [Tokyo, 1995], 269–77.) Sejima's role may have been a case of camouflaged provocation. Sometimes, if not always, it was Soviet secret police operatives who led uprisings in order to identify and arrest their active participants and thereby derail the uprisings. See for example the well-documented and illuminating case of Cossack uprisings in 1930: A.V. Venkov, *"Delo Senina" ili operatsiia "Trest" na Verkhnem Donu* (Moscow, 2016).

[221] Kobayashi Akina, *Shiberia yokuryū. BeiSo kankei no naka deno hen-yō* (Tokyo, 2018), 156–57.

[222] Yukiko Koshiro, "Eurasian Eclipse: Japan's End Game in World War II," *American Historical Review* 109, no. 2 (2004): 423.

[223] *Kido Kōichi kankei bunsho*, 496; Ueda Shunkichi, "Gunbu kakushin kanryō no Nihon kyōsanka keikakuan," *Jiyū*, November 1960, 98.

Soviet Union and had influenced the thinking of Kido, the man closest to the emperor.[224]

Delusions about Stalin spread well beyond Tokyo. Outlandishly, the Japanese Army commanders in China maintained secret yet regular contact with the CCP.[225] They did so in the ill-judged hope of dealing with the CCP and, by extension, the Soviet Union (rather than with Britain and the United States) to determine the future of China and Japan. For his part, Mao Zedong hoped to defeat Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT by aligning with Japan and its puppet government of Wang Jingwei in Nanjing (see p. 397). When Japan's defeat at American hands loomed large, Mao also wanted to acquire Japanese military expertise and weaponry against Chiang by cultivating contacts with the Japanese Army in China.[226] The Japanese liaison was Togō Kitaru (都甲徠, 1899–1991), the intelligence head of the Japanese Army in China, while Pan Hannian (see p. 406) served as a CCP contact. Mao opened more than one channel of secret contact. Later, he imprisoned Pan and other CCP operatives involved to hide his wartime secret dealings with the Japanese Army.[227] Chiang Kai-shek was apprised of what he called collusion between the CCP and the Japanese Army.[228] Japanese diplomats in China also knowingly fostered communication with the CCP through its agents, including Pan Hannian and Yuan Shu (see p. 406).[229]

Having long believed Stalin's feigned posture for mediation was genuine, Tokyo, in the end, had to face the truth: Moscow declared war on August 8. On August 6 and 9, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan with devastating results. Tokyo had no choice but to surrender.[230] After Japan's surrender, on 27 September 1945, Konoe repeated his concern about Communist influence to the SCAP, General MacArthur.[231]

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[224]Matsuura Masataka, "Munakata Hisanori to mō hitotsuno shūsen kōsaku (ge)," *UP: University Press* 26, no. 2 (1997): 25–27. Tanemura was emphatic that Stalin would *not* attack Japan.

[225]See the diary of a Soviet military intelligence officer stationed in Yan'an during the war: Peter Vladimirov, *The Vladimirov Diaries. Yenan, China: 1942–1945* (New York, 1975), 502–3. "Only a few persons from the CCP leadership had known about" this contact (503).

[226]Van, *Polveka KPK*, 187, 189–92.

[227]Ibid., 190. Pan's biographers obliquely discuss Pan's role in the dealings. See Yin, *Pan Hannian*, 163–68; Wang, *Hongse tegong*, 302–4.

[228]Chiang Chung-cheng (Chiang Kai-shek), *Soviet Russia in China: A Summing-up at Seventy* (New York, 1957), 122, 128–29.

[229]Iwai Eiichi (岩井英一, 1899–?), a Japanese diplomat in Shanghai from 1938 to 1944, detailed this history in his memoir, *Kaisō no Shanhai* (Tokyo, 1983).

[230]Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA, 2009) argues that the Soviet Union's declaration of war against Japan was the decisive factor in Japan's surrender. Asada Sadao strongly disagrees with Hasegawa, arguing that the bombs were decisive. See Asada Sadao, " 'Genbaku gaikō setsu hihan': 'shinwa' to tabū o koete (1949–2009)," *Dōshisha hōgaku* 60, no. 6 (2009): 43–477. They debated on this matter in the *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (June 2006), 565–69 ("Letters to the Editors").

[231]A first-hand account by Okumura Katsuzō, "Konoe kōshaku to Makkāsā gensui," *Himerareta Shōwashi*, ed. Hayashi Masayoshi (Tokyo, 1965), 270–75.

The British journalist Leonard Mosley, who after World War II had interviewed people close to the emperor, left the following remark: "One wonders how the Japanese could have been so naïve as to imagine, in that last summer of war, that the Russians, of all people, could help them in their desperate dilemma. 'We put great faith in the integrity of Secretary Stalin,' the Emperor was afterward to say. The result was that the Russians, from June, 1945, onward, played the Japanese like a fish on a hook."[232]

It is difficult to tell where Japan's delusions about the Soviet Union ended and its international political realism began. It is difficult to determine how far Stalin's influence extended into the Japanese political and military establishment and how strong an influence it was. Stalin was not always successful. How truly shocking the Soviet declaration of war was to the emperor, Umezu, and Kido is a major point of scholarly contention. There is no doubt, however, that Soviet disinformation, camouflage, and provocation played a critical role. Stalin managed to keep hope alive in certain circles of the Japanese establishment that Japan could exploit the Soviet Union for its geopolitical ends. Moscow spotted and cultivated people in positions of responsibility who would advance its political agenda, as it did Harry Dexter White in Washington. Needless to say, it also used blackmail and other secret weapons, a subject difficult to study owing to the lack of documentation. Without showing his hand, and by using the force of the adversary against itself, Stalin controlled the flow of history to bring about the adversary's self-destruction.

Moscow's influencers

Tanemura and Sejima influenced Kido in a way that suited Moscow's interests. Tsuru Shigeto (都留重人, 1912–2006), who was married to Kido's niece, is also suspected of proliferating Soviet disinformation, wittingly or unwittingly, among the Japanese establishment at the time. Tsuru was a left-wing firebrand expelled from a Japanese college. He moved to the United States, where he completed a PhD in economics at Harvard University in 1940, after which he taught there. He lived in circles sympathetic to Communism and befriended Herbert Norman (see Chapter 4, p. 321, footnote 178), who was also studying at Harvard. Tsuru was a close friend of Thomas A. Bisson's (1900–79), a "staunch supporter of Chinese Communism" who, like White, appears in the Venona intercepts under the cover name "Arthur" (which was his middle name). In June 1937, just before the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, Bisson traveled to Yan'an, China, and interviewed CCP leaders, including Mao and Zhou Enlai (see Chapter 4, p. 342). Two U.S. researchers identified him as a "Soviet spy."[233] In 1942, after Pearl Harbor, Tsuru was repatriated to Japan. With Kido's assistance, he secured a position

[232] Leonard Mosley, *Hirohito, Emperor of Japan* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1966), 291–92.

[233] Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 177; Haynes and Klehr, *In Denial: Historians, Communism, and Espionage* (San Francisco, 2003), 108.

in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Like Sejima and Tanemura, Tsuru served as a diplomatic courier to Moscow, traveling from late March to early May 1945. Another courier, who followed him and carried secret cipher codes, was poisoned and killed on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Utterly unmoved, Tsuru wrote about it in an uncharitable manner.[234] In contrast, after his return from the Soviet Union in May 1945, he gave a talk, laudatory in tone, about the Soviet Union. If it was not a deliberate distortion, then he seems to have been thoroughly blind to the reality of life in the Soviet Union.[235]

Bisson joined the U.S. Occupation Forces after World War II. When he moved to Japan, he immediately looked up Tsuru. So did Herbert Norman. They are suspected of conspiring to influence Kido and shift the responsibility for Japan's war to Konoe. According to some historians, they drove Konoe to suicide. Tsuru also helped the IMTFE's prosecutors.[236] During the McCarthy era, Tsuru was summoned to Washington to testify. He acknowledged his friendship with Norman and his radical thought of the 1930s that could "not be interpreted other than as Communist sympathy." He denied having been a member of the Communist Party. To avoid further pursuit, however, he offered to assist the Senate committee investigating him and his old acquaintances with a list of all the names he could remember who might have been involved in the Communist movement in the 1930s in the United States.[237] His verbal skill and his American clout among the economists at Harvard and elsewhere helped protect him. He escaped from any political complications and lived the life of a prominent professor and "progressive" public intellectual in Japan. Shortly after Tsuru's testimony to the U.S. Congress in March 1957, Norman, hounded by McCarthyism, killed himself in Cairo, where he was stationed as Canada's ambassador.

