

## Richard Sorge Case and Unit 731 of the Imperial Japanese Army

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### **1. *Richard Sorge was well-informed about Japanese preparedness for biological warfare as early as 1937***

According to Japanese police record of the interrogation of Max Klausen of January 5, 1942, Richard Sorge might wire to Moscow about Unit 731 of the Imperial Japanese Army as early as 1937.

This record was uncovered by a Unit 731 biological warfare and human experimentation researcher and journalist, Shoji Kondo. He presumed that it might be based on the information from the source close to Duke Fumimaro Konoe, Prime Minister of Japan through June 1937 to January 1939 and July 1940 to Oct 1941 when Sorge group were arrested (Sheldon Harris, *Death Factory*, Japanese translation by Shoji Kondo, Kashiwa Shobo, 1999, p.48).

Max Klausen surely stated, “ I happened to hear the conversation at Richard Sorge’s home between himself and Guenter Stein to the effect that in 1937, Imperial Japanese Army set up a facility in or around Harbin for the culture and development of such lethal germs as cholera and pest as a part of a stratagem for a possible war. Since I was not capable of handling the code at that time, I am not sure if I really sent the wire.” (*Contemporary Historical Materials : Sorge Case 4*, Misuzu Shobo, 1971,p.280)

#### 1-1 Sorge’s Interest in Kwantung Army

Although there were huge amounts of records of police interrogation and/or preliminary hearing concerning intelligence gathering done by members of Sorge group, such as division formation of Kwantung Army, division commanders, available weapons, airpowers and so forth, this is the only statement, as far as I know, which directly refers to Harbin biological weapon facility in or around 1937. In fact Unit 731 was yet to be known before Nomonhan Incident (Battles of Khalkhyn Gol, 1939 ). It still had been operated by the name of “Unit Togo” of The Epidemic Prevention Department of the Kwantung Army and the experiment facility at Pingfang was being constructed.

#### 1-2 Guenter Stein left Japan in 1938

On September 7, 1942, a preliminary judge questioned Klausen (about Imperial

Japanese Army in Manchuko) reading to him the decoded message in item 378 of the list of the intercepted wire, if he had known about it. Klausen's reply was that, although he was not capable of message encryption at that time, it was reasonable to presume that the information had come from a cooperative source, as Guenter Stein was mentioned there (*Sorge Case 3*, p.213).

This question and answer imply something related with the biological warfare. It is also considered possible that further attempt of investigation was not made because the information provider, Guenter Stein, left Japan in 1938 and was not in Japanese jurisdiction.

### 1-3 Was it surely informed to Soviet Union?

There is a detailed description in "*Sorge Case 3*" concerning the interrogation of Yotoku Miyagi (1903-43), Branko Vukelic (1904-1945) and Max Klausen(1899-1979) in great detail about such information they provided to Sorge as deployment, armament and the most advanced Hasegawa mechanized unit of Kwantung Army, but no mention was made on biological warfare unit. Likewise, the same or similar information had never been found in Soviet's record of wire from Sorge Group at least in declassified documents of Russian archives.

Accordingly, we may not be able to jump to a conclusion on this basis that Soviet had come to know about the Japanese germ warfare research before Nomonhan Incident, which led to the revelation of the suspects among detainees at Siberian POW (prison of war) camps after the war and also to Khabarovsk War Crime Trials in 1949. Even so, we may also not be able to rule out the possibility at all that it could have provided the causes of the investigation and indictment after the war by the Soviet, along with the condemnation by communist China for inordinate damages, of Japanese biological warfare research and development.

### 1-4 Possible Routes of the Intelligence

- In that instance, many possible sources of information could be considered like,
- a) direct input to Richard Sorge (1895-1944) by Klausen himself who was well versed of things in or around the area he covered, Harbin, at the time when he worked in Shanghai,
  - b) the one that were passed to Sorge by Hozumi Ozaki (1901-1944) which he acquired through his activities at the Investigation Department of South Manchurian Railroad and the Breakfast Club among some of Konoe Cabinet members,
  - c) the one that Sorge himself got from German Embassy in Tokyo and from a few pro-German Japanese high ranking army officers (Akira Muto for instance) and

d) the one that were provided by Chinese Communist Party with whom Sorge kept contact even after he had left Shanghai.

