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THE JAPANESE VICTIMS OF STALINIST TERROR IN THE USSR

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In the 1920s and 1930s, there were about 100 Japanese who dreamed of living in “the paradise of the working class” and went to the USSR. These people were mainly communists, who were oppressed by the imperial police in Japan. There were also ordinary workers, intellectuals and artists who were not communist. They were organized and led by the Japanese Communist Party (the Japanese section of Comintern, the JCP), whose representatives in Moscow in the 1930s were Sen Katayama, Sanzo Nosaka (alias Susumu Okano) and Kenzo Yamamoto (alias Tanaka).

After the death of Sen Katayama in November 1933, Sanzo Nosaka was sent to the USA in early 1934 and Kenzo Yamamoto became the top leader of the Japanese Communist group in the USSR. But Yamamoto was suddenly arrested as an “agent of Japanese Imperialism” by the Soviet secret police (NKVD) in November 1937 and was shot in March 1939. Almost all Japanese living in the USSR at the time faced the same destiny. The exact number of victims is not yet known, but I now estimate there to have been about 80 Japanese.

This paper will try to trace this tragic history, based on newly found Russian documents.¹

I. *The Japanese in the USSR in the 1930s*

After the collapse of the USSR, we gained access to new materials about the Stalinist terrors. Some Japanese journalists found new documents from the archives of the former Soviet government. The most dramatic case was the Nosaka scandal. Sanzo Nosaka was the representative of the JCP in Moscow and a member of the Executive Committee of Comintern (ECCI). He became the chairperson of the postwar JCP. At the end of 1992, when he was 100 years old and the honorary chairperson of JCP, the JCP suddenly purged him.

The reason for the purge came from one document from Moscow. Two journalists, Akira Kato and Shunichi Kobayashi, found proof that Nosaka accused his close friend Kenzo

¹ This paper was originally written in English, but first published in Germany as an article “Biographische Anmerkungen zu den japanischen Opfern des stalinistischen Terrors in der UdSSR,” in, Hermann Weber u.a. hrsg., *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* 1998, Akademie Verlag, 1998 Berlin. The author would like to thank Mr. Andrew Macmillan for his help with the first English version, and Dr. Rainer Schmitt for his translation into German. The French version will be published in the quarterly journal “*PERSPECTIVES ASIATIQUES*”, No.10, 2000 Paris.

The author has already published this story in three Japanese books; “*Moscow de Shukuseisareta Nihonjin* [The Japanese purged in Moscow]”, Aoki-shoten, Tokyo 1994. “*Kokumin Kokka no Ergology* [Ergology of the Nation State]”, Heibon-sha, Tokyo 1994, and “*Ningen Kunizaki Teido* [A Life of Teido Kunizaki]” Keiso-shobou, Tokyo 1995. But this new English version includes the most recent informations of victims. If you have any information about the missing Japanese in this article, please send me E-mail to: katote@f.ij4u.or.jp.

Yamamoto, who originally came to the USSR as the Japanese representative of the Profintern in 1928. In his letter (in English) to Georgi Dimitrov on 22 February 1939, he pointed out nine suspicions of Yamamoto's communist career. Yamamoto, already in prison, was shot as a "Japanese spy" on 19 March of the year. The JCP admitted this fact only after they re-examined the report of "bourgeois journalism," and they then expelled the 100 years old honorary chairperson. In party rhetoric Nosaka changed from "the face of glorious party history" to "the betrayer and enemy of our party," and he died the next year in loneliness.²

Although Nosaka himself did not make any defense of or comment about his accusations of "Japanese comrades" in Moscow in the 1930s up to his death in 1993,³ the situation of the Japanese in the USSR in the 1930s has become clearer with the discovery of other documents.

Before the collapse of the USSR, only five Japanese were conclusively known to have been arrested or purged in the Stalinist oppression. Three communists, Kenzo Yamamoto, Teido Kunizaki (alias Alexander Kon) and Ryokichi Sugimoto, were arrested, and it was reported that they had "died in Moscow." Two stage directors, Seki Sano and Yoshi Hijikata were purged from the USSR as "dangerous Japanese" in August 1937. Some other people were talked of as missing in the USSR, but there was no reliable information on them.⁴

When journalists checked the secret records of the Nosaka-Yamamoto relationship during 1936-39, they found names of other Japanese victims. These names were not known even after the end of the second world war. Before 1945, Japanese communists or leftists, who were against the Emperor system and the imperialist war, were labeled as "Reds" or "Non-Japanese." The families and relatives of the people who went to the USSR tended to conceal the fact for fear of the imperial police. The refugees themselves could not disclose their addresses or situations in the USSR, because they had to obey party discipline and to prove themselves true internationalists, who changed their loyalty from Japan to the USSR. They were under the strong control and close surveillance of the JCP and the Comintern.

It turns out that the prewar Japanese Ministry of the Interior made some reports about the Japanese who entered the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s. One report titled a "List of Japanese Communists in Russia" dated September 1934 mentioned 38 names.⁵ Another list titled "Top secret: Japanese Communists in Russia" from February 1936 listed 32 names.⁶ Some names like Sanzo Nosaka or Kenzo Yamamoto can be seen in both lists, but others are only on one list. One more list has a title of "Research on Japanese Communists entering Russia" in 1936. There are 78 names, including people who had once entered but then returned

² Akira Kato & Shunichi Kobayashi, "Yamino Otoko: Nosaka Sanzo no Hyakunen [The man of Darkness: A Hundred Years of Sanzo Nosaka]," Bungei-Shunju-sha, Tokyo 1993.