These suspicions cannot be verified without further documentation. What matters is the likelihood that Moscow searched for and cultivated candidates to do its political bidding. All means were used, including blackmail, "honey traps," and bribery. Diplomats, politicians, military, naval, and commercial attachés, businessmen, journalists, students, artists, tourists traveling to and from Europe on the Trans-Siberian Railway—essentially, people from all walks of life—were targets.

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[234] *Tsuru Shigeto jiden. Ikutsumono kiro o kaiko shite* (Tokyo, 2001), 200.

[235] *Tsuru Shigeto chosaku shū. Dai jūikkan. Hito to tabi to hon* (Tokyo, 1976), 243–50.

[236] Torii Tami, *Konoe Fumimaro "moku" shite shisu* (Tokyo, 2014); Kudō Miyoko, *Ware Sugamo ni shuttō sezu: Konoe Fumimaro to tennō* (Tokyo, 2009); Kudo, *Supai to iwareta gaikōkan. Hābāto Nōman no shōgai* (Tokyo, 2007). These works implicate in the events leading up to Konoe's suicide other like-minded individuals such as Paul A. Baran (1909–64), a Ukrainian-born American Marxist, and John K. Emmerson (1908–84), an American diplomat who worked closely with Norman. Norman wrote a strikingly prejudicial report for SCAP against Konoe and an extenuating one for Kido, deploring that certain individuals interned in the Soviet Union were not brought to the court to testify. See Hābāto Nōman [Herbert Norman], *Hābāto Nōman zenshū* (Tokyo, 1977), 2:334–52, 397.

[237] *Tsuru Shigeto chosaku shū* (Tokyo, 1976), 12:520, 525.

It is true, of course, that all countries engage in this business. What distinguishes the Soviet Union is the scope, energy, and resources poured into it. Although pre–World War II Japanese espionage is sometimes called "total espionage," it was no match for Soviet espionage. Stalin's operations can be legitimately called "total espionage." Combined with what can be called "total counterespionage," whereby even a casual contact with a foreigner was enough to put a person to death,[238] it made foreign espionage inside Stalin's Soviet Union well-nigh impossible.

After World War II, hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers, officials, and civilians in Manchuria were interned in the Soviet Union as forced laborers.[239] Moscow picked over the vast pool, and by 1950, Moscow selected some five hundred Japanese internees as intelligence agents. It then trained and repatriated them to Japan.[240] Among them, according to a Russian account, were Araki Sadao's son, Araki Morio (荒木護夫), and Itagaki Seishirō's son, Itagaki Tadashi (板垣正, 1924–2018). Upon repatriation in 1950, Itagaki joined the JCP, although he left it later.[241] Many of the repatriated were interviewed by the U.S. Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) upon returning and confessed that they had pledged to help the Soviet intelligence. Others did not. They were called the "phantom corps" (幻兵團), and their existence became a huge political issue in Japan. It was debated in the Japanese Diet, and discussed by mass media, because a significant number of them committed suicide or died under mysterious circumstances. Some of them feigned extreme right-wing views.[242] When Rastvorov defected in 1954, he disclosed thirty-six Japanese agents he had known. Among them were, apart from those already mentioned such as Izumi Kōzō and Takamore Shigeru, a number of officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tamura Toshio (田村敏雄, 1896–1963), a Ministry Finance official close to the minister, Ikeda Hayato (池田勇人, 1899–1965), who became Japan's premier from 1960 to 1964.[243] It is known that some of the interned Japanese who refused to work for

[238] Hiroaki Kuromiya and Andrzej Pepłoński, "Stalin und die Spionage," *Transit: Europäische Revue* (Vienna) 38, 2009, 20–33.

[239] The real reason for the mass internment was political and military. Stalin explained that the Soviet Union, unlike the United States, "took the Japanese Army as prisoners." To ensure that Japan would never rise and fight again, he deemed it necessary to take "50,000–60,000 officers as prisoners and some 12,000 generals." See *Sovetsko-kitaiskie otnosheniia. Tom IV. 1937–1945. Kn. 2: 1945 g.* (Moscow, 2000), 338–39. In fact, many civilians were interned as well.

[240] As testified by Rastvorov, who personally selected some of them. See Iurii Rastvorov, "Nihon o kōshite supai shita," *Bungei shunjū* 58, no. 3 (March 1980): 125.

[241] A.E. Zabelin, "Iaponskie spetssluzhby i sovetskii plen," *Iaponiia nashikh dnei*, no. 4 (10) (2011), 96; Kobayashi, *Shiberia yokuryū*, 157–159.

[242] See for example "Shiberia de tamashii o utta maboroshi heidan." *Yomiuri shinbun*, 11 January 1950 (morning edition), 2; "Jūshi mei ga nazo no shi," 30 December 1952 (morning edition), 7;"Kyokuu yosou moto chūsa," ibid., 13 January 1950 (morning edition), 2. Tanemura Sakō, suspected to be one of the corps, even appeared in a group discussion about the danger of this very corps to Japan. See "Nihon no jōhō shūshū ni yonenkan no yokuryū," ibid., 28 January 1950 (morning edition), 3.

[243] See the Japanese police record on the Rastvorov affair (Chapter 4, p. 324, footnote 194).

the Soviet Union were killed; Konoe's son, Fumitaka (近衛文隆, 1915–56), was among them.[244]

Other Japanese discussed in this book faded from public life to varying degrees. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Tanaka Ryūkichi rendered valuable assistance to the IMTFE prosecution with truth and untruth, after which he was haunted by the ghosts of the executed. Kōmoto Daisaku stayed in China, where he died in 1953 or 1955. Ishiwara Kanji withdrew from public life and died in 1949. Kamei Kan-ichirō continued to live a shadowy life. He provided information on Japan's weapons research (including bacteriological research) to the U.S. Occupation Forces and was in the pay of its G-2 (intelligence).[245] He also seems to have maintained or renewed some channels of communication with the Soviet Union (as discussed earlier in Chapter 3, p. 273). Tominaga, who, as a Soviet captive, provided false testimonies to the IMTFE, was repatriated from the Soviet Union in 1955. He never recovered from the opprobrium occasioned by his numerous misbegotten actions in the military. Suzuki Teiichi was sentenced to life imprisonment at the IMTFE. Released in 1955, he assumed no public position thereafter. Ushiba's life involved a peculiar twist. Along with another member of the Konoe entourage and his close friend, Matsumoto Shigeharu (松本重治, 1899–1989), he stayed overnight next to Konoe's bedroom, ostensibly to dissuade him from suicide, on the very night he killed himself.[246] (It should be noted that Matsumoto was close to Ozaki before Ozaki was arrested in 1941.) After the war, Ushiba worked in business, while Matsumoto turned (at least superficially) pro-American and ran the International House of Japan in Tokyo. Sogō Shinji became a famous railway specialist, known as the father of the Japanese bullet train. Tanaka Shin-ichi spent the postwar years writing self-serving memoirs.

Only Kuhara and Kazami continued an active political life, both promoting friendship with the Soviet Union and Communist China. Kuhara in particular worked as a shadowy mastermind in Japan's postwar democratic body politic. He received money from the CCP. In 1955, he met with both Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in Beijing, hatching with them plots to spirit Chiang Kai-shek from Taipei to Beijing, while the resurrected JCP solicited Kuhara for financial support.[247]

Hiyama Yoshiaki, *Sokoku o Soren ni utta sanjūroku nin no nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1982) discusses these thiry-six Japanese, some under altered names.

[244]V.A. Arkhangel'skii, *Purinsu Konoe satsujin jiken*, trans. Takizawa Ichirō (Tokyo, 2000). This book by a Russian author does not seem to have been published in Russian.

[245]Aoki Fukiko, "Ishii nanasan-ichi butai to Beikoku o torimotta otoko (ge). Ima akasareru 'Kamei Kan-ichirō' no sakudō," *Foresight*, November 2004, 60–62.

[246]Matsumoto Shigeharu, *Konoe jidai (ge)*, comp. Rōyama Yoshirō (Tokyo, 1987), 257–59.

[247]The CIA collected voluminous information on him. See Katō Tetsurō, ed., *CIA nihonjin fairu. Beikoku kokuritsu kōbunsho kimitsu kaijo shiryō*, 3 vols. (Tokyo, 2014). The plots to kidnap Chiang failed. Yonemoto Jirō, *Denki Kuhara Fusanosuke ō o kataru* (Tokyo, 1992), 1049–53.

