

THE ÉVIAN CONFERENCE FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE? THE ESTONIAN-GERMAN-JAPANESE JOINT INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION IN THE SUMMER-AUTUMN OF 1938

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SUMMARY. The Évian Conference of July 1938 was a historic event in the history of European Jews. The delegates from 32 countries all around the world failed to reach an agreement regarding the acceptance of Jewish refugees from Germany and former Austria. Ultimately, the failed conference led to the genocide of the Jewish refugees in the 1940s. Meanwhile, at the time of the conference, the German military intelligence service (*Abwehr*) under the command of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris has been actively organizing intelligence operations against the Soviet Union in Estonia together with the local Estonian and Japanese intelligence services. Contrary to the persecution of the Jews in the Third Reich, the Germans employed the émigrés for intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. The author of the article tried to sum up the trilateral intelligence activities of Estonia, Germany and Japan, which could be helpful in understanding or analyzing the Évian Conference from a different perspective.

KEYWORDS: Baltic Studies, intelligence history, interwar history, Estonia, Japan.

1. THE BACKGROUND OF THE GERMAN-JAPANESE INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION

The road to Berlin-Tokyo Axis was paved by the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936. In December 1936, shortly after signing of the pact, Hiroshi Oshima, Japanese military attaché to Germany, spontaneously proposed a German-Japanese Military Convention to the Germans. Despite strong opposition of the Foreign Ministry of Germany (*Auswärtiges Amt*) and Reich's War Ministry (*Reichskriegsministerium*), Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the German military intelligence service (*Abwehr*), received personal encouragements from two generals, Blomberg and Keitel, to continue the negotiations with the Japanese regarding the exchange of intelligence information and infiltration methods.¹

In February 1937, secret meetings between the representatives of the Second Department of the Japanese General Staff, including General Hisao Watari, head of the Japanese Second Department, and Eugen Ott, German military attaché

¹ Mueller M. *Canaris: The Life and Death of Hitler's Spymaster*. Pen & Sword Books, South Yorkshire, 2017, 109.

to Japan, were held in Tokyo to confirm future policies of the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation. In the meetings, an exchange of Soviet information and the stratagems against the Soviet Union were mentioned as two of the four pillars for the (future) cooperation.² Shinichi Tanaka, head of the military affairs section (*Gunji-ka*) of the Japanese Army Ministry, wrote on 23 April 1937 that four measures must be taken for keeping down the Soviet Union: 1) expansion of armaments in an unprecedented scale, 2) strengthening air power, 3) promotion of stratagems against the Soviet Union (both in Europe and in Mongolia), and 4) promotion of stratagems in Northern China.³ By the date (23 April), the plan to organize joint intelligence activities with Germany was shared with high-ranking officials of the Japanese Army.

In Berlin, based on the meetings in Tokyo, Oshima concluded two secret agreements with Canaris regarding the exchange of the Soviet information and the joint stratagems against the Soviet Union between Germany and Japan on 11 May 1937.⁴ In the Canaris-Oshima Agreements, Eurasia was divided into three areas: 1) European border region from Finland to Bulgaria, 2) Turkey and Iran, and 3) East Asian border region. Intelligence operations in the first region were assigned to the German sphere of interests and the third region was attributed to the Japanese sphere of interests; whereas the second region was noted as the German-Japanese joint sphere of interests.⁵ A chart was attached to the Canaris-Oshima Agreements which presented a five-years plan to establish communications with the local authorities and émigré organizations of the targeted nations.⁶

2. THE STRATAGEMS OF THE JAPANESE ARMY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Shortly before the conclusion of the Canaris-Oshima Agreements in Berlin, Major Yoshihide Kato, Japanese military attaché to Finland, paid a visit to the headquarters of the Finnish secret police E.K. (in Finnish: *Etsivä keskuspoliisi*) on 15 January 1937. Kato exchanged several opinions with the E.K. officer, but his main purpose was to confirm whether émigré communities in Finland could be useful for Japanese intelligence activities. Kato asked the E.K. officer if, in case of war between Finland and Russia, the émigrés residing in Finland would side with Finland. The E.K. officer answered that all émigré organizations in Finland have

² Tajima N. *Stratagems of the Japanese Army against the Soviet Union (Nihon Rikugun no Tai-So Bouryaku)*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Koubunkan, 2017, 116.