³ Sanzo Nosaka left eight volumes of memoirs about his prewar activities; they contain many exaggerated and distorted stories about his life overseas. Sanzo Nosaka, "Fuusetsu no Ayumi [My Way of Winds and Snows]," Shin-Nihon Shuppan-sha, Tokyo 1971-89. See, Haruki Wada, "Rekishi no nakano Nosaka Sanzo [Sanzo Nosaka in History]," Heibon-sha, Tokyo 1995.

⁴ Before 1975, when Teido Kunizaki's family was found in West Berlin, Ryokichi Sugimoto and Yoshiko Okada's "Escape for Love" was only known in Japan as a simple tragedy, because the JCP did not admit to the existence of "Stalinist Purges of Japanese."

⁵ 'Zairo Houjin Kyousanshugisha Chou,' in, "Shakaiundou no Joukyou: Shouwa 10 Nen: Kyousanshugi Undou [The Situation of Social Movements in 1935: the Communist Movements]."

⁶ 'Zairochuuno Nihonjin Kyousanshugisha Ichiranhyou,' in, *Namushou Keiho-Kyoku "Gokuhi Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyou: Shouwa 12 Nen [Top Secret: Outline of Police Intelligence Activities Overseas in 1937]."*

from the USSR before that time.⁷

These lists were published in the 1980s as part of the reprint series of secret government sources from the interwar period. But very few scholars were interested in the Japanese who lived in the USSR in the 1930s. Only after 1991, with the collapse of the USSR, did some journalists and scholars notice that there were many Japanese who might have been killed in the USSR as “Japanese agents.”

II. *The Secret Struggles Among Top Leaders of the JCP in Moscow: The Cases of Katsuno, Kunizaki, Yamamoto, and Ryou Nosaka*

One sensational piece of news coming from Moscow in September 1992 was the discovery of a letter by Sanzo Nosaka which accused his “close friend and comrade” Kenzo Yamamoto. It was found by a team of journalists from “Bungei Shunjuu,” one of the most influential (but conservative) monthly journals in Japan. In an English letter to Dimitrov dated on 19 February 1939, Nosaka raised nine reasons for why he considered Yamamoto a “suspicious character.”

One of these was Yamamoto’s entrance into the USSR. When the Japanese Government arrested 1,568 communists in Japan on 15 March 1928, Yamamoto was “strangely” (according to Nosaka) free from the police’s oppression. At the time, he was ill in bed, and his tuberculosis was believed very infectious. Yamamoto’s explanation was that the Japanese police only watched him at home and he could easily escape from his home in May. He then came to the USSR under the instruction of the underground party to participate in the 6th World Congress of the Comintern in August 1928. This heroic story of escape from Japan by Yamamoto was once admired in Japanese leftist newspapers and journals. But some JCP members were suspicious as to how he alone could escape the powerful police network although almost all other important leaders of the JCP were arrested.

Sen Katayama, the founding father of the JCP and its eldest representative in Moscow in 1928, was one of these. In Moscow, Katayama once accused Yamamoto to the Comintern in the autumn of 1929. The reason was that one Japanese student member of the KUTV (the Communist College of Far Eastern Workers), whom Yamamoto had recommended, had defected to the Japanese Embassy in Moscow.⁸ Katayama might also have raised Yamamoto’s “miraculous” escape from Japan with the Cadre Section of the Comintern, since he had secretly received documents relating to Yamamoto’s escape through the Japanese communist group in Berlin. Yamamoto once said to Nosaka that he was examined by the Comintern but was judged innocent.⁹ After this, he bore a grudge against Sen Katayama and Teido Kunizaki, the leader of the Japanese communist group in Berlin.

Just before this conflict between the two Japanese leaders in Moscow, there was another scandal surrounding Sen Katayama also involving Yamamoto. In July 1929, Chiyo Katayama, the 21 years old (second) daughter of Sen Katayama, visited him to take care of her aging

⁷ ‘Nihon Kyousantou Kankei Nyuurosha Chou,’ in, “*Shisou Geppou* [Thoughts Monthly]” No.33 (March 1937).

⁸ Joukichi Kazama, “*Moscow Kyousanshugi Daigaku no Omoide* [Memories of the KUTV]”, Sangen-sha, Tokyo 1949. Masami Yamamoto, “*Gekidou no Jidai ni Ikite* [Living in an Age of Convulsions],” Maruju-sha, Tokyo 1985.

