

## MONEY TALKS; IDEOLOGY WALKS

Russian Collaborations with the Japanese in Shanghai, 1931-1945

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Old Shanghai – seemingly one of the most dazzling international lands in the first half of the twentieth century, where people of diverse nationalities enjoyed economic prosperity and political freedom – was also a land of transnational collaborations. This essay focuses on the unsuccessful Russian collaborations with the Japanese in Shanghai during the period between 1931 and 1945, analyzing how these collaborations took place and why they did not produce any significant changes.

Although there have been a number of preceding studies on the foreign communities in Old Shanghai, very few of them focused on the Russian community there. Among the few researchers who focused on Russians in Shanghai, however, Marcia R. Ristaino and Bernard Wasserstein shed considerable light on the uncertainty in their lives. In *Port of Last Resort* (2001), Ristaino examines the community formation and how the community organization's political relations with the Japanese intersected with the Russian emigrants' social life. Another notable scholar Wasserstein recounts in *Secret War in Shanghai* (1998) the underground espionage networks of the major powers in Shanghai during World War II. With a few anecdotes, he briefly states the fact that quite a few Russians in Shanghai collaborated with the Japanese as black-market dealers or informers. While selectively utilizing the preceding studies by these two scholars, this essay examines in great detail the Russian collaborations with the Japanese in Shanghai, with the assistance of a wide range of primary documents.

Russia's connection with Shanghai dates back to the nineteenth century when Shanghai became a trans-shipping point for tea from Russian tea factories in Hankou destined for Russia. In 1860, the Russian consulate was established in Shanghai. Since then Shanghai grew in importance for Russia as that country penetrated China's northeastern economy even as its population in Shanghai remained inconsequential. However, their situation drastically changed after the October Revolution in 1917, as a consequence of which Russians siding with the Imperial Russian government went into exile themselves, fleeing relentless persecution by Bolsheviks<sup>1</sup>. These exiled Russians who maintained affinity for the imperial regime were often times called "White Russians" in contrast to

“Red Russians,” which means communist Russians or Soviets. In this essay “White Russians,” who were anti-communist are simply labeled “Russians” except in some instances when clarification is necessary.

In the period shortly after the October Revolution, Europe was a popular destination for Russian refugees presumably due to its geographical and cultural proximity. But in the wake of the White Army’s defeat by Soviets in the civil war and the dissolution of the Far Eastern Republic in 1922, desperate White Russians escaped to China, and quite a few of them eventually arrived in Shanghai through various routes<sup>2)</sup>. This critical incident precipitated an upsurge of the Russian population in Shanghai, from 8,000 in 1923 to 10,000 in 1925, and a decade later their number reached almost 20,000<sup>3)</sup>. Not surprisingly, the influx of destitute Russian refugees was not welcomed by Russian residents already domiciled there as well as by other foreign nationals in Shanghai who believed such refugees would usher in a decline in public safety and a rise in unemployment<sup>4)</sup>. At first, most of these Russian refugees were placed in temples in the French Concession, but later they settled around Avenue Joffre and gradually expanded their residential area to the International Settlement, forming what became the pre-World War II Russian diaspora community in Shanghai<sup>5)</sup>.

Despite this residential community development, the majority of Russian emigrants lived a hard life. Since the Chinese government in Beijing shut down the Imperial Russian consulate in Shanghai in 1920 as part of the negotiations with the new Soviet regime and the Soviet government deprived all Russians living abroad of their citizenship in 1921, Russians in Shanghai lived under precarious conditions in which they had no homeland, no government, and no consulate<sup>6)</sup>. To make matters worse, the British, the Chinese, and the French governments successively recognized the Soviet Union in 1924, placing Shanghai Russians in an even deeper predicament<sup>7)</sup>. Foreign companies in the Settlement were unwilling to hire Russians since they were largely devoid of English or Chinese language skills. As a result, those who had been employed in high-skilled and high-wage occupations in Russia had no choice but to engage in manual labor with low wages and high competition with Chinese workers<sup>8)</sup>. Hence, many ex-White Army Russians were employed as bodyguards for wealthy Chinese in the 1930s<sup>9)</sup>. Some women found it especially tough to survive, as evidenced by the fact that reportedly 22.5% of Russian girls and women between the ages of sixteen and forty-five years were involved in prostitution<sup>10)</sup>. Yet the picture for the employment situation of Russians was not eternally bleak. It improved to some extent over the years. Those who with some funds started up businesses and those who had some abilities and language skills started to work for foreign companies according to their expertise, while also there were Russians who got jobs at, for instance, the Shanghai Municipal Council<sup>11)</sup>. On the whole, however, Russians had scarce economic resources compared with other foreign nationals in the Settlement, and therefore they remained in subordinate positions socially and politically in the international society of Shanghai<sup>12)</sup>.

