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The Great Terror

Polish-Japanese Connections

La Grande Terreur : les relations polono-japonaises

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HIROAKI KUROMIYA, ANDRZEJ PEPEŁŃSKI

THE GREAT TERROR

Polish-Japanese Connections

The Great Terror of 1937-1938 took place against the backdrop of war threat. The defendants of the famous Moscow trials were tried and executed as German, Japanese and Polish spies. When closely examined, the majority of the lesser-known cases, too, show that they were tried as cases of foreign espionage, defeatism and other similar charges related to war and foreign threat. Yet when war is discussed in scholarly literature, it focuses almost exclusively on Germany with whom the Soviet Union did fight a long and bitter war. This is understandable, given that wars with Poland and Japan were much more limited: the September 1939 war with Poland was one-sided and swift with Poland easily dismembered; and the August 1945 war against Japan/Manchukuo was equally one-sided and swift with Japan decisively defeated. Yet, surprisingly the numbers of repressed at the time of the Great Terror as Polish and Japanese spies and agents far surpassed those repressed as German spies and agents. The NKVD statistics show that in 1937-1938, 101,965 people were arrested as Polish spies, 52,906 as Japanese spies and 39,300 as German spies to be followed by Latvian, Finnish, Estonian, Romanian, Greek and other “spies.”¹ All major countries (Germany, Poland, Japan, Britain, France and others) engaged in espionage against the Soviet Union just as the Soviet Union engaged in espionage against these countries, so why were Poland and Japan more intensely targeted than Germany? In May 1937 I.V. Stalin explicitly told K.E. Voroshilov and N.I. Ezhov that the main enemy was the German intelligence service.²

1. V.N. Khaustov, V.P. Naumov, N.S. Plotnikova, eds., *Lubianka: Stalin i Glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti NKVD 1937-1938* [The Lubianka: Stalin and The NKVD Chief Administration of State Security] (M.: Mezhdunarodnyi fond “Demokratiia,” Fond A.N. Iakovleva, 2004), 660.

2. Quoted in V.K. Vinogradov, “Tret’ia reforma organov bezopasnosti (1934-1941),” [“The third reform of the Organs of State Security (1939-1941)”], *Trudy Obshchestva izucheniia istorii otechestvennykh spetssluzhb*, [Works of The Society for the Study of Soviet Special Services], v. II (M.: Kuchkovo pole, 2006), 93.

In this essay we discuss briefly the intelligence activity of Poland and Japan against the Soviet Union and their collaboration. We suggest general reasons for the targeted attack against Polish and Japanese “spies”: first, by 1937 and 1938 Stalin had probably decided to destroy Poland as a country; second, in the 1930s Japan was a dangerous and unpredictable country and therefore had to be weakened to the maximum degree possible; third, Germany was a dictatorship not unlike Stalin’s own regime with which Stalin saw the possibility of a short-term deal even though, given Hitler’s ultimate goal, he knew well that the deal could not be enduring.

Charges of “espionage,” “subversion” and so forth had no substance in the vast bulk of the cases processed under Stalin. According to Stalin, spying did not necessarily consist of placing secret agents in foreign countries: it also consisted of such mundane tasks as the clipping of newspapers.³ By this logic, nearly every newspaper reader could be considered a foreign spy. Not merely reading but entertaining a certain thought was tantamount to spying, according to L.M. Kaganovich who said in December 1936, “If they stand for [the] defeat [of the Soviet Union], it’s clear that they are spies.”⁴ Characteristically, Stalin was extremely hardheaded in these matters. He said in May 1937, “From the point of view of intelligence, we cannot have friends: there are clear enemies and there are potential enemies. So we cannot reveal any secrets to anyone.”⁵ By contrast, Poland and Japan exchanged intelligence and appeared to trust one another. They therefore must have appeared all the more dangerous to Stalin.

Many of those repressed as Polish and Japanese “spies” were arrested according to special operations. Most if not all those repressed as Polish “spies” were probably arrested according to the “Polish Operation” (NKVD Order No. 00485, dated 11 August 1937).⁶ There was no specific “Japanese Operation,” but most are believed to have been arrested in connection with the wholesale deportation of ethnic Koreans from the Far East based on the 21 August 1937 resolution of the government and the party,⁷ the “Kharbintsy Operation” (NKVD Order No. 00593 dated 20 September 1937), an operation directed against the former employees (and their families) of the Chinese Eastern Railway (sold to Manchukuo in 1935)⁸ and on the basis of NKVD Order No. 52691 dated 22 December 1937 on the arrest of politically suspect ethnic Chinese.⁹ In addition, numerous Polish and Japanese

3. O.A. Rzheshvskii, O. Vekhviliainen, eds., *Zimniaia voina 1939-1940* [*The Winter War, 1939-1940*], v. II (M.: Nauka, 1998), 207.

4. *Voprosy istorii*, no. 1 (1995): 6 (December 1936 Central Committee plenum).

5. Vinogradov, “Tret’ia reforma organov bezopasnosti...,” 93.

6. Khaustov, Naumov, Plotnikova, eds., *Lubianka i Glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti*, 301-303.

7. N.L. Pabol’, P.M. Polian, *Stalinskic deportatsii 1928-1953* [*Stalin’s Deportations, 1928-1953*] (M.: MFD-Materik, 2005), 83-84.

8. E.A. Bakirov, ed., *Butovskii poligon, 1937-1938 gg.*, [*The Firing Range in Butovo, 1937-1938*] t. 1 (M.: Institut eksperimental’noi sotsiologii, 1997), 355-356.

9. This order has not been published yet.

“spies” were arrested according to other special operations, particularly NKVD Order No. 00693 dated 23 October 1937 (which mandated the arrest of all people who had defected to the Soviet Union by crossing international borders, regardless of the motives and circumstances of their defections)¹⁰ and NKVD Order No. 00698 dated 28 October 1937 (to “arrest all Soviet citizens who are connected to the staff of foreign diplomatic offices and who visit their businesses and private premises” and to “place under constant surveillance all members of the German, Japanese, Polish and Italian embassies”).¹¹

National Prejudices

What role did national prejudices play in the Great Terror? The distrust between the Russians and the Poles is well documented and, although not an ethnic Russian, Stalin identified himself with Russia. In modern times, Poland has suffered at the hands of Russia. Russia, in turn, has suspected Poland’s “inherent” anti-Russian sentiments. Poland’s rage is probably best exemplified by the literary work of Poland’s “national poet,” Adam Mickiewicz who deplored the subjugation of Poland to foreign rule. In his *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828) Mickiewicz appears to suggest that treachery and deceit are morally justified to save one’s nation. It seems likely that Mickiewicz’s enormous popularity in Poland encouraged Russia’s mistrust. In any case, in spite of the anti-Polish climate in Russia, Stalin himself chose not to sacrifice his political goals for whatever prejudices he may have had. In fact, when Stalin deemed it imperative to conclude a non-aggression pact with Poland in 1931 to secure the western borderlands, he feared that anti-Polish sentiments in the Soviet Union would be an obstacle to his goal. In August 1931, Stalin urged M.M. Litvinov, the Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, not to “yield to so called ‘public opinion’” (“the common, narrow-minded mania of ‘anti-Polonism’” and to proceed to conclude a non-aggression treaty with Poland.¹² Indeed in 1932, with the tension mounting in the east dramatically owing to Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in September 1931, Stalin succeeded in concluding non-aggression pacts with Poland. (Stalin concluded similar treaties with France, Estonia, Latvia and Finland at the time.)

10. Oleg Mozokhin, *Pravo na repressii: Vnesudebnye polnomochiia organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti (1918-1953)* [*The Right of Repression: The Extrajudicial Power of the Organs of State Security (1918-1953)*] (M.: Kuchkovo pole, 2006), 160. See also RGASPI (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politicheskoi istorii — Russian State Archive of Social-Political History), f. 17, op. 162, d. 22, l. 114 (31 January 1938 decision by the Politburo of the Communist Party).

11. Quoted in I.L. Shcherbakova, *Nakazannyi narod: Repressii protiv rossiiskikh nemtsev* [*The Punished People: Repression against Soviet Germans*] (M.: Zven’ia, 1999), 47 and Vadim Abramov, *Kontrrazvedka: Shchit i mech protiv Abvera i TsRU* [*Counterintelligence: Sword and Shield against the Abwehr and CIA*] (M.: Iauza Eksmo, 2006), 105.

12. R.W. Davies, Oleg V. Khlevniuk, E.A. Rees, eds., *The Stalin-Kaganovich Correspondence 1931-1936* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2003), 68.