⁹ Sanzo Nosaka, “*Fuusetsu no Ayumi*,” Vol. 6.

father. But Yamamoto objected not only to her admission to the KUTV but also to her lodging with her father at the Lux Hotel since she was not a member of the JCP but a “non-worker” university graduate. As the Lux Hotel was reserved as a special political facility for Comintern cadres, she was thus not entitled to reside there.¹⁰ Katayama could not force his way clear to living with his daughter in the face of Yamamoto’s political objections to the Comintern’s top leaders. Chiyo Katayama was sent at first to Leningrad and later to the Ukraine to train herself as a “member of the working class,” and endured great hardship until the death of her father in November of 1933. After her father’s funeral, she could live in Moscow, but became emotionally unstable, and died in a mental hospital near Moscow in April 1946.¹¹

At the end of October 1930, Yamamoto denounced Kinmasa Katsuno (alias Hayashi), Katayama’s private secretary at the time, to the Comintern as a danger to the USSR. The Soviet Secret Police (the OGPU) arrested Katsuno and sent him to a concentration camp (the gulag). Katsuno was a young intellectual who studied literature at the Sorbonne and became a member of the French Communist Party. He was purged by the French government in early 1928, and entered the USSR in March of 1928 with the help of the Japanese language group of the German Communist Party, which was led by Dr. Teido Kunizaki. Kunizaki organized a Japanese anti-imperialist group in Berlin, although he was sent to Germany by the Japanese Ministry of Education for research (he was an associate professor at the department of Medicine of Tokyo Imperial University). Kunizaki was the first Japanese to become a member of the German Communist Party, and wrote a letter of introduction for Katsuno to Sen Katayama in Moscow, who already had close communication with Japanese leftist group in Germany.

In 1930, Sen Katayama was already 71 years old. He remained a top cadre of the Comintern because of his past career in the labor and peace movements, but he had no real power either in Moscow or in Japan. He was a symbol of peace used to organize a broad range of intellectuals and artists for the anti-imperialist and anti-war movements to defend Soviet Russia. He was concentrating on writing a new, final, autobiography at the time, although he had already published two versions. For copyright reasons, Katayama’s new autobiography was to be published at first not in Russian but in German.¹² Katsuno became Katayama’s private assistant to help complete his final work in Moscow, and Kunizaki translated it into German in Berlin.¹³

But Kenzo Yamamoto, the Japanese representative of Profintern at the time, was a typical working class fighter and looked down on the “intellectuals.” Katayama’s Circle, including Katsuno and Kunizaki, had typical intellectual careers in Japan for the time. Both graduated from famous universities (Katsuno from Waseda University and Kunizaki from Tokyo University), and studied abroad. Yamamoto believed these persons to be a dangerous element

¹⁰ Joukichi Kazama, op.cit. Masami Yamamoto, op.cit. Kinmasa Katsuno, “*Sekiro Dasshutsuki* [Escape from the Red Russia],” Nihon-Hyouron-sha, Tokyo 1934. Kakuzo Takaya, “*Comintern wa Chousensuru* [The Comintern Challenge],” Daito Shuppan-sha, Tokyo 1937. Aino Kuusinen, “*Der God stürzed seine Engel*,” Wien-München-Zürich 1972.

¹¹ We are now checking new documents on Chiyo Katayama found in December 1997 at the Russian Center for the Preservation & Study of Documents of Contemporary History (Former Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CPSU). *RTsKhIDNI*, f.521/op. 1/ d.15.

¹² P.P.Topeha, ‘Soren ni okeru Katayama Sen Kenkyuu no Genjou,’ in, “*Roudouundoushi Kenkyuu* [Historical Studies of Labor Movement],” Tokyo, November 1959.

¹³ “*Revolutionäres Asian*,” 1.Jg. Nr.3, Berlin 1932.

in the party. When Katayama and Katsuno recommended one more young Japanese, Toki Nemoto who had graduated from Kyoto Imperial University and had a letter of introduction from the German Japanese leftist group to Katayama, for a studentship at the KUTV, Yamamoto strongly rejected him. He denounced Nemoto and Katsuno as “suspicious Japanese” to the Comintern. Unfortunately, Katayama was not in Moscow when Nemoto applied for the KUTV in October 1930. Katsuno was arrested by the OGPU and Nemoto was purged from the USSR.

During the Yamamoto’s first informing on Japanese to the Soviet Secret Police (OGPU), Sen Katayama could not save his companions. He lost his reliable secretary and a young supporter. Katayama could not protest to the Soviet government, but he tried to prove Yamamoto a spy. But he soon fell seriously ill. He lay in bed in the Kremlin hospital from January through the summer of 1931. The Oriental Section of the Comintern treated this conflict between Katayama and Yamamoto carefully. Yamamoto was sent from Moscow to Vladivostok. No Japanese leader was left in Moscow in early 1931.

Then Sanzo Nosaka was invited to become the third senior Japanese leader in the USSR. Nosaka was also an intellectual, having graduated from Keio University, but he had long worked at the headquarters of the leftist trade unions with Kenzo Yamamoto. He could mediate between two top leaders. He arrived in Moscow in April of 1931. At the time, Yamamoto was in Vladivostok and Katayama was in the Kremlin hospital. He surely knew of the serious conflict between Katayama and Yamamoto, but he pretended to take a neutral position between them and aimed for the casting vote.

The second stage of the conflict between Katayama and Yamamoto was begun by the emigration of Dr. Teido Kunizaki from Berlin to Moscow in September 1932. As the leader of the Japanese section of the German Communist Party, Kunizaki and his group struggled against German Nazism and Japanese Imperialism in North China. They organized demonstrations in Berlin against Japanese intervention in China and published a German journal “*Revolutionäres Asien*” from January 1932 onwards. When the Prussian government expelled Kunizaki as a “Japanese non-gratia,” Sen Katayama invited him to Moscow in place of Katsuno, who was interned in the concentration camp during 1930-34. Kunizaki emigrated to Moscow with his German communist wife, Frieda Retlich, and their small daughter Tatsuko.