However, the most probable case among those could be the one that was passed to Sorge through Miyagi by Tokutaro Yasuda (1898-1983), another accused person of Sorge Link. Yasuda was a medical doctor, graduate of Kyoto Imperial University, year 1924, from which came quite a few Unit 731 members. Among the fellow students, there were notorious Unit 731 leaders. General Shiro Ishii, graduated year 1920 and Tomosada Masuda, year 1926. The same Hisato Yoshimura, year 1930, Ryoichi, Naito, Tachio Ishikawa and Kozo Okamoto, all of them year 1930 were his junior. However, the certain source of information still remains in the air and is yet to be known. Although none is certain, but some of possible scenarios are

- a) it got to Yasuda through a sympathetic doctors from the same medical school, as Yasuda walked in the same path as Senji Yamamoto, a radical doctor assassinated by a rightist in 1929 did,
- b) Yasuda possibly learned it from one of his patients, a high ranking army officer,
- c) and it was possibly transmitted to Sorge by way of Miyagi.

**2. It was right wing publication “Seikai (Political) Jeep” by Futaki Hideo, ex-Unit 731 member, that made Sorge Case a “Red Spy Case”**

Hideo Futaki was a project manager of Unit 731 in charge of tuberculosis and syphilis research group. After returning to his hometown, Kanazawa, he set up Unit 731 temporary main facility in Noma Shrine there to cover up what the Unit did in Manchuria during the war. He first published local publication “Yoron (public opinion)” and “Nippon Yoron (Japanese public opinion)” in November 1945 by recruiting Professor Tachio Ishikawa of Kanazawa College of Medicine, who cashed in Unit 731 records and data of germ warfare and lethal human experimentation he was holding, to deal with American force for acquiring immunity.

Futaki came to Tokyo in the spring of 1946 and started publishing the right wing scandalous magazine “*Seikai (political) Jeep*” to compete with the left wing disclosure publications, “*Sinso (truth)*”. It made the record sales of 100,000 copies at the highest while lasting until 1956. Actually, ahead of US/G2 Willoughby report of February 1949, the special October 1948 issue of “*Seikai Jeep*” greatly helped to color and establish Sorge Case as “Red Spy Case”, despite the fact that Sorge Case had been taken so far as antiwar and anti-fascism story due to the impact of Ozaki Hotsumi’s “*Aijo wa Furuhoshi no Gotoku (Love is*

*Like a Falling Star*”). At the same time, so far moderate “*Seikai Jeep*” and its publisher which dared to carry articles by non-nationalistic writers like Yukio Ozaki and Nyozeikan Hasegawa, and even comments by socialist and/or communist Diet members, took this opportunity to become positive anti-Soviet and anti-communist institution. In so doing, they succeeded to make close connection with such authorities as GHQ/PHW (Public Health and Welfare), Welfare Ministry and major medical drug companies by publishing “*Igaku no Tobira (Door to Medicine)*” with the help of Welfare Ministry Medical Bureau, which helped them to exonerate ex-Unit 731 members and recover their status in the medical circles.

#### 2-1 Testimony by Ms. Hanako Ishii

“It was after the war when I came to know that Richard Sorge had been executed. Since no official announcement was made, there was no way of knowing where my husband’s dead body was buried. However, it was October 1948, as I recall, that I happened to note the article in “*Seikai Jeep*” with the title “The truth about Ozaki/Sorge Red Spy Case”. So, I hastened to buy and took it home. The article read that since nobody came out to claim the dead body, it was buried by Sugamo Prison in public section for the unknown in Zoshigaya Cemetery and a humble wooden marker was placed. In order to know the exact location of the burial site, I made almost daily visit to the cemetery keeping office as well as to the prison, only to no avail. They were not willing to help me for fear of the eyes of American occupation forces. When I visited Zoshigaya Cemetery on November 16, 1949, a grave digger approached me and said that when he was digging mass burial site for the unknown the other day, he found bones unusually big for a Japanese. He had no doubt it was a non-Japanese. So he laid it out aside. (*Sorge as a human being*, Hanako Ishii, Kadokawa Bunko, pp183-185)”

#### 2-2 Cover up, Cooperation, Escape from war crime and Rehabilitation with GHQ

Initially, all the ex-members, from Ishii Shiro down, were intended to be covered up in Unit 731 restoring process. But they were all dismissed at International Military Tribunal for the Far East due to the interference in the fourth interrogation of the investigation team of the occupation force. It was made by those under the influence of G2 chief, Charles Willoughby, like Seizo Arisue, Takushiro Hattori and some others. They worked on the interrogation team through the interpreters, Ryoichi Naito, Kanichiro Kamei and others. They agreed to provide US force in exchange with the data and materials of germ warfare and human experimentation and also showed willingness to cooperate with ABCC (Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission)

in their atomic-bomb damage investigation and anti-infection measure.

### 2-3 Rally of ex-Unit 731 members

Hideo Futaki was very close to Ryoichi Naito who was a contact man, key person for negotiation with US force. In 1950 Futaki founded Japan Blood Bank (latter day Midori Juji which is infamous for medicinal injury) with Naito and Koichi Miyamoto. He enjoyed good connection with G2/CIS (Civil Information Section through Paul Rusch,) and PHW (Public Health and Welfare through Brigade General Crawford F. Sams ). Futaki arranged the social club Seikonkai (Heart and Soul Association) for Unit 731 senior members and built Seikonto (Heart and Soul Monument) in Tama Public Cemetery.