As for Japan, it is known that Stalin considered the territorial loss in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War a national insult. Very fond of listening to the music “On the Hills of Manchuria” by I.A. Shatrov (the lyrics of which by S. Petrov includes lines such as “You fell for Rus, perished for Fatherland, / Believe us, we shall avenge you / And celebrate a bloody wake”), he appeared bent on taking revenge.¹³ Stalin indeed took revenge in 1945 and declared:

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 eliminated. We, the people of an older generation, have waited forty years for this day. And now this day has come.¹⁴

Stalin actively used ethnic and national prejudices for political purposes. His 1931 speech about Russian history as a history of “continual beatings owing to backwardness,” beatings by the Mongol khans, the Swedish feudal lords, the Polish-Lithuanian pans, the Anglo-French capitalists and the Japanese barons is well known. In 1937, anti-Japanese sentiment was such that when, out of diplomatic concern, Litvinov refused to sanction the arrest of a Japanese citizen on the island of Sakhalin, he had to qualify his refusal: “It is perfectly reasonable to suspect that all Japanese in the USSR are spies without exception.”¹⁵ In order to carry out the Polish Operation, A.I. Uspenskii, the head of the Ukrainian secret police even stated in 1938 that “all Germans and Poles living in Ukraine are spies and saboteurs.”¹⁶ Stalin did not discourage these sentiments. (Likewise, while Stalin was probably not inherently anti-Semitic, he was not averse to using popular anti-semitism for political purposes, especially towards the end of his life.)

Nevertheless, little proof exists to suggest that Russia’s and Stalin’s anti-Polonism and other prejudices played a central *causal* role in the Great Terror. As is seen in the case of Japan, it was state interests that guided Stalin. According to the US President Harry Truman, Stalin said, “it would be incorrect to be guided by injuries or feelings of retribution”: such feelings are “poor advisers in politics.”¹⁷ In 1945, Stalin told the visiting Czechoslovaks:

13. Artem Sergeev, Ekaterina Glushik, *Besedy o Staline [Conversations about Stalin]* (M.: Krymskii most-9D Forum, 2006), 22-23, 78.

14. I.V. Stalin, *Sochineniia [Works]*, v. II (15) (Stanford, CA, 1967), 214.

15. Khaustov, Naumov, Plotnikova, eds., *Lubianka i Glavnoe upravlenie gosbezopasnosti*, 298.

16. Quoted in *Z arkhivov VUChK-HPU-NKVD-KHB*, nos. 1-2 (1998): 215. This sentiment reflected NKVD Circular No. 68 dated 22 August 1937 which stated that an “overwhelming majority of foreigners living in the USSR are the organising source of espionage and diversion.” Quoted in *Nakazannyi narod*, 46.

17. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman*, v. I (New York: Doubleday, 1955), 364.

I hate the Germans, but hatred must not hinder us from objectively assessing them. The Germans are a great people, very good technical people and organisers. Good, innately brave soldiers. It's impossible to eliminate them. They'll stay.¹⁸

Stalin also often praised Poland as a “good nation” and the Poles as brave fighters, the third most “dogged” soldiers after the Russians and Germans.¹⁹

Ethnic and national prejudices may have played an auxiliary role and aggravated the Great Terror, but it can be assumed that it did not play a central causal role.

Polish Intelligence

Before Adolf Hitler's ascension to power, Poland and Japan presented the greatest threat to the Soviet Union. Until then Germany and the Soviet Union, both inimical to the Versailles settlement after World War I, maintained a degree of amicable relations and even engaged in secret military collaboration. By contrast, Poland and Japan appeared politically and militarily hostile to the Soviet Union. According to Karl Radek, in the early 1930s Stalin feared a simultaneous Japanese-Polish attack.²⁰ There was good reason for Stalin's fear. Poland considered the Soviet Union, along with Germany, the greatest threat to its hard-won independence while Japan regarded the Soviet Union, along with the USA, as the greatest obstacle to its imperialist ambitions. In other words, the Soviet Union was a hypothetical enemy for both Poland and Japan, and they acted accordingly. The Soviet Union responded in kind. The two sides actively spied on each other. In this triangular relationship, Poland and Japan found common ground and cooperated, a cooperation that dates back to the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War.²¹

In 1923 Japan invited the Polish specialist of Russian/Soviet cyphers Jan Kowalewski to train Japanese military cypher specialists.²² (In its war against the Bolshevik Government in 1919-1920 Poland had put its expertise in signal

18. *Istochnik*, no. 5 (1997): 128.

19. Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin* (Profiles in Power) (Harlow: Longman, 2005), 181.

20. Louis Fischer, *Russia's Road from Peace to War: Soviet Foreign Relations 1917-1941* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 222. The exact date of Stalin's remark is not known, but it appears to have been in 1931 or 1932.

21. See Ryszard Świątek, *Lodowa ściana: Sekrety polityki Józefa Piłsudskiego 1904-1918* [*An Ice Wall: The Secrets of Józef Piłsudski's Policy*] (Cracow: Platan, 1998).

22. Manuscript by Shunjiro Ōkubo, “Tairo angō kaidoku ni kansuru sōshi narabini senkun nado ni kansuru shiryō,” [“Materials on the Beginning of Decoding Soviet Cipher, Military Instructions”] available at BBKT (Bōeishō bōei kekyūjo toshokan — The Library of the Self-Defense Institute, Ministry of Self-Defense), Tokyo. See also Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Polityka Japonii wobec Polski 1918-1941* [*Japanese Policy towards Poland, 1918-1941*] (Warsaw: Nozomi, 1998), 77-78. Kowalewski was subsequently decorated by the Japanese Government.

intelligence to good use in defeating its enemies.²³ It was due partly to Poland's expertise that Britain broke Germany's Enigma machine during World War II.) Japan sent cypher specialists to Poland for training on several occasions well into the 1930s. Likewise, Poland and Japan continued to exchange intelligence concerning the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s, the 1930s and even during WWII when they were technically at war.²⁴

In both Poland and Japan, not all politicians and military leaders considered the Soviet Union the most dangerous potential enemy. In Poland, opinions split as to which posed the greater danger, Germany or the Soviet Union. Similarly, in Japan, there was a split in assessing the relative danger of the USSR and the USA. Nevertheless, neither country neglected anti-Soviet intelligence after the Russian Civil War ended and diplomatic relations had been established with the Soviet Union.

Much of Poland's anti-Soviet intelligence was carried out by the *Dwójka*, the Second Department of the General (later Chief) Staff of the Polish Army. Poland was well situated to carry out anti-Soviet intelligence, because many of the citizens of the newly independent state were former citizens of the Russian Empire, intimately familiar with the way of life in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Moreover, in 1937 there were more than 636,000 ethnic Poles in the Soviet Union, about seventy percent of them in Ukraine,²⁵ on whose service Poland expected to draw. During WWI Piłsudski, the future leader of Poland, had founded a secret military organisation (Polska Organizacja Wojskowa, POW) for the purpose of intelligence and subversion against Poland's enemies (Russia, later Soviet Russia, and Germany). Although it ceased to exist after the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920, the *Dwójka* absorbed many of its members, inherited its expertise and sought to utilise the remnants of its conspiratorial organisational structures in the Soviet Union.²⁶ Many workers of the *Dwójka* were former members of the POW. Jerzy Niezbrzycki (Ryszard Wraga), a native of Ukraine and a former citizen of the Russian Empire who spoke Russian and Ukrainian in addition to Polish, had been a member of POW and had fought in the Polish-Soviet War. From 1927-1929 he worked as an intelligence operator under the guise of a diplomat at the Polish

23. Grzegorz Nowik, *Zanim złamano "Enigmę": Polski radiowywiad podczas wojny z bolszewicką Rosją 1918-1920* [Before the Enigma was broken: Polish radio intelligence during the War against Soviet Russia, 1918-1920] (Warsaw: Rytm, 2004).

24. See our work, *Między Warszawą a Tokio: Polsko-Japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904-1944* [Between Warsaw and Tokyo: Polish-Japanese Intelligence Cooperation, 1904-1944] (Toruń: Wydawn. Adam Marszałek, 2009). Note also Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, Andrzej T. Romer, *Historia stosunków polsko-japońskich 1904-1945* [A History of Polish-Japanese Relations, 1904-1945] (Warsaw: Bellona, 1996).

25. N.A. Aralovets, V.B. Zhiromskaia, I.N. Kiselev, eds., *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1937 g. Kratkie itogi* [The All-Union Population Census of 1937: Brief Summaries] (M.: Institut istorii SSSR, AN SSSR, 1991), 83, 94.

26. Andrzej Peplński, *Wywiad w wojnie polsko-bolszewickiej 1919-1920* [Intelligence in the Polish-Bolshevik War, 1919-1920] (Warsaw: Bellona, 1999), 301 and idem., *Wywiad Polski na ZSSR 1921-1939* [Poland's Intelligence against the Soviet Union] (Warsaw: Bellona, 1996), 27-28.