Katayama welcomed him and recommended that he take the short cadre course at the KUTV to prepare him for promotion as a new Japanese communist leader. Kenzo Yamamoto returned to Moscow in December 1931 to work on new strategic theses for the JCP (so called “1932 Theses” published on May 20, 1932).¹⁴ He strongly opposed Kunizaki’s admission to the KUTV because of his intellectual origins and his lack of experience of class struggle in Japan.¹⁵ The final decision became Nosaka’s. He supported Katayama and agreed to send Kunizaki to the KUTV. Kunizaki studied there in 1933, then helped Katayama to complete his autobiography, and became the chief of the Japanese section of the Foreign Workers’ Publishers in Moscow in 1934. He also taught Marxism to some Japanese workers from the American Communist Party who worked at the Oriental Institute in Moscow. Kunizaki was close to Katayama, and Yamamoto opposed them. Nosaka stood somewhere between Katayama and

¹⁴ See: Toshio Iwamura, ‘The 1932 Theses of the JCP and Koza-ha,’ in, “*Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* 1994.”

¹⁵ *RTsKhIDNI*, f.495/op.280/d.168.

Yamamoto. Yamamoto now doubted even Nosaka's political attitude.

The crucial turning points were the death of Sen Katayama in November 1933 and Nosaka's secret entry into the USA in February 1934. Although Nosaka was elected to a member of ECCI as the successor to Katayama at the 13th Plenum of ECCI in December 1933, he was sent to the USA. He was on a mission to establish a new route to Japan after the collapse of the German route with the Hitler dictatorship.

Kenzo Yamamoto used this as a new opportunity to accuse Teido Kunizaki. In June 1934, Kinmasa Katsuno, Katayama's former secretary and an acquaintance of Kunizaki, finished his term of imprisonment in the gulag and escaped to Japan. Although forbidden to live in Moscow by the Soviet government, he had abandoned his former belief in communism because of his own experiences in the gulag and decided to flee the USSR. He secretly ran away to the Japanese Embassy in Moscow and claimed the protection of Japanese government. Fortunately for him, Katsuno returned to Japan in early August 1934, although the Soviet government strongly protested to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Katsuno worked as a businessman in Nagano and left some important testimonies of his experiences in the USSR. He died in 1984 and his innocence was confirmed by the Soviet Government in 1989.¹⁶

In Moscow, Yamamoto was convinced by this affair that Katsuno had originally been an important spy of the Japanese police. As Kunizaki had introduced Katsuno to Katayama, he himself might be also "very dangerous" for the party. Yamamoto stealthily denounced Kunizaki to the Cadre Section of the Comintern for his connection to Katsuno. Kunizaki and Ryou Nosaka (alias Kim Sian), Nosaka's wife, were interrogated by the Comintern in September 1934 and began to be watched carefully by the NKVD (the successor to the OGPU).

Until 1992, these events were not known in Japan. The formal history of the JCP painted a beautiful picture of comradeship among Katayama, Nosaka and Yamamoto. But there was no reliable information about the destinies of Yamamoto and Kunizaki in the late 1930s. Nosaka was the only living commentator who could testify to these events. He officially admitted to the death of Yamamoto for the first time in 1962 after he became the chairperson of the JCP. But he lied, claiming that Yamamoto "died in hospital in April 1942."

Nosaka admitted to Kunizaki's death in the USSR for the first time in 1975, only after one of the Kunizaki's close friends in Berlin, Tomin Suzuki, found Kunizaki's wife Frieda Retlich in West Berlin in 1974. In 1975, just after the JCP admitted the existence of the "Stalinist problem" in the history of the USSR, the JCP asked CPSU about Yamamoto and Kunizaki and officially reported Yamamoto's death in April 1942, and Kunizaki's in December 1937. Yamamoto, Kunizaki, and Ryokichi Sugimoto were at this time recognized as "Japanese communist victims" in the party's history.

With the discovery of secret Soviet documents, the conflicts among the top leaders of the JCP in Moscow became clear. Kunizaki was arrested on Yamamoto's charge on 4 August 1937 and was shot on 10 December 1937. Yamamoto was arrested on 10 November 1937 and shot on 10 March 1939. Even Nosaka's wife Ryou was arrested in February 1938, but strangely enough, she was released soon thereafter in March 1938.¹⁷ All these people were closely connected to Nosaka. Ultimately not only these three or four (Katayama, Nosaka, Yamamoto

¹⁶ *RTsKhIDNI*, f.495/op.280/d.198. "Asahi Shinbun," Jan. 13, 1997.

¹⁷ Kato & Kobayashi, "Yami no Otoko."

and Kunizaki) top leaders, but also all other Japanese in the USSR in the 1930s were to be caught up in the chain of Stalinist terrors. It was a tragic cycle of suspicions and fears rending that small group of Japanese controlled by the party discipline; i.e. so-called "Democratic Centralism."

III. *The Cycles of Purges of Japanese Emigres in the USSR: A List of Personal Histories*

The following is a detailed summary of individual histories based mainly on the new documents found since 1989.