Vulnerability and political leanings of the Russian community in Shanghai attracted Japanese attention. The Russian Emigrants' Committee, established in 1926 by the former Imperial consul general in Shanghai Viktor Fedorovich Grosse, was the central administrative organization of the Russian community in Shanghai when it came to expatriate political affairs<sup>13</sup>. After Grosse's death in October 1931, Charles E. Metzler assumed the Committee chairmanship but suffered enormous pressure from the Japanese authorities to cooperate with them<sup>14</sup>. The principal reason the Japanese endeavored to bring Russians over to their side and take control of them was Shanghai Russians' anti-Soviet and anti-communist ideology which matched Japanese interests. In light of the growing Russian population in Shanghai, the Japanese authorities found it highly desirable to keep these many anti-Soviet elements in line with Japanese policies when confronting the Soviet Union since they could serve as allies for the Japanese. Japanese intervention in the affairs of Shanghai Russians became particularly conspicuous after the arrival of Kei Kuroki in Shanghai in 1937. Kuroki, having received education in Russia before the Russian Revolution, was sent to Shanghai by the Japanese government to conduct propaganda among these Russians. As a result, he became deeply involved in the affairs of the Russian Emigrants' Committee<sup>15</sup>. In early July 1940, the Japanese authorities announced publicly their plans to reorganize the Committee to follow those already functioning in Harbin. Under new arrangement, the Committee would receive directions from representatives and organs of the Japanese military. Metzler was unwilling to accept this level of Japanese control, and refused on principle the Japanese offer to let him continue to lead the body during the planned reorganization period. On August 2, 1940, he was murdered by hired Chinese assassins<sup>16</sup>. Obviously, behind his murder were Japanese officials, who were irritated by Metzler's failure to secure Russian votes in support of Japanese candidates in the Shanghai Municipal Council elections in April 1940, as well as by his obstinate refusal to collaborate with the Japanese<sup>17</sup>.

Shanghai Russians' opposition to the Japanese control over their political organization continued. The new chairman of the reorganized Russian Emigrants' Committee Nikolai A. Ivanov, although appointed by the Japanese authorities, was reluctant to head the Committee from the very beginning and also refused to obey the Japanese authorities in the increasingly complicated political atmosphere of the Russian community. He was cautioned by Kuroki that as the new chairman he had to prevent any further anti-Japanese outbursts at the Russian Emigrants' Committee meetings. Ivanov's tenure of office was brief; on September 9, 1941, he too was assassinated by Chinese terrorists<sup>18</sup>. Although no reports have ever conclusively demonstrated who ordered the assassination of Ivanov, presumably it was supervised by the Japanese authorities, aiming to reform the Committee into a puppet organization under their control.

After all, before the outbreak of the Pacific War the Japanese failed to gain anything from the Russian authorities in Shanghai unlike in Tientsin or Harbin<sup>19</sup>. In Tientsin, for instance, the Japanese-