Consulates in Kharkiv and Kyiv from where in December 1929 he was expelled on charges of espionage. In 1932 Niezbrzycki was appointed the head of the Dwójka's "Eastern Section" (in charge of the Soviet Union), where he worked until 1937.²⁷ There is little evidence, however, that the remains of the POW functioned at all in the 1920s and beyond in the Soviet Union, owing largely to the intense counter-intelligence work of the Soviet Union. Although in 1931-1932, apparently for intelligence purposes, the Dwójka did collect information on former POW members in Ukraine,²⁸ there is no evidence that the POW revived in any form at all. All the same, from 1933 onwards numerous ethnic Poles in the Soviet Union, particularly in Ukraine, were arrested as members of POW.²⁹

As Niezbrzycki's case suggests, Poland, probably like many other countries and certainly Japan and the Soviet Union, used diplomatic missions extensively to cover its intelligence activity. Until 1937 Poland maintained consulates in Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Minsk and Tiflis where they ran intelligence operations.³⁰ Diplomatic posts in other key countries, particularly those surrounding the Soviet Union such as Japan, Finland, Turkey, Latvia, Estonia and Czechoslovakia as well as Germany, France and Yugoslavia served the same purpose.

One of the most important strategic goals of independent Poland was to weaken and, if possible, destroy the Soviet Union and for this purpose Poland sought to encourage the separatist movements of national minorities in the Soviet Union. In the 1920s and 1930s Poland operated the "Promethean Movement," an "anticommunist international, designed to destroy the Soviet Union and to create independent states from its republics."

It brought together grand strategists of Warsaw and exiled patriots [Ukrainians, Georgians, Azeris, and others] whose attempts to found independent states had been thwarted by the Bolsheviks [and was] supported by European powers hostile to the Soviet Union, morally by Britain and France, politically and financially by Poland.³¹

27. Włodzimierz Bączkowski, "Jerzy Niezbrzycki (R. Wraga) 1902—1968," *Niepodległość*, no. 23 (1990): 99-102; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki SSSR [Document of Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union]*, v. XII (M.: Izd-vo politicheskoi literatury, 1967), 774.

28. RGVA (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv — Russian State Military Archive), f. 308k, op. 3, d. 230.

29. Mikołaj Iwanow, *Pierwszy naród ukarany: Stalinizm wobec polskiej ludności kresowej (1921-1938) [The Nation Punished First: Stalinism towards the Polish People in the Eastern Borderlands]* (Warsaw: Omnipress, 1991), 141-145.

30. For the list of such units, see Peptoński, *Wywiad Polski na ZSSR*, 126-127.

31. Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 40. A comprehensive account is given in Sergiusz Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej [Prometheanism in the Politics of the Second Republic]* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1971).

The most important group for the Promethean movement was Ukraine. Poland contained a large Ukrainian minority, many of whom were Ukrainian nationalists and irredentists with Soviet Ukraine. Just as many of these Ukrainian nationalists considered Communist Russia to be their enemy (occupier of Eastern [Soviet] Ukraine), so too did they regard Poland as enemy (occupier of “Eastern Galicia” or “Western Ukraine”). It was vital for Poland to divert their attention and political energy away from Poland towards the Soviet Union. Even though the Ukrainian nationalists engaged in political terror against Polish authorities, Poland tolerated their presence in the country and allowed and even encouraged their anti-Soviet activity. An unknown number of them are believed to have acted as Polish agents as well. An incident that took place in the spring of 1932 is characteristic. In May of that year, according to a Japanese record intercepted by Soviet spies,

the Japanese military attaché in Moscow, Torashirō Kawabe, enquired of his colleague in Warsaw, Hikosaburō Hata, whether the rumour he had heard in Moscow that two members of the Polish General Staff were executed for espionage for the Soviet Union was true. Two days later, Hata, who worked closely with the Polish intelligence agency, responded: the Polish General Staff recently sent 20-odd secret agents to Ukraine, all of whom, however, were caught by the GPU. Two “secretaries” of the General Staff had been bought off by the Soviets and leaked secret information to them. They were court-martialed and sentenced to be shot. The Kawabe-Hata correspondence was intercepted by the Soviet secret police and reported to Stalin.³²

Although it is not known whether these agents were Poles or Ukrainians, the Ukrainians continued to send their agents into the Soviet Union from Poland. For example, agent No. 7 was repeatedly sent across the border from 28 September to 5 October 1932, from 25 November to 1 December 1932 and from 29 December 1932 to 4 January 1933. Finally after he was sent on 19 September 1933, he did not return: he was killed by the OGPU. Agent No. 102 similarly crossed the Polish-Soviet borders six times in 1932-1933, but after he was despatched into Soviet territory on 22 January 1933, he failed to return, apparently apprehended by the OGPU.³³ According to Soviet data, between 1922 and 1936, the Soviet Ukrainian border guards arrested 1,763 “spies,” 66 “diversionary elements” and 5,326 “smugglers” (of whom 479 were armed). The Soviet data also indicate that there were 144 cases of armed conflict with border transgressors from Poland, as a result of which 60 “bandit groups” (both local and foreign) were “liquidated.” Likewise, between 1921 and 1935 the Soviet Belarusan border guards apprehended 4,902 “spies,” 550 “diversionary elements” and 13,656 “smugglers.” 282 cases of armed

32. Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 2007), 220-221.

33. Mikulicz, *Prometeizm*, 111-113.

conflict were also recorded.³⁴ Needless to say, Poland feared that many border-crossers from the Soviet Union were Soviet spies. For what appears to be in the first few years of the 1930s, Poland, according to Japanese sources, captured 1,500 “Soviet spies” along its borders with the Soviet Union.³⁵

As in any intelligence and espionage, Poland’s strengths were also its weaknesses. The Soviet secret police recruited a number of able POW members. Two famous examples are Wiktor Steckiewicz and Igancy Dobrzyński, who were arrested by Soviet authorities in 1920 (at the time of the Polish-Soviet War) and then recruited through the personal intervention of the then Soviet secret police chief Feliks Dzerzhinskii, a Pole. They subsequently became prominent Soviet secret police operatives as Viktor Kiiakovskii and Ignatii Sosnovskii respectively.³⁶ It was Steckiewicz/Kiiakovskii who became the architect of the famous “*Trest*” operation, a brilliant Soviet counter-intelligence operation in the 1920s which set up a fictitious anti-Soviet underground organisation.³⁷

Likewise, many Ukrainian émigré organisations in Poland and elsewhere were penetrated by Soviet agents. The penetration was mandated especially after the assassination in October 1933 in L’viv of the Soviet secret police agent working under the cover of Assistant Consul, Andrei Mailov, by the OUN (Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists) terrorist Mykola Lemyk.³⁸ The most famous example is the master Soviet spy Pavel Sudoplatov, who penetrated the OUN and succeeded in assassinating its head, Ievhen Konovalts, in Rotterdam in May 1938.³⁹ As it turned out, the OUN division in Finland was led by the Soviet agent K. Poluved’ko.⁴⁰

34. P.A. Ivanchishin, A.I. Chugunov, *Pogranichnye voiska SSSR, 1919-1938* [*The Border Guard Troops of the Soviet Union, 1919-1938*] (M.: Nauka, 1972), 77.

35. “Soren no chōhō hanchōhō ni suite.” [“On Soviet Intelligence and Counterintelligence”] stamped “Secret,” dated September 1936 (BBKT). More generally, see Andrzej Peplowski, *Kontrwywiad II Rzeczypospolitej* [*The Counterintelligence of the Second Republic*] (Warsaw: Bellona, 2002).

36. In 1936 Dobrzyński/Sosnovskii was arrested in 1936 and executed in 1937 in Moscow as a “Polish spy.” After Stalin’s death, he was rehabilitated. See Peplowski, *Wywiad Polski na ZSSR, 232-234*; A. Papchinskii, M. Tumshis, *Shchit, raskoloty mehom: NKVD protov VChK* [*The Shield Cracked by the Sword: the NKVD against the VChK*] (M.: Sovremennik, 2001), 243-245, 284-285; N.V. Petrov, K.V. Skorkin, *Kto rukovodil NKVD 1934-1941: Spravochnik* [*NKVD Leaders, 1934-1941: Directory*] (M.: Zven’ia, 1999), 390-391.

37. He died in 1932 in line of duty in Mongolia, Papchinskii, Tumshis, *Shchit, raskoloty mehom*, 244, 250, 330; A. Dienko, ed., *Razvedka i kontrrazvedka v litsakh* [*People of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*] (M.: Russkii mir, 2002), 229.

38. Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii Orhanizatsii Ukrains’kykh Natsionalistiv 1920-1939* [*A Study of the History of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, 1920-1939*] (Munich: Ukrainsk’e vydavnytstvo, 1968), 337-348. Lemyk did not know that Mailov was an OGPU functionary. For Mailov’s belonging to the OGPU, see Aleksandr Kolpakidi and Dmitrii Prokhorov, *KGB: spetsoperatsii sovetskoi razvedki* [*The KGB: Special Operations of the Soviet Intelligence*] (M.: Olimp, 2000), 234.

39. Pavel Sudoplatov, Anatoli Sudoplatov, *Special Tasks* (Boston: Little Brown, 1994), 12-29.

40. D.V. Viedenieiev, H.S. Bystrukhin, *Mech i tryzub: Rozvidka i kontrozvidka rukhu ukrains’kykh natsionalistiv ta UPA (1920–1945)* [*Sword and Trident: Intelligence and*

Even though the Polish Intelligence services were infiltrated by Soviet agents, it was widely recognised that in the 1920s and 1930s, as far as the Soviet Union was concerned, Polish intelligence, along with Finnish intelligence, was probably the finest in the world.

Both Poland and the Soviet Union acknowledged that they spied on each other. On a number of occasions in the 1920s and 1930s, the countries exchanged political prisoners (including spies), the last in 1936.⁴¹

In the mid-1930s, the ethnic Polish population in the Soviet Union came increasingly under suspicion. By the mid-1930s, like ethnic Germans,⁴² ethnic Poles in the Soviet Union were probably subjected to detailed census. In 1931-1933 the Soviet secret police used its agents and informers, particularly teachers at Polish schools, to investigate the households of ethnic Poles under the guise of teachers' visits. They informed the police on the Polish household's political orientations, on whether they retained connections with Polish diplomatic missions and other sensitive matters such as their attitudes towards the collectivisation of agriculture.⁴³ Any contact with foreign consulates became fatally dangerous. As Tymothy Snyder has argued, efforts to prove absence of contact became a "diabolical trap":

By late 1936, the [Polish] consulate [in Kiev] was dealing with the desperate applications of people caught in a diabolical trap: petitioners who wished to prove, somehow, that they had no contacts at all with Poland. Consular employees knew that these people were innocent of espionage, but how could they certify an absence? From the Soviet point of view, their very attempt to prove their innocence probably proved their guilt. Once they had contacted the Polish consulate, they had contacts (as the Soviet saw matters) with Polish intelligence.⁴⁴

Shortly after the December 1934 murder of Sergei Kirov in Leningrad, Moscow began to deport ethnic Poles, Germans and Finns as well as other politically suspect from its border zones.⁴⁵

Counterintelligence of the Ukrainian Nationalist Movement and the UPA (Kiev: Hencza, 2006), 122.

41. Peplński, *Wywiad Polski na ZSSR*, 122-123 and, more generally, Wojciech Materski, *Robocza dyplomacji: Wymiana więźniów politycznych pomiędzy II Rzeczpospolitą a Sowietami w okresie międzywojennym* [*The Roadsides of Diplomacy: Exchange of Prisoners between the Second Republic and the Soviet Union in the Interwar Period*] (Warsaw: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2002).

42. "As early as 1934, as a result of the Nazis coming to power in Germany, the Central Committee of the Communist Party decided to have full and accurate data collected on all Germans working in industry and in administrative bodies, and to see to it that this survey should not be publicly known." According to one who took part in the collection, by late 1934, the Soviet government "had before it the most precise data on the numbers and occupations of all the Germans living in the USSR. All the secret service work and repressions carried out later were guided by the data we collected and arranged." Ingeborg Fleischhauer and Benjamin Pinkus, *The Soviet Germans: Past and Present* (London: C. Hurst, 1986), 34, 91.

43. Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*, 224.

44. Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War*, 124-125.

45. Poboł', Polian, *Stalinskie deportatsii*, 45-73.

Japanese Intelligence

Like Poland, Japan's General Staff and the Kwantung Army in Manchuria had their own intelligence units (the Second Departments). In addition, in Manchuria there existed numerous special intelligence agencies (military missions, or *tokumu kikan*). Before Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 there were six Kwantung Army special intelligence agencies, in Kharbin, Manchouli, Mukden, Jilin and elsewhere. In 1931-1934, when the foundation of its puppet government Manchukuo brought Japan and the Soviet Union face to face in northeast China, the Kwantung Army added seven more intelligence agencies in Manchukuo (in Qiqihar, Hailar, and Heihe and elsewhere) to confront the Soviet Union. Like other countries, Japan used its diplomatic posts for intelligence. Not merely its missions in the Soviet Union but in those countries surrounding the Soviet Union, particularly Finland, Sweden, Poland and Turkey, were used for this purpose. Japan's intelligence activity increased sharply after the Manchurian invasion. Remarkably, from 1931 Japan stationed a full-time military attaché in the three small Baltic states (the attaché in Latvia served as the attaché in Estonia and Lithuania) and collaborated with Baltic intelligence services against the Soviet Union. From 1932 an intelligence officer was attached as a consular official to the Japanese consulates in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Novosibirsk and the Manchukuo consulate in Chita, and from 1934 in Blagoveshchensk (Manchukuo) and in Odessa as well. From 1933, Japan began to post a military attaché to its legation in Tehran, Persia (Iran from 1935). In 1936 Japan set up the office of military attaché in Afghanistan, but the Japanese officer was promptly expelled for espionage in 1937.⁴⁶

Like Poland, Japan showed keen interest in the minorities within the Soviet Union whose independence movements could be utilised for political and military purposes. Among the tens of thousands of émigré "Russians" in Manchuria were numerous ethnic Ukrainians and Poles. In certain districts in the Vladivostok area ethnic Ukrainians accounted for more than half of the population. There were Chinese, Koreans, Tungusic people (such as Manchus, Oroqens or Orochons), Mongols (Buriat) and other ethnic groups on both sides of the Soviet-Manchu (Japanese) borders. Japan used all these people for intelligence in Manchuria, Sakhalin and elsewhere in the Far East.⁴⁷ The Japanese military also recruited Japanese orphans, trained them in Chinese and Mongolian languages and cultures as well as radio communication and set them on expeditions to "Outer Mongolia" (i.e. today's Mongolia), Tibet and other remote areas of strategic importance to Japan. Through them Japan collected vital intelligence on these little-known areas. Many of the boys failed to return.⁴⁸ By the mid-1930s Japan and the Soviet Union

46. Tsutao Ariga, *Nihon riku kai gun no jōhōkikō to sono katsudō* [*The Structure and the Activity of the Japanese Military Intelligence*] (Tokyo: Kindai Bungeisha, 1994), 84-100.

47. The best source is the manuscript of memoirs by Etsuo Kōtani, "Manshū ni okeru jōhō kinmu," ["Intelligence Work in Manchuria"] available at BBKT.

48. Takezō Obata, *Kakusaretaru rekishi* [*Hidden Story*] (Tokyo: Hokushindō, 1951), 170-171.

began to compete actively for influence as far as Xinjiang (Sinkiang or Chinese Turkestan) in western China.⁴⁹

Japan's imperial ambitions extended far and wide. Already in the 1920s Japan targeted the Northern Caucasus (with its large Muslim population as well as ethnic Greeks, Germans and Persians) as a potentially productive site for subversion against the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ Some documents related to Japan's espionage against the Soviet Union presumably lost in WWII later surfaced in Soviet hands and copies were submitted at the Tokyo Trial as evidence of Japan's anti-Soviet machinations. Japan targeted Trotsky supporters inside and outside the Soviet Union for possible agents. In 1931-1932, the Japanese military attaché in Warsaw Hikosaburō Hata worked closely with émigré Muslim leaders against the Soviet Union. According to the Russian scholar Aleksei Kirichenko, in March 1934 the Japanese military attaché in Turkey, Masatane Kanda, sent a detailed report to Tokyo on his intelligence work in the Caucasus regions. According to the report, Kanda operated Azeris, Crimean Tatars and Persians for subversive work in the Soviet Union. He even reported that there were approximately 1,000 armed forces in Persia that could be despatched to Soviet territory and another 1-2,000 Caucasian forces in Turkey that could be used for the same purpose.⁵¹

Japan and Poland had common political and military interests and worked closely, although there is little evidence that the Polish-Japanese cooperation was officially sealed in any written agreements. As far as the Promethean movement was concerned, Japan did not get involved directly. If anything, Japan remained aloof, even though Poland presented the movement as pro-Japan and provided to Japan intelligence gained through it.⁵² Probably Japan feared Britain and France working behind Poland. In any case, the Soviet Union suspected that the two countries had signed a secret agreement in the autumn of 1931 whereby Poland was obliged to deflect the Soviet forces upon itself when Japan began to advance its troops against the Soviet Union. This intelligence report, acquired by a Soviet agent in Poland, was sent to Stalin in March 1932.⁵³ This may be why Stalin told Radek, as discussed earlier, that he feared a simultaneous Japanese-Polish attack.