On 21 April 1922 a famous Japanese journalist, Kakou Ohba (1872-1923?), was reported missing in the USSR. Ohba was the correspondent of the *Yomiuri Shinbun* Newspaper and was known as a pro-soviet intellectual, but went missing in Moscow after he participated in the Conference of Far Eastern Nations as an interpreter. In 1924 the Soviet government sent a simple report of his death to the Japanese government. He might well have been the first Japanese victim of the Soviet system, but documents revealing his final destiny have not yet been found. In 1992 the new Russian government rehabilitated him.¹⁸

Kiyoshi Shinpo (1899-1922?), who was a pilot in the French Army in the First World War and entered the USSR in 1919, was arrested in May 1922. It was said that he was shot in Moscow shortly afterwards. At the time, Eikichi Kubota was also arrested as a "Japanese spy" and spent two years in prison.¹⁹

In 1930, as already explained, Kinmasa Katsuno (alias Hayashi, 1901-1984, Sen Katayama's private secretary in Moscow), was suddenly arrested and sent to a concentration camp. But he escaped from the USSR to Japan after four years in the gulag and left valuable memoirs.²⁰ At the same time, one more young Japanese, Toki Nemoto (1904-38) was expelled from the USSR and returned to Japan in 1933.

In autumn 1931, Shinzo Saiki (alias Kawata), a former KUTV student and political activist in Vladivostock, was investigated by the Comintern and was banished to the Soviet countryside, but he was able to return to Japan in 1934 and was arrested by the Japanese police.

In 1936, at least two Japanese were arrested and were probably shot:

The first Japanese victim at the peak of the Stalinist terror was Takeo Maejima (alias Kanjo, 1901-1936?). He was born in 1901 in Kagoshima. He went to the USSR in 1930, studied at the KUTV during 1933-36, but he was arrested on 8 June 1936 and perhaps shot. His confessions in prison were used in the Kenzo Yamamoto case.

Masanosuke Itoh (alias Takeuchi, 1908-1937?) was the second victim. He was born in Yamagata in 1908, organized printing workers into a trade union and was sent to the KUTV during 1926-1928. In July 1928, he secretly returned to Japan and became the president of the Japanese Communist Youth League. But he was soon arrested by the Japanese police in December 1928 and recanted communism. In October 1929, he was released and returned to

¹⁸ The short biographies of Ohba and other victims can be seen in "*Kindai Shakai Undoshi Jinbutsu Daijiten* [The Greater Dictionary of Persons in the Social Movements of Modern Japan]," 5 Vols, Nichigai-associates, Tokyo 1996.

¹⁹ "*Yomiuri Shinbun*," Feb.5, 1998.

²⁰ Kinmasa Katsuno, "*Todo Chitai* (The Ice Zone)", Azuma-Shobou, Tokyo 1977.

the USSR without the permission of the JCP. Kenzo Yamamoto once gave him a party reprimand in Vladivostok. But in December 1933, Sanzo Nosaka appointed him to the staff of the Japanese section of the Foreign Workers' Publishers because he was a printing worker. He worked there with Teido Kunizaki. Kenzo Yamamoto accused him of being a "dangerous person" to the Comintern in September 1934, at the same time as he informed on the Katsuno-Kunizaki relationship to the Comintern. Itoh married Yasu Katayama, the elder daughter of Sen Katayama, but he was expelled from the JCP in October 1936 on charges of embezzlement of publishers' funds. He was arrested by the Soviet police on 25 November 1936 and shot on 14 September 1937. His confessions, extracted by torture, were used both in Teido Kunizaki's and Kenzo Yamamoto's cases.

One more important victim was Masao Sudo (1903-1937), the former leader of a trade union in Vladivostok. He was born in Hokkaido, worked in a coal mine, and entered in the USSR in 1924. In 1929, he became a member of the CPSU and organized Japanese oil workers into an union in the Sakhalin and Vladivostok area. Under his leadership, Niichi Nagai, Hamazo Koishi and others became political activists. Sudo moved to Moscow in 1933, and was suddenly arrested as a "Japanese spy" on 29 April 1937. He was shot on the 4th of December 1937. He left behind his Russian wife and a son. His son, Dr. Michail Masaowich Sudo, grew up to be a university professor. He sought the rehabilitation of his father and demanded the disclosure of all documents relating to Masao Sudo's case from the Soviet government. In 1956 Masao Sudo was rehabilitated, but Michail only received the KGB files on his father (No. 24189) in 1990. It is a truly exceptional case for the son of a Japanese victim of Stalinist terror to gain access to documents relating to the purges and clear his father's name.

From the files on Masao Sudo, we can now postulate some other Japanese victims in the USSR during 1937-1939. Zentarou Nakamura (alias Tokio Fukuda), Seikichi Yuzuki (alias Tatsuo Akashi), Shizuo Tsukada (alias Saito), Tokutarou Hashimoto, Jinkou Hiramatsu (alias Kanto), Mr. Teranuma and Mr. Sugimura were probably arrested and killed at the same time since they were close political friends of Masao Sudo. The other two members of the same group, Niichi Nagai and Hamazo Koishi, were surely purged in 1938 (as I show below).

These victims experienced interrogation by the Soviet secret police under torture and were mostly likely shot without formal trial.

Probably based on confessions extracted from Takeo Maejima and Masanosuke Itoh, two important leaders of the Japanese left in Moscow were arrested. Although Dr. Teido Kunizaki (alias Alexander Kon, 1894-1937) was not a member of the JCP but belonged to the German Communist Party,²¹ he was suddenly sent to prison on 4 August 1937. Kenzo Yamamoto (alias Tanaka, 1895-1939) was arrested on 2 November 1937.

