

Japanese Strategy in the Final Phase of the Pacific War

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Introduction

The Pacific War broke out on December 8, 1941 with the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor. Three days later, on December 11, Japan's two allies, Germany and Italy, declared war on the United States. Meanwhile, as the Soviet Union was fighting on the German-Soviet front, it joined in via the Declaration by the United Nations in January 1942. As a result, Japan and the Soviet Union were affiliated with the Axis Powers and United Nations respectively, in opposition to each other, but as both countries had concluded a neutrality pact maintaining official diplomatic relations, this formed an extremely ambiguous relationship, described as "strange neutrality" by the American historian, Alexander Lensen.¹ Furthermore, although the Soviet Union joined in the Declaration by the United Nations, its posture as being completely allied on the side of the United States and Great Britain was not clear. Whether the huge Soviet Union would participate in the war in either camp would be decisively significant to the balance of power.

On the other hand, Japan recognized that it was impossible to win against the United States and Great Britain with military power alone, and since victory through military power would be difficult, a good command of diplomacy for after the end of the war would be needed. Therefore, diplomacy with the Soviet Union would hold an important position in Japanese strategies during the war. The Minister of Foreign Affairs when the war began, Shigenori Togo, pointed out, "The politics of the war at this time are in a contest for the Soviet Union. It is the Sekigahara of diplomacy."² Consequently, right after the start of the war, former Foreign Minister Naotake Sato, who had abundant diplomatic experience with the Soviet Union, was appointed to be the ambassador stationed there.

It is the purpose of this presentation to reexamine Japanese strategies through the end of the war, centering on the dealings with the Soviet Union, paying special attention to the period at the end of the war, while looking at other research.³

¹ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Anto* (Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman and the Surrender of Japan), Chuokoron-Shinsha., 2006, p. 33-35.

² Shigenori Togo, *Jidai no Ichimen* (A Side of the Times), Kaizosha, 1952, p. 288.

³ Sumio Hatano, "Nihon no Sensokeikaku niokeru Sorenyoin (Soviet Factors in Japanese War Planning)," *Shin Boei Ronshu*, Vol. 12, No. 2, October 1984; Chihiro Hosoya, "Taiheiyosenso to Nihon no Taisogaiko (The Pacific War and Japanese

1. Roadmap for Peace between Germany and the Soviet Union Aiming for Victory

First, from the context of the end of the war, diplomacy with the Soviet Union after the war aimed for “tranquility” between Japan and the Soviet Union, and at the same time providing mediation between Germany and the Soviet Union for peace. Seeds for German-Soviet peace dated back to the Tripartite Pact that Japan, Germany and Italy signed in September 1940. In a secret exchange of documents that accompanied this pact, one section reads, “As for the relationship between Japan and the Soviet Union, Germany shall strive to promote friendly agreements as much as possible, and shall take the trouble to intercede for said goal.”⁴ This reflects the expectations for a “Quadrupartite Entente” with the addition of the Soviet Union, anticipated upon the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact.⁵ It seems this plan failed for a time due to the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, but it was revived with the “Draft Proposal for Hastening the End of the War against the United States, Great Britain, Holland and Chiang”⁶ concluded at the Liaison Conference between the Government and Imperial General Headquarters in November 1941, just before the outbreak of the war. Namely, under the objectives that were to lead to the end of the war, in addition to the submission of the Chongqing government, by causing the United States to lose the will to continue fighting through submission of Great Britain with the cooperation of Germany and Italy, the “Draft Proposal” read, “If Germany and the Soviet Union have such objectives, the two countries can make peace and the Soviet Union can be drawn into the Axis Powers. While coordinating relations between Japan and the Soviet Union on the one hand, we will take into consideration the Soviet Union’s progress into India and Iran.”⁷ A quick conclusion to the war was sought by freeing Germany from its war with the Soviet Union so it could concentrate on the war with Great Britain and at the same time incorporating the Soviet Union into the Axis Powers.

Therefore, after the outbreak of the war, Foreign Minister Togo strongly insisted on conciliation for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union. However, in the “Matters relating to current measures involved in the development of the situation” decided at the Liaison

Diplomacy with the Soviet Union.” in Chihiro Hosoya, and Takeshi Minagawa, eds. *Henyosuru Kokusaishakai no Ho to Seiji* (The Law and Politics of a Transforming Global Community), Yushindo, 1971; etc.

⁴ Gaimusho (Foreign Ministry), ed. *Nihongaikonenpyo narabini Shuyobunshyo* <2>(Chronology of Japanese Diplomacy and Important Documents <2>), Hara Shobo, 1965, p. 460.

⁵ Hosoya, “Taiheiyosenso to Nihon no Taisogaiko,” p. 279. For the latest research on the “Quadrupartite Entente,” please see Masaki Miyake, *Sutarin , Hitora to Niissodokuirengokoso*(Stalin, Hitler and the Conception of the Alliance between Japan, the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy), Asahi Shimbunsha, 2007.

⁶ With regard to the “Draft Proposal” in general, please see Ikuhiko Hata, “Sensoshumatsukoso no Saikento(Reexamining the Designs for the End of the War),” *Gunji-Shigaku*(The Journal Of Military History), Vol. 121 • 122 , September 1995.

⁷ Boeicho Boeikenshujo Senshishitsu (History Department of the Defense Agency College), *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu*<2>(The Imperial Headquarters Department of War <2>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1968, p. 642-644.

Conference between the Government and Imperial General Headquarters in January 1942, although this was contended, only the following was included: “We will strive to maintain peace between Japan and the Soviet Union, while preventing the strengthening of ties between the Soviets and the United States and Great Britain, and if possible, to cause them to become estranged.”⁸ Under the first outline for guiding the war (“Outline to be Followed in the Future for Guiding the War”),⁹ which was concluded at the Liaison Conference between the Government and Imperial General Headquarters in March, though it would depend on the “Draft Proposal” and “Matters relating to current measures involved in the development of the situation,” it was specified, “However, we will not mediate for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union.”¹⁰ This was due to the objections of the army, which had concerns about a “nightmare” of a war against the Soviets at the same time as a revival of the northern menace.¹¹ An army administration official pointed out, “It would be better for the war to continue between Germany and the Soviet Union for a while, when considering the significance of proceeding with our southern strategy, a stable northern front is desirable. If Germany and the Soviet Union make peace, the northern front would become rather tense.”¹² In other words, success of the initial strategy in the south would be determined by the premise of avoiding war with the Soviet Union. There was a huge difference between Japan and Germany concerning which country should be defeated first and the positioning of the Soviet Union.

