

Intelligence in the New Japan

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The psychological and historical antecedents of a rudimentary national service.

Adam Jourdonnais

Japan stands today impressive at the gateway to Asia, a nation not simply rehabilitated from the physical disasters which capped its military adventures of the thirties and forties but with an economy reoriented and modernized in a way that commands respect throughout the world. Although not a formal part of the framework of Western alliances, it has been governed consistently since the war by anti-Communist leaders and it provides base facilities for U.S. forces in north Asia. Its business and political leadership, while obliged to give due heed to the strong emotional urge for some kind of accommodation with mainland China, has overwhelmingly recognized that if Japan is to have a future as a prosperous and influential nation its basic interests lie in and with the West. There is no similar emotional link to Russia; indeed, the history of Russo-Japanese relations offers a consistent pattern of suspicion and distrust.

In most respects Japan's governmental structure has been modified and expanded to keep pace with the nation's growing international interests. The postwar Japanese foreign service is now in action in respectable force on all the continents and particularly in the developing nations of Africa and South and Southeast Asia. Defense attaches are posted in the major Western countries. And at home a well-disciplined

bureaucracy is back at work among the pile drivers and bamboo scaffoldings that mark the modernization of one of the world's great capitals.

Conspicuously missing in this picture of Japan's resurgence as a world power is a comprehensive intelligence establishment. With their well-deserved reputation for energetic acquisition of the trappings of a modern Western society, why have the Japanese apparently failed to fit themselves out with a new set of spectacles for examining the increasing complexities of international politics? What has happened to the industrious bands of Japanese agents who served the expansionism of the China and Pacific wars with their various espionage and subversive apparatus?

To some extent the romantic wartime image of the Japanese spy is a false point of reference. In a sense, also, the current absence of a Japanese intelligence mechanism is more apparent than real. Nevertheless the discrepancy remains: there is little evidence that Japan has established or intends to create an intelligence system appropriate to its current involvement in world affairs. Among the reasons for this, we suspect, are some historical, psychological, and institutional influences on which we propose to touch in these pages.

Symbolical Tabus

Semantic examination of some pertinent Japanese terminology may be useful in providing insight into the Japanese practice of intelligence. The word most broadly approximating "intelligence" in Japanese is *john*, a term even more ambiguous than its English counterpart, connoting, among other things, either "intelligence" in our technical sense or "information" in the form of publicity or propaganda. Significantly, its only appearance in the postwar bureaucratic glossary is in the title of the Foreign Office's Information and Cultural Bureau, Japan's USIA. "Espionage" is more straightforwardly rendered as *choho*, but the word is a historical relic; it is not used by even the most hardheaded professionals among today's Japanese intelligence officers. Similarly, *boryaku*, a difficult word to translate which was used professionally during the war to describe the activities of the Japanese units scattered

throughout Asia for covert political action and subversion operations, is not a part of even the most arcane postwar professional jargon.

All these words are indeed dirty words today, offensive to the ear and reminiscent only of wartime abuses of power. Two words which can be heard, at least in professional intelligence circles, without undue damage to the sensibilities better illustrate the current psychology of the Japanese intelligence officer. The closest approximation to "agent" is *kyoryokusha*, meaning at most "collaborator" but more literally "cooperator," a word that nicely suggests the delicacy with which the Japanese approach the concept of controlling intelligence sources. (Agents of foreign services, however, are likely to be called a name borrowed from English, *supai*.) And the prevailing term for the mission of Japanese government agencies engaged in intelligence work—a word fit even for public consumption—is *chian*, "the public peace and safety." This word, as we shall see, reflects accurately three aspects of, and limitations on, today's Japanese intelligence activity—sensitivity to public attitudes, an overwhelmingly internal orientation, and domination by professional police officials.

From Isolation to Conquest

We do not propose to trace how the Japanese got that way or even very definitively whence they came, but a few observations on the development of a Japanese intelligence tradition seem necessary. The central and obvious historical fact is that Japan has been an utterly closed society for most of its existence. The feudal lords and the shogun had their spies, of course—essentials in the interminable military campaigns which now provide material for Japanese movie and television thrillers analogous to our "westerns"—but these were all domestic quarrels which brought no need for international espionage. It was after all a "divine wind," not a triumph of intelligence indications, that repulsed the only threat of foreign military invasion in Japanese history prior to the Okinawa operation of 1945. The economic and cultural "invasions" which came after the opening of Japan to the world in 1858 were eagerly welcomed in the suddenly awakened desire to catch up with the rest of the world. If we consider the reports of Japanese students returning from abroad during this period to represent

espionage, this loose system can then be considered the beginnings of Japanese secret foreign intelligence.