sponsored and controlled Russian Central Anti-Communist Committee, the so-called “White House,” was established in 1937. This organization facilitated the political collaborations of Russians with the Japanese military and Gendarmerie. Subordinate committees were also established in Beijing, Tsingtao, Yantai, and Zhangjiakou. The purpose of the “White House” was to educate Russian emigrants against the development of communistic ideas and make them believe in Japanese militaristic slogans. Many Russian emigrants were lured by a catchphrase “Fight against communism,” and believed that the Japanese were the future liberators of Russia from the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, Japanese intentions were to utilize Russians, and that was done in their reign of terror. In April 1944, when the Japanese authorities were truly aware of the necessity to maintain favorable relations with the Soviet Union, the “White House” was suddenly stripped of its anti-communistic rhetoric that went contrary to the latest trend of Japanese policies, and was converted into a mere administrative organization<sup>20)</sup>. It is also noteworthy that in 1939 the Japanese organized a military language school known as the Far Eastern Institute in Tientsin, where selected Russian youths were trained to qualify as Japanese interpreters to be used for services of the Japanese intelligence. Upon completion of the schooling, the cadets were given assignments with the Japanese Gendarmerie in north China, where they acted as intelligence agents<sup>21)</sup>.

To sum up, in contrast to north China, what was absent in Shanghai was an ideological organization to instill the pro-Japanese ideology in the Russian community. More fundamentally, compared with north China especially Manchukuo, Japanese leverage was limited in Shanghai since the city housed multinational communities. For these reasons, the Japanese could not succeed in obtaining anything from the Russian authorities in Shanghai before the Pacific War. Having failed to make the Russian Emigrants’ Committee pro-Japanese, the Japanese authorities then changed their approach to soliciting individual Russians to assist them in carrying out their policies.

The outbreak of the war against the Allies on December 8, 1941 and the following Japanese occupation of the Shanghai International Settlement inflicted tremendous economic pain on the Russian community in Shanghai. Shanghai’s economy during the Japanese occupation never functioned well because the Japanese took over the commercial enterprises and banks of enemy nations. A great many Russians lost their jobs, and they became impoverished<sup>22)</sup>.

Then the Japanese, who were now the only dominant power in Shanghai, tenaciously attempted to utilize these desperate Russians in every conceivable way. Many of them, of course, refused to collaborate with the Japanese because it was regarded as anathema. However, those who were dazzled by money, especially the young, found themselves as collaborators for the Japanese even though they were not particularly supportive of the Japanese or their policies. A number of these Russian collaborators, many of them unscrupulous individuals, profited during this period, engaging

in transactions of war materials such as metals, leather, and industrial diamonds for the Japanese Navy and Army, and made their fortunes quickly. These brokers were even given immunity from the police authorities. In this way brokers flourished, and numerous offices were established for the purchase of these materials. Moreover, a certain percentage, not over 5% of the total number of brokers, willingly or not, acted as informers for the Japanese. In most cases this service concerned hidden materials, but a number of notorious Russians did participate in undercover political activities.

The Japanese also used Russian informers, who helped to monitor the Russian community and to keep the Russian population in a state of fear<sup>23</sup>). One of the most notable figures among them was Pick Hovans, who organized an extensive intelligence network for exposing spy activities against Japan as well as watching anti-Japanese activities among Russians<sup>24</sup>). Pick Hovans was a professional opera singer and actor, but also a notorious criminal. Pick Hovans, besides his real name “Evgeny Mihailovich Kojevnikoff,” had more than ten aliases including “Eugene Pick,” “Eugene Hovans,” “Clige,” “Von Krige,” “Dr. Carl Kliege,” “Kurjensky,” and “Kreeger.”

He was born on February 19, 1900, in Riga, Latvia, the son of a Cossack army colonel<sup>25</sup>). Very little is known about his early years except that he graduated from an officer school in Vilnius and was promoted to the First Lieutenant of the Imperial Russian Army. He participated in World War I and was captured by Germans in 1916. After two years’ confinement at various military prisoners’ camps in Germany, he was released and returned to post-revolutionary Russia in 1918, where he joined the High Military Staff Academy in Moscow the following year. While he received military training, he also studied opera and drama at Moscow Musical and Artistic Academy, perhaps seeing also his artistic career possibilities, which was quite unique for military personnel. In fact, his talent as an opera singer and actor found expression later when he moved to Shanghai<sup>26</sup>).