However, Foreign Minister Togo said, “It is the spring of 1942, and of the major countries of the world, only Japan and the Soviet Union have a relationship so as not to go to war. That is to say, we are in a place as if sunlight is shooting through the downpours.”¹³ Recognizing this, he did not halt the pursuit of peace between Germany and the Soviet Union with the goal for the future end of the war, but instead placed pressure through the ambassadors stationed in those two countries. However, on the contrary, no further progress was made because negotiations were deadlocked, such as in responses to demands from the German government for participation in the war against the Soviet Union, as well as due to Togo’s resignation with the establishment of the Ministry of Greater East Asia. In addition, the Japanese navy also proposed peace between

⁸ *Senshi Soshō –Daihōnei Rikugunbu<3>*(The Imperial Headquarters Department of War <3>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1970, p. 246-248.

⁹ With regard to the “Outlines for Guiding the War” during the Pacific War period in general, please see Minoru Nomura “Taiheiyosenso no Nihon no Sensoshido(Japan’s Guiding of the War in the Pacific),” *Kindainihon Kenkyū< 4>* *Taiheiyosenso*(Annual of the Studies of Modern Japan <4 >, The Pacific War), Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1982.

¹⁰ *Senshi Soshō –Daihōnei Rikugunbu<2>*, p. 517.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 614.

¹² Suketaka Tanemura, *Daihōnei Kimitsunishi* (Secret Journal of the Imperial Headquarters), Fuyo Shobo, 1979, p. 156-157.

¹³ Jun Eto, Supervisor, Ken Kurihara, and Sumio Hatano, eds., *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku <1>*(Records of Actions at the End of the War <1>), Kodansha-bunko, 1986, p. 35.

Germany and the Soviet Union through German naval officers residing in Tokyo at the beginning of 1942, but such efforts did not come to fruition.¹⁴

However, the time would come when an opportunity for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union would come from within the previously objecting army. With the completion of the southern strategy and the start of the Battle of Caucasus by the German army, a “Western Offensive” and peace between Germany and the Soviet Union were examined by the Office of the Army’s General Staff, aiming for British submission based on the designs of the “Draft Proposal.”¹⁵ Furthermore, before the state of the war turned against the Axis Powers, there were expectations that peace between Germany and the Soviet Union could be reached under favorable conditions and that the Soviet Union could be induced to join the Axis Powers. The person behind this was Lt. Colonel Masanobu Tsuji of the Operations Section of the General Staff. Such examinations were later encouraged, and discussions were held between administration officials in the Army Ministry, Naval Ministry and Foreign Ministry. In December 1942, “Guidelines for Coordinating Diplomatic Relations Between Japan, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union” were drafted so that negotiations between Germany and the Soviet Union could begin by March 1943. However, a full-scale investigation did not come to pass, and at the end of the year, the search for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union was facing a temporary lull.¹⁶ This was because while Germany completely rejected peace with the Soviet Union, and even asked for Japan’s participation in the war against the Soviet Union, domestically, the Foreign Ministry and the Naval Ministry showed strong disapproval. The reason was that without the establishment of principles for guidance in war for Japan, they could be dragged in to the war by Germany. There was a threat that compensation in the form of an attack against the Soviet Union and further involvement in the Indian Ocean and destruction of commerce would be requested.¹⁷ Furthermore, under the conditions in which Germany was requesting participation in the war against the Soviet Union, there were concerns that relations between Japan and Germany would be damaged, as Japan was

¹⁴ Takeshi Oki, “Dokusowaheikosaku womeguru Gunzo (A Sculptured Group through Pacification between Germany and the Soviet Union),” *Kindainihon Kenkyu <17> Seifu to Minkan* (Annual of the Studies of Modern Japan <17> Government and Private Enterprise) Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1995, p. 254-255. Furthermore, for discussions on relations between Japan and Germany during the war, see Takeshi Oki, “Dokusowaheimondai to Nihon (Japan and the Problem of Peace between Germany and the Soviet Union),” in Chihiro Hosoya, and others, eds., *Taiheiyousenso no Shuketsu* (The End of the Pacific War), University of Tokyo Press, 1997; Nobuo Tajima, “Higashiajiakokusaikankei no nakano Nichidokukankei (Relations between Japan and Germany within International Relations in East Asia),” in Kudo, Akira, and Tajima. Nobuo, eds., *Nichidokukankeishi <1>* (Historical Relationships between Germany and Japan <1>), University of Tokyo Press, 2008; and Gerhard Krebs, “Sangokudomei no Najitsu (Content of the Tripartite Pact),” in Akira Kudo, and Nobuo Tajima., eds., *Nichidokukankeishi <2>* (Historical Relationships between Germany and Japan <2>), University of Tokyo Press, 2008; etc.

¹⁵ Hatano, “Nihon no Senseokeikaku niokeru Sorenyoin,” p. 50-53.

¹⁶ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku <1>*, p. 40-46.

¹⁷ *Senshi Soshō -Daihonei Rikugunbu <5>* (The Imperial Headquarters Department of War <5>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1973, p. 102.

insisting on peace between Germany and the Soviet Union. One concern was, “Japan was afraid that by stimulating the passions of the German government, thus providing a motive for the cooling of Japan-German relations, the Soviet Union and/or the United States/Great Britain may be able to read the objectives of Japan and Germany.”¹⁸ There were frequent requests for participation in the war against the Soviet Union after the defeat of Stalingrad in February 1943, but at the time it was necessary to prepare for an American counteroffensive, and even if Japan attacked the Soviet Union, “It is very difficult to agree with Germany on this timing, because there is an extremely large fear that geographically, it goes to the heart of the matter, and it may move into a long-term protracted war.” The execution of war against the Soviet Union was impossible from the standpoint of national power.¹⁹

In any case, until the end of 1942, relations between Japan and the Soviet Union were stable because while the Axis Powers were maintaining an offensive, there was no northern menace surfacing. In particular, the above “Guidelines for Coordinating Diplomatic Relations Between Japan, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union” framed a plan for mediation for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union against a background of military power. At the time, there were constant supplies of reserves so as to reinforce the Kwantung Army and to prepare for offensives, which were the core of the guidelines. In the end, Japan did not succeed at utilizing such a predominant war position to negotiate peace between Germany and the Soviet Union.

However, potential opportunities for the Axis Powers to utilize this superior situation and mediate peace between Germany and the Soviet Union were lost after 1943 with the deterioration of the state of the war.

2. Maintaining Neutrality in the Defensive

In June 1943, “Matters relating to impending policies towards the Soviet Union” were adopted at the Liaison Conference between the Government and Imperial General Headquarters. In order to “maintain peace between Japan and the Soviet Union, and to comply with the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact,” it “designed positive solutions for pending problems between Japan and the Soviet Union.” Namely, instead of peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, it aimed at the stabilization of relations between the two countries, and in turn securing a “Northern Peace” by solving problems that had lasted for many years between Japan and the Soviet Union, such as rights to oil and coal in northern Sakhalin and fishery issues. It also noted the following,

¹⁸ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku*<1>, p. 41-44.