With Kunizaki's arrest in August 1937, two Japanese stage directors in Moscow were exiled from the USSR. Seki Sano (1905-1966), studied under Vsevolod E. Meyerhold, went in Paris, and lived the remainder of his life in Mexico as "the father of Mexican drama art." One more stage director, Yoshi Hijikata (1898-1959) and his wife Umeko (1902-1973) with their sons returned to Japan. Hijikata was imprisoned in Japan during the war.

We should add one more artist to this list. According to Hijikata's memoirs, a stage director Mr. Hattori went missing in Leningrad in 1937. At the same time, Mrs. Teruko

²¹ Dr. Teido Kunizaki is noted as a German victim of the purges in a German book, "*In den Fängen des NKWD: Deutsche Opfer des stalinistischen Terrors in der UdSSR*," Berlin 1991.

Villich, a young Japanese woman married to a Soviet diplomat named A. Villich, was also arrested and went missing. Hattori and Teruko were friends of the Hijikata's family, but Hijikata left only passing references to them in his postwar memoirs. We found the new secret documents of Teruko Villich in Moscow in 1999, and knew that she was shot as a "Japanese spy" on 14 March 1938.²²

Teido Kunizaki was shot as a "spy of the Japanese army" on the 10th of December 1937. As he taught Marxism to some other Japanese in Moscow, his students also came under suspicion. On the 15th and 23rd of March 1938, eight Japanese were arrested. They all belonged to a group of "American-emigre" Japanese in Moscow and were led politically by Teido Kunizaki. Seiei Shimabukuro (alias Yuku, 1903-38), Jiro Yamashiro (alias Lee, 1902-38), Yosaburo Miyagi (alias Pak, a cousin of Yotoku Miyagi who belonged to the Richard Sorge group in Tokyo, 1900-1938), Jun Matayoshi (alias Tzoi, 1891-1937) and Chusei Teruya (alias Nyu, 1898-?) all originally came from Okinawa. Heizo Hakomori (alias Senu, 1891-1938) was from Ibaragi. Yohei Fukunaga (alias Yen, 1893-1938) was from Oita, and Jinsaku Yoshioka (or Nao Yamashita, alias Kim, 1897-1932) was from Hokkaido.

They were born in Japan, but went to the USA in search of job and lived as poor emigrant workers on the American West Coast. They entered the trade union movement developing amongst Californian Japanese. They were forced to leave the USA at the time of the so-called Longbeach affair in January 1932, and came to the USSR with the help of the American Communist Party. All of them except Teruya left confessions extracted under torture and were shot on 29 May (Shimabukuro, Yamashiro, Matayoshi, etc.) and on 2 October 1938 (Miyagi). Only Teruya continued to insist upon his innocence and was sent to the gulag. But his fate after 1944 is not known.²³

Confessions by "American emigre" Japanese could have been used in the cases of other Japanese. Because of her connection with Yamamoto and Kunizaki, even Ryou Nosaka (alias Kim Sian, 1896-1971), the wife of Sanzo Nosaka (who was in the USA at the time), was expelled from the CPSU on the 2nd of November 1937, and she was arrested on the 11th February 1938. But she was released on 31 March 1938, probably due to the Sanzo Nosaka's private letter sent from the USA to the Comintern top leaders in Moscow.

On the 2nd of February 1938, Gizo Terashima (alias Pazon Dasha, 1909-) from Hokkaido was suddenly arrested. He studied Marxism in Moscow under the instruction of Kenzo Yamamoto. Fortunately he was not shot immediately but was interned in the gulag from 1938 to 1955. He now lives in Russia, and has published two important memoirs in Japanese since the collapse of the USSR.²⁴

Two more students of Kenzo Yamamoto, Hamazo Koishi (alias Wan Pin, 1907-?) from Hokkaido and Niichi Nagai (alias Kuif, 1907-1994) from Niigata were arrested on the 16th of October 1938. They both worked with Masao Sudo when they were in Vladivostok in the early 1930s, and were followers of Kenzo Yamamoto in Moscow. Nagai was in the gulag until 1946

²² Yoshi Hijikata, "Enshutuka no Michi [The Way to Stage Director]," Mirai-sha, Tokyo 1959. Umeko Hijikata, "Jiden [An Autobiography]," Hayakawa-Shobou, Tokyo 1976. "Yomiuri Shinbun," 20 August, 1998 & 25 Februar, 1999. "Nihon Keizai Shinbun," 17 & 25 February, 1999.

²³ Kato & Kobayashi, "Yami no Otoko." James Oda, "Secret Embedded in Magic Cables," Los Angeles 1993. We have their KGB personal files collected by the Fuji-TV Documentary team.

²⁴ Gizo Terashima, "Nagai Tabi no Kiroku [Records of A Long Journey]," 2 vols, Nihon Keizai Shinbun-sha, Tokyo 1993/94.

and lived in the USSR until his death in 1994. Koishi went missing.

On the 26th of November 1938, Sadakazu Kenmochi (alias Sasaki, 1900-?), a member of the Japanese language section of the American Communist Party and the leader of the "American emigre" group in Moscow, was also arrested. We have no information about him thereafter. We have three more names of people who went missing in Moscow: Kazumasa Yamamoto (alias Homin, 1910-?) from Okayama, Tetsuji Horiuchi (alias Shimizu, a former KUTV student), and Masami Izumi (alias Tanho, 1908-?) from Akita.