Despite his earlier career in the Imperial Russian Army, Hovans carved out a notable career in the Soviet military. In 1922, he graduated from both of the academies and was sent to Baku, Azerbaijan by the Soviet government. In 1923, he was appointed as Assistant of Military Attache to Kabul, Afghanistan, and the following year he was appointed as Military Attache to Turkey<sup>27</sup>). In early 1924, Hovans was sent to China as a Red Army intelligence officer and was on active duty in major Chinese cities such as Harbin, Beijing, Shanghai, and Hankou. In February 1927, he went to Hankou and started to work as an adjutant of Galen (Vasily Blyukher), who was a Soviet military adviser for the Kuomintang. In Hankou there was also a Soviet political adviser named Mikhail Borodin, who was deeply committed to the First United Front of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China. Hovans had a hand in Borodin’s secret missions aiming to bring China in line with Moscow’s policies. On May 18, however, Borodin and his associates turned against Hovans and made an attempt on his life for reasons that Hovans later recounted in his book titled *China in the Grip of the Reds* (1927) as

follows:

First of all, let me say that I never approved of the methods employed by such men as Petroff and his kind – blackmail, torture, and murder. Also, like many of the other Russian military men, I disliked the Jews in the Red organization. Both of these prejudices I showed rather plainly, which was of course indiscreet, at many times. The two most powerful men in Hankou, Borodin and Petroff, the head of the Cheka, were both Jews<sup>28)</sup>.

It must be true that Hovans' recalcitrant attitude was a seed of trouble. In addition, another reason why skeptic Borodin attempted to liquidate Hovans was allegedly that Borodin believed Hovans had established connections with the Japanese intelligence around 1924 and he may have been furnishing the British intelligence with the confidential information on the inner workings of Borodin's organization in Hankou<sup>29)</sup>. Hovans barely escaped alive to Shanghai with the help of the Portuguese Consul named A. T. Belchenko<sup>30)</sup>. Hovans turned his years of experience as a Soviet agent to his own advantage when he later worked with the anti-Soviet and anti-communist intelligence operatives in Shanghai and Taiwan after abandoning communism.

On his part, Hovans immediately worked against his former employers after arriving in Shanghai. He disclosed Comintern conspiracies in China by writing up a long report on them, and he also received a substantial sum of money from the British intelligence for other revelations<sup>31)</sup>. As for the former, he published the scandalous book, *China in the Grip of the Reds* (1927) to expose Borodin as the real power behind the scenes controlling the Hankou government and Petroff's plan to assassinate Chiang Kai-shek in April 1927, although some of his stories here will remain suspect until confirmed by other credible sources<sup>32)</sup>. Despite these seemingly treacherous acts against Soviets, it is premature to assume that they reflected a reversal of

Hovans' political ideology. In fact, a Japanese intelligence report observed that as of June 1928 Hovans was a journalist of the *New Shanghai Life*, a pro-Soviet paper and at the same time a secret agent of the Soviet consulate<sup>33)</sup>. Also a British intelligence report indicated Hovans was still pro-Soviet when it made reference to one of his journal articles in January 1931 that showed a clear pro-Soviet line<sup>34)</sup>. Moreover, Hovans worked for the intelligence services of China, the United States, and Japan. During this period, Hovans appeared to be an intelligence agent without a specific ideology, or an information broker who informed these different intelligence services of what reports were being received by others. He was also mixed up in swindle, gamble, counterfeit, and false representation,



Pick Hovans  
[NARA II,  
Washington DC]

and therefore was constantly in and out of jail<sup>35</sup>).