Conclusion

Stalin, the "hero" and "villain" of this book, was not a vainglorious statesman. He did not boast of his accomplishments gained through disinformation, camouflage, and provocation. On the contrary, he took a myriad of secrets to his grave. Stalin's operations were particularly successful in Asia, where he was able to engage in political intrigues unfettered from the political constraints that obtained in Europe. Stalin was in his element in Asia. He was able to conceal his hand adroitly in all the major events in interwar Asia, from the Washington Conference to the rise of nationalism and Communism in China, to the Zhang Zuolin murder in 1928, the Mukden Incident in 1931, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, the Battles of Lake Khasan and Khalkhin Gol (Nomonhan) in 1938 and 1939, and others. Much less successful in camouflage operations in Europe, however, Stalin resorted to military attack on Poland and Finland in 1939.[1] By 1945 Stalin could no longer dissimulate his presence in the war against Japan. He justified the war by the self-serving allegation of Tokyo's violation of the Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality. As far as the events up to 1945 involving China, Japan, and the Soviet Union were concerned, he enjoyed the last laugh, for his accounts of them were accepted in toto, carved in stone in the form of the judgments at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial. Stalin's accounts are a bespoke story, however.

Moscow and Beijing still jealously guard their archives and strictly limit access. Consequently, the current state of archival research in Russia and China perpetuates the Stalinist accounts of the interwar history of East Asia. Western historiography, generally speaking, has not questioned them. Needless to say, nothing is immutable, as Stalin knew well. He used to say that "in the end everything will be known, everything will become public" (В конце концов все узнается. Все становится гласным).[2] In 1933, he opined that "Truth will find its way" (Правда найдет свою дорогу).[3] This book has argued that it is long past time to stop seeing history through the Stalinist looking glass.

Japan's spectacular westernization in the second half of the nineteenth century and its rise as a new imperialist power changed the face of Asia in a fundamental way. Its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 was an epoch-making event that affected not only Asia but all of the non-Western world. With its new,

[1] Similarly, Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, launched a full-bore war against Ukraine in February 2022 when he had exhausted his seemingly inexhaustible stock of covert political and military stratagems.

[2] Akakii Mgeladze, *Stalin kakim ia ego znal. Stranitsy nedavnego proshlogo* (N.p., 2001), 116.

[3] RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 733, l. 10.

elevated stature in the world, Japan was encouraged to adopt the attitudes of superiority that characterized Western imperialist nations. By behaving just like Western powers, it alienated the very countries that at the outset had admired its ability to best a mighty Western power. Japan faithfully followed the rules of the game set by the Western world. This was the case at the Portsmouth negotiations in 1905. In 1919 Japan demanded (hypocritically, for its neighbors) "racial equality" with the Western powers, which was refused. Japan soon became an international outcast. Unable to adapt, Japan continued to pursue an imperialist course. Stalin used this quest to trap Japan in China, rewriting the history of the interwar period as it unfolded.

Two major factors account for Stalin's resounding success and Japan's unmitigated failure in China. The first was that the times were changing in favor of Stalin and against Japan. The world was in search of a new global order "after imperialism."[4] As Christopher Thorne argued almost fifty years ago, Japan "seemed to have learned the game [of the Western powers] remarkably well—too well, for comfort in the West, where in any case the rules of that game were about to be changed."[5] No small part of this change was occasioned by Japan's victory over Russia in 1905. Nagata Tetsuzan said in 1932 that had Japan embarked on its path to the world stage fifty years earlier, it would not have faced the Western powers' interference in the wake of its Manchurian invasion.[6] Of course, it is difficult to determine whether Nagata was right. Clearly, Japan knew, however, that it was late to the game. Karl Radek openly said so in 1932 (see Chapter 3, p. 248). Likewise, in 1937, after Japan went into an all-out war with China, Trotskii wrote:

> War and revolution will be interlaced in the nearest future history of China. Japan's aim, to enslave forever, or at least for a long time to come, a gigantic country by dominating its strategic centres, is characterized not only by greediness but by stupidity [тупоумие]. Japan has arrived *much too late* [emphasis added]. Torn by internal contradictions, the empire of the Mikado cannot reproduce the history of Britain's ascent. . . . In these historic conditions [of rising nationalism], even if the present war in the Far East were to end with Japan's victory, and even if the victor himself could escape an internal catastrophe during the next few years—and neither the former nor the latter is in the least assured—Japan's domination over China would be measured by a very brief period, perhaps only the few years required to

[4]Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921–1931* (Cambridge, MA, 1965).

[5]Christopher Thorne, *The Limits of Foreign Policy: The West, the League and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1931–1933* (New York, 1973), 22.

[6]Nagata Tetsuzan, "ManMō mondai kankai no ittan," *Gaikō jihō*, no. 668 (1 October 1932), 343.

> give a new impulse to the economic life of China and to mobilize its labouring masses once more.[7]

As Radek, Trotskii, and Stalin knew well, Japan had failed to understand that the train of history had already departed.

What is striking is that Japan never seemed to adapt to the new age of struggle against Western imperialism and colonialism that it itself had pioneered in 1905. What Japan's success in 1905 demonstrated was that a rising tide of nationalism had led to powerful, violent resistance against the Western imperialist powers. Yet, Japan failed to recognize this same force of nationalism when confronted with it in China. This failure is well-nigh beyond comprehension: Immediately after its annexation of Korea in 1910, Japan had faced the vigorous and violent nationalism of the Koreans. Japan simply failed to understand that the age of colonial rule by force was drawing to a close. Moreover, Japan's diatribes against Western hypocrisy led nowhere, as Japan sought, in vain, to justify the atrocities it committed in Korea, China, and elsewhere by countering with those of the Western powers in their colonies (including the insensate acts of violence perpetrated by the Americans in the war against the Philippines in 1899–1902). Japan hewed to the policy of "pressure and aggression," while Britain moved on to "forbearance and benevolence" (see Chapter 2, p. 164). Unable to overcome its imperialist cupidity, Japan failed to see that it operated in China on sufferance. These failures of Japan helped Stalin trounce it politically on an international stage.

In 1932, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, William C. Forbes, deplored Tokyo's tactless and ham-fisted diplomacy. He noted that Japan was a stabilizing force in China and that for this reason, Manchuria had seen a massive influx of Chinese (nearly one million a year). Forbes said: "If they [the Japanese] had served notice on the World that unless redress were given [from China's anti-Japanese nationalism] before a certain date they would be obliged to act, there would have been less ground for criticism [of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931]."[8] Although Forbes may have been right, Japan's problems were far more complex than merely a matter of tact or skill. As two Russian analysts noted as early as 1922, "motives which will prompt Japan to engage in the struggle [for China] are so deep and so vast that not one but several wars will have to be waged before a solution is reached" (see Chapter 1, p. 68).

The second factor accounting for Stalin's success and Japan's failure in China was that at the time, the world was obsessed with racial distinctions. The Japanese politicians would have been surprised to learn what their "ally,"

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[7] Leon Trotsky, "The Chinese Revolution," introduction to Harold R. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* (London, 1938), xxiv. I have slightly altered the English translation according to the Russian original: "Revoliutsiia i voina v Kitae," *Biulleten' oppozitsii* no. 72 (December 1938): 14.

[8] William Cameron Forbes Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, fMS Am 1365, vol. 8, 539.

Germany, thought of them. Japan's initial, arresting tactical victories in the war against the United States and Britain in 1941 disquieted some Nazis. In March 1942, according to Galeazzo Ciano, Italy's foreign minister, the Germans began raising the bugbear of the "yellow race," as if echoing Wilhelm II's remarks about the Japanese earlier in the century (see Chapter 1, p. 45):

> Prince Urach of von Ribbentrop's press bureau, has come to Rome and asked to see d'Aieta [Ciano's secretary]. His conversation about Japan was strange, with an ambiguous tinge and bittersweet flavor. It is all very well for the Japanese to win because they are our allies, but after all they belong to the yellow race and their successes are gained at the expense of the white race. It is the leitmotiv which frequently appears in the conversation of the Germans.[9]

Ciano himself was no fan of Japan. He noted in his diary, "No one can accuse me of being strongly pro-German, but I still prefer the white to the yellow race."[10] Otto Christian Archibald von Bismarck (1904–75), a German diplomat and prominent Nazi who was also a grandson of the famous nineteenth-century German statesman Otto von Bismarck (1815–98), floated an even more remarkable idea to his Italian counterparts "in the greatest confidence." In the spring of 1942, von Bismarck had come to the conclusion that "By October, no matter how things go, Germany must make peace." His reasoning was, according to Ciano (via his secretary), that by then, "England will be ripe for negotiations, especially if the Germans would consider the possibility of an anti-Japanese collaboration for the reconquest of Asia by the whites."[11] If this was the only kind of ally Japan could find, then no alliance would have helped it, and indeed none did.