¹⁹ Sanbohonbu (Office of the Army's General Staff), ed. *Sugiyama Memo*<2>, Hara Shobo, 1967, p. 386.

“With formal negotiations, we shall be taking steps that may bring about an estrangement between Japan and Germany.”²⁰ Later, negotiations between the two countries were held. Objections were also made that the Soviet Union may surrender, but as a result of strong demand from the army for the indispensability of a “Northern Peace” in the guidelines for the war, they arrived at a compromise plan in February 1944.²¹ The following was written in the “Secret War Journal” of the Imperial Headquarters Department of the Army, War Guidance Division: “Matters related to measures concerning the Soviet Union were decided today in the liaison conference. This was a huge resolution concerning the path of execution of the Greater East Asia War. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is necessary to make all efforts to obtain an absolute sense of safety for the Soviet Union.”²² Among the disadvantages that would come about in the war situation there, a sense of relief was shown for securing the “Northern Peace,” which had been a major concern. Later, the signing of a protocol was officially conducted in Moscow in March 1944.

Meanwhile, as the war situation for the Axis Powers worsened, a movement was gaining momentum aiming once again at peace between Germany and the Soviet Union using new objectives within the Office of the Army’s General Staff. As for “Observations Concerning the Global War” prepared by the Planning and Operations Bureau of the General Staff in April 1943, the “shortest distance to victory by the Axis Powers” was peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, but the “shortest distance to the end of the global war” was independent peace between Germany and the United States/Great Britain. As a result, it determined that the “greatest crisis” for Japan would be if it were left to stand on its own.²³ In the background, in addition to bitter diplomatic experiences surrounding the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact and war between Germany and the Soviet Union, there also existed a distrust of Germany that arose from racial factors. Based on this kind of assessment of the situation, instead of an advantageous end to the war, negotiations for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union was felt out, with the aim of staving off independent peace with Germany. In addition, in the beginning of August that same year, Emperor *Hirohito* made inquiries to the Chief of the Army’s General Staff, Gen Sugiyama, concerning the necessity for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union from the sense of

²⁰ *Senshi Soshō –Daihonei Rikugunbu*<6>(The Imperial Headquarters Department of War <6>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1973, p. 526-527.

²¹ Hosoya, “Taiheiyosenso to Nihon no Taisogaiko,” p. 283-285.

²² Ginji Shigaku-kai (Military History Society of Japan), ed., *Daihonei Rikugunbu Sensoshidohan Kimitsusenshonisshi* <2>(The Imperial Headquarters Department of War, Planning and Operations - Secret War Journal <2>), Kinseisha, 1998, p. 485.

²³ Hatano, “Nihon no Sensokeikaku niokeru Taisoyoin,” p. 54-55; *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku*<1>, p. 125-132.

impending a crisis from a German defeat,²⁴ but at that time the army overestimated German war potential after the defeat of Stalingrad.²⁵

In this way, the second outline for guiding the war (“Outline to be Followed in the Future for Guiding the War”) adopted at the Imperial Conference in September 1943 included, “Japan will strive as much as possible to prevent the provocation of war between Japan and the Soviet Union, to proceed with designs to improve diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union, and at the same time, look for opportunities to advise peace between Germany and the Soviet Union.”²⁶ This was the first time a reference was made to peace between Germany and the Soviet Union in an “Outline for Guiding the War.” Attending the same conference, Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, while pointing out that because Germany and the Soviet Union were ideologically opposed and that each had confidence in itself, compromise would be difficult for the time being. He said, “Relations between the Soviet Union and Great Britain/United States are, in the end, that of enemies working together. Without a change in the state of affairs, I cannot assert that there is no appearance of hope for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union,” thus pointing out the contradictions in the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States/Great Britain resulting in particular from the advances in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as in the Near and Middle East, by the Soviet Union.²⁷ In addition, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu envisioned a plan after the surrender of Italy for cooperation between Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union by transferring the Mediterranean Sea, which had been in the sphere of influence of Italy, to the Soviet Union.²⁸ The reality was, however, that in October 1943, Stalin told Secretary of State Hull for the first time that the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan after Germany surrendered, and at the outset of the Tehran Conference of heads of state in the following December made a formal statement. It can be said that given the hope resulting from the signing of the protocol related to pending problems between Japan and the Soviet Union, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu’s recognition of the international situation proved to be overly optimistic. Accepting the “Outline,” Foreign Minister Shigemitsu sounded out the Soviet Union on sending a special envoy for negotiations between the two countries, such as mediation for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union refused.

In addition, in the data the Office of the Army’s General Staff prepared as reference for deliberating the “Outline,” it was noted that it would be necessary to realize military gains against

²⁴ *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <7>* (The Imperial Headquarters Department of War <7>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1973, p. 170.

²⁵ *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <6>*, p. 235-239.

²⁶ *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <7>*, p. 185-186.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 198-201.

²⁸ Tajima, “Higashijaiakokusaikenkei no nakano Nichidokukankei,” p. 60.

the United States and Great Britain. “We devote ourselves to the war against the United States and Great Britain, and such exalted military gains shall be our foundation” in order to mediate peace between Germany and the Soviet Union and to avoid war with the Soviet Union.²⁹ On the other hand, at the same time, a part of the Office of the Army’s General Staff foresaw not peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, but the defeat of Germany and the breakup of relations with Germany as a measure for avoiding war with the Soviet Union. The following is from “Policies for the End of the Greater East Asia War,” which the Planning and Operations Bureau of the General Staff prepared in September 1943: “Japan wants to avoid war with the Soviet Union if at all possible, but if we cannot help but be pulled into such, we predict that it will be unavoidable for Japan to make a sacrifice of its alliance with Germany and Italy.”³⁰ In contrast to the optimistic views towards the Soviet Union, Japan’s perception of Germany was complicated. Namely, while German strength and armaments were continually being overestimated, with the refusal to participate in the Great War against the Soviet Union in the beginning and the worsening war situation for Germany, both concerns over a separate peace with Germany and further fragmentation with Germany were examined, although such examinations were incomplete.³¹ This truly demonstrates the “Empty Alliance.”³²

In Europe, in 1944, the Allied Forces struck Normandy in June and the Soviet army continued attacking Eastern Europe as well. In the Pacific, the Mariana Islands, including Saipan, fell, the administration of Hideki Tojo broke down, and the Kuniaki Koiso cabinet was formed in July. Then, the third outline for guiding the war (“Outline to be Followed in the Future for Guiding the War”) was adopted at the Imperial Conference in August. To begin with, this “Outline” stated, “Japan will show its superiority in the potential for war with the nation’s armed forces in the latter part of this year, lead in decisive battles, and destroy the plans of our enemies,” which emphasized the destruction of the main force behind the United States’ Armed Forces, which were invading all over the Pacific area throughout the year,³³ but this was a point of view cognizant of a “gradual decline” in the strength of the nation and upon operations with the Soviet Union. In other words, at the time, the possibility of a German collapse was already being discussed, and on such occasion the subsequent participation by the Soviet Union in the war against Japan had grave significance

²⁹ *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <7>*, p. 192-194.