Japan's and Poland's interests did not always coincide. The question of Ukraine and Belarus is evidence of this. In 1933 the Japanese General Staff set up a "Conspiracy" (Subversion) Organ (*Bōryaku Kikan*) in Berlin and Paris. The one

49. E.M. Primakov, ed., *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi vneshnei razvedki*, [Studies of the History of Russian Foreign Intelligence] v. III (M.: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1997), 217.

50. The National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD), RG331, Numerical Evidentiary Documents as Evidence by the Prosecution for Use before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, no. 1989 (Kingorō Hashimoto), no. 2460A (Masatane Kanda).

51. Arekusei [Aleksei] Kirichenko, "Kominterun to Nihon, sono himitsu chōhōsen o abaku" ["The Comintern and Japan: Revealing the Secret Intelligence War"], *Seiron* (Tokyo), no. 10 (2006): 108-109.

52. Mikulicz, *Prometeizm*, 262-270, Gaimushō Gaikō Shiryō Kan (GGSK) (Tokyo), B1.0.0.PO/R (May 1938 report from the Japanese Ambassador to Tokyo).

53. RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 185, l. 65.

in Paris did not last long, but the one in Berlin expanded and worked together with the Germans. This organ, completely separate from Japan's diplomatic mission, appears to have engaged in, among others, anti-Soviet subversion using émigré Ukrainians, Belarusians and people from the Caucasus.⁵⁴ According to a Japanese intelligence officer, the "subversive political activities within the USSR" by Japan (and Germany) were to be used "later, in time of war," "for fifth column purposes."⁵⁵ Some Ukrainian groups were responsive, particularly after the disappointment of the 1932 Polish-Soviet non-aggression treaty. They pinned their hopes on Japan as a reliable force destined to enter into war against the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

In general, Poland kept its distance from the White (anti-Soviet) émigré Russians whose nationalistic and monarchist orientations Poland distrusted. By contrast, Japan used them extensively. Many of them, deeply anti-Soviet, worked willingly for the Japanese intelligence services in various capacities.⁵⁷ According to the master Japanese spy, Major General Shun Akikusa, the head of the Intelligence Department of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria in 1945, between 1933 and 1936 he sent 12 spies (mostly émigré Russians) into Soviet territory. Although they were supposed to return after collecting military information, "almost no one" returned. Similarly, "when most Soviet citizens in Manchukuo (*Kharbinty*) returned to the Soviet Union in the wake of the 1935 sale of the East China Railway to Manchukuo, he managed to hire approximately 20 Soviet citizens. (It is estimated that approximately 25,000 *Kharbinty* returned to the Soviet Union in 1935-1936. The 20 'spies,' then, constituted fewer than 1 out of 1,000 provided that Akikusa's account is to be believed.) Yet only three of them reported back, the first one from Irkutsk, the second from Vladivostok and the third from where Akikusa could not remember. He could not make contact with these three, however, and received no information from them." Akikusa made these statements under Soviet captivity after WWII and died in prison in Vladimir.⁵⁸

Moreover, from 1933 onwards, Japan, somewhat belatedly, following the example of Poland, Germany and other countries, employed the diplomatic courier system to protect communication between Tokyo and its overseas diplomatic missions, especially in Europe. This courier system was consistently deployed from 1936 so that at any given time there were Japanese couriers on the Siberian

54. Yuriko Onodera, *Barutokai no hotori nite. Bukan no tsuma no Daitōa sensō* [On the Shore of the Baltic Sea; A story fo the Great East Asian War by the Wife of a Military Attaché] (Tokyo: Kyōdō tsūshinsha, 1985), 51-53.

55. See the 1936 "highly secret" mission given to the Berlin office, cited in Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*, 279.

56. See a memorandum of Ukrainian nationalists to the Japanese military attaché in Istanbul Masatane Kanda, *ibid.*, 279.

57. This is extensively discussed in Kōtani, *op. cit.* and Yukio Nishihara, *Zen kiroku Harubin tokumu kikan* [The Whole Records of the Special Organ in Kharbin] (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1980). John J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) also discusses this.

58. Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*, 256, 287.

railways. Japanese couriers, many of whom were military intelligence officers, estimated the Soviet transport capacity on the railways and even managed to figure out a very accurate schedule of the Siberian railways.⁵⁹ This allowed Japan to determine which points in the rail system to attack, which bridges to destroy and so on in the event of war. Japan provided the data collected by its couriers to Poland. Poland regarded these data highly and, in turn, provided much valuable information it obtained about the Soviet Union to Japan.⁶⁰

Like that of Poland, Japan's intelligence was penetrated by Soviet agents. As it turned out in 1945, many of the White Russians Japan had employed Soviet agents.⁶¹ It is quite possible that at least some of those Akikusa despatched into Soviet territory were in fact Soviet agents. The Japanese Conspiracy Organ in Berlin was also deeply penetrated by Soviet agents. The mistress of the chief of the Organ was a Russian émigré who was in fact a Soviet agent.⁶² The Soviet secret police also penetrated the office of the military attaché in the Japanese Embassy. In December 1931 and February 1932 two stolen memoranda from the embassy were circulated among the Politburo members.⁶³ In one of them dated 19 December 1931, that is after Japan's conquest of Manchuria, the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow Kōki Hirota was quoted as having conveyed the following opinion to the Japanese General Staff in Tokyo: "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." Stalin underlined this sentence in pencil. Hirota continued: "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." Stalin circled the phrases "the Soviet Far East and Eastern Siberia" in pencil.⁶⁴

In the 1920s and 1930s the Soviet Union also successfully deployed "Trest"-like fake counterintelligence organisations in Moscow, Siberia and the Far East against

59. The best account is by a former courier-intelligence office Masakata Suzuki, "Gaikō densho shi soren o iku," *Rekishi to jinbutsu*, no. 10 (1980): 74-82.

60. Nakano Kōyūkai, ed., *Rikugun Nakano Gakkō* [*The Nakano School of the Army*] (Tokyo: Nakano Kōyūkai, 1978), 170. This book was privately published by the alumni of the Japanese spy school Nakano Gakkō.

61. See, for instance, Petr Balakshin, *Final v Kitae: Vozniknovenie, razvitie i ischeznovenie Beloi Emigratsii na Dal'nem Vostoke* [*Finale in China: Birth, Development and Demise of White Emigration in the Far East*], 2 vols. (San Francisco: Sirius, 1958-1959).

62. Kenji Suzuki, *Chūdoku taishi Ōshima Hiroshi* [*Ambassador to Germany Hiroshi Ōshima*] (Tokyo: Fuyō shobō, 1979), 94-95.

63. N. Khaustov, V.P. Naumov, N.S. Plotnikova, *Lubianka: Stalin i VchK-GPU-OGPU-NKVD. Ianvar' 1922-dekabr' 1936* [*The Lubianka: Stalin and VchK-GPU-NKVD, January 1922-December 1936*] (M.: Mezhdunarodnyi fond demokratsii, 2003), 291-295, 298-308.

64. *Ibid.*, 292, 295. In the end, Japan never attacked the Soviet Union. It was the Soviet Union that attacked Manchukuo and Japan in 1945. The Soviet Union submitted these documents to the Tokyo Trial as evidence of war crime by Hirota. Hirota was hanged.

Japan (“Shogun,” “Dreamers,” “Maki-Mirage,” “Organizator” and so on).⁶⁵ Japan was often misled by false intelligence supplied by “anti-Soviet” organisations which it believed were run by Japan but in fact were run by the Soviet secret police. (The Soviet Union even submitted to the Tokyo Trial one such case as evidence of Japan’s war crime!) When Poland and Japan exchanged information about the Soviet Union, they were sometimes at odds because their data did not match.⁶⁶ In 1930 on Ingushetiya in the Caucasus the Soviet secret police operated a fake Japanese spy to entrap anti-Soviet forces there.⁶⁷

The records of Soviet border troops show that in the Far East as in the western borderlands, numerous Japanese “spies” and “diversionary elements” operated.⁶⁸ Yet former Japanese intelligence officers have testified that it proved extraordinarily difficult to penetrate the Soviet borders in the Far East because they were guarded extremely tightly. By contrast Japan could not politically stabilise the Manchurian side. It did not have enough resources to guard the borders tightly. Moreover, the border areas were constantly disturbed by Chinese and Korean Communist guerrillas and other “bandits.” By one Japanese estimate, only less than 5 percent of Japan’s attempts at penetrating Soviet territory succeeded in the 1930s, whereas the success rate of the Soviet penetration of Manchurian territory was at least 65 percent.⁶⁹

The Terror

International espionage and counter-espionage were and are facts of international life. The Great Terror took place against this background.