In this sense, Japan's political isolation was in no small way a consequence of its racial isolation. Stalin understood this well and took full advantage of it, deluding the Japanese by repeatedly telling them that he, too, was "Asiatic." His meretricious appeal to racial kinship was completely empty but psychologically acute; the Soviet Union became, in the psyche of many Japanese political figures, the only hope for international cooperation.

Japan, too, was caught up in the racist discourse of the period. Racial obsessions drove Japan to identify itself as the liberator of the non-white Asians from the white West. Japan's own obsessions with racial superiority over the Koreans, Chinese, and others, however, made this claim totally pharisaic. Japan had no qualms about bringing Taiwan, Korea, China, and other Asian nations under its boot. Japan never realized that it would have to pay the price for its racial superiority complex. Stalin deftly helped hoist Japan by its own petard.

If Japan's failures to adapt to the new demands of imperialism and the rising racist climate were crucial reasons for the Soviet Union's triumph and Japan's

[9]Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries 1939–1943*, ed. Hugh Gibson (New York, 1946), 458–59. Prince Urach is the same Urach whom Richard Sorge befriended (see Introduction, p. 16).

[10]Ibid., 460.

[11]Ibid., 470–71.

defeat in China, the Washington Conference of 1921-22 was the first clue to Japan's fate. Indeed, the conference was the single most important event setting the country on its course to international isolation and disorientation. As a non-white neophyte to the game of imperialism, Japan insisted it was being short-changed on the world stage. Japan was convinced that the West, particularly the United States, was not playing fair. Japan remained bitter, too, with the way Britain ended the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1921–22. As late as 1937, Japanese diplomats in London continued to rake over the past with the old grudge about Britain's termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The Japanese diplomats received this response from London:

> Whether or not that Alliance should have been ended, is a very serious question. You will no doubt remember that after the War there was an irresistible movement in Britain to cement the understanding of the English-speaking nations. To please America we accepted an impossible war-debt settlement, we extended the three-mile limit to twelve miles to assist their prohibition law, we made Southern Ireland into a Free State to soothe the feelings of Irish-Americans, and finally we parted company with our good friend and ally, Japan. It is only fair to say, Your Excellency, that we might not have done so if the pressure from Canada had not been enormous and finally decisive.
>
> Many of us had grave doubts at the time and expressed them. However, the Anglo-American ideal won out. Also, you must remember that we hoped that the League of Nations would see the end of all alliances.[12]

The 1937 exchange was characteristic of Tokyo's stale thinking and its poignant inability to adapt to a new era radically reconfigured by the vying interests of imperialist, Communist, and nationalist forces. Anthony Eden was right when he claimed that "Japan's leaders were lured on by imperial ambition, however much they might pretext economic needs to excuse their policy."[13]

Moscow, in contrast, adapted skillfully to the new age. In fact, by promoting the anti-imperialist struggle in Asia and elsewhere, it symbolized the new epoch, even as it failed to shed its own imperialist ambitions. In Asia, the Soviet Union proved to be not only the perfect counterpoint to Japan but also the adversary most prepared to take advantage of Japan's geopolitical weaknesses. From the moment that the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in 1917, the Soviets and Japan competed for the hegemonic control of East Asia; yet, it was the Soviet Union that had the perspective and understanding to win the contest. Their grand strategy was to pit Japan and the United States against each other over hegemony in the

[12] Beverly Baxter, *Westminster Watchtower* (New York, 1938), 200. For a very thoughtful account of why British-Japanese relations in the end unraveled, see Philip Towle, *From Ally to Enemy: Anglo-Japanese Military Relations 1900–1945* (Kent, 2006).

[13] *The Memoirs of Anthony Eden: The Reckoning* (Boston, 1965), 353.

Pacific region (particularly in China) while promoting anti-imperialist nationalism in China, Japan, and elsewhere. Stalin was far-sighted, skillful, and vulpine, and he cultivated a myriad of Chinese, Japanese, and American collaborators and agents. At the Washington Conference, Moscow successfully collaborated with Washington to strike at Tokyo's position in Asia. Whatever promises Moscow may have given to Washington, it did not keep, and consequently, Washington refused to recognize the Bolshevik government. Meanwhile, by the mid-1920s, Moscow and Tokyo had come to terms. Moscow found Tokyo useful against London and Washington, whereas Tokyo sought in Moscow a countervailing power against the Western world. Ivan Maiskii called Tokyo's new orientation Japan's political "romance" with the Soviet Union. While during the 1920s, Britain came to recognize the new force of Chinese nationalism and adjusted its policy accordingly, Japan remained stuck in the rut of atavistic thinking.

Stalin took advantage of Tokyo's international vulnerability, developing an expansive network of secret intelligence operations to drive Japan further into an imperialist strategy that Stalin knew was doomed to fail. The chaotic political world born from Japan's international confusion was the perfect hotbed for Stalin's secret intelligence operations. Japan, first of all, accepted Moscow's myth that the Soviet Union and the Comintern were two different entities. While on the one hand, Japan attacked the Comintern for its subversion, on the other, it dealt with the Soviet Union as a worthy partner. Strikingly, Japanese Social Democrats, right-wing nationalists, and even liberals all sought a mutual "understanding" with Moscow against the Anglo-American liberal world, presenting Japan as a proletarian or non-propertied Asian nation fighting against the bourgeois, propertied Western powers. This was a political risk Japan could ill afford to forgo, and Moscow was happy to oblige. While Japan desperately sought "autonomy" on the world scene,[14] historians neglect the fact that it actively courted the Soviet Union.[15]

From this courtship, Stalin began cultivating those who would aid him in his attempt to trap Japan in China. He drew many Japanese from right-wing circles, who shared with Moscow an anti-Western stand. Stalin took advantage of their bitter feelings toward Britain and the United States while providing consistent disinformation about the Soviet Union's military weakness to encourage their imperialist hopes. Moscow also availed itself of Japanese Communists and left-wingers who, in addition to wanting to work together with the Soviet Union, hoped Japan's imperialist failures might lead to revolution in Japan. Moscow encouraged Japanese Communists such as Ozaki Hotsumi and many others to dissemble as nationalists, which allowed them to pursue Moscow's political

[14] See the classic work: James B. Crowley, *Japan's Quest for Autonomy: National Security and Foreign Policy 1930–1938* (Princeton, NJ, 1966).

[15] It is true, as Jonathan Haslam has convincingly shown, that the fear of Communism was a defining factor in interwar international politics. Jonathan Haslam, *The Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II* (Princeton, NJ, 2021). At the same time, no imperialist power was averse to using the Soviet Union for geopolitical reasons.

agenda undercover. This disguise was successful precisely because the Japanese right, while deeply anti-Communist, was also in the throes of a romance with the Soviet Union as an anti-Western force.

Even the notable anti-Communist Araki Sadao was no exception. Araki went so far as to prattle on about a "Soviet system under Japanese ideology." Another radical right-wing leader, Hashimoto Kingorō, formerly the head of the Russian Section of the Army General Staff Second Department (see Chapter 3, p. 218), was anti-Communist but pro-Soviet. Quite incredulously, this Soviet specialist contended in 1939 about the Battle of Nomonhan that London had "tricked" the anti-imperialist Communist regime (the Soviet Union) into serving as Britain's "watchdog" against the weak capitalist Japan.[16] While sitting in prison after World War II, Shigemitsu Mamoru, Japan's wartime foreign minister, complained that there were many pro-Soviet men (such as Araki and Hashimoto) among the now disbanded Imperial Japanese Army.[17] These specialists of the Soviet Union never understood Stalin. They continued hoping, even while in jail and awaiting trial, that the Soviet Union would mitigate Anglo-American retribution. Both received a life sentence.

Apart from these men, there were social-democratic forces (such as Kamei Kan-ichirō and Asō Hisashi), who sought an "understanding" with the Soviet Union to better position Japan against Britain and the United States. Many of these people also saw Japan's war against China as a catalyst for a revolutionary change in Japan itself, and were therefore willing to make irrational compromises—or even assist—Stalin on the global front. In 1940, even Hanzawa Gyokujō, deeply disturbed though he was by Moscow's penetration of radical nationalist circles in Japan (see Chapter 3, p. 271), reverted to his earlier position of favoring alliance with the Soviet Union.[18] He, like many other Japanese politicians, military leaders, and right-wing ideologues, expediently accepted Moscow's equally convenient claim that the Soviet government had nothing to do with the Comintern. The Japanese military commanders also entertained a weakness for Communism as a totalitarian ideology. In fact, some of them had no scruples in dealing with the anti-Western CCP rather than with the pro-Western KMT (see Chapter 5, p. 429).