Matsu Seki (alias Yuki Ando, 1897-1968), the wife of Kenzo Yamamoto, was expelled from the JCP in 1938, but she was to live for a long time in the USSR. She was arrested in 1944, and spent five years in the gulag. She hoped to go back to Japan in the 1950s, but the CPSU and the JCP did not allow her return home up to her lonely death in 1968.

During these periods of political terror in Moscow, there were only two Japanese who were not arrested or purged. They were Yasu Katayama, the first daughter of Sen Katayama, and Sanzo Nosaka who came back from the USA in August 1938. If Nosaka had not written the letter which condemned Yamamoto would also have been arrested and killed. He wrote the letter to Dimitrov with its nine suspicions of Yamamoto's career on the 22nd of February 1939. Yamamoto was shot on the 10th of March, just three weeks after Nosaka's declaration of his suspicions.

There was another cycle of purges in Leningrad. Some Japanese communists, politically connected to Yamamoto and Nosaka, lived in Leningrad as Japanese teachers at the Leningrad Oriental Institute. They were Meikichi Nishimura (alias Hanmiya) from Kouchi and Fumio Yoshikawa (alias Kishi) from Yokohama plus Maruya Nagahama (alias Fuvan) and Sayo Nagahama (alias Nam), who belonged to the "American emigres." They all went missing during 1937-38. Only about Sayo Nagahama do we now have some information. She often visited the well-known Russian Orientalist Nikolai Nefski in Leningrad. But Nefski was arrested on the 4th of October 1937 and was shot as a "Japanese agent" on the 24th of November 1937. His Japanese wife, Iso Yorozuya (1901-1937) from Hokkaido, was arrested and shot at the same time. Nefski was rehabilitated in 1957 and he was awarded the Lenin prize in 1962. Their daughter, now living in Leningrad, informed us that Sayo Nagahama, while being pursued by the Russian police, jumped from window and died perhaps in 1938. The other Japanese in Leningrad were probably also arrested and killed.

Besides these Japanese communist groups in Moscow and Leningrad, there are only the names of those supposedly lived in the USSR listed by the Japanese police at the time. There are about 20 such Japanese: Yoshigoro Anpo (alias Suzuki), Kumakichi Kikuchi, Kanji Yoshioka, all from Hokkaido, Shunzo Osawa (alias Ishida) from Iwate, Minoru Kawasaki from Shimane, Takehiko Tetsu (alias Yamaguchi) from Kagoshima, Mr. Kawai from Saga, Saburo Sasaki (alias Hanai) from Nagasaki, Yukiyoshi Hazama (alias Yamada) from Niigata, Koujiro Taniguchi (alias Hide), Einosuke Yamaguchi (alias Pauley), Ishizo Harima, Inao Shimoda, Kizo Abe, Tokio Hanasaki, Kenji Yano, Noboru Tani, Renji Taira, and others.²⁵

Terror was also directed at non-political Japanese in the USSR. At least three circus artists were killed or disappeared. Kiyoshi Yamazaki (1900-1937) from Tokyo was a former circus artist. He married a Russian who bore him three children. He worked in a factory in

²⁵ These names are mainly from the list in "Shiso Geppou" No.33,1937. For the Leningrad group, see Prof. Kazuyuki Fujii's Homepage at <http://www.fujii.edu> (in Japanese).

Moscow and was suddenly arrested as a “Japanese spy” on the 22th of July and shot on the 19th December 1937. Pantoshi Shimada, a circus star, was also arrested in 1937 and disappeared. Masaura Ishiyama, also a circus player, died in 1940 of unknown causes.²⁶

Thanks to new documents released after the collapse of the USSR, we uncovered some Japanese names from Russian books and journals on the Stalinist purges. Petrova Saito (1912-1938) and Pavrowich Kubota (1908-1938) were killed in Sakhalin in 1938.²⁷ Kentaro Kataoka (alias Shimakichi Tanaka, 1909-1941) and Kaichiro Naka (1913-1941) were shot in 1941 near Moscow.²⁸ From my personal research of Soviet secret documents I can add five more Japanese: Torao Sashin (KGB file No.9500) shot in 1937, Masami Mori (KGB file No.33569) shot in 1938, Mataichi Narusawa (KGB file No. 843964) shot in 1939 and Sadao Dobashi (KGB file No.5842) shot in 1942 to the list of victims.

IV. *How A Framed up “Japanese Spy” Created Russian Victims*

A most tragic case was the affair of the couple Ryoukichi Sugimoto (1907-1939) and Yoshiko Okada (1903-1992) who escaped from Japan to the USSR early in 1938. Okada was a very popular Japanese film actress in the early 1930s. She fell in love with the well-known communist stage director Ryoukichi Sugimoto. They planned to escape militarist Japan and go to the USSR in search of artistic freedom. Although both married they hoped to elope and live together in the USSR. Sugimoto once tried to sail to the USSR in 1932 under the instruction of the JCP but failed. Okada believed she would be able to meet the Japanese stage directors, Yoshi Hijikata and Seki Sano in Moscow. They did not know the reality of the situation in the USSR at that time, nor did they know anything of the purge of Hijikata and Sano in August 1937.