But Hovans moved on to even more seemingly questionable activities – he became a valuable agent for the Japanese intelligence. In September 1941, Hovans was arrested for instigating the murder of Serge Mamontoff, who was a journalist and had once written an article about Hovans in the form of a negative expose. Hovans was sentenced to 15 years in prison, but was released by the Japanese after the outbreak of the war on December 8 and the following Japanese occupation of Shanghai on the condition that he would collaborate with them<sup>36</sup>). Hovans was employed in the Liaison Room of the Japanese Naval Office in Shanghai under the command of Commander Inaho Otani and a civilian officer named Kichizo Ikushima, and worked as an adviser on Russian and other foreign affairs. Hovans was the only foreigner directly connected with the Japanese Naval Office and the most trusted Russian agent under a Russian-speaking Japanese named Noboru Fukuhara, his immediate superior<sup>37</sup>). Hovans' intelligence activities were mainly reporting on the affairs of pro-Allied and neutral nationals in Shanghai, investigations of anti-Japanese activities and political disaffections, and interrogations of suspected Allied spies, prisoners of war, and internees<sup>38</sup>). Hovans also worked for the Japanese Gendarmerie, a “semi-independent” branch of the Japanese Army, and for them he arrested many suspects with the help of his broad spy network. With it, Hovans terrorized much of Shanghai city since many suspects were sent to the “Bridge House,” notorious gaol of the Japanese Gendarmerie. While some were executed, in most cases however, Hovans used his authority to extort money or to simply get people out of his way. Besides his intelligence activities, he was deeply caught up in black-market dealings, which further enriched him<sup>39</sup>). Despite his busy if not notorious activities, Hovans still found time to engage in one of his passions. He was a famous opera singer and actor who owned a theater in Shanghai, and every two weeks he performed in a Russian play at the White Russian Club House on Avenue Foch<sup>40</sup>). His commitment to theatrical and musical activities is best described in his favorite phrase, “Drama and music are my best friends, and the stage is my entire life.”<sup>41</sup>)

Yet Hovans' main focus during the war years was intelligence activities for the Japanese. In one of the few existing records, Hovans' preoccupation with supplying intelligence to his Japanese superiors becomes obvious. One of his letters to Commander Otani sent between 1942 and early 1943 shows that Hovans predicted air raids on Japan through analyzing the public opinion in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia. He also reported that the U.S. government and the Chungking government had reached an agreement in 1941 to allow the former to construct military bases in the latter's territory. He also warned that the arrival of U.S. airmen in China and the transportation of large planes were confirmed by secret telegrams<sup>42</sup>). Moreover, a Chinese source that focused on the Russian community in Shanghai reported that Hovans was able to provide the Japanese with maps and intelligence related to Pearl Harbor as well as the similar other materials concerning key landing

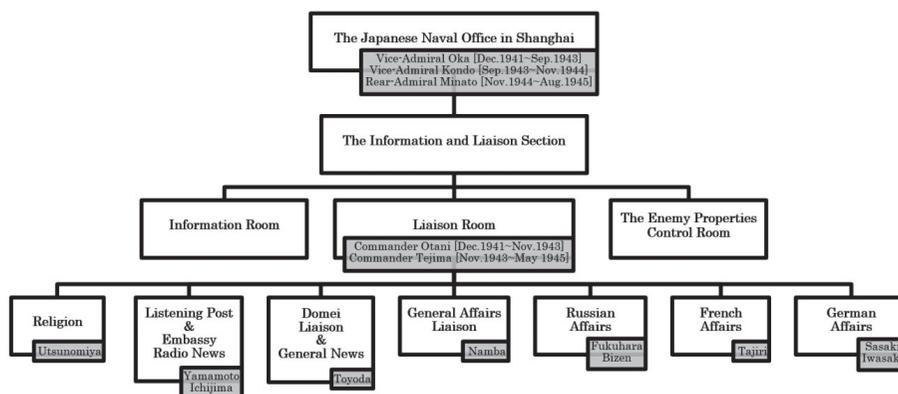


Chart showing the organization of the Liaison Room of the Japanese Naval Office in Shanghai [Japanese Intelligence Organizations in China, June 4, 1946, FOIA/CIA]

sites among the islands in the South Pacific<sup>43</sup>). Last but not least, Hovans, while often viewed as anti-Soviet, probably played a more prominent role in spying on the Shanghai Russian community, given the fact that he was employed in the Russian Affairs section of the Japanese Naval Liaison Room while Soviet affairs were dealt with in another section<sup>44</sup>). Presumably, he had to control Russians in Shanghai especially after 1944, when they rapidly turned pro-Soviet due to the course of the Russo-German War and the success of Soviet propaganda in wooing their support<sup>45</sup>).