³⁰ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku <1>*, p. 137-147.

³¹ Please see Tomoyuki Yamamoto, “Sanbohonbusensoshidoka no Shusenkenkyū to Doitsuninshiki (Study of the Planning and Operations Bureau of the General Staff at the End of War and German Awareness),” *Nihon Rekishi* (Japanese History), Vol. 669, February 2004 for discussions on the awareness of the Planning and Operations Bureau of the General Staff with regard to Germany.

³² Johanna Menzel Meskill, *Hitler & Japan: The Hollow Alliance*, New York: Atherton Press, 1966.

³³ *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <9>*, Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1975, p. 90-92.

for the army and had to be avoided at all costs. For example, “Observations Concerning Leadership in the War with an Outlook for the end of 1944” prepared by the Office of the Army’s General Staff, 20th Division (Planning and Operations), recognizing that unless the situation for both Japan and Germany improved and that the ability to lead the war autonomously would be until the end of the year, claimed, “The degree to which we can expect the Soviet Union to maintain neutrality towards Japan should be at most to the end of the year, as long as the scales turn fairly for Japan and Germany.” Based on relations with the Soviet Union that year, that is, in 1944, a plot for challenging the United States in a decisive battle was born. It further stated, “When advantageous, Japan and Germany shall together win a final counteroffensive against the enemy this summer or fall, and with that, embrace the Soviet Union into our side. Then we expect developments in the situation akin to a proposal for compromise and peace from the United States and Great Britain.”³⁴ In this way, the *Sho*-1 Operation, which saw the Philippines become the main battlefield as perceived in the “Unique Points for a Breakthrough in the Fate of the Nation,” was implemented. “General Investigation of National Defense to Deal with the Worst Case Scenario,” prepared by the Military Affairs Bureau of the Army Ministry in September 1944, gave the following as an expected scenario in the case that the *Sho* Operation ended in defeat and Japan surrendered to the United States and Great Britain: first, the United States military would be stationed on Japanese soil; second, the army and navy would be disarmed; third, the imperial system of Japan would be abolished and a democratic system implemented; and fourth, all males would be forcibly sent to foreign countries with the aim of extinguishing the Japanese race. Except for the fourth point, the conditions demanded by the United Nations were fairly precisely predicted, but this document shows that there was a definite significance on the future of Japan based on the success or failure of the *Sho* Operation.³⁵

On the other hand, this operation caused a weakening of defense against the Soviet Union. Namely, due to the counteroffensive of the United States military after the Battle of Guadalcanal, extractions of military units to the south from the Kwantung Army had already begun from the latter half of 1943; divisions were finally subject to this from February 1944, and ten out of 17 divisions in Manchuria were extracted by the summer of 1944. By the end of the year, only a few, four, of the most elite divisions, remained. In particular, the *Sho*-1 Operation on Leyte Island saw the extraction of the elite forces in sequence, from the First Division, Eighth Division, and First Tank Division and from the aviation corps, the Second and Fourth Air Divisions, which formed the backbone of the Second Air Army. Therefore, in September 1944, the Imperial Headquarters

³⁴ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku <I>*, p. 179-193.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 421-431.

determined that an offensive operation against the Soviet Union was impossible and ordered the Kwantung Army to switch to a full-scale defensive posture.³⁶ A staff officer of the Imperial Headquarters recalls, “We well understood at the time that the Kwantung Army had fallen into a difficult situation due to a succession of demands, but they were unavoidable for the fortification of defense in the ‘*Sho Operation*’.”³⁷ To work smoothly with the Soviet Union, it was necessary for the Office of the Army’s General Staff to lead a strong counterattack against the United States and to remain in an advantageous position, but in order to do so, the elite corps on the Chinese Front and in the Kwantung Army had to be further extracted. However, as a result, in recognizing that the weakened Kwantung Army would not be able to fight a war against the Soviet Union, at the same time a vicious circle was being created in which there were demands to prevent further Soviet participation in the war, there was wishful thinking that the Soviet Union would not participate, and this led to some misjudgments.

In addition, concerning the Soviet Union, the “Outline” stated, “Japan will attempt to maintain a neutral relationship and further improve diplomatic relations, and in addition strive for immediate peaceful relations between Germany and the Soviet Union.” It also mentioned peace with the Chongqing government, which had been used by the Soviet Union. This was a result of the army, and in particular the Office of the Army’s General Staff, which had an increasing sense of impending crisis against the Soviet Union, demanding positive work with the Soviet Union. Chief of the Army’s General Staff Yoshijiro Umezu said, “Japan will strive to take every possible strategy and measure to prevent the creation of a war between Japan and the Soviet Union.”³⁸ Furthermore, as “compensation” for actions against the Soviet Union, it was thought that it would be possible to persuade the Soviet Union if maximum concessions were made, such as the transfer of southern Sakhalin and the northern Kuril Islands. To this point in time opposition arose in the background between the Soviet Union and the United States/Great Britain, and it was recognized that this could be used as a good opportunity. For example, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu noted, “As the war situation continues to be advantageous for them, it will be indispensable to develop different interests between them for the future. In this regard, this is the only weakness of our enemy that we can use today.”³⁹ Minister of Army Sugiyama pointed out, “There is a possibility that war may break out between the United States and the Soviet Union.”⁴⁰ However, on the eve

³⁶ *Senshi Soshō – Kantōgun <2>* (The Kwantung Army <2>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1974, p. 263-283; Toshihiko Shimada, *Kantōgun* (The Kwantung Army), Chūko-shinsho, 1965, p. 176-186; *Senshi Soshō – Daihōnei Rikūgunbu <9>*, p. 251-256; and Hattori, Takushiro, *Daitōsenso Zenshi* (Complete History of the Greater East Asia War.), Hara Shobo, 1965, p. 847-857.

³⁷ *Senshi Soshō - Kantōgun <2>*, p. 266.

³⁸ *Daitōsenso Zenshi*, p. 654.

³⁹ *Shūsenkosaku no Kiroku <1>*, p. 332.

⁴⁰ Shōgo Nakamura, *Nagata-cho Ichibanichi*, News-sha, 1946, p. 32

of the anniversary of the Soviet Russian Revolution in November, Stalin gave a speech criticizing Japan as an “aggressor nation” for the first time, and it turned out that the thinking on the Japanese side was nothing more than wishful thinking. Nevertheless, Japan continued to be optimistic that Soviet policies concerning Japan would not be seriously changed.