By 1937 the clouds of war thickened in both the east and the west. Hitler’s advance into the Rhineland in violation of the Versailles treaty in March 1936 significantly increased tension in the west. After the Polish-German non-aggression pact signed in January 1934 and Poland’s opposition to the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations, Soviet-Polish relations deteriorated (even though the two countries had renewed the 1932 Polish-Soviet non-aggression treaty for ten years in 1934). The Soviet Union increased its subversion against Poland and its military by

65. “Trest” was a famous Soviet counterintelligence operation using a fake anti-Soviet underground organisation. Its architect was a former member of POW turned Soviet secret police agent Wiktor Steckiewicz (Wiktor Kiiakovskii).

66. “Duel’ razvedok: Rossiia — Iaponiia,” [“Duel of Intelligence: Russia and Japan], broadcast by Gosteleradio on 2 March 2005. See also Katsumasa Watanabe, *Sugihara Chiune no higeki* [The Tragedy of Chiune Sugihara] (Tokyo: Taishō Shuppan, 2006), 49.

67. Aleksandr Uralov (A. Avtorkhanov), *Narodoubiistvo v SSSR: Ubiistvo chechenskogo naroda* [Genocide in the USSR: The Murder of the Chechen People] (Munich: Svobodnyi Kavkaz, 1952), 3133. We are grateful to Professor Jeffrey Burds for this reference.

68. Ivanchishin, Chugunov, *Pogranichnye voiska*, 309-692 covering the years from 1929 through 1938.

69. Tōkichi Harada, *Kaze to kumo to. Saigo no chōhō shōkō* [Wind, Cloud: and the Last Officer of Intelligence] (Tokyo: Jiyū kokuminsha, 1973), p. 68.

using Comintern agents and Communists.⁷⁰ From late 1936 and early 1937 Poland, in turn, sought to revive its diversionary activity in the Soviet border areas that had been cut back owing to financial difficulties.⁷¹

In the east, Japan further advanced into China and Mongolia. Japan extended its control to Hebei (a province which included Beijing), where it set up a puppet government in 1935. Japan also extended its control to Inner Mongolia where in May 1936 it created the Mongol Military Government (Mengjian) under Demchugdongrub (Teh Wang). Soviet-Japanese border clashes sharply increased in the mid-1930s. Japan's belligerence prompted Stalin to admit in early 1937 that the Soviet Far East was in a "state of semi-war" with Japan.⁷²

The tension in the east led to the "Great Terror" in Mongolia, engineered by Stalin in 1937. On 27 November 1934 the Soviet Union concluded a treaty of mutual military assistance with Mongolia. On 12 March 1936 the Soviet Union and Mongolia renewed their treaty of mutual aid for ten years. In the mean time Japan/Manchukuo and Mongolia had a number of border clashes. Manchukuo and Mongolia held meetings to resolve the border issues. When it was announced on 25 November 1936 that Germany and Japan had signed an agreement (Anti-Comintern Pact), the Mongolian delegation left the negotiation table. Yet within the Mongolian leading circles, there were forces in favour of continuing negotiations with Japan and wary of Soviet influence in Mongolia. Stalin responded by a Mongolian version of the Great Terror.⁷³ According to an official who defected from Mongolia in the summer of 1938, anti-Soviet forces in Mongolia were contemplating an anti-Soviet insurrection in 1937. Rumours of Japanese military actions in China reached Mongolia in July 1937 and agitated the Mongolians. Soon after Soviet military forces advanced en masse into Mongolia and terrorised the Mongolians, with tens of thousands of Mongolians executed as "Japanese spies."⁷⁴

Moreover, from the spring of 1937 onwards, anti-Chinese rebellions engulfed Xinjiang, the predominantly Muslim area of western China close to the strategically important area of Western Siberia and the Urals.⁷⁵ Japan sought to take advantage of the unrest. Although how much influence it exerted in Xinjiang is not known, Japan

70. Ia.S. Drabkin, L.G. Babichenko, K.K. Shirinia, *Komintern i ideia mirovoi revoliutsii* [The Comintern and the Idea of World Revolution] (M.: Nauka, 1998), 787, 809-812.

71. Marcin Kwincień and Grzegorz Mazur, "Działalność prometejska i dywersja na wschodzie (Relacja Mjr. Włodzimierza Dąbrowskiego)" ["Promethean Activity and Diversion in the East: A Report of Major Włodzimierz Dąbrowski"], *Zeszyty historyczne*, v. 140 (2002): 113-114.

72. N.I. Dubinina, "Tragediia lichnosti" ["The Tragedy of a Personality"], *Dal' nii vostok*, no. 7 (1989): 130.

73. Mandafu Ariunsaihan (Mandah Ariunsaihan), "Mongoru ni okeru daishukusei no shinsō to sono haikai," ["The Truth of the Great Terror in Mongolia and its Backgrounds"] *Hitotsubashi ronsō* (Tokyo), 126, 2 (2001) and Aleksei Pavliukov, *Ezhov: Biografiia* [Ezhov: A Biography] (M.: Zakharov, 2007), 376-390.

74. Saburō Hayashi, *Kantōgun to Kyokutō Sorengun* [The Kwantung Army and the Far Eastern Army of the Soviet Union] (Tokyo: Fuyō shobō, 1984), 153-154.

75. See V. Barmin, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Sin' tszian 1918-1941 gg.* [The Soviet Union and Xinjiang, 1918-1941] (Barnaul: Izd-vo BGPU, 1999), 159-165.

had long courted the Xinjiang population. Moscow, in turn, made every effort to exclude Japan from Xinjiang: Japan's conquest of Xinjiang, like Japan's conquest of Mongolia, would have opened a direct path of attack against West Siberian and the Urals. Moscow intervened in Xinjiang militarily. Like Mongolia, Xinjiang had its own Great Terror in 1937-1938.

Meanwhile, the NKVD, now headed by Nikolai Ezhov, reassessed its foreign intelligence. It had so successfully penetrated the émigré anti-Soviet organisations that by 1937-1938 the NKVD no longer considered it important to uncover these organisations "diversionary, terroristic and espionage" activity in the Soviet Union.⁷⁶ Instead, the police became alarmingly concerned about the penetration of Soviet organisations by foreign intelligence. Why this concern, which had always existed in the secret police, emerged so strongly in 1936-1938 is not entirely known. True, Ezhov entertained deep suspicion of his predecessor's (Iagoda's) foreign operatives. It is also true that the Soviet Union used fake deserters extensively to penetrate foreign countries: the secret police used its agents as convinced anti-Soviet defectors to fool foreign intelligence.⁷⁷ It is possible that its own extensive use of deception began to haunt Moscow, as war threatened. Alexander Orlov, a former NKVD official noted that

Stalin, who was his own intelligence boss and who liked to take a personal part in the cloak and dagger business, warned his intelligence chiefs time and again to keep away from hypotheses and "equations with many unknowns" [...] He used to say: "An intelligence hypothesis may become your hobby horse on which you will ride straight into a self-made trap", and he often interjected during his conferences with intelligence chiefs, "Don't tell me what you think, give me the facts and the sources!"⁷⁸

Late in his life, Molotov told his interviewer that every day he used to spend half a day reading intelligence reports, but insisted that it was impossible to rely on spies, who "could push you into such a dangerous position that you would never get out of it": "You have to listen to them, but you also have to verify their information."⁷⁹ In June 1937, Stalin contended that in all spheres but one, the Soviet government had defeated the international bourgeoisie, which, however, had beaten the Soviet government effortlessly in the area of intelligence operations.⁸⁰

76. R.N. Baiguzin, ed., *Gosudarstvennaia bezopasnost' Rossii: Istoriia i sovremennost'* [*State Security in Russia: History and the Present*] (M.: ROSSPEN, 2004), 491, 523-524 (V.N. Khaustov).

77. For example, Obata, *Kakusaretaru rekishi*, extensively discusses the Soviet use of "fake defectors."

78. Alexander Orlov, *Handbook of Intelligence and Guerrilla Warfare* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 10.

79. Feliks Chuev, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics* (Chicago: I.R. Dec, 1993), 22.

80. *Istochnik*, no. 3 (1994): 79.

Polish-Japanese disinformation may have contributed to the downfall of Tukhachevskii and other Red Army commanders. In April 1937 the Soviet secret police intercepted a document sent by the Japanese military attaché in Warsaw to Tokyo which reported that contact had been established with a special envoy of the marshal of the Red Army Tukhachevskii. This was almost certainly disinformation.⁸¹ Interestingly, when the news of the execution of Tukhachevskii and others reached the office of the Japanese military attaché in Riga, Latvia, the entire office rejoiced at it and celebrated it.⁸² It should be noted that it is also possible that the intercepted document was not Polish or Japanese but Soviet disinformation.