³ Kawada M. *History of the Japanese Army during the Showa Era (Showa Rikugun Zenshi 2)*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2014, 190.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

been penetrated by the Bolshevik agents. Both of them agreed that émigrés are not trustworthy, since many of them cooperate with the Soviets.⁷ Kato's visit to the E.K. headquarters was very likely a preliminary research about the state of the émigré organizations in Finland as part of the Canaris-Oshima Agreements.

Instead of Finland, the Japanese Army selected Estonia as a new partner for the intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. While the Finnish intelligence service was reluctant to cooperate with the great powers, Estonia was rather forthcoming about it. Already in June 1936, the Second Department (Intelligence) of the Estonian General Staff reached a special agreement with the *Abwehr* to allow the establishment of a special branch in Estonia called the "Group 6513" (in German: *Gruppe 6513*).⁸ According to the analysis of the Soviet secret police, NKVD, 100% of low-ranking officers of the Estonian Army were against the cooperation with Germany; however, several personnel members in the General Staff, such as Richard Maasing, head of the Estonian Second Department, and Johannes Soodla, pushed the bilateral cooperation ahead.⁹ Estonia has been showing friendly attitude towards the relationship with Japan throughout the 1930s. For instance, between 1933 and 1934, the Japanese Army sent two officers to study in the Estonian military units.¹⁰ Unfortunately, only a few Japanese sources mention the Japanese Army connections with Estonia. It had been unclear how the Japanese Army was able to use Estonia as a hub for its intelligence operations. Yet, at some point, Estonia agreed with both, Germany and Japan, to participate in the intelligence operations against the Soviet Union.

3. THE GAVRILOV DIVERSION GROUP AND OPERATIONS IN ESTONIA

Julius Mader, East German journalist, wrote in the 1970s about a group of special agents of the *Abwehr* active in interwar Estonia. The "Gavrilo Diversion Group" (in German: *Gruppe Gawrilow*; hereafter, the "GDG") was first unveiled by him.¹¹ Since Mader did not cite his sources of information regarding the GDG, it was unclear how and when the group was established. However, the group insisted that the *Abwehr* and the second departments of the Estonian and Japanese General

⁷ Report of the conversation between Yoshihide Kato and the E.K. officer, 16 January 1937 (ILM No.146). Kansallisarkisto (Finnish National Archives) M36.3134.

⁸ Mader J. *Hitler's Spying Generals Speaks Up (Hitlers Spionagegenerale sagen aus)*. Verlag der Nation, Berlin: Verlag der Nation, 1972, 307; Ilmjärv M. The Baltic States Military and Their Foreign and Defence Policies 1933-38, *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 2003, Vol. 1, 75.

⁹ Report of the agent No. 292 in Estonia, 6 June/July 1939. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.8.90, 84.

¹⁰ Captain Tadamasu Shimanuki studied in the 3rd Division of the Estonian Air Force (1933) and Captain Toshio Nishimura studied in the tank regiment of the Estonian Army (1934).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

Staffs (military intelligence services) jointly supported the activities. Around 1937, Makoto Onodera, Japanese military attaché in the Baltic States residing in Riga, was invited to join a plot to topple the Soviet regimes of Ukraine and Georgia by Shigeaki Usui, a representative of a special intelligence agency of the Japanese Army in Berlin. The plot, to be planned jointly with the Germans, was to infiltrate agents into the Soviet Union (especially Moscow) through the Baltic States.¹² In Berlin, Onodera met two or three agents, who appeared to be Ukrainians and were fluent in the Russian language.¹³