It was really, however, only the evolution of a police state at home and the eruption of military adventurism abroad in the 1930's that prompted the creation of intelligence and security agencies in the government. They came, not as the institutionalization of a Japanese tradition of intelligence collection, but rather as an adaptation of imports necessary to keep the military regime in power at home and to precede, expand upon, and consolidate the military occupations in Asia and the Pacific. The importation was eclectic: the German general staff system provided the pattern for development of the military intelligence system, and a Home Ministry in the European tradition set up a pervasive police system which could rapidly be specialized into the Special Higher Police (tokko), economic police, etc., needed to sustain an authoritarian regime and control the economy in support of the military effort. Of today's world powers surely only the United States was competing with Japan in this turtle's race to establish an intelligence mechanism adequate to its international aspirations and commitments.

The lines of a national policy, however unpraiseworthy, were at least clear during this period, and with characteristic vigor the Japanese developed the intelligence formations they needed for its implementation. In many areas, as we know to our sorrow, they were successful. Their failures, however, may be more significant in that they often reflected characteristics which are still in evidence in the Japanese approach to intelligence. It must be said, despite all the literature about wartime Japanese exploits of espionage and subversion and the undoubted accomplishment of individuals, that Japanese intelligence during World War II presented a most irregular and diffuse pattern.

The Wartime Apparatus

There was a certain valid division of labor in the field of foreign collection, with Imperial Army units generally predominant in China and mainland Asia, the Navy in the South Pacific and to some extent in Europe, and the Foreign Office in the West. Personal and inter-service rivalries in Tokyo, however, tended to water down the accomplishments

of the operatives stationed abroad. Perhaps the most disastrous example of this is to be found in the sad history of the naval intelligence negotiations in Europe which sought during the months before Hiroshima to end the Pacific War but foundered on Foreign Office incredulity and unwillingness to entrust the matter to Navy hands.¹

Most of Japan's wartime intelligence and covert action work was of course done in Asia, where the immediate requirements were the greatest, the military were in predominant force, and a full selection of covers was available. Here there were the conventional tactical and headquarters G-2 units, the kempei handling counterintelligence and security functions, and a great profusion of tokumu kikan ("special service agencies") for clandestine operations (boryaku). The latter were charged variously with softening up and penetrating target national groups, supporting and training puppet national armies, and assisting the conventional forces in maintaining the subjugation of conquered areas; some of them were organized as task forces for specific covert purposes—even peace negotiations—and then disbanded when their missions were accomplished or aborted. These tokumu kikan tended to acquire the best trained personnel, both military and civilian, drawing on the Nakano School in Tokyo and the Toa Dobun Shoin in Shanghai among others, and from them have come most of the professional veterans who still find their ways into—and out of—Japanese postwar intelligence organizations.

Most of the tokumu kikan were known during the war only by the names of their commanders, a curiosity perhaps significant in that these organizations in particular reflected the factionalism and diffusion of authority which in other ways still plague their profession. They tended to be most successful where they had strong leadership and a clear and independent line of authority back to Tokyo. The Fujiwara Kikan, based in Singapore, is credited with the creation of the Indian National Army, which for a time was effective in harassing the British in India. (Fujiwara, incidentally, is one of the few wartime intelligence chiefs to have been rehabilitated successfully in the postwar intelligence system; he has headed the Ground Self-Defense Force Intelligence School in recent years.) The Minami Kikan was a joint Army-Navy operation mounted in Tokyo to establish the Burma Independence Army, but it suffered rather seriously from an Army-Navy split and soon gave way to another, more notorious effort under Col. Iwakuro.