The Japanese government estimated in 1937 that approximately two thousand Soviet spies existed in Japan and Manzhouguo (see Chapter 4, p. 324). Even though the estimate was merely wild guesswork, those individuals this book has alleged to be Soviet agents surely represent only a minority of Stalin's reach into Japan's political and military apparatus. That Stalin could penetrate so

[16] Hashimoto Kingorō, "TaiSo kankei shiken," *Gekkan Roshiya*, August 1939, 73.

[17] Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Sugamo nikki* (Tokyo, 1953), 407. It should be noted, however, that in 1944, Shigemitsu himself endorsed the "Soviet principle of liberating the oppressed peoples of East Asia," supporting "the Soviet endeavor against Anglo-American imperialism." See Chapter 5, p. 428.

[18] Hanzawa Gyokujō, "Ōshū senkyoku to NiSso kankei," *Gaiko jihō*, no. 852 (1 June 1940): 3–4.

deeply reflects the political disarray at the heart of the Japanese government. The Japanese military sought to undermine the government, while many political activists were seeking methods for instigating revolution; Stalin used anyone who could be tricked into seeing an advantage in cooperating with the Soviet Union. And where he could not, he was skilled at coercion. Japan as a whole proved incapable of limiting the purchase of Stalin's covert operations.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, then, Japan advanced farther and farther into China, with Stalin secretly at the helm. It is only in this context that one can truly make sense of the sequence of the events that would transpire. Although Stalin's attempt to grab power in China in 1927 had ended in disaster, Tokyo's imperialist policy in China that was orchestrated by Stalin was even more disastrous. It began with Stalin's influence over Tanaka Giichi, Japan's prime minister from 1927 to 1929, who had been compromised from intelligence work he had provided years earlier to Imperial Russia. Thereafter, Stalin's strategy was to lure Japan into the quagmire of China's nationalism and then allow it to sink under its own weight. The murder of Zhang Zuolin was executed by the combined forces of Soviet, Chinese, and Japanese conspirators (such as Kōmoto Daisaku and Tanaka Ryūkichi). The Mukden Incident in 1931 was an utterly fanciful plan concocted by Japanese military strategist, Ishiwara Kanji, who gamely allowed himself to be misled by Soviet disinformation into seeing possibilities in Manchuria that were simply quixotic. Engrossed in China, Japan entertained no serious plan to attack the Soviet Union. Instead, it sought a secret understanding with the Communist state. Knowing Japan's position, Radek issued a feigned warning in 1932: Anyone with the "slightest sense of rational strategic calculation" will understand that, having antagonized the Chinese people and with the prospect of war with the United States looming, the Japanese imperialists would be mad to take on the Soviet Union. But, Radek continued, "no one can be certain whether they have enough sense to understand it."[19] Although Japan was sensible enough not to take on the Soviet Union, it nevertheless punched far above its weight and fell into the traps Stalin set in China in 1931 and 1937. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937 resulted from a complex matrix of Soviet, Chinese, and Japanese provocations. The Battle of Nomonhan originated in the Soviet abetting of the previously compromised commander, Komatsubara. Such descriptions barely scratch the surface of Stalin's operations in each of these events, not to mention the numerous other critical events that led to Japan's downfall in 1945. The consistent factor throughout them is the way they trapped Japan further in China and isolated it from the rest of the world.

Japan lacked the political will and courage to mend its strategic blunders. Stalin quietly scuttled Tokyo's, however feckless, attempts to mend them. Moreover, he repeatedly and covertly lured Japan ever deeper down China's rabbit hole. And, crucially, he managed to make Japan's blunders and failures appear

[19] Karl Radek, "Pod znamenem bor'by protiv imperialisticheskoi voiny," *Pravda*, 7 November 1932, 7.

all self-inflicted. This was the essence of his "reflexive control," discussed in the Introduction (p. 23). By employing the Japanese arts of *ninjutsu* and *jūjutsu*, Stalin soundly beat Japan at its own game. Ordinary common sense should have delivered Japanese politicians and strategists from delusions about the Soviet Union. Yet, even after Moscow flagrantly violated its non-aggression pacts with Poland and Finland in 1939, Tokyo still clung to the chimera of an understanding with Moscow. By playing Stalin's game, Japan helped itself to suicidal imperialist greed. In 1950, Stalin told Ivan I. Kovalenko (1919–2005), the Kremlin's Japan hand, that the Japanese were good at tactical maneuvers but weak at big, strategic ones.[20] Zhang Xueliang thought likewise (see Chapter 2, p. 156). Stalin and Zhang grasped Japan's weakness and used it to trump Japan.

Meanwhile, Moscow convinced the world that the Japanese people were inherently aggressive. This was easy to do because, of course, Japan was aggressive. Yet, this simplistic rendering of history by Moscow obscures the deeply conflicted and ambivalent nature of the Japanese political body as a whole. More importantly, it obscures the critical ways Soviet and Chinese conspirators helped direct the events that unfolded in China, as well as their brutal, calculating reasons for doing so. The Soviet Union and China convincingly hid this involvement for many years. The hubris and bravado of the Japanese Army proved a very useful propaganda tool for the two countries. Even though by the mid-1930s, Moscow was confident that Japan no longer presented a serious threat, Moscow continued to promote Japan as an aggressive, even sinister, military superpower. It was Moscow that fabricated and circulated the Tanaka Memorial with the help of Zhang Xueliang. Even when there was virtually no Japanese presence in Outer Mongolia and Xinjiang, Moscow insisted that the source of the trouble in these lands was Japan. Such was the propaganda Moscow used regarding the 1932–33 massive rebellions in the MPR.[21] So successful was its propaganda that even now, some Mongolian scholars still hold the completely discredited account of Japan's role.[22] Even in Xinjiang, where there was virtually no Japanese presence in the 1930s, the Soviet-inspired anti-Japanese campaign was in full swing.[23] This is not to say that Japan's dreams of controlling Mongolia and Xinjiang did not exist. They did. Rather, it is to recognize that Japan was not an actor in the

[20] Iwan Kowarenko [Ivan Kovalenko], *TaiNichi kōsaku no kaisō*, trans. Kiyota Akira (Tokyo, 1996), 113. His meeting with Stalin, which Kovalenko suggests took place in the Kremlin, does not appear in the log of visitors to Stalin's office in the Kremlin.

[21] See for example RGASPI, f. 495, op. 152, d. 140, ll. 81–81 ob, 114. See also MUÙTA, f. 445, d. 6, khn. 4, 15. Likewise, Moscow insisted that Japan was "making comprehensive preparations to capture the Mongolian People's Republic." See Ts. Batbaiar, *Mongol ba ikh gürnüüd XX zuuny ėkhniĭ khagast (Khiagtaas Ialta khürtėl): Stalin, Chan Kaĭshi, Mongolyn tusgaar togtnol* (Ulaanbaatar, 2006), 153.

[22] See *Gadaadaas turkhirsan 1932 ony boslogo: (Tüükh, durdatgal, dursamzh, niĭtlėl, tėmdėglėl, zakhidal)* (Ulaanbaatar, 2013).

[23] "Sinkiang [Xinjiang], which in 1935 was probably the only corner of Chinese territory where her [Japan's] agents were not at work." See Peter Fleming, *News from Tartary: A Journey from Peking to Kashmir* (London, 1936), 262.

Mongolians' rebellion against the government's forcible sovietization policy or the Xinjiang Uighurs' rebellion against Han Chinese rule. For Stalin, this fact made no difference. Moscow continued to circulate disinformation, which even today, Western professional historians take as true.[24]

Soviet disinformation was ubiquitous. At the news of the Xi'an Incident, Stalin asserted that it was "fabricated by Japanese intrigue," adding that:

> among Chang Hsueh-laing's [Zhang Xueliang's] aides and among his troops Japanese spies were hidden, who took advantage of Chang's ambition to create chaos in China, even making use of anti-Japanese slogans. If we allowed the situation to develop, China would be involved in long years of civil war and the anti-Japanese forces would perish as a result, leaving Japan to enjoy its advantage at leisure.[25]

Stalin's logic was limpid: Japan could benefit from the incident; therefore, it was Japan's intrigue.[26] Not everyone agreed, however. Zhang Guotao and others in the CCP's Central Committee, for example, "wondered how the Sian [Xi'an] Incident, which clearly had been fomented by the triangular alliance of Chang, Yang [Hucheng], and the CCP, could be called a Japanese plot."[27]

Moscow convinced the world, including the IMTFE, that the Battles of Lake Khasan and Khalkhin Gol/Nomonhan were examples of Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union. Every textbook in and outside of Russia accepts the Stalinist accounts. Yet, these were cases of Soviet disinformation and provocation. Stalin's anti-Japanese operations at the time of the Great Terror in 1937–38 were the most violent (in proportion to the number of ethnic Japanese in the Soviet Union) of all terror operations against ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union.