The details of the Estonian-German-Japanese intelligence operations of summer of 1938 were only recorded in the dossiers of the interrogation records of Henn (Herbert) Puusepp, senior officer of the Estonian Political Police (in Estonian: *Poliitiline politsei*), and Rudolf Velling, officer intern at the Section C of the Estonian Second Department. Both were arrested by the Soviet secret police in the aftermath of the Soviet occupation of Estonia in summer of 1940. Their interrogations continued until the end of 1940. The authenticity of the Soviet interrogation records are highly questionable, since most of the confessions have been produced by extortions and torture. However, some parts of the interrogation records of Puusepp and Velling coincided with the post-WW2 confession of Makoto Onodera. Thus, they are considered as valuable primary sources.

In May 1938, Captain Aksel Kristian, member of the Second Department (Intelligence) of the Estonian General Staff, summoned Henn Puusepp to Tallinn. Kristian told Puusepp that the Estonian Second Department had been planning to send 6 agents to the Soviet Union, each time in pairs. The agents were to use a boat from the point that was 5-6 km north of the town of Vasknarva and to cross the river bordering Estonia and the Soviet Union. After crossing the river, the agents were instructed to reach one of the train stations of the Pskov-Leningrad railway.¹⁴ In the end of May or June, Puusepp was invited to the apartment 'Tourist House' (in Estonian: *Turistide Kodu*) in Tallinn, where Gavrilov, head of the GDG, was residing.

¹² Okabe N. *Disappeared Emergency Telegram of the Secret Agreement at the Yalta Conference. (Kieta Yaruta Mitsuyaku Kinkyuden)*. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 2013, 110.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 5 November 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1. (1.0), 211-212.



Picture No. 1. A mugshot of Henn (Herbert) Puusepp after his arrest by the Soviet secret police, autumn of 1940. Courtesy of the Estonian National Archives (*Eesti rahvusarhiiv*).

In the end of July, Lieutenant Colonel Tamotsu Takatsuki, Japanese military attaché to the Baltic States residing in Riga, visited the Estonian General Staff in Tallinn and protested the delay of the deployment of the GDG to the Soviet Union.¹⁵ However, according to Puusepp, no actions were taken until the end of September 1938. In the end of September 1938, Puusepp was notified by Kristian about the date when the GDG members would be sent to the Soviet Union.¹⁶ Shortly after, Puusepp received a letter from Gavrilov regarding the arrival date. Two agents of the GDG, accompanied by Gavrilov, arrived to Narva. Puusepp instructed his friend, the Estonian border guard, called ‘Kaze,’ who was working at the branch in Vasknarva, to help with the crossing of the border.¹⁷ In total, Puusepp helped 3 agents of the GDG to cross the Soviet border: two from “Narva” [sic]¹⁸ one from Irboska (Izborsk).¹⁹ Makoto Onodera recalled in 1976 that he

¹⁵ Interrogation Record of Rudolf Velling, 16 September 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.2), 3.

¹⁶ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 5 November 1940, ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.0), 212.

¹⁷ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 2 September 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.0), 152.

¹⁸ Puusepp may have meant Vasknarva.

¹⁹ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 5 November 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.0), 214.

met 2 or 3 agents of the GDG who were thought to be Ukrainians and trained in Berlin.²⁰ The number of the agents indicated in the interrogation record of Puusepp matched the number mentioned by Onodera.

In 1937, by the invitation of the Estonian General Staff, Onodera and his wife Yuriko travelled to Estonia and visited the town of Petseri (Pechory).²¹ In this small town, near the border between Estonia and the Soviet Union, Puusepp was stationed as a senior assistant officer of the local branch of the Estonian Political Police around May 1937.²² No doubt that Onodera and Puusepp met in Petseri and discussed the plans to send agents to the Soviet Union. Presumably, the number of the agents was also discussed.



Picture No. 2. Lieutenant Colonel Tamotsu Takatsuki (fourth from the left), Japanese military attaché to the Baltic States residing in Riga, and his predecessor Makoto Onodera (fourth from the right), spring of 1938. Courtesy of Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (*Latvijas Okupācijas muzejs*).