Consequently, former Prime Minister Koki Hirota was chosen in September as a special envoy for negotiations with the Soviet Union. He made a proposal to the Soviet Union, but was rebuffed, and in the end, Japan gave up dispatching special envoys. Later, Foreign Minister Shigemitsu strongly ordered Ambassador Sato stationed in the Soviet Union to work with the Soviet Union to bring peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, but the ambassador argued that it would be impossible to persuade the Soviet Union to alter their plans to suit those of Japan to provoke estrangement between the United States and the Soviet Union, even saying, “The attitude of the Soviet Union making such preposterous concessions just for its own survival is a crime. If Japan were to do such, other countries would look at us as shameful, even worse than Burma or Thailand, and laugh at us. It would be absolutely unbearable.”⁴¹ In addition, he pointed out concerns such as excessive approaches from Japan to the Soviet Union causing relations between Japan and Germany to deteriorate, and Germany was facing another compromise with the United States and Great Britain.

Despite the halt to the dispatching of special envoys, in September 1944, under strong persuasion from the Office of the Army’s General Staff, “Matters Related to Measures to be Implemented for the Soviet Union” from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were reported to the Supreme War Council. It read, in part, “Japan intends to maintain and improve a neutral stance between Japan and the Soviet Union. We will strive for improvement in situations using the Soviet Union to deal with cases such as if Germany collapses or independent peace is reached,”⁴² but the “Secret War Journal” commented, “The details are insufficient, and there are no outlooks for success.”⁴³

On the other hand, Germany put out feelers concerning peace with the Soviet Union, and because the war situation was unfavorable, Foreign Minister Ribbentrop showed interest, but Fuhrer Hitler refused in the end. The war between Germany and the Soviet Union differed from traditional wars in that an end was possible through diplomacy, and Japan could not understand that this was a “War on the Outlook of the World” being called a “War of Annihilation.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku*<1>, p. 342.

⁴² *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu* <9>, p. 265.

⁴³ *Daihoneirikugunbu Senshidoohan Kimitsusenonissshi*<2>, p. 589.

⁴⁴ Oki, “Dokusowaheimondai to Nihon,” p. 65.

From the end of 1944 through 1945, along with the *Sho-1* Operation in the Philippines, called the decisive battle, ending in failure with defeat in the Leyte Campaign, the war situation gradually worsened. From the standpoint in which it was impossible under the current conditions to expect the Big Three and China to fail at cooperating, “Observations Concerning Leadership in War that the Empire should Adopt,” prepared by the Office of the Army’s General Staff 20th Division concluded in December 1944, “It is almost impossible for the Empire to plan a turn in the international situation through diplomacy.”⁴⁵ The failure of the *Sho* Operation meant the collapse of working with the Soviet Union centering on peace between Germany and the Soviet Union. In this way, the grasp for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union that had been often pursued since the outbreak of war had failed, and further focus on working with the Soviet Union shifted to maintaining the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact whose end was approaching and whose abolition had been announced in April, or in other words, to restraining them from participating in the war against Japan. Ambassador Sato in the Soviet Union tried again to send out feelers to the Soviet Union on the continuation of the neutrality pact.

Meanwhile, in Europe it became obvious that Germany would surrender. At the Yalta Conference in February, Stalin promised to join in the war against Japan within two to three months after Germany surrendered. There was also information on large-scale movements of Soviet forces to the Far East coming in from the end of that month. In February, the Supreme War Council concluded the “Assessment of the International Situation” and came up with the following analysis: “The Soviet Union should continue to maintain neutral relations with Japan, though there is a considerable chance that they will give notice of an annulment of the neutrality pact this spring.”⁴⁶ In addition, in March the Office of the Army’s General Staff, 20th Division gave its forecast that the Soviet Union would prolong the war in East Asia for as long as possible, that there was a good chance that they would join near the end of the war after Japan, the United States, and Great Britain had thoroughly exhausted their supplies, that discord about the problem of East Asia between the Big Three would intensify after the European War ended, and thus was a bit optimistic that “there was light at the end of the tunnel” for negotiations with the Soviet Union as a result.⁴⁷

In this way, government authorities, especially the army, tried to approach and compromise with the Soviet Union at the end of the war, and there was criticism from within the country for this optimistic point of view. Representative of such is former Prime Minister

⁴⁵ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku*<1>, p. 431-442.

⁴⁶ *Senshi Soshō -Daihōnei Rikugunbu <10>* (The Imperial Headquarters Department of War <10>), Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1975, p. 24-26.

⁴⁷ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku*<1>, p. 504-510.

Fumimaro Konoe, who in February wrote in a Memorial to the Emperor, “In contrast to the calls for the thorough destruction of the United States and Great Britain, I believe that the pro-Soviet atmosphere is gradually growing tense. No matter what kind of sacrifice we make of even a military nature, we should be discussing taking the hand of the Soviet Union.” At the same time others criticized the approach to the Soviet Union, with extreme expressions of danger if the country became communist, instead advocating immediate peace with the United States and Great Britain.⁴⁸ As for direct peace with the United States and Great Britain, the United Nations had insisted on unconditional surrender since the Cairo Declaration, and since the army advocated thorough resistance as the purpose of the war, such was taboo. However, the Cabinet of Kantaro Suzuki linked the activities involving the Soviet Union to peace with the United States and Great Britain.

3. Negotiations with the Soviet Union with the Aim of Ending the War

The Suzuki Cabinet was formed in April 1945, but at almost the exact same time, the Soviet Union gave notice to the effect that it would not extend the Neutrality Pact. However, Ambassador Sato in the Soviet Union led Japan to have high expectations with his assessment that the announcement that the pact would not be extended was aimed at relaxing tensions between the United States/Great Britain and that this was not connected to a breakdown of diplomatic relations or the Soviets joining in the war against Japan.⁴⁹ Deputy Chief of the Army’s General Staff Torashiro Kawabe made the following evaluation: “I harbor no thoughts that he (Stalin) has favorable impressions of Japan and is not friendly towards the United States, but as calculating as he is, surely he does not want to make the Orient into a new battlefield at this time.”⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the notice that the Neutrality Pact with the Soviet Union would not be extended, combined with the surrender of Germany in May, even though expected, came as a huge shock for the army, which had been fighting a fierce battle in Okinawa. This became an ingredient for concern that the premise of the *Ketsu* Operation, the last-ditch defense strategy called *Ketsu-go*, the defense of the Japanese mainland, would be impossible due to the lowering of national strength such as a lack of food from extended economic blockades along with the Soviet Union joining in the war against Japan. The successful execution of the war, preparations for defense of the Japanese mainland and diplomacy with the Soviet Union were emphasized in the

⁴⁸ Please see Junichiro Shoji, “Konoye Josobun no Saikento (Reexamining *The Konoe Memorial*,” *Kokusaiseiji* (International Relations), Vol. 109, May 1995.