As for Mongolia, proportionately speaking, far more Mongolians were killed in the Great Terror than Soviet people by Stalin's order. It is unknown whether the executed MPR leaders entertained any pro-Japanese sentiments. At least some of them did fear that the overbearing Soviet Union was taking over their

[24] See for example Michael B. Share's contention, taking Soviet archival documents at face value, that in 1933 "two Japanese officers visited Ma [Zhongying, Muslim rebel leader in Xinjiang] in his headquarters in Turfan, to give him arms." See his "The Great Game Revisited: Three Empires Collide in Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang)," *Europe-Asia Studies* 67, no. 7 (2015): 1122. There is no evidence to uphold this contention. The more egregious work is James Harris, *The Great Fear: Stalin's Terror of the 1930s* (Oxford, 2016), which takes Stalin's disinformation at face value.

[25] Quoted in Chang Kuo-t'ao, *The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party 1928–1938. Volume Two of the Autobiography of Chang Kuo-t'ao* (Lawrence, KA, 1972), 483.

[26] The Comintern's directive to the CCP issued on 16 December 1936 used the expression "objectively"; it spoke of the incident being objectively deleterious to the cause of the Chinese people and beneficial to Japan's aggression. See *VKP(b), Komintern i Kitai. Dokumenty. T. IV, chast' 2* (Moscow, 2003), 1085.

[27] Chang, *Rise of the Chinese Communist Party 1928–1938*, 484. In 1938 Zhang defected to the KMT. After World War II he emigrated to Canada where he died as a Christian.

country, especially when the Soviet military forces imposed themselves on Mongolia in 1936. For this reason, they became (according to Stalin) Japanese agents, for such fear constituted, in Stalin's mind, support for Japan.

P. Genden (ca. 1892–1937), the MPR premier from 1932 to 1936, is a good example. In 1937, he was executed in Moscow as a Japanese spy.[28] The same fate befell Genden's successor, A. Amar, who was tried and executed in Moscow. Amar took a stand, however. In his final statement to the Soviet court, he protested his innocence, stating that the court had no right to try him, a citizen of Mongolia. He went further by declaring "I don't like the Soviet Union. Nor do I the Communist Party from the beginning" (Би ЗХУ-ыг үздэгүй, коммунист намд хэтээсээ дургүй) and adding that Moscow sought to "invade and take over the Mongolian state."[29] Even Kh. Choibalsan, Mongolia's dictator whom Stalin had cultivated as his henchman, seems not to have felt any differently, at least in his early political career. Ten years before the Great Terror, he was so angry with the Soviet control of Mongolia that he almost struck its representative and Soviet secret police official, Iakov G. Bliumkin (1898–1929).[30]

Japan and Poland were Stalin's main targets for destruction in the 1930s. Although Poland had concluded a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in 1932, it refused to submit to the Soviet Union. As a result, in 1939, Stalin destroyed it in collusion with Germany. Shortly thereafter, Stalin cowed other smaller states (the Baltic states and Finland in particular) into submission. Japan, larger than Poland, was more difficult to destroy. Japan was different also in that in the post–World War I world order, Japan and the Soviet Union had sought to use each other against their foes, Britain and the United States. Both Japan and the Soviet Union schemed to present the other as its mortal nemesis while secretly seeking political rapprochement. Japan was the weaker of the two, because of its smaller size and weaker military forces. Moreover, Moscow had a sympathetic friend in Washington, allowing it to play its hand more successfully than Tokyo. The United States, with its vast economic and political power and without any overt territorial ambitions, was a far more attractive partner to the Soviet Union, even though Stalin knew well it was run by "scoundrels in Washington."

The more isolated and disoriented Japan became in the 1930s, the more doggedly it pursued a political agreement with the Soviet Union. The Tripartite Pact of 1940 was not an agreement on "joint aggressive action" against the Soviet Union, as the IMTFE concluded when it unquestioningly accepted the Soviet misrepresentation. Tokyo had wanted, in vain, to draw Moscow into the pact so

[28] See his file: GKhTA, kh. 2, d. 761, as well as his biography: Г. Цэрэндулам, *P. Gėnden: ėtsgiĭn tukhaĭ dur'tgal* (Ulaanbaatar, 2000).

[29] See P. Ianzhmaa, "Amar saĭdyn ėtssiĭn ùg. Dald arkhivyn nuuts barimtsaas," *Il tovchoo*, 1–10 March 1996, 2. Amar's file copied from the former KGB archive in Moscow is available in Ulaanbaatar: GKhTA, f. 2, d. 2, kh/n. 742.

[30] GKhTA, f. 2, shifr 582, khudaas, 22. Bliumkin was executed in 1929 for his meeting with Lev Trotskii in exile in Turkey. On Bliumkin and Choibalsan, see also Evgenii V. Matonin, *Iakov Bliumkin: oshibka rezidenta* (Moscow, 2016), 344.

as to use it as a lever against Washington. Tokyo's plan never worked. True, it reflected Tokyo's flinty realism. At the same time, however, it reflected Japan's delusion about Stalin's "Asiatic" sympathy. The Soviet-Japanese Pact of Neutrality of 1941 merely delayed Stalin's plan of dealing with Japan. In 1945, when an opportunity finally presented itself to level Japan and Manzhouguo, he razed the latter easily. Before Stalin could overrun Japan, however, Tokyo surrendered to the Allies.

By "Asiatic," Stalin really meant the use of brute force, as he intimated to a German diplomat after the Battle of Khalkhin Gol/Nomonhan. Stalin "mentioned with almost sadistic glee that twenty thousand Japanese had been killed on that occasion [in the Battle of Nomonhan]. 'That is the only language these Asiatics understand,' he said. 'After all, I am an Asiatic too, so I ought to know.' "[31] When the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact upset Japan, Ribbentrop suggested to Stalin that Berlin and Moscow issue a joint appeal to Japan for collaboration. Stalin responded by saying: "Your intentions are good, but the implementations are wrong. I know the Japanese better. They have just suffered a defeat at Nomonhan and had 20 000 killed. Now negotiations are under way to wind up the incident. They have understood my language."[32] Stalin's was the language of force.

Japan's international isolation and bitterness at the West after the Washington Conference contributed to its defeat in World War II. Outwardly, Moscow made every effort to help Japan in this regard, all the while undermining it in private, luring Japan on its path to self-destruction, an excellent case of subversive strategy known as "reflexive control." The Soviet Union studied Japan's strengths and weaknesses in depth and devised and implemented plans for subversion from within. Needless to say, Stalin could not hide his presence completely. The essence of his "hybrid war" against Japan was disguise and camouflage using third-party forces (such as the Chinese), as well as forces within the enemy camp (such as Communists masquerading as ultranationalists), thereby sowing enough doubt as to Moscow's involvement. To ensure the war's success, Stalin practiced what might be called "total espionage" and "total counterespionage." Japan's political and military establishment, like that in Washington, was penetrated by Soviet agents, whereas neither Japan nor Britain nor the United States had any credible agent in the Kremlin.

By their nature, Stalin's camouflage operations are difficult to prove. In their essence, they were in a class by themselves. Barring Moscow's fully opening its secret archives, a smoking gun will not be found. Even then, archival documents may not convince everyone. What is clear, however, is that Stalin was extraordinarily successful in his operations against Japan. His covert use

[31] See Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, *The Incompatible Allies: A Memoir-History of German-Soviet Relations, 1918–1941* (New York, 1953), 305.