²⁰ Okabe, 2013, 111.

²¹ Onodera Y. *On the Shore of the Baltic Sea. (Baruto-kai no Hotori nite)*. Kyodo Tsushinsha, Tokyo: Kyodo Tsushinsha, 1985, 55.

²² List of agents of the Estonian political police branch in Petseri (Pechory), date unknown. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.58, 15.

Directive(s), given to the agents of the GDG, still remained a mystery due to the absence of information, which was not included in the interrogation records of either Puusepp or Velling. Makoto Onodera recalled in 1976 that he carried bombs for the GDG agents once or twice from Berlin to Tallinn.²³ Puusepp also recalled in autumn of 1940 that two canned bombs and the Browning pistols were handed over by him to each of the GDG agents at Petseri (Pechory) before they crossed the border from Vana-Irboska (Stary Izborsk).²⁴ According to the Japanese Army's list of special equipment for the intelligence agents issued in February 1939, there were two types of canned bombs registered: 1) "Hai-Kai," meant for destroying subjects, could be concealed as boxes of coffee beans and confectionery, and 2) "Hato-Tsuse" used for the assassination of a person.²⁵ In late 1938, the Japanese Army sent another 10 agents to the Soviet Union via Turkey. The agents were given bombs and the directive to assassinate Stalin. However, they were arrested after crossing the Soviet border and executed near the border.²⁶

To sum up, there was a possibility that the GDG members who crossed the Soviet border from Estonia were given the same or similar directives to assassinate Stalin or high-ranking officials of the Soviet government. The assassination of Stalin would have caused drastic changes in the Évian Conference and the European politics. However, that did not happen.

4. THE FATE OF THE GDG AND ITS RELATION TO GERMAN DIPLOMATIC POLICY

The GDG ended abruptly in autumn of 1938. In the first week of October 1938, Gavrilov arrived to Petseri (Pechory) with a GDG agent. Puusepp remembered that the man, whose name was Petrushenko, looked 25 years old. However, Petrushenko failed to cross the Soviet border at Vana-Irboska (Stary Izborsk) in the night, informing Puusepp that due to darkness, Gavrilov ordered him to remain on the Estonian side.²⁷ This was the last confirmed attempt of the GDG to cross the Soviet border testified by Puusepp. However, the Estonian immigration

²³ Okabe, 2013, 112.

²⁴ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 2 September, 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.0), 154.

²⁵ Use of codenames for equipment for stratagems and intelligence operations (Bouryaku oyobi Chouhou-you Shokizai Rui Fugou Shiyou no Ken), JACAR (Japan Centre for Asian Historical Records), C01004658600, 8. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_C01004658600?IS_KEY_S1=C01004658600&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD& \[16-09-2020\]](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_C01004658600?IS_KEY_S1=C01004658600&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD& [16-09-2020]).

²⁶ Office of the United States, Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. Volume IV*. United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1946, 852.

²⁷ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 2 September, 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.0), 154.

record indicates a departure of Takatsuki from Tallinn to Berlin on 30 October.²⁸ The (failed) deployment of Petrushenko should have taken while Takatsuki was staying in Tallinn. Also, Major Takeharu Shimanuki, assistant officer of Takatsuki, who resided in Tallinn and presumably supported the preparations for Petrushenko, returned to Tallinn from Berlin on 24 September²⁹ and left Estonia from the Valga border checkpoint on 1 October.³⁰ Thus, the deployment probably took place sometime between 24 and 30 September.