At any rate, Moscow targeted Poland and Japan for counter-offensive. The Polish intelligence officer turned NKVD functionary Dobrzyński/Sosnovskii was arrested in late 1936 and executed in 1937. Many others of similar background met the same fate. Within the NKVD it was asserted that its Polish operation had been a failure, and many associated with anti-Polish intelligence were arrested and executed.⁸³ Everyone who dealt with foreigners and foreign agencies began to appear suspicious. Just as the Soviet Union recruited double spies out of foreign agents, so, it feared, did foreign countries use Soviet agents. Many of the Soviet handlers, including translators, of the intelligence sent from Tokyo by the Soviet spy, Richard Sorge, were also repressed. The old “anti-Soviet” Tsarist officer, the key figure in the Shogun Operation against Japan, Polonskii, was likewise arrested and executed.⁸⁴ Thus, the Great Terror repressed 275 (or 68 percent) out of 450 Soviet foreign intelligence officials in Moscow and abroad.⁸⁵

The Polish Operation extended far and wide. NKVD Order no. 00485 noted that out of 15,000 “defectors” (*perebezhchiki*) from Poland, only 9,000 had been accounted for. Out of 5,000 “defectors” residing in West Siberia no more than 1,000 had been accounted for. The order thus specified for arrest these defectors, former Polish prisoners of war, political immigrants, Soviet agents exchanged for Polish spies and political prisoners, among others.

In the Far East the ethnic Koreans were wholesale deported to Central Asia. In ordering this operation, Stalin categorically stated that its aim was to “stop the infiltration of Japanese espionage into the Far East Province.”⁸⁶ According to Genrikh Liushkov, the NKVD head in the Far East, who carried out the massive Korean deportations,

81. “M.N. Tukhachevskii i ‘voenno-fashistskii’ zagovor,” [“M.N. Tukhachevskii and the ‘Fascist-Military’ Conspiracy”] *Voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv*, vyp. 2 (1998), 29-33.

82. Onodera, *Barutokai no hotori nite*, 54.

83. See A. Kh. Artuzov’s March 1937 letter to Ezhov in Pauchinskii, Tumshis, *Shchit, raskoloty mechom*, 282-287.

84. “Duel’ razvedok: Rossiia — Iaponiia.”

85. I.A. Damaskin, *Stalin i razvedka [Stalin and Intelligence]* (M.: Vecher, 2004), 205.

86. Pabol’, Polian, *Stalinskie deportatsii*, p. 83.

Stalin did not trust the Koreans at all. Fearing that as long as they lived near the Soviet borders in the Far East, Japan would use them as spies and infiltrate Soviet territory, Stalin ordered their deportations from the standpoint of counter-intelligence.⁸⁷

Stalin said explicitly, according to Liushkov:

It is necessary to clean up the army and its rear in the most determined manner from hostile spy and pro-Japanese elements [...] the Far East is not Soviet, there the Japanese rule [...] Stalin resumed the conversation by saying that it was necessary in cleansing the rear to terrorize the [Korean] district and the frontier so as to prevent any Japanese [espionage] work.⁸⁸

Japanese documents suggest that the deportations of Koreans achieved Stalin's goal, at least to an extent: they deprived real Korean spies working for Japan of refuge and assistance in the border areas.⁸⁹

As if to confirm the Soviet suspicion of Polish-Japanese clandestine anti-Soviet operations, in December 1937, Poland and Japan held joint military intelligence conferences in Harbin and Warsaw to assess the Soviet situation.⁹⁰

Nearly all foreign diplomatic missions were implicated in spy charges. The case of the Japanese Consulate in Novosibirsk in western Siberia, for instance, is instructive. The consulate

carefully monitored all sorts of seemingly innocent Soviet activity, including the Siberian railway. In 1937, pretending to go on picnics, some Japanese diplomats (intelligence specialists) spent most of their days on river banks to observe the transport of freight cars, whilst others monitored military bases and military factories. Obviously they needed help from local residents (some of whom may have been Soviet agents). In late 1937 more than 100 Soviet citizens were arrested as Japanese spies and 63 of them were executed. Among them were the consular secretary Viacheslav Petrovskii, his sister Ol'ga, the telephone operator at the Consulate, Mikhail Mikheev, the chauffeur and Stepan Bylov, the cleaner. The consulate was shut down in late 1937.⁹¹

87. Genrikh Liushkov, who defected to Japan in 1938 quoted in Hayashi, *Kantōgun to Kyokutō Sorengun*, 110-111.

88. US Military Intelligence Reports. The Soviet Union 1919-1941. Reel 4, frame 0976-0977 (originally from the National Archives and Record Service, Washington, D.C., Record Group 165. Military Intelligence Division files: Russia). For Stalin's remarks quoted by Liushkov, see also Dirk Kunert, *General Ljuschkows Geheimbericht: Über die Stalinsche Fernostpolitik 1937/38* (Bern: Schweizerisches Ost-Inst, 1977), 21-22.

89. See the August 1938 interview of a Korean spy: GGSK, s.1.6.5.0—2 and the unpublished 1952 study of pre-war Japanese espionage in the Far East: "Manshū ni kansuru yōheiteki kansatsu," ["Tactical Observations about Manchuria"] v. 10 (available at BBKT), 5-6, 10-11, 21-23, 25-28, 31-32, 46.

90. RGVA, f. 308k, op. 3, d. 456, l. 37 and AAN (Archiwum akt nowych — Archive of Modern Documents) (Warsaw), Sztab Główny, 616/249 (10-13 December 1937).

91. Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead*, 164.

Most foreign consulates in the Soviet Union were forced to shut down. In September 1937 the Japanese Consulates in Odesa and Novosibirsk were shut down. In 1938, the Japanese Consulates in Khabarovsk and Blagoveshchensk met the same fate. By the spring of 1938, Germany, Italy, Britain, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Afganistan had all their Consulates in the Soviet Union closed. The number of Japanese consulates were reduced from 9 to 4 (Vladivostok, Petrovavlovsk, Okha and Aleksandrovsk, although Manchukuo, Japan's puppet state, maintained one in Chita and another in Blagoveshchensk.) Poland managed to keep two, one in Kiev, the other in Minsk, whilst the Soviet Union kept one in L'viv and another in Gdańsk (Danzig).⁹²

The Soviet fear of foreign penetration also decimated Soviet partisan detachments, shock-strike groups, parachute-landing detachments, snipers, demolition experts and others who were trained at special schools and stationed in the border areas (including Polish and Japanese/Manchurian border areas). Stalin feared that these border military legions were so deeply penetrated by foreign spies that the legions themselves would be used by foreign countries against the Soviet Union.⁹³

Conclusion

The Great Terror was a precautionary strike against people who could pose internal threat in the event of war.⁹⁴ Needless to say, it is not that an actual threat existed to such an extent that it justified Stalin killing nearly one million people. True, at any given time, a degree of internal threat exists in any regime. The Soviet Union was no exception. For Stalin to think otherwise would signify poor and reckless political leadership. True, foreign intelligence was afoot everywhere. Yet, in spite of Stalin's contention that the international bourgeoisie had beaten the Soviet government in the area of intelligence operations, all indications suggest that the Soviet intelligence appeared more ubiquitous, more successful and more resourceful than that of other countries. Stalin was extraordinarily cautious. Believing that one spy could determine the outcome of war, he left nothing to chance. He believed that if only 5 percent of the alleged enemies were enemies, it was a big deal (*esli budet pravda khotia by na 5%, to i eto khleb*).⁹⁵ According to Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin believed that "Ten percent of the truth is still the truth. It requires decisive action on our part, and we will pay for it if we don't act accordingly."⁹⁶

92. *Ibid.*, 182. Italy appears to have maintained its consulate in Odesa until the end of 1938, however.

93. Baiguzin, *Gosudarstvennaia bezopasnost' Rossii*, 539-540 (V. N. Khaustov).

94. See Hiroaki Kuromiya, "Accounting for the Great Terror," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 53, 1 (2005).

95. His 2 June 1937 speech in *Istochnik*, no. 3 (1994): 79-80.

96. *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev. Volume 1. Commissar (1918-1945)* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2004), 117.