During the war, the Japanese recruited some of the worst elements of the Russian community in Shanghai as collaborators. One of them is Paul Ivanovich Lojnikov, a Harbin-born Russian boxer in Hovans' gang, who was hired by the Japanese Navy and Gendarmerie. His ostensible role was to detect American, British, and Chungking agents but he is particularly noteworthy for his avocation as an infamous black-market operator, thief, and extortionist<sup>46</sup>). One of the methods Lojnikov employed to get rich quickly was kidnapping rich people and extorting money from them. In some cases, a rich individual was ordered to appear at a Japanese Gendarmerie station or the notorious Bridge House, where the victim was falsely charged with anything from being a spy against Japan to secretly furnishing supplies to U.S. warships off the China coast. The victim was held under arrest, often severely beaten, and finally released upon payment of a sizable amount of ransom. Often the victim was also required to furnish information regarding other rich individuals in Shanghai so that they could be similarly victimized. Then the seized money was divided between Lojnikov and his Japanese masters of the Gendarmerie. Many other



Paul Lojnikov  
[Family Search]  
<https://familysearch.org>

Russian agents connected with the Japanese Gendarmerie such as Nathan Rabinovitch, Serge Tautz, and Anton Bourtseff used this brutal tactic as well<sup>47</sup>. Rabinovitch was a strong arm of Hovans' circle and one of the most notorious Japanese agents in Shanghai. He turned into a killer when drunk. Rabinovitch, in addition to his racket activities, trapped Chinese guerilla generals, many of whom had to switch to the Japanese to save their lives. The Japanese paid Rabinovitch well<sup>48</sup>. Some Russian informers such as 'Count' Vladimir Tatischeff, a former cavalry officer of the Imperial Russian Army, specialized in preying on people who engaged in then-illegal currency transactions<sup>49</sup>.

The Japanese also utilized some Russian agents in the field of propaganda. For instance, P. A. Savintsev, under the direction of Kei Kuroki, was the editor of the *Novoe Vremia* (New Times), a pro-Japanese Russian newspaper, and A. A. Purin was the editor of a pro-Japanese magazine *Parus*<sup>50</sup>. Boris F. Ignatenko worked for the Japanese in a similar line, but it should be noted that he was a fascist. In Harbin Ignatenko joined the All-Russian Fascist Party headed by Konstantin Vladimirovich Rodzaevsky, and was working as a journalist with the party newspaper *Nash Put* (Our Way) and journal *Natsiya* (Nation). From 1938 to April 1940, Ignatenko resided in Beijing and Tientsin, being connected with the South Manchuria Railway Company and working as an informer for the Japanese intelligence. In Tientsin, he belonged to the Russian Anti-Communist Committee<sup>51</sup>. In addition, a Japanese intelligence report hints that in 1939 he was admitted to the aforementioned Far Eastern Institute attached to the Committee, where he developed an anti-Soviet and pro-Japanese ideology and received intensive Japanese language education<sup>52</sup>. Later he moved to Shanghai and got a position at a pro-Japanese newspaper *Rus* edited by Kuroki. Besides his pro-Japanese propaganda activities, Ignatenko gained notoriety for his collaboration with Hovans and the Japanese Gendarmerie and thus engaged in questionable blackmails, arrests, and executions<sup>53</sup>.

As in the case of Ignatenko, Russian fascists were backed by the Japanese authorities. Nevertheless, the All-Russian Fascist Party had difficulty in winning broad support from Russians in Shanghai because Shanghai Russians were less obsessed with counterrevolution than their compatriots in Harbin, where the party was founded. Moreover, the Japanese authorities had to scale back their support for Russian fascists following the conclusion of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in April 1941, in order not to upset the delicate relations with the Soviet Union<sup>54</sup>. Probably these are the reasons why Russian fascism ended up in a minor movement in Shanghai.