On 7 October, a new agreement regarding the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation was finalized between Hiroshi Oshima and Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, OKW).³¹ The so-called Oshima-Keitel Agreement was based on the Canaris-Oshima Agreements of 1937. Professor Nobuo Tajima notes that the Oshima-Keitel Agreement was a formalization of the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation, while the latter were merely promises made between Canaris and Oshima.³²

In the second week of October 1938, a secret conference of Japanese military attachés stationed in Europe was held in Riga. The moderator of the conference was colonel Akio Doi, military attaché to the Soviet Union. According to Doi, the military attachés mainly exchanged opinions regarding the strengthening of the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany, and they insisted on careful consideration of the strengthening of the pact. The conclusion of the meeting was sent to Tokyo; however, the General Staff did not take their opinion into account.³³

Meanwhile, there was a different view on the Japanese conference in Riga. In the same month, the Latvian Legation in London was informed by the British intelligence service (Anglo-Foreign Information Bureau, AFIB) that a possibility to jointly attack the Soviet Union by Germany and Japan was discussed at the conference.³⁴ The author of the article is not in the position to decide which information

²⁸ Departure from the Tallinn border checkpoint that took place on 30 September, 1938, created on 1 October, 1938. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERA495.11.28, Dossier No. 1, 529. There is no record of Takatsuki's entrance to Estonia in late September.

²⁹ Entrance from the Tallinn border checkpoint that took place on 24 September, 1938, created on 26 September, 1938. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERA495.11.28, Dossier No. 1, 514.

³⁰ Departure from the Valga border checkpoint that took place on 1 October, 1938, created on 3 October, 1938. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERA495.11.28, Dossier No. 2, 1523.

³¹ Main body of the agreement between the military forces of Germany and Japan regarding the exchange of the Soviet information and stratagems, 7 October, 1938. (Tai-So Jyoho Koukan Oyobi Bouryaku ni kansuru Nichi-Doku ryo-gunbu no torikime shubun, Showa 13.10.7) JACAR (Japan Centre for Asian Historical Records), C14061021200, 1-4. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_C14061021200?IS_KEY_S1=C14061021200&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD&\[16-09-2020\]](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_C14061021200?IS_KEY_S1=C14061021200&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD&[16-09-2020]).

³² Tajima, 2017, 154.

³³ Doi Akio-den Kankokai. *A Life of One Patriotic Military Officer (Ichi Gunjin no Yuukoku no Shougai)*. Tokyo: Hara-Shobo, Tokyo, 1980, 102.

³⁴ Report of the Latvian Minister Zariņš to the United Kingdom, No. 5837, 17 October, 1938, LVVA (Latvian State Historical Archives) LVVA2574.2.7231, 5.

is correct, due to the lack of sources. Yet, knowing of the fact that the GDG failed to send the last agent to the Soviet Union two weeks before the Riga conference, the recollections of Akio Doi seem more credible than the British information.



Picture No. 3. A group of foreign military attachés accredited to Estonia at Rapla, Estonia, (6 October, 1938.) Lieutenant Colonel Takatsuki (centre) was among the military attachés. Courtesy of the Estonian Film Archives (*Eesti filmiarhiiv*).

Then, in either in the end of October or early November 1938, Aksel Kristian decided to abandon the GDG. He informed Puusepp that the members of the GDG will no longer be sent to the Soviet Union. Kristian requested Puusepp to keep looking for candidates for agents; however, the authority to lead the intelligence operations was handed over from Kristian to his aide, Rudolf Velling.³⁵ It was also confirmed that Takatsuki arrived to Tallinn from Berlin on 27 October³⁶ and that he left Estonia for Riga on 31 October.³⁷ Kristian's decision to disavow the GDG was probably based on the agreement with Takatsuki, who may had visited Berlin to receive instructions for the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation.

³⁵ Interrogation Record of Henn Puusepp, 2 September, 1940, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1 (1.0), 154.

³⁶ Entrance from the Tallinn border checkpoint which took place on 27 October, 1938, created on 28 September, 1938. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERA.495.11.29, 310.

³⁷ Departure from the Valga border checkpoint which took place on 31 October, 1938, created on 1 November, 1938. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERA495.11.28, Dossier No. 2, 1587.