[32] Erich Kordt, "German Political History in the Far East During the Hitler Regime," Hoover Institution Archives, E-1903, 23. See also Kordt, *Wahn und Wirklichkeit. Die Aussenpolitik des Dritten Reiches: Versuch einer Darstellung* (Stuttgart, 1948), 226–27.

of Zhang Xueliang, China's supreme conspirator, and many other Chinese operatives to realize his political goals was quintessentially Stalinist and nothing short of masterful. Thus, under Soviet influence and control, Zhang played a pivotal role in all critical events, from the murder of his father, Zhang Zuolin, in 1928 to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in 1937, including the publication of the Tanaka Memorial in 1929 and Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931. In fact, until 1937, Zhang played an unsung yet far more significant role in Stalin's quest of supremacy over China than did Mao Zedong or Chiang Kai-shek. A "fanatic patriot," Zhang did Moscow's bidding of his own accord. Stalin hid behind Zhang. In Japan, there were many witting and unwitting Soviet influencers, collaborators, and agents—Tanaka Giichi, Kuhara Fusanosuke, Ozaki Hotsumi, Kōmoto Daisaku, Tanaka Ryūkichi, Kamei Kan-ichirō, and Kawashima Yoshiko, to name just a few. In 1938, Stalin was so pleased with the development of war in China that he exclaimed that the Japanese generals turned out to be chumps. Also clear is that Moscow remained silent on matters in which it engaged surreptitiously. Lack of accessible archival documents is often not so much evidence of the absence of conspiracy as an eloquent testimony to the secret role Moscow played—for example, in the murder of Zhang Zuolin or the mysterious life of Sejima Ryūzō. There is no dearth of probative evidence to challenge the Stalinist accounts of the interwar history of East Asia. The devil is hidden in the details. This book has attempted to unknot the fine threads of Moscow's disinformation, camouflage, and provocation, and it posed difficult questions about the roles certain individuals played.

Truth is often elusive; yet, it is also often inconvenient, uncomfortable, and resistant to simple explanations. Current politics interferes in the academic quest for the truth of the past. Apologists for Japan's aggression favor conspiracy theories that blame the Soviet Union (or the United States or both) for everything. Yet, these apologists elide the fact that some of their favorite nationalist heroes were Soviet agents and collaborators who, wittingly or unwittingly, did Moscow's bidding. As Karl Radek made clear in his Schlageter speech, Moscow was game to work with nationalists to fight against the world imperialist order. Moscow fostered and abetted Chinese nationalism against the imperialist states; it encouraged Japanese Communists to pose as ultranationalists for the same reason.

Japan had good reason to be unhappy with some of the IMTFE judgments; by accepting Soviet accounts in toto, the IMTFE muddied the water for the future. Yet, this does not negate all of its judgments. Japan did commit atrocities in China and elsewhere. Some apologists impute them to Communist provocation. In the Jinan Incident in 1928, for example, Chinese Communists provoked Japanese atrocities. Yet, the numbers are arresting: By an official Japanese account, Chinese soldiers killed fourteen or fifteen Japanese as opposed to 3,500 Chinese deaths at the hands of Japanese soldiers. Even if these 3,500 deaths were not premeditated killings, it indicates that Japan's command either clearly

failed to stop them or overlooked the odious atrocities. In any case, Chinese lives were trampled with abandon. Japan's responsibility was clear to everyone. The Sino-Japanese War that started in 1937 followed a similar pattern on a far grander scale. McKenzie was fully justified in his warning in 1908 about Japan's demonstrated cruelty toward the Koreans (see Chapter 1, p. 37). Stalin and Mao masterfully turned Japan's wanton cruelty as an effective weapon against it. The fact that the Soviet Union tainted the IMTFE judgments made it harder for Japan to confront its own guilt squarely.

At the same time, Stalin's meticulous, cold-blooded execution of many secret operations involved numerous collaborators in Japan, China, the United States, and elsewhere. As a result, ever since the IMTFE, there has been continued reluctance to question the Stalinist accounts of interwar East Asian history in Japan, China, and the United States, let alone in Russia. The full scope and extent of Stalin's operations remains obscure and unplumbed. In an altered international environment after World War II, Japan found it convenient to forget its erstwhile romance with Russia.

Japan's imperialist obsession with China, its insistence that China was being usurped by Western powers against Japan's legitimate claims, was a necessary condition for the Soviet triumph over Japan. Stalin purposefully created sufficient conditions by luring Japan into suicidal wars with China, the United States, and Britain. This book has looked rigorously and systematically at Stalin's presence, even when it is inconvenient to the accepted narrative of events. It is all too easy to miss the extent to which the struggle for power determines and defines entire nations; that those with power, in ways constantly obscured by their own legislation of history, conspired to bring about the tragedies of the twentieth century, casting aside human lives for the sake of political gain.

The United States played a central role in Stalin's scheme to gain supremacy over China. Ishiwara Kanji noted before he led the invasion of Manchuria that Japan's "China problem" was the "American problem" in disguise (see Chapter 3, p. 191). Both Japan's left and right insisted that Sino-Japanese solidarity against Western imperialism was the sine qua non for the prosperity of Japan, China, and Asia. Although Ishiwara understood that Japan's invasion of Manchuria would almost inevitably alienate China and the United States, he did see a slim chance of success were Japan to make Manchuria into an Asian "paradise" while forfending any war for a long time. As a soldier of the Japanese Empire, he saw no other way out and gave it a shot. Like Ishiwara, Stalin understood the fundamental conflict between Japan and the United States over the future of China. He therefore ensured that Japan and the United States would be embroiled in war. It appears as though Washington did Stalin's bidding of its own volition.

Unlike Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy, Japan had no dictator. This made it more difficult for Stalin to deal with Japan. Although the emperor bore the ultimate responsibility for the use of military forces abroad, he did not necessarily make decisions. In 1937, for example, he initially stood against war with China. He was overruled by army leaders reassuring him that the war would be won

Figure C.1. Yin Jukeng/Yin Rugeng, a Chinese politician accused and executed as traitor in 1947

easily and swiftly.[33] By subtly influencing Japan's highest political and military establishment, including the royal court, Stalin helped "fascisize" Japan and make the war inevitable. He played a pivotal role in this turn of events by using both nationalists and Marxists in Japan and China, as well as his agents in these countries and the United States. In January 1928, Stalin even kindly, or perhaps inadvertently, advised Gotō Shinpei that Japan should emulate the American "policy as soft as gypsum" toward China instead of resorting so quickly to force. In fact, Stalin's policy was built on inducing Japan to use force against China. Stalin was successful because he knew how willingly the Japanese imperialists relied on force. He had merely to wait for the right moment to induce or provoke them. In the end, in 1945, he delivered his coup de grâce. The Soviet occupation of Manchuria made it into a bastion of Communism from which to take over China as a whole.

Stalin knew that Japan failed to understand the power of Chinese nationalism. Yin Jukeng (Rugeng) (see Chapter 4, p. 293), a pro-Japanese politician who was executed by the KMT in 1947 for treason, was a Chinese patriot who sought mutual understanding between the two countries. Even Yin, however, was horrified at Japan's imperialist ambitions. In 1921, he said of Japan: "This country makes one shudder [戦慄すべき]."[34] Yin's essay was published in Japan in Japanese. In June 1928, soon after the Jinan Incident, Yin traveled to Tokyo with Chiang Kai-shek's complaints about Japan. Chiang stated that Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People" now guided the political life of China,

[33]See Handō Kazutoshi, ed., " 'Ogura Kuraji jijū nikki': Shōwa tennō senjika no nikusei," *Bungei shunjū* 85, no. 5 (April 2007): 165.

[34]Yin Jukeng, "TaiNichi kanjō no itsuwarazaru kokuhaku," in *TaiNichi kanjō no itsuwarazaru kokuhaku, Shiberia shuppei no sōkanjō* (Tokyo, 1921), 31.

which no one could ignore. He continued, "Japan doesn't really understand China. The Japanese are not seriously studying China, the country with which it closely shares its fate of rise and fall." Japan's attitude was incomprehensible, Chiang concluded, "in view of the relations of our countries which truly desire co-existence."[35] By enlisting Roosevelt, Zhang Xueliang, Chiang, and Mao, as well as his many secret agents in Japan, China, the United States, and elsewhere, Stalin only had to ensure that Japan would not veer off its doomed path. In the long run, it was Japan's aggression that, as Mao admitted happily, created a political base for the victory of Communism in China in 1949.