The Japanese Navy hired other Shanghai Russians to assist in their control over the city. For instance, 'Baron' N. N. Tipolt, a former officer of Ataman G. M. Semenov's force during the civil war, was appointed as an adviser to the Japanese Naval Office in Shanghai with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. His duties before the Pacific War included obtaining all sorts of information concerning foreign nationals in Shanghai and trying to influence the U.S. public opinion in favor of Japan through leading representatives in Shanghai. His superior ability in gathering and analyzing

information was attested to by a U.S. intelligence report<sup>55)</sup>. Andrew and George Molostvov materially supported the Japanese control over the city. The Russian brothers established AGMOL in Shanghai, a company operating brokerage business for the Japanese Navy on a big scale. AGMOL, having branch offices in Tientsin, Beijing, and Saigon, collected extensive materials such as gold, diamonds, and gasoline in conjunction with Manwa Kikan<sup>56)</sup>. Another pair of Russian agents working for the Japanese G. A. Tcheremshansky and Boris S. Maklaevsky were inside the Shanghai Municipal Police, but they were simply names appearing in the archival records with little notable achievements<sup>57)</sup>.

Japanese occupation authorities depended on Shanghai Russian assistance in pacifying the Philippines too. Following the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Japanese troops invaded the Philippines and occupied Manila in January 1942, and by June succeeded in getting control of the Philippines. During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese authorities faced difficulties in dealing with fierce resistance of Filipino guerillas backed by the U.S. military. In June 1944, when the recapture of the Philippines by the U.S. forces was imminent, the Japanese Navy dispatched to Manila foreign agents in Shanghai including Russians such as Pick Hovans, Paul Lojnikov, and Viacheslav Jack Toropovsky, accompanied by Japanese superiors, to suppress Filipino guerillas and to penetrate and expose other pro-Allied underground groups. Upon their arrival in Manila on June 15, they were assigned different tasks by Kichizo Ikushima, the civilian chief of the Japanese Naval Liaison Room in Shanghai and also the *de facto* chief of this project in Manila. However, few records have elucidated their assiduous work for the original purposes. Instead, Hovans, Lojnikov, and several other foreign agents enriched themselves through transactions of diamonds, radio parts, machinery, trucks, and motorcycles for Japanese firms in Shanghai. As in Shanghai, they hatched schemes involving swindles and extortions in Manila<sup>58)</sup>. There were also those who were unwilling to work from the very beginning because they were forced to join this mission<sup>59)</sup>.

Of special note was Viacheslav Toropovsky and Peter Kazak, who carried out orders from the Japanese occupiers. Toropovsky was a Harbin-born Russian youth, who previously worked in Shanghai for the British, monitoring Shanghai-Berlin and Mukden-Berlin radio circuits. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, he was compelled to switch to the Japanese, and thereafter worked for the Japanese, using his knowledge and skills in radio, although he was never pro-Japanese. In Manila, Toropovsky and Kazak were put in a listening post of the Japanese Navy and ordered to intercept U.S. Naval communications. Based on information they gathered, they were able to locate positions where air raids would likely take place and urged the Japanese to take precautions. More remarkably, they even forecasted on October 16 that the U.S. forces would shortly be landing somewhere in the Philippines. Nonetheless, the Japanese superior officers were so foolish and reckless that they never

treated the reports with enough gravity and they rejected them as “dangerous thoughts.” As a consequence, the Japanese paid for their mistakes. Exactly as predicted, on the next day there was a U.S. landing on Suluan island, followed by the invasion of Leyte. On December 24, 1944, when a U.S. landing on Luzon seemed imminent, the agents flew back to Shanghai. Toropovsky later complained that the Japanese intelligence officers were completely unsuitable for the listening post work due to their indecisiveness and lack of English language ability. Worse, the Japanese intelligence officers placed little trust in Toropovsky and Kazak, and garbled their reports to present intelligence data in a favorable way, which undermined the whole intelligence work at the monitoring station. The mission in Manila thus ended in failure<sup>60</sup>). But for Shanghai Russians, the end of the war presented even greater problems for them as their expatriate community was quickly coming to an end. When Chinese communists took over Shanghai in May 1949, the Russians once again were forced to flee to other regions of the globe such as South America, bringing to an end the troubled relationship between them and the Japanese in Shanghai.