What had brought an end to the GDG? The cause has been unclear even after the discovery of the Soviet records of the interrogations of Puusepp and Velling. Between summer and autumn of 1938, the eyes of the world were focused on the Sudeten crisis in Central Europe and the persecution of the Jewish people in Germany. On the same day of the German military occupation of the Sudetenland (1 October, 1938), major Takeharu Shimanuki, Japanese assistant military attaché residing in Tallinn, who may have played an important role in preparing the GDG, left Estonia for Japan. When Shimanuki reached Milan on 5 October, all German passports issued to Jews were declared void. As a result, the Jews, who resided in Germany and former Austria, lost the right to lawfully leave the country and defect to other countries. The impact of the Sudeten crisis and inhumane acts of the German authorities against the Jews because of the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation must still be researched; however, too many uncertainties, including the diplomatic and political factors related to the events, exist.

According to the Soviet investigation, when the operations failed, Gavrilov fled to Yugoslavia.³⁸ Shortly after, Lieutenant Colonel Masao Ueda, Japanese military attaché to Poland, visited Belgrade in Yugoslavia to have a talk with a local émigré organization. Ueda was introduced to one or two men suitable for intelligence operations by them.³⁹ The Polish General Staff accepted a plan for the joint operation with the Japanese to deploy an émigré agent. At the end, he was deployed into the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ The agent was ordered to cross Siberia and escape to Manchukuo; however, he failed.⁴¹ That person may have been Gavrilov himself or one of the former members of the GDG.

On January 31, 1939, Heinrich Himmler, chief of the German Police (*Chef der Deutschen Polizei*), reported Hitler about the progress of the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation based on the conversation with Oshima.⁴² The aforementioned execution of 10 agents in the Caucasus was reported in the document. Meanwhile, it was less likely that Himmler knew the details of the German-Japanese intelligence operations, especially of the activities of the GDG in Estonia. In additional secret protocol of the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936, the establishment of a special commission in case of unprovoked attacks or threat of attacks to either Germany or Japan from the Soviet Union was mentioned.⁴³

³⁸ List of Collaborators of Rudolf Velling: File Numbers between 32 and 40, written date unknown, ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.13015, Dossier No. 1. (1.2), 3.

³⁹ Memoir No. 6-5 Military Attache to Poland (6-5 Poland Taishikan-tsuki Bukan), written date unknown, Yasukuni Kaiko Archive, 82332.390.281U, 4; Yomiuri Shimbun, 1 April, 1974, Evening edition, 5.

⁴⁰ Memoir No. 6-5 Military Attaché to Poland, 4.

⁴¹ Memoir No. 6-5 Military Attaché to Poland, 4; Yomiuri Shimbun, 1 April, 1974, Evening edition, 5.

⁴² Office of the United States, Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, 1946, 852.

⁴³ Toynebee A. J. (Ed.). *Documents on International Affairs 1939-1946, Vol. 1 (March-September 1939)*. Oxford University Press, London: Oxford University Press, 1951, 5.

However, according to Oshima, a special commission was never realized due to the political intervention of Himmler. Hitler assigned the foreign minister Ribbentrop to lead the standing committee in preparation for special commission. Himmler protested, saying that the issues handled at the special commission should be closely related to the internal affairs and that he intended to take down Ribbentrop.⁴⁴ Although Himmler confused the German and Japanese authorities, his involvement with the Anti-Comintern Pact was very limited. In the late 1930s, based on the Pact, the German and Japanese police exchanged a few individuals to share the information related to the Comintern (Communist International).⁴⁵ Himmler took initiative in the police officer exchange programme, but it was the only confirmed involvement of his with the Pact. Thus, it was less likely that Himmler knew the details of the GDG or of the intelligence operations, mainly organized between Oshima and other German high-ranking officials, such as Canaris and Keitel.