⁴⁹ Ken Kurihara, *Sato Naotake no Menmoku* (The Honor of Naotake Sato), Hara Shobo, 1981, p. 150-152.

⁵⁰ *Senshi Soshō –Daihonei Rikugunbu <10>a*, 1975, p. 192.

army's proposal for a new Outline for Guiding the War under consideration at the time. In particular, "In the current situation, whether Japan allows the war to continue or heads towards a conclusion, there is no path for Japanese foreign policy except to conduct thorough and firm diplomacy with the Soviet Union" showed that diplomacy with the Soviet Union was the most urgent of tasks.⁵¹

Therefore, army leaders demanded "bold" developments in "thorough and firm" diplomacy with the Soviet Union from Foreign Minister Togo. He recognized that at that point it was impossibly too late to use diplomacy to prevent participation in the war against Japan, but while the army refused unconditional surrender and there was little left to the nation's strength, by using the hopes of the army in this way, it was convenient to use the Soviet Union to bring the war to an end, and he correctly thought this was an "opportunity from Heaven."⁵² The influence of the Nomonhan Incident can be pointed out as background for these ideas by army leaders and Foreign Minister Togo. Namely, the defeat in this incident was a big factor in the army's sense of fear of the Soviet Union. The chief secretary to the cabinet of Japan at the end of the war, Hisatsune Sakomizu, ironically pointed out, "The only credit to the army was that they were correct in recognizing the Soviet Union."⁵³ Actually, the army still held prospects for success in the war against the United States at this time, but questioned a war with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it is said that Foreign Minister Togo was confident that he could work with the Soviet Union on the occasion of the Nomonhan Incident based on his successful experience in diplomatic mediation as ambassador to the Soviet Union.⁵⁴

In any event, it was not a direct surrender from the United States and Great Britain that hardliners such as the army were after, so much as a form of peace under favorable conditions using intermediation from the Soviet Union. Accordingly, although both Foreign Minister Togo and the army were in agreement on the implementation of negotiations with the Soviet Union, the respective purposes of peace and avoidance of war with the Soviet Union showed this was "a divergence of opinion within their alliance."⁵⁵ Although the army requested negotiations with the Soviet Union, these same negotiations affected negotiations with the United States, and there was concern about this resulting in an unconditional surrender.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Jun Eto, Supervisor, Ken Kurihara, and Sumio Hatano., eds., *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku* <2>(Records of Actions at the End of the War <2>), Kodansha, 1986, p. 137-145.

⁵² *Jidadi no Ichimen*, p. 316-317.

⁵³ Hisatsune Sakomizu., "Waheikosaku no Kushin (Pains of Pacification)," in Jun Eto, *Mohtotsu no Sengoshi* (Another Postwar History), Kodansha, 1978, p. 31-33.

⁵⁴ Yomiuri Shimbunsha, ed., *Showashi no Tenno* < 7> (*Emperor Hirohito in Showa History* < 7>), Yomiuri Shimbunsha, 1969, p. 364.

⁵⁵ *Daitoasenso Zenshi*, p. 887.

⁵⁶ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku* <2>, p. 56-66, 114-122.

First, Togo established the “Council of Members of the Supreme War Council” (hereinafter referred to as “Council of Members”) that excluded the subordinates of the directors and the like, to secure free discussion among leaders. Then, in the middle of May, he opened the Council of Members to make final policy decisions on negotiations with the Soviet Union. General Staff Chief Umezu, who had formerly been the military commander of the Kwantung Army and well understood how much it had weakened, insisted on improving relations with the Soviet Union, as it was necessary to prevent their participation in the war against Japan. Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai did the same to gain supplies such as oil, but Foreign Minister Togo argued that there was no advantage for Japan to use the Soviet Union and that formal and immediate actions should be taken for bringing the war to a conclusion. As a result, Prime Minister Suzuki suggested that Japan should request the Soviet Union to mediate peace with the United States and Great Britain, to which the council decided, “Even if war against the United States and Great Britain or any other characteristic presents itself, as an Empire, we must strive to prevent participation in the war at all costs.” With the ultimate goal of preventing the Soviet Union’s participation in the war, it was resolved that in negotiations with the Soviet Union, first, to prevent participation in the war against Japan; second, to acquire favorable neutrality with the Soviet Union; and added a new, third, to gain favorable intermediation related to the end of the war. This was an epoch-making council as it was the first time the end of the war had been examined in a public arena, but on the other hand, it brought an abrupt end to unofficial peace negotiations such as those through the Vatican, Sweden, and Switzerland, thus closing the possibility of a multifaceted approach. Furthermore, it was decided that as “compensation” to the Soviet Union, Japan would return southern Sakhalin, cancel fishery rights, and if necessary, transfer the northern Kuril Islands, but it was clear that these conditions would not satisfy the Soviet Union as it was far from the Yalta Agreement, which included the transfer of all of the Kuril Islands. Meanwhile, agreement was not reached on conditions for peace with the United States and Great Britain that were needed for negotiating the end of the war. This was due to the strong insistence of the Minister of War, Korechika Anami, that conditions for peace should be considered as the situation in Japan was not one of utter defeat. As a result, it was concluded that there would be no intermediation for peace for the time being.⁵⁷

The Imperial Conference of June 8 decided on an “Outline to be Followed in the Future for Guiding the War,” which was the final such outline. Based on the insistence of the army, in addition to calling for a strong policy for successfully conducting the war in defense of the

⁵⁷ Please see *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <10>*, p. 262-266; *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku <2>*, p. 66-77; *Jidai no Ichimens*, p. 315-321; etc.; for details on this conference.