Although it is not certain that Futaki made public known about Unit 731 intentionally as intended by G2, he was definitely in a position to know the summary of Sorge case investigation (CIS Report, August 1947) being done by Paul Rusch and others even before the so called Willoughby Report was released in February 1949.

### 2-4 The Role of Futaki's "Seikai Jeep" at the time of Khabarovsk War Crime Trial

Futaki's "Seikai Jeep" played a big role in its April 1950 issue. It denied and tried to burke the sensational reportage in "Sinso" and "Report" of the USSR Khabarovsk War Crime Trial concerning bacteriological warfare, as complete fabrication. It also made a big propaganda campaign to warn the infiltration of Soviet spy among those who returned from Siberia as well as in communist party that split up in 1950. And at the time of Korean War and McCarthyism, they appealed the necessity of germ warfare and also stressed a danger of the "revival of Sorge Case".

### **3. Suspicious death of Unit 731 medical doctor Tomio Karasawa in the Soviet detention camp and of Prince Fumitaka Konoe, Fumimaro Konoe's eldest son, both at the time of the restoration of Russo-Japan diplomatic relation in October 1956.**

When the total return of Japanese detainees in Siberian Soviet camps was agreed in December 1956, ex-Unit 731 medical doctor Tomio Karasawa committed suicide in October 20. He was one of the defendants at Khabarovsk trial and was sentenced to 20 years corrective labor. One week after the day of his death, Fumimaro Konoe's eldest son, Fumitaka Konoe, also died of disease in the same camp. He was a witness of Karasawa's death.

US force regarded this suspicious serial incidents as the death by drug and they made follow-up investigation with the help of the testimony by former KGB

agent (fled to USA at the time) Juli Rastborov's testimony is found in "Konoe Fumitaka File" made by US/MIS (Military Information Service).

It may seem to support a part of Masaaki Nishiki's reasoning he made in his book, "*Mugan-san ni yoroshiku ("Send my best regards to Mr. MUGAN [YUMEGAO =Dreamy Face])"*". However, little possibility is there in the connection of Konoe Fumitaka's death with Sorge Case as done by Masaaki Nishiki, Miyoko Kudo and others. We cannot find the direct connection between Sorge Case and Fumitaka Konoe's death but say their's is a biased view peculiar to Japanese way of thinking.

### 3-1 Khabarovsk War Crime Trial of Unit 731

Although it is hard to tell when the Soviet started the investigation, they somehow got a scent of Unit 731's research and development works of biological warfare and human experimentation and tried to find out what was really done from various angles by,

- a) the arrest and interrogation of Unit 731 Division 4 chief, major general Kiyoshi Kawashima, and Cultivation Section chief, major Tomio Karasawa,
- b) from the materials they confiscated at Manchurian archives and ,
- c) the testimony by Kuwantung Army Surgeon General, lieutenant general Ryuuji Kajitsuka and Chief Instructor, Toshihide Nishi.

In January 1947, the Soviet made a demand to GHQ to prosecute, interrogate and turn over war criminals like Unit 731 commander and lieutenant general Shiro Ishii, Division 1 chief and colonel Hitoshi Kikuchi and Division 2 chief and colonel Kiyoshi Ota. However, US Army agreed only to make the interrogation in their presence in Tokyo, after they cajoled Ishii and others to sit for it in exchange of acquittal, trying to take all the research data and materials in their hands.

After the conclusion of Tokyo trial (International Military Tribunal for the Far East) which gave immunity from responsibility to Unit 731 members, Soviet pronounced judgement at Khabarovsk trial of Unit 731 in December 1949, as the state-sponsored crime and condemned 12 people including ex-Kuwantung Army commander Otozo Yamada, Kiyoshi Kawashima, Tomio Karasawa and Toshihide Nishi to correctional labor in camps for 25 years maximum. Further in 1950, they demanded at Far Eastern Commission for calling the international court to convict Emperor Hirohito, Shiro Ishii and Seiji Kitano, only to be turned down by US and UK.

### 3-2 Prince Fumitaka Konoe's life and struggle in Soviet camp

In the summer of 1936 Prince Fumitaka Konoe, a student at Princeton University,

became acquainted with Hotsumi Ozaki at Yosemite Conference of the IPR (Institute of Pacific Relations). And in 1938 he had opportunities of seeing Ozaki and Sorge as the secretary to the prime minister in the first Fumimaro Konoe (his father's) cabinet. Although there were such influential persons like Akira Kazama, Tomohiko Ushiba, Kinkazu Saionji and Takesi Inukai around and close to him, he was supposed to be just too young to get involved in Sorge Case at the age of 23.