There is much evidence that Stalin believed in the ninety percent of the truth, but used the ten remaining percent for his political purposes. It was easy to glean the critical ten percent from rumours, misinformation and disinformation circulating in the world, both in and outside the country. Stalin said privately of his former political rivals whom he alleged schemed with Poland, Japan and Germany:

We were aware of certain facts as early as last year [1936] and were preparing to deal with them, but first we wanted to seize as many threads as possible. They were planning an action for the beginning of this year. Their resolve failed. *They were preparing in July to attack the Politburo at the Kremlin.* But they lost their nerve — they said: “Stalin will start shooting and there will be a scandal.” I would tell our people — they will never make up their minds to act, and I would laugh at their plans.⁹⁷

In October 1938, when he was ending the Great Terror, Stalin stated that Bukharin had had “ten, fifteen, twenty thousand” supporters, and that there were as many, possibly more, Trotskyites. Their mortal sin, according to Stalin, was not their foreign espionage but their opposition to his “revolution from above”:

Well, were they all spies? Of course, not. Whatever happened to them? They were cadres who could not stomach the sharp turn toward collective farms and could not make sense of this turn, because they were not trained politically, did not know the laws of social development, the laws of economic development, the laws of political development. [...] How to explain that some of them became spies and intelligence agents? [...] It turns out that they were not well-grounded politically and not well-grounded theoretically. They turned out to be people who did not know the laws of political development, and therefore they could not stomach the sharp turn.⁹⁸

This is convincing evidence against taking Stalin’s allegations about espionage and subversion at face value. Clearly, he had other justifications in mind.

Spy-mania existed in many countries in the 1930s. Communists and left-wing elements were ruthlessly repressed in Germany, Poland, Japan and elsewhere. The Soviet Union and the Comintern did operate its agents in these and other countries. As the former Japanese counter-intelligence services recounts the political atmosphere of Manchuria in 1937, it was characterised by “unprecedented international espionage.”⁹⁹ Japan arrested numerous suspected Soviet spies. Many were tortured to death. The bodies were called “logs” and discarded. In sanctioning the use of torture in 1937, Stalin asked why the socialist secret service had to be more humane in applying torture against the agents of the bourgeoisie and the enemies

97. *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 70 (11 November 1937).

98. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 163, d. 1217, l. 51-52. This speech was published in *Voprosy istorii*, no. 4, (2003): 21. See also Kuromiya, *Stalin*, 135-136.

99. *Nihon kenpei gaishi* [*An Unofficial History fo the Japanese Military Police*] (Tokyo: Zenkoku kenyūkai rengōkai honbu, 1973), 436-442.

of workers and peasants than the bourgeois secret services were in torturing the representatives of the socialist proletariat.¹⁰⁰ When he made this remark, he may well have had Japan in mind. As one former Japanese counter-intelligence officer in Heihe (a Manchurian city across the Amur River from Blagoveshchensk) in the 1930s admitted later anonymously, in his mind the prospect of war justified torture and killing:

“It was said that one enemy spy was mightier than one division of soldiers. I did not feel particularly guilty for torturing and killing spies at the time. Now I only pray for the souls of these many people.¹⁰¹

This use of war as justification of terror was probably shared by Soviet torturers and executioners. It is the logic of Stalin as well, except that Stalin consciously used the war justification for his *political* purposes — *preemptively* eliminating his political enemies and *potential* defeatists and fifth columns.

It therefore appears to be utterly irresponsible and patently absurd to claim that foreign intelligence was at least indirectly “guilty” of Stalin’s Great Terror, as some Russian historians now claim.¹⁰² Were this true, every other country could have killed millions of its own people and held the Soviet Union at least indirectly accountable.

In any case, the war was the defining element of the Great Terror. By then Stalin appeared to have concluded that Poland had to be destroyed. Stalin once said that “Piłsudski — he is Poland.”¹⁰³ If so, after Piłsudski’s death in 1935, Poland ceased to exist for Stalin. The Promethean movement declined after his death. In 1939, Stalin told Dimitrov that formerly

the Polish state was a nat[ional] state. Therefore revolutionaries defended it against partition and enslavement, [but Poland had now become a] fascist state, oppressing Ukrainians, Belorussians, and so forth [: the] annihilation of that state under current conditions would mean one fewer bourgeois fascist state to contend with!¹⁰⁴

Remarkably, Moscow even dissolved the Communist Party of Poland in 1937. Stalin noted at the time that “the dissolution is about two years late”.¹⁰⁵ In 1937-

100. Oleg Mikhailov, “Limit na rasstrel,” [“Limit on Shooting”] *Sovershenno sekretno*, no. 7 (1993): 5.

101. Toyotaka Katō, *Manshūkoku keisatsu shōshi* [A Short History of the Manchukuo Police], v. II (Matsuyama: Manmō dōhō engo kai ehime ken shibu, 1974), 129.

102. For example, E.P. Laidinen, S.G. Verigin, *Finskaia razvedka protiv sovetskoi Rossii* [Finnish Intelligence against the Soviet Union] (Petrozavodsk: RIF, 2004), 221.

103. Oleg Ken, *Moskva i pakt o nenapadenii s Pol’shei (1930-1932 gg.)* [Moscow and the Pact of Non-Aggression with Poland, 1930-1932] (SPb.: PIIaF RAN, 2003), 110.

104. *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov*, p. 116.

105. *Polibiuro TsK RKP(b) — VKP(b) i Komintern. 1919-1943. Dokumenty* (M.: ROSSPEN, 2004), 760.

1938 Stalin felt no hesitation in repressing Poles and those associated with Poland. In 1939 Stalin, in collaboration with Hitler, indeed destroyed Poland.

Japan, on the other hand, was a military power which continued to pose a serious threat to the Soviet Union. Stalin could not have destroyed it as he did Poland. Moreover, Japan's political situation was so unstable and unpredictable with frequent changes of hands that Stalin found it difficult to devise an effective anti-Japan strategy. Enormous precaution was therefore needed to combat Japan's threat. There were not many ethnic Japanese in the Soviet Union. Because Japan was demonised in the Soviet Union, those few living in the country went by Korean names. In the end the entire Korean population, identified with Japan, became suspect and was wholesale deported from the Far East.

By contrast, Stalin found it easier to deal with Germany even though he understood that Germany was the main enemy in 1937. Because Germany was personally ruled by Hitler as the Soviet Union was by Stalin, Stalin found it easier to deal with Germany. Indeed, even when Stalin was killing numerous people as German spies, he sent out feelers to Hitler about a possible rapprochement.¹⁰⁶ In the end, he did strike a deal with Hitler two years later. Stalin could not destroy the Soviet Germans as he did the Soviet Poles.

Likewise, the ethnic Chinese fared better than the ethnic Koreans: unlike the ethnic Koreans, the ethnic Chinese were not wholesale deported from the Far East. Given Japan's extensive use of ethnic Chinese for espionage and subversion, there is no compelling reason why the Koreans should have suffered more than the Chinese did at Stalin's hands. Yet Stalin needed China to fight Japan whereas Korea, a colony of Japan, did not even exist as a state. Taking advantage of the December 1936 X'ian incident, Stalin and Mao succeeded in turning Chiang Kai-shek (a Fascist sympathiser who drew on German military advisers for his fight against the Chinese Communists) and his Kuomintang Army against Japan to form a united front with the Chinese Communist Party. This change marked an important turning point in international politics as well: it defeated one of the aims of the "anti-Comintern pact" by detaching China from the pact's three powers. It is not known whether Moscow and the Chinese Communists were behind the July 1937 Marco Polo Bridge incident that drew Japan into the Chinese quagmire, but it greatly helped Stalin by diverting Japan's aggression away from the Soviet Union. In August 1937 Stalin and Chiang signed a non-aggression pact explicitly directed against Japan.¹⁰⁷ Even though Stalin did not exempt the Chinese from his terror, just as he did not the Germans, he could not treat China as an enemy nation.

Thus Poland and Japan became targets for exceptional terror by Stalin. Poland and Japan proved exceptional in another respect. They continued to collaborate

106. Silvio Pons, *Stalin and the Inevitable War, 1936-1941* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 66-67, 95.

107. See the account based on Soviet archival documents in D.B. Slavinskii, *Sovetskii Soiuz i Kitai: istoriia diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii, 1917-1937 gg.* [*The Soviet Union and China: A History of Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1937*] (M.: Iaponiia segodnia, 2003), 316-317.

in anti-Soviet intelligence without betraying each other, even after 1941 when technically the two countries were at war. By contrast, Japan and Germany did not trust each other even though they worked together against the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁸ When Hitler concluded the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1939 without informing his partner, Japan, Japan's cabinet was forced to resign, declaring that the European event was so bizarre as to be incomprehensible. Stalin did not have friends, only "clear enemies" and "potential enemies". So he could not understand the extraordinary mutual trust of Poland and Japan. At the height of the terror, in January 1938, Stalin tellingly referred to a Russian proverb (which was also Lenin's favourite): *Izbavi nas bozhe ot "druzei", a ot vragov my sami izbavimsia* (God save us from our "friends," from our enemies we shall save ourselves.)¹⁰⁹

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108. For the collaboration of German and Japanese intelligence, see Jeffrey Burds, "The Soviet War against 'Fifth Columnists': The Case of Chechnya, 1942–4," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 42, 2 (2007): 274–282.

109. Kuromiya, *Stalin*, 128.