Japanese mainland with the purpose of “defending the Imperial Estate” and “Preservation of *Kokutai*, the Imperial System (Polity),” it was also noted on negotiations with the Soviet Union that, “Japan’s future position in the war will be advantageous by conducting firm diplomacy with the Soviet Union and China in particular.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Council of Members on the 18th of that same month received word from Navy Minister Yonai that while a decline in Japan’s strength led to difficulties in continuing the war, as long as there was some war potential, Japan should hold negotiations for peace using the Soviet Union as mediator. Agreeing that negotiations for peace should be added as a purpose for negotiations with the Soviet Union, along with confirmation that the Imperial Conference would be held on the 22nd at the invitation of Emperor *Hirohito*, he also declared that it was necessary to examine concluding the war.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the army’s military power and position on invasion, though a bit underestimated, were fairly accurate concerning the participation of the Soviet Union in the war on Japan, but there was a problem in assessment on the time of the invasion. While the General Staff of the army saw early fall, specifically the end of August to be the “ultimate crisis,” it believed that the Soviet Union would wait until Japan’s strength had further weakened and join in the war along with the United States military landing on the mainland. Furthermore, the Kwantung Army thought that taking into consideration conditions of the Soviet military units, weather, and the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact, that the outbreak of war would not be until the following spring, perhaps when things were thawing out, which was an even more naïve judgment than that of the General Staff of the Army.⁶⁰ Based on the fact that eight and a half divisions had been extracted to the south, substantially lowering both quality and quantity and that preparations for war were not in place, to the point that it could be called a “paper tiger,” they were engaged in unconscious wishful thinking in their assessment that operations to defend against the Soviet Union would not be in place until summer and that if they joined the war, they would enter as late as possible.⁶¹ Therefore, the invasion by the Soviet Union was a definite “surprise” for the General Staff of the army, not to mention the Kwantung Army.

The anticipated negotiations with the Soviet Union took place between former Prime Minister Koki Hirota and Soviet Ambassador to Japan Malik, but progress was not made as

⁵⁸ *Senshi Soshō – Daihonei Rikugunbu <10>*, p. 323.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 327-328; *Jidai no Ichiminen*, p. 325-328.

⁶⁰ *Senshi Soshō – Kantogun <2>*, p. 325-341; Shimada, *Kantogun*, p. 186-188; Takashi Nakayama, *Kantogun* (The Kwantung Army), 2000, p. 241-242.

⁶¹ Reflections of the Vice Chief of the Kwantung Army, Matsumura Tomokatsu, NHK Press, ed. *Dokumento Taiheiyosenso <6> Ichiokugyokusai heno Michi* (Documentary of the Pacific War <6> The Path to a Hundred Million Deaths), Kadokawa Shoten, 1994, p. 216-223; *Senshi Soshō -Kantogun <2>*, p. 335-338; Teigo Kusachi, *Kantogunsakusensanbo no Shogen* (Testimony of Staff Officers in Kwantung Operations), Fuyo Shobo, 1979, p. 34-36.

expected. However, one thing that should be noted is the point that Japan offered a proposal for a long-term military alliance in order to oppose the United States and Great Britain at these negotiations.⁶² Japan was still optimistic about breaking up the Big Three. On July 10th, the Council of Members decided to dispatch former Prime Minister Konoe as a special envoy to breakthrough the situation. Konoe advocated immediate peace, not intermediation with the Soviet Union, but due to Emperor *Hirohito*'s strong leanings and failure at intermediation with the Soviet Union, he accepted the hope that they could start negotiations directly with the United States and Great Britain. Ambassador Sato stationed in the Soviet Union hoped for peace without having Emperor *Hirohito* surrender unconditionally, and therefore clarified for the first time that mediation for peace was for that purpose. He asked that a special envoy be sent to the Soviet Union, but they replied that they could not make an immediate reply because the objectives were unclear.

In any case, although there was agreement concerning the implementation of negotiations with the Soviet Union despite "a divergence of opinion within their alliance," in the final stages, consensus could not be reached in the end concerning the fundamental problems such as the future of the war and a possible defense of the Japanese mainland, the nation's ability to continue the war, and conditions for peace with the United Nations such as the United States and Great Britain.

While this was happening, the Potsdam Proclamation was made on July 26, but the Japanese government decided that since the Soviet Union did not participate, Japan would stay the course until there was a reply from the Soviet Union concerning the dispatch of a special envoy, and not clarify its objectives, but it was reported as "shelved" in the newspapers.⁶³ At this point in time, only faint expectations remained for the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ However, in actuality, Japan's proposal to the Soviet Union was introduced by the Soviet Union at the Potsdam Conference, but it was not accepted by the leaders of the Big Three, who were in agreement on unconditional surrender.

The reply given to Ambassador Sato in the Soviet Union from Foreign Minister Molotov on August 8 was the non-acceptance of a special envoy, but rather a notice of the outbreak of war, thus breaking the hopes of the Suzuki Cabinet. The planned special envoy, former Prime Minister Konoe, pointed out, "Kantaro Suzuki's cabinet was mistaken in trusting the good faith of the

⁶² Suzuki, Tamon, "Suzukikantaronaiikaku to Taisogaiko (Kantaro Suzuki's Cabinet and Diplomacy with the Soviet Union)," *Kokusaikankairon Kenkyu* (Research in International Relations,) Vol. 26, March 2007, p. 54-55, 59-61.

⁶³ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku*<2>, p. 325-330.

⁶⁴ Shigeru Funaki, "Shusenkosaku ni Tazusawatta Rikugunhishokan no Kodokuna Tatakai <2> (The Lonely Battle of an 'Army Secretary' Engaged at the End of the War <2>.)" *Maru*, Vol. 642, October 1999, p. 165.

Soviet Union so much. Government intelligence on the Soviet Union was weak, and this led the government to be wrong.”⁶⁵

It was the army that received a bigger shock. Deputy Chief Kawabe wrote in his journal, “Oh, did the Soviet Union finally decide to wage war with Japan? My determinations were way off base.”⁶⁶ Army leaders such as Minister of Army Anami and General Staff Chief Umezu, who had been emphasizing a defense of the Japanese mainland up to that point, could not accept defeat. Continuation of the war with a defense of the Japanese mainland, which had thus far been advocated by the army, was the main premise for neutrality with the Soviet Union, but this opinion crumbled when the Soviet Union joined in the war against Japan. Former Prime Minister Konoe and Navy Minister Yonai pointed out that the Soviet Union’s participation in the war would be “divine help” to lead the army to the end of the war,⁶⁷ but on August 15, the war would come to an end for Japan.

In the “Outline for Guiding the War with Soviet Participation in the War (Proposed)” prepared by the army on August 9, after the Soviet Union joined the war, it noted that instead of declaring war against the Soviet Union, Japan should make an effort to use the Soviet Union or a neutral country to end the war at an opportune time, and to continue negotiations with the Soviet Union for the time being.⁶⁸ Even after the Soviet Union joined in the war against Japan, there were still some empty hopes within the army, but a fierce battle and a tragedy developed on the plains of Manchuria.

This paper has focused mainly on the army up until now, but I would like to touch on actions by the navy hereon.⁶⁹ It was the navy that mainly took the war to the United States, and the menace from the Soviet Union came only from submarines. Other than the planned peace between Germany and the Soviet Union through German naval officers stationed in Tokyo at the beginning of 1942, the navy’s dealings with the Soviet Union were passive as compared to that of the army’s. On the other hand, at the end of the war, the navy expected to work with the Soviet Union for purposes beyond that of preventing them from joining the war as the army emphasized. For example, looking forward to a defense of the Japanese mainland, Japanese warships such as

⁶⁵ Guillain, Robert, “Konoyeko tonō Saigo no Kaiken (The Last Interview of an Imperial Guard),” *Chuo Kuron*, December 1988, p. 328.