At the same time, in January 1939, Lieutenant Colonel Ueda, Japanese military attaché to Poland, met Major General Torashiro Kawabe, Japanese military attaché to Germany, who had succeeded Oshima in December of 1938, after Oshima was appointed the ambassador to Germany. Ueda was asked about the possibility to send an agent to the Soviet Union again, as part of the cooperation with the German intelligence service (likely the *Abwehr*).⁴⁶ Ueda's recollection proves that the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation has been functional until January 1939. However, the intimate relationship between Germany and Japan suddenly ended with the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed in August 1939. On August 24, 1939, the following day of the signing of the German-Soviet Pact, Colonel Takanobu Manaki, who succeeded Usui in 1937, visited Colonel Helmuth Groscurth, subordinate of Canaris. Manaki said to Groscurth in disgust that the "entire Anti-Comintern pact is now defunct."⁴⁷

5. CONCLUSION

The cause(s) of the failure of the GDG have not been identified yet. As I mention in the previous chapter, the impact of the Sudeten crisis and the persecution of the Jews in Germany because of intelligence operations remain unclear. I will try to answer these questions in my future articles.

⁴⁴ Suzuki K. *Hiroshi Oshima, Ambassador to Germany. (Chudoku Taishi Oshima Hiroshi)*. Tokyo: Biho Shobou, 1979, 91.

⁴⁵ The Emperor of the Showa era history (Showa-shi no Tennou) No. 1901, the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact (Nichi-Doku Boukyo Kyotei) No. 92. Yomiuri Shimbun, 3 October 3, 1972, Morning edition, 21.

⁴⁶ Memoir No. 6-5 Military Attaché to Poland, 4-5.

⁴⁷ Tajima, 2017, 164.

According to one account, every year throughout the interwar period, the Japanese Army had consecutively sent around 30 agents from the neighbouring countries (Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and Turkey) to the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ However, as the Finnish intelligence service and major Yoshihide Kato agreed in January 1937, many of the émigrés, who were hired as agents by the Japanese Army, would have been double agents of the Soviet intelligence services. Colonel Saburo Hayashi, one of the best Russian experts of the Japanese Army, agrees with that.⁴⁹ It was not only the émigrés but also the Japanese, whom the Soviets used as double agents. In 1938, the Soviet secret police sent agent ‘Sato’ of Japanese origin (Agent No. 143). His name appeared on the list of agents in Estonia published in December 1938.⁵⁰ No reports about ‘Sato’ were found in former NKVD archives of Estonia. However, it was no doubt that at some point, the Soviets had noticed the vitalization of the Japanese intelligence activities in Estonia.

Meanwhile, the Canaris-Oshima and the Oshima-Keitel Agreements were probably successful for their original purpose: the exchange of Soviet information. In May 1943, Colonel Etsuo Kotani, Japanese assistant military attaché to Germany, reported to the Japanese Second Department that he had previously exchanged the Soviet information with the “authorities of the German armed forces” [sic] in 1937 and that the Germans were enjoying the “considerable success in collecting intelligence” [sic].⁵¹ Since this was part of the ciphered telegram sent by Kotani, secretly intercepted and decoded by the British intelligence service, the information was credible. The author of this article intends to research more on the British perception of the German-Japanese intelligence cooperation alongside the aforementioned issues.

⁴⁸ Suzuki, 1979, 93.

⁴⁹ A memoir of the former Colonel Saburo Hayashi: How we managed the intelligence works against the Soviet Union. (Wareware wa donoyouni Tai-So Chohou Kinmu wo yattanoka) Written dDate unknown. NIDS (National Institute for Defence Studies) Archives in Tokyo, Reference: Chuo-Gunjigyo-sei-Sonota 151, 7.

⁵⁰ List of agents in Estonia, December 1938. ERA (Estonian National Archives) ERAF138sm.1.56, 72.

⁵¹ Col. Kotani reports on the exchange of Russian intelligence with the Germans (Serial No.140), sent on 25 May, 1943. Decoded and reported by the British intelligence service on 27 July, 1943. British National Archives, HW35.10. The files concerning the decoded Japanese military attachés’ telegrams were classified until 2000.