In 1939 while he was working at Shanghai Toa Dobunshoin Daigaku (East Asian Literary School) he was called up for military service as he fell into disgrace of military police on Chunking plot through Zheng Pingru of Makoto Onodera's Special military agency.

In 1942 he came to know while in military service the announcement by the Department of Justice concerning the Sorge/Ozaki international intelligence group. At the end of the war in August 1945, he was a lieutenant and company chief of the third field gun troop of Kwantung Army and was held in Manchuria as a prisoner. As he was considered convenient to Soviet for use in relation to his father, Fumimaro Konoe who was close to imperial court and killed himself on being classified as an A-class war criminal in 1945, he was sent around detain camps and prisons here and there before he was sentenced 25 years in prison under Soviet penal law article 58 paragraph 4 (helping international bourgeoisie) in 1952. He was relentlessly asked to work for Soviet, namely to become "another Hotsumi Ozaki" (Alhangrusky, *"Killing of Prince Konoe"*, Shinchosha, 2000).

### 3-3 US Exposing of Possible Soviet Agent from Japanese Returners

About 600,000 Japanese detainees in Siberia (2,400,000 German POW) finally went home until 1950 with the exception of the war criminals who were continued to be held even after the conclusion of San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952. They were eventually set free in a state of grace on the restoration of the Russo-Japan diplomatic relation in 1956.

However, Soviet never hesitated to threaten the returnees to work for them after they went back to their home land. On the other hand, US army made every effort in interrogating the returnees on "Project Stitch" on their landing at Maizuru, Hakodate and others, to pick up PSA (possible Soviet agent) so they could thwart possible spy activity. As a result, according to Kenro Nagoshi, 352 Soviet agents were located, among which 138 confessed the loyalty commitment to the Soviet and 32 had actual contact from Soviet agents after the return. Another Sorge case was also said to be framed up involving Masao Ito and his 200 crews. In fact "another

Ozaki Hotsumi” emerged in 1954 in KGB Rastborov case involving the employees of Japanese Foreign Ministry.

Among US/NARA (National Archives and Records Administration) MIS (Military Intelligence Service) files, we are able to go over the individual files of such Unit 731 members as Otozo Yamada, Shigeharu Asaeda and Norimitsu Kikuchi (and these files are included in *“The collection of materials regarding Biological Warfare and Unit 731”* compiled by Kondo Shoji, Kashiwa Shobou 2003). The interrogation records of about 1,000 PSA were checked by myself at NARA.

In addition, the returnees must have been interrogated in detail as a part of US Air Force “Project Wringer” about geography and landscapes of where they were detained. Presumably, the location map was made up by G2 Geography Section on the basis of data thus obtained from about 10,000 returnees and it was taken as the useful data into making up a human GPS for specifying points of strategic bombardment.

#### 3-4 Riddle of Fumitaka’s Last Word *“Send my best regards to Mr. MUGAN”*

In MIS Fumitaka Konoe file, there are remarks like,

- a) US force knew about brainwashing attempt by Soviet of Fumitaka Konoe earlier,
- b) Fumitaka became neurotic on finding the suicide of Karasawa,
- c) he was given drug administration until his death by caregiver like Toshihide Nishi and other ex-731 members and
- d) Fumitaka’s close friend in camp, Takehiko Yoshida, who delivered the will of Fumitaka was a suspected Soviet surveillance agent.

On the other hand Rastborov made the testimony in the states “Fumitaka was nothing but a political prisoner”. Although Masaaki Nishiki insisted in his book *“Mugann-san ni yoroshiku (“Send my best regards to Mr. MUGAN [YUMEGAO=Dreamy Face]”)* that Mugan who was referred to six times in the letter that Fumitaka wrote in the late days of detention in 1955/56 is hardly acceptable. It seems more probable that Fumitaka meant Ryugan (Dragon face) for the emperor Hirohito and Mugan (Dreamy Face) for Prince Takamatsu, as stated in Kudo Miyoko *“Seven Mysteries of the Konoe Family”* (PHP, 2009) .

But it might be also possible that Mugan meant Kouichi Kido, the closest advisor Emperor Hirohito and the go-between of Fumitaka’s marriage with his wife Masako in 1944, Akira Kazama, the general secretary of Fumimaro Konoe Cabinet, and/or Masaru Nakayama, Professor of Dobunshoin Daigaku (East Asian Literary School) and important brain of Fumimaro Konoe. Without evidence and testimony by Fumitaka Konoe himself. The riddle of “MUGAN” remained forever.