⁶⁶ *Shusenkosaku no Kiroku* <2>, p. 364.

⁶⁷ Morisada Hosokawa, *Hosokawa Nikki* (Hosokawa Journal), Chuo Kuron, 1978, p. 420; Takashi Ito, et. al., eds., *Takagi Sokichi Nikki to Joho* <2> (Sokichi Takagi - Journal and Information-<2>), Misuzu Shobo, 2000, p. 926-927.

⁶⁸ *Daihonei Rikugunbu Sensoshidohan Kimitsusenonishi* <2>, p. 751.

⁶⁹ With regard to the navy’s attitudes toward the Soviet Union, please see Yoichi Hiram, “Nihonkaigun to Nichidokusokankei (The Japanese Navy and Japanese-German Relations);” Yoichi Hiram, “*Dainijisekaitaisen to Nichidokutsangokudomei* (World War II and the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy),” Kinseisha, 2007; Hidemi Higuchi, “Shusenshijo no Sengo (Postwar History of the End of the War),” *Gunji Shigaku* (Military History of Japan), Vol. 142, September 2000; etc.

the battleship “Nagato,” the aircraft carrier “Hosho,” and the cruiser “Tone,” as well as trade with the Soviet Union for oil and warplanes, was being examined by sounding out the Soviet naval officers in Tokyo. At the same time, Naval Minister Yonai was making similar requests.⁷⁰ This shows that naval interests, compared to those of the army, were focused more on the United States than on the Soviet Union, but on the other hand, it cannot help but be mentioned that the navy’s views of the Soviet Union were extremely optimistic.

Conclusion

Colonel Michitake Yamaoka, who was working as a military attaché stationed in the Soviet Union when the war broke out, wrote through the Russian desk of the Office of the Army’s General Staff, “Will Germany and the Soviet Union make peace, or will the Soviet Union be drawn into peace and join the Axis Powers, or will Japan and Germany fight against the Soviet Union, thoroughly decimating it? If neither of these occurs, the greatest and final ‘cancer’ of the Greater East Asia War will be the Soviet Union.”⁷¹

When war first broke out, Japan was not looking to begin a war with the Soviet Union, but was hoping for peace between Germany and the Soviet Union. Germany was consistently seeking participation in the war against the Soviet Union. Even though mediation was refused, Japan remained deeply attached to peace between Germany and the Soviet Union, and that restricted Japan’s leadership and diplomacy during the war. The end of the war saw more attempts at neutrality and trying to avoid participation in the war against Japan, but this resulted in delays in direct peace with the United States and Great Britain as well as other alternatives to end the war. While waiting for the Soviet Union to join in the war against Japan, it finally concluded with the end of the war. Neither of the routes that Colonel Yamaoka had pointed out was accomplished and Japan was defeated, truly being left as a “cancer.” Furthermore, as symbolized in the implementation of the *Sho-go* Operation, it cannot be denied that the Soviet influence exerted a big influence and distorted leadership of the war.

Why were there so many expectations of the Soviet Union? First, the only path remaining for Japan, which could not win a war against the United States and Great Britain on its own, was developing autonomous diplomacy, and the only possible country to accomplish that with was the Soviet Union. Furthermore, near the end of the war, it was indispensable in light of the United

⁷⁰ *Jidai no Ichimen*, p. 316-317; *Showashi no Tenno* <7>, p. 281-289, 372-388; *Takagi Sokichi Nikki to Joho* <2>, p. 896-900.

⁷¹ *Senshi Soshō –Daihōnei Rikugunbu* <4>, Asagumo Shimbunsha, 1972, p. 126-127.

States' counteroffensive and Germany's defeat. Approaches were made and work was done with the Soviet Union.

Second, Japan made poor judgments concerning the international situation, including Soviet intentions and relations between the Big Three. In addition to insufficient intelligence gathering, wishful thinking caused by Japan's weakened nature can be pointed as a factor. One staff officer at the Imperial Headquarters recollected, "As the situation became intense, there was a tendency to make assessments at the last possible moment for preparing strategies,"⁷² but the menace of Soviet armaments and decisions that were insufficient for a defense of the Japanese mainland resulted in wishful thinking. This was particularly remarkable in, but not limited to, the Kwantung Army. Prime Minister Suzuki noted, "Premier Stalin's personality seems to be similar to that of Nanshu Saigo, ... As he does not seem to be a bad person, the Soviet Union should become a vessel to bring mediation for peace."⁷³

Third, since the United Nations were insisting on unconditional surrender, direct negotiations were not accepted by the army in particular. Conditional surrender was raised through Soviet mediation. In this sense, to nurture peace, it can be said that negotiation through the Soviet Union was the only possible policy for a form of agreement within the government, including the army, which was advocating a defense of the Japanese mainland.⁷⁴

From these factors, despite the fact that the Soviet Union was the greatest imaginary enemy with an ideology opposed to Japanese "*Kokutai*," or the Imperial System, led by Emperor *Hirohito*, naïve notions abounded, such as former Prime Minister Konoe, in a Memorial to the Emperor, having to sound a small alarm concerning the dangers of the nation turning communist.⁷⁵

In this way, Chihiro Hosoya, a researcher in the history of diplomacy, has developed "the diplomacy of illusion."⁷⁶ Despite the conclusion of this "illusion," when considering Japan's awareness of the Soviet Union through the end of the war, an end like a detention in Siberia by the Soviet Union at the end of the war was truly an "ironic" tragedy.⁷⁷

⁷² *Senshi Soshō - Kantōgun* <2>, p. 336-337.

⁷³ *Jidai no Ichimen*, p. 319.

⁷⁴ Ryoichi Tobe, "Waheiwado to Shusenkosaku (Peace Movements and Work at the End of the War)" in Fusao Okumura, Supervisor, Shinji Kondo, ed., *Kindainihonsenshō* < 4 > *Daitōsenso (Modern Japanese War History < 4 > The Greater East Asia War)*, Kinokuniya Shoten, 1995, p. 672-673.

⁷⁵ Furthermore, there are indications that there was a wide range of feelings among army officers, from disgust towards the United States, and in contrast, goodwill towards the Soviet Union. (Masayasu Hosaka, *Senryōka Nihon no Kyōkan (A Lesson of Japan under Occupation)*, Asahi Shinsho, 2009, p. 283.)

⁷⁶ Hosoya, "Taiheiyosenso to Nihon no Taisogaiko," p. 304.

⁷⁷ *Ichiokugyokusai heno Michi*, p. 269-270.