On 3rd of January 1938, they eluded the Japanese police and crossed the border in Sakhalin under cover of heavy snows. They were soon arrested by the Soviet border police by whom they were interrogated separately and tortured. Sugimoto insisted that he was a member of the JCP and was on a mission to contact the Comintern. But for the Soviet police, all Japanese including JCP members fell under suspicion of being “agents of Japanese imperialism.” Okada demanded to meet Hijikata and Sano in Moscow as her friends in drama art, but of course they were already exiled to Paris as “foreigners dangerous for Socialism.” Sugimoto was shot on the 20th of October 1939 and Okada was sent to the gulag for 10 years forced labor.

Their case was also used to spark a great purge of Russian artists. As Yoshiko Okada asked to meet Seki Sano and confessed under torture that Sano was a “spy of Japanese government,” the Soviet secret police concocted the story that Sano’s Russian collaborator, the famous stage director Vsevolod E. Meyerhold might be the “top agent of Japanese Imperialism.” Meyerhold and his artistic group were arrested and shot as a “Japanese spy group” in the USSR.

These facts came to light in the 1990s when the Meyerhold case was re-examined in

²⁶ I owe a great deal to research by Mr. Mikio Ohshima for my information on the circus artists.

²⁷ A.M. Pasikow, “*Affliction and Reality*,” Yujino Sakhalinsk 1990 (in Russian).

²⁸ “*Report of the CC of CPSU*,” October 1990.

Russia and Yoshiko Okada left a short memorandum on the events just before her death in Moscow in 1992.²⁹

My own research into the Masao Sudo and Kiyoshi Yamazaki cases has established that their Russian wives and Russian neighbor friends were also arrested and sent to the gulag as “agents of Japan.” In the Teruko Villich or Iso Yorozyuya’s cases, they were arrested only because their Russian husbands became “enemies of the people.”

Considering the existence of cases like these it would seem sensible to assume that our list of Japanese victims of Stalinist terror is incomplete. Using the logic of one article that appeared on the 9th and 10th “Pravda” of July 1937, all Japanese in the USSR at the time looked suspicious and were “potentially Japanese spies,” and all Russians related to Japanese might thus be dangerous to Socialism.³⁰

I summarize here the number of Japanese victims of the Stalinist purges in the 1920s and 1930s as presently known.

(1) 33 Japanese victims are confirmed both by Russian documents and Japanese materials.

(1-1) 16 persons were accused and killed for crimes of which they were innocent: Itoh, Sudo, Yamazaki, Kunizaki, Yamamoto, Sugimoto, Hakomori, Fukunaga, Yoshioka, Matayoshi, Simabukuro, Miyagi, Yamashiro, Koishi, Yorozyuya and Teruko Villich.

(1-2) 7 Japanese were sent to the concentration camps or prison: Kubota, Katsuno, Okada, Terashima, Nagai, Teruya and Seki.

(1-3) 5 persons were arrested and went missing: Ohba, Shinpo, Maejima, Kenmochi and Shimada.

(1-4) 4 were expelled from the USSR: Nemoto, Sano and Hijikata family.

(1-5) Only one, Ryou Nosaka, was arrested but soon released, perhaps because of the personal political connections of her husband, Sanzo Nosaka.

(2) 14 Japanese were supposedly killed or oppressed according to Soviet documents.

(2-1) Two were witnessed by other victims: Mr. Hattori is noted in Hijikata’s memoirs, and one unknown Japanese in Aino Kusinen’s memoirs.

(2-2) 9 were shot according to Soviet documents, but there is no material on them in Japan: Morita, Sashin, Dobashi, Narusawa, Saito, Kubota, Kataoka, Naka and Okuzawa.

(2-3) Two were supposedly purged according to Soviet documents: Kazumasa Yamamoto and Maruya Nagahama.

(2-4) One, Sayo Nagahama suicided under the pressure of Soviet Police.

(3) 12 Japanese were definitely in the USSR, but went missing in the 1930s: Horiuchi,

²⁹ “Pravda,” July 9/10, 1937 (in Russian).

³⁰ “Aganyok,” April 1989 (in Russian). “Asahi Shinbun,” April 15, 1989. “Gekkan Asahi [Asahi Monthly]” April 1990. “Shokun” Sept. 1992.

Izumi, Anpo, Nakamura, Yuzuki, Saito, Aida, Hashimoto, Sugimura, Teranuma, Kimura and Tsukada.

(4) Over 20 Japanese were supposedly in the USSR according to Japanese police records, but we have no information on them thereafter: Yamaguchi, Nishimura, Yoshikawa, Osawa, Hiramatsu, Kawasaki, Tetsu, Sasaki, Kawai, Hazama, Taniguchi, Kikuchi, Yoshioka, Harima, Shimoda, Abe, Hanasaki, Terada, Yano, Tani and Taira.

This list of about 80 Japanese is not yet complete. There might have been more Japanese particularly in the Sakhalin and Vladivostok area as the Stalinist purge reached its peak in 1937-39. We can find new names when we find new secret documents in Russia, because most Japanese were arrested based on the confessions of other Japanese.

They dreamed of a paradise for working people, but their emigration there resulted in death or internment in the gulag. Their history resurfaced only 60 years after their tragic lives ended.

The author and our research group in Japan have opened an internet homepage to collect and display the details of their stories. We hope that our list will be checked and added to by scholars from all over the world.³¹

³¹ Please see my Homepage at <http://www.ff.iij4u.or.jp/~katote/Home.html> (in English).