Viacheslav Toropovsky  
[Family Search]  
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By way of summary, the relationship between Shanghai Russians and the Japanese can be seen as largely one of unfulfilled promises. Before the Pacific War, the Japanese authorities saw these Russians as potential supporters in their anticipated confrontation with the Soviet Union. However, the Russians were basically anti-Soviet but not pro-Japanese in their political inclinations. Given that ambiguity, the Japanese made strenuous attempts in the 1930s to bring Russians over to their side. For instance, the Japanese authorities aggressively approached two of the Russian Emigrants' Committee chairmen, C. E. Metzler and N. A. Ivanov, but were unable to win their cooperation in a real sense. It is true that finally the Japanese authorities gained full control of the Committee during the tenure of F. L. Glebov, but the Russian community itself was not cooperative<sup>61</sup>). Japanese interests in exploiting the anti-Soviet sentiments of the Russians, however, cooled in the wake of the signing of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact in April 1941 when the Japanese authorities had to tone down their anti-Soviet activities in deference to the Japanese central government's desire to maintain peace with the Soviet Union even though Japan was formally an ally of Germany. Exploiting anti-Soviet sentiments among Shanghai Russians, however, no longer became an option during the Pacific War. On the other hand, when an increasing number of Shanghai Russians expressed sympathy for Soviets, who were fighting for their homeland against Germans, the Japanese authorities again found the need to contain Shanghai Russians' support for the Soviet Union. Again, the Japanese authorities

had to change their approach, this time focusing on destitute individuals in the Shanghai Russian community and recruited those who sought quick money as brokers, informers, and agents. With the outbreak of the Pacific War, they hired various individuals of questionable character rather than utilizing valuable Russian individuals such as V. J. Toropovsky. The most important figure among them was Pick Hovans, who contributed to the Japanese in the espionage field in general as well as specifically with regard to controlling the Russian community through surveillance, although it is inconceivable that he played a major role on the whole in light of the course of the war. His influence was limited because he was not particularly pro-Japanese as he often voiced his wonder why the Japanese hired him<sup>62</sup>). However, Hovans' lack of influence was not so unusual since other foreign agents who materially supported the Japanese Navy, Army, and Gendarmerie also exerted limited influence except for when their notoriety drew public attention. What limited their influence and at the same time bound these Shanghai Russians to the Japanese military was not their ideology but money. As a result, the Japanese were never able to gain a strong following among Shanghai Russians. They failed largely because there was an absence of a pro-Japanese ideology among the Russian community in Shanghai in contrast to north China where collaborations proved successful to some extent. In Shanghai, there were no ideological organizations such as the "White House" or the Far Eastern Institute to instill the pro-Japanese ideology in the Russian community. That is why the Japanese were unsuccessful in getting the entire Shanghai Russian community on their side, except for unscrupulous individuals dazzled by lure of easy money.

## NOTES

- 1) Marcia R. Ristaino, "The Russian diaspora community in Shanghai," *New frontiers – Imperialism's new communities in East Asia 1842-1953*, Robert Bickers and Christian Henriot (ed.), Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 192
- 2) 11「上海ニ於ケル赤白露人情勢」調査送付ノ件 1, 25 June 1937, Reference Code B02032146000, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan
- 3) 東亜経済調査局『上海の白系露人に就て — 1935年7月現在』東亜経済調査局上海支局, 1935, p. 5
- 4) 榎本泰子『上海 — 多国籍都市の百年』中央公論新社, 2009, pp. 120-121
- 5) 11「上海ニ於ケル赤白露人情勢」調査送付ノ件 1, 25 June 1937, Reference Code B02032146000, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan
- 6) Ristaino, op. cit., pp. 192-193
- 7) 榎本, op. cit., p. 120
- 8) Ibid., p. 121
- 9) Ristaino, op. cit., p. 194
- 10) Ibid., p. 197

- 11) 11 「上海ニ於ケル赤白露天情勢」調査送付ノ件 1, 25 June 1937, Reference Code B02032146000, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan
- 12) 12 「上海ニ於ケル赤白露天情勢」調査送付ノ件 2, 25 June 1937, Reference Code B02032146100, Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan
- 13) Marcia R. Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort – The diaspora communities of Shanghai*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 50
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