The ruthless battle for hegemony over China obscured many truths. Yet, it was perhaps particularly tortuous in the way it obscured the deep connections in the hearts of so many devastated by the war. Chiang's anger with Japanese politicians notwithstanding, he also personally knew many Japanese who seriously studied and admired China. For Japan, too, the relationship with China was complex.[36] When Japan was defeated in World War II, the favorite poem the Japanese cited was "Spring Scene" (春望) by the famous Chinese poet Du Fu (杜甫, 712–70):

國破山河在, 城春草木深
感時花濺淚, 恨別鳥驚心
烽火連三月, 家書抵萬金
白頭搔更短, 渾欲不勝簪

The state may fall,
but the hills and streams remain.
It is spring in the city:
grass and leaves grow thick.
The flowers shed tears of grief
for the troubled times,
and the birds seem startled,
as if with the anguish of separation.
For three months continuously
the beacon-fires have been burning.
A letter from home
would be worth a fortune.
My white hair is getting so scanty
from worried scratching
that soon there won't be enough
to stick my hatpin in![37]

We cannot know how many Japanese shed tears not only for Japan but also for China. Although the Chinese state did not fall during World War II, the CCP would overthrow it soon afterward. Mao Zedong, who welcomed Japan's aggression against his own people, went on to kill millions more to achieve his ends. Zhang Xueliang, who shed copious tears over a divided China, did not

[35] Ugaki Kazushige, *Ugaki nikki* (Tokyo, 1954), 104.

[36] For an erudite discussion of the tortuous history of China and Japan in general, see Joshua A. Fogel, *Between China and Japan: The Writings of Joshua Fogel* (Leiden, 2015).

[37] David Hawkes, *A Little Primer of Tu Fu* (Oxford, 1967), 48.

grieve for the millions of victims of a unified, Communist China, accepting the old Chinese adage that "the fame of a general costs ten thousand lives" (see Introduction, p. 21). Meanwhile, the Soviet state not only did not fall but became a world superpower. Stalin deftly masked his camouflage operations and convinced the world that his hands were clean. He was triumphant, never shedding a tear for anyone.

Acknowledgments

I have worked on this book for almost two decades. Asia outside Japan seemed somehow distant to me while I was growing up in Japan in the 1950s and 1960s. I knew that my grandfathers had taken part in wars in China, one in the Russo-Japanese War and the other in World War I. I also knew that two of my cousins, lost in China in the chaos of 1945, probably still lived somewhere in China and that in 1945 another cousin, still an infant, was shot dead near Rajin (Rason), Korea, by invading Soviet soldiers. At the time these matters seemed to me to belong to a distant past in remote and closed lands. After I moved to the United States in 1979 and to Britain in 1986, Asia felt even more distant. It all began to change in 1989, however, when I worked in Soviet Ukraine on a British Council scholarship. That year in Donets'k I met Volodymyr N. Pak (1946–2008), a Ukrainian journalist of Korean descent who kindly gave me some articles on the Stalin years published in the local newspaper *Vechernii Donetsk* for which he worked. Subsequently I explored Korean names among the innocent Soviet citizens killed in Kyiv as Japanese spies during Stalin's Great Terror. I requested some of their personal files compiled by the Soviet secret police. With much difficulty but to my great fortune I gained access to them. (Their stories are told in my book *The Voices of the Dead* [2007]). At the time I also read that in 1934 the Polish consul in Kyiv reported to Warsaw that the military maneuvers of the Soviet forces in Kyiv in August and September of that year were "a demonstration against foreign countries, particularly Japan" (Wojciech Włodarkiewicz, *Przed 17 września 1939 roku* [2002], 132). I suspected that "Japan" was a mistake for Poland or Germany, but when I subsequently looked up the original archival document, it confirmed that the report was cited accurately. I sensed the specter of Japan in the 1930s in this part of the Soviet Union thousands of kilometers removed from Japan. This book thus originated in my earlier work in Ukraine and Poland.

The late Andrzej Pepłoński (1944–2021) of Słupsk and Georges Mamoulia of Paris, with whom I have collaborated academically, both deserve special thanks for having inspired me to write this book.

Aleksei A. Kirichenko (1936–2019) of Moscow was invaluable to me. A former KGB counterintelligence officer (in the field of Japan), he left the organ in 1986 to become an academic. Right up until his death in October 2019 he maintained that he strove to speak the truth about history. In 2006, intrigued by his publications and in the spirit of "不入虎穴，焉得虎子" (nothing ventured, nothing gained), I sought him out in Moscow. From then on, whenever I visited Moscow, he gave generously of his time, and we spent countless hours in discussion. Even though we sharply disagreed on contemporary politics, we

both agreed that Moscow, Beijing, and Tokyo are still loath to speak the truth about their complicated relations. For obvious reason, he was not able to discuss much of what he must have done or known. After ten years of acquaintance, however, one day I finally mentioned to him a strange incident that befell me in Moscow in the spring of 1983. (I understood it to be a honey trap and eluded it.) As expected, he sidestepped my question, neither confirming nor denying my long-held suspicions about his involvement in the incident. In what became our last conversation in March 2019 in Moscow, he told me with a look of resignation that he used to work for an organ that did not like to tell the truth. He taught me a great deal about history. I cannot adequately express my gratitude to him for the deep interest and great patience with which he always listened to me. I sorely regret that he did not live to read this book.

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Last but not least, I dedicate this book to my father, Kuromiya Satoru (黒宮悟), and to the memory of my father-in-law, James W. Morley (1921–2020). They fought in World War II on opposite sides—my father as a teenage soldier in training in the Japanese Army, and my father-in-law as a U.S. naval intelligence officer working against Japan. Although often skeptical of my views, my father-in-law looked forward to reading this book. I have done my best to respond to his skepticism. I only regret not having been able to complete this book sooner.

Sources of Maps and Illustrations

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4: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Sorge#/media/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-1985-1003-020,_Richard_Sorge.jpg (Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1985-1003-020 / CC-BY-SA 3.0).

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1.3: Adapted from "Japan" in *Leslie's New World Atlas* (New York: Leslie-Judge Co., 1920).

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1.7: Same as 1.3.

2.6: Courtesy of the P.A. Crush Chinese Railway Collection and Special Collections, PC-s054, University of Bristol Library (https://www.hpcbristol.net/visual/pc-s054).

2.7: Courtesy of the Archives and Special Collections, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, James Steen Collection, "Huanggutun Incident (assassination of Zhang Zuolin), near Shenyang."

3.1: *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* (東京朝日新聞), 3 November 1928, morning edition, 2.

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3.7: Adapted from "A Political Map of Manchuria" in *Appeal by the Chinese Government. Report of the Commission of Enquiry* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1932), Insert, Map No. 2.

3.8: Courtesy of the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Law, Kindai Nihon hōsei shiryō sentā genshiryōbu.

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4.3: *Saikin no TōA keisei zukai* (最近の東亜形勢圖解) published by *Ōsaka mainichi shinbun* on 1 January 1937. Courtesy of the Harvard University Map Collection.

4.5: Same as 4.1.

4.11: Adapted from https://oregondigital.org/sets/easia/oregondigital:df72d066g: Courtesy of the U.S. Military Academy Department of History.

5.1: Courtesy of Academia Historica (國史館), Taipei, Taiwan, Doc. 002-020300-00042-030-005x.

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AAN: Archiwum akt nowych (Warsaw)
Academia Historica: Kuoshih kuan/Guoshi guan (國史館) (Taipei)
AVP: Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Moscow)
BBK: Bōeishō bōei kenkyūjo senshi kenkyū sentā shiryōshitsu (防衛省防衛研究所戦史研究センター史料室) (Tokyo)
CAW: Centralne archiwum wojskowe (Rembertów, Poland)
GKhTA: Gadaad khariltsaany tөv arkhiv (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)
Harvard University, Houghton Library (Cambridge, MA, USA)
Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford, CA, USA)
JACAR: Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan (アジア歴史資料センター), digital archive accessible at: https://www.jacar.go.jp/
Kaikō Bunko (偕行文庫) (Tokyo)
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Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (Washington, DC)
MUÜTA: Mongol ulsyn Ündėsniĭ tөv arkhiv (Ulaanbaatar)
NA: National Archives (Kew, UK)
NARA: National Archives and Record Administration (College Park, MD, USA)
National Archives, Taiwan, Kuofangpu shihcheng pienichu/Guofangbu shizheng bianyiju (國家檔案國防部史政編譯局) (Taipei)
National Archives of Japan Digital Archive (国立公文書館デジタルアーカイブ), accessible at: https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/
RGASPI: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (Moscow)
RGVA: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv (Moscow)
TsA FSB: Tsentral'nyi arkhiv Federal'noi sluzhby bezopasnosti (Moscow)
University of Tokyo, Faculty of Law, Kindai Nihon hōsei shiryō sentā genshiryōbu (東京大学大学院法学政治学研究科附属近代日本法政史料センター原資料部) (Tokyo)
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Tōkyō Asahi shinbun (東京朝日新聞)
Tōyō keizai shinpō (東洋経済新報) (Tokyo)
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