Military intelligence operations in China at one period suffered from

another flaw not unknown to occidental services undue yielding to the temptation to dispose of hotheads and mavericks by dispatching them to field establishments. Premier Tojo availed himself of this luxury to a degree that for a time threatened the functioning of the China Expeditionary Force Headquarters at Nanking. Many of the younger officers who had participated in the ultranationalist uprisings of the thirties found themselves exiled to intelligence outfits in China, and by sheer numbers they exerted a primary influence in military operations until reassignments put operations staff (G-3) people back in the driver's seat. Duplication of effort among Army, Navy, Foreign Office, and Greater East Asia Ministry intelligence officers also disfigured the China operation. In tactical and combat intelligence, however, it was for the most part highly effective.

The Occupation

Scoring its successes and failures, youthful Japanese intelligence lived out the war and then quite thoroughly died with the surrender in 1945. Some individual officers managed to integrate themselves locally into the newly independent nations of Southeast Asia—after all, they considered themselves to be important instruments in the creation of these nations—and a few others found employment with the Chinese Nationalists. But the cold winter of defeat and demobilization in 1945–46 found the profession of arms, and with it that of intelligence, the most utterly discredited trade in Japan. The thoroughgoing mechanics of the Occupation broke up the returning military units and scattered their bedraggled personnel to family farms and stores. The armed forces, the Home Ministry, the Foreign Office, and the Imperial General Staff were abolished and all their principal officers purged from public office. (Some made a lucrative, if temporary, profession of peddling cached general staff documents to the intelligence services of the occupying powers.) In 1946, with the adoption of a new constitution and new elections to the Diet, the formation of such national policy as an occupied nation could afford shifted uncertainly and somewhat unwillingly from what was left of an entrenched bureaucracy to the national legislature and the revived political parties. There could be no place in this policy for a national intelligence system.

These institutional changes, of course, did not individually annihilate the motley corps of Japanese intelligence professionals which had been developed over the past twenty years. Some simply gave up and tried chicken farming or apple-raising. Sentimentalists formed societies which met once a month to reminisce uselessly over past intrigues and exploits. A good many found demeaning but regular employment in the operational and historical intelligence departments of the Occupation's headquarters and its burgeoning local establishments. Their skills and their remarkable adaptability to what in effect was their new government made them, in fact, the blood and bone of a somewhat more orderly and comprehensive intelligence system than Japan had ever had, now provided free of charge by the occupation forces. But in general (and in distinction from the German experience) their services were contracted for individually, and they gave their loyalties, opportunistically but completely, to the temporary and alien authority which had replaced their Emperor. Their employment was not the preservation intact of a functioning intelligence mechanism but the recruitment of a diverse group of jobless professionals who were, in a large sense, starting all over again.

The Occupation thus set the institutional pattern for such indigenous intelligence work as went on in Japan during the immediate postwar years. The psychological climate in which Japan shivered at that time comprised such a complex of adverse factors as to stifle any significant attempt to retain an intelligence system proper in the Japanese Government. Many of these factors remain the same today, or their alteration has been such as to keep on inhibiting the development of an intelligence system eleven years after Japan's return to national sovereignty.

In a sense, Japan in 1945 returned to the familiar insularity once imposed by its own xenophobic leaders, now enforced by foreign conquerors. Economically broken, its leaders and its people, under Occupation tutelage, turned their thoughts inward to the staggering work of relieving food shortages, rebuilding shattered industries, and rehabilitating a peacetime economy. This had to be accomplished outside the context of the now forbidden Zaibatsu-government partnership which had created the war economy and in the face of a massive redistribution of land holdings under Occupation directive. The idea of foreign intelligence collection was not only unpromising but little short of ludicrous in those years.

The shift of the locus of power in Japan's limited political sovereignty from the civil service to the National Diet brought with it a both opportunistic and to some extent honest wave of anti-bureaucratic feeling, abetted not only by the ambitions of the long-suppressed political leaders who avoided the purge but also by the SCAP directives which abolished both the government-sponsored parties of the wartime period and the most entrenched of the government ministries. There was understandably no public or popular urge to establish an internal security program-this was in any case in the hands of the Occupation-and a psychology of dependence on foreign protection from both internal and foreign enemies seemed the only possible attitude the defeated nation could adopt.

Identification of these enemies was in itself a psychological as well as practical problem for the bulk of the Japanese. The wartime images of the Western foes were quickly shattered not only by the exigencies of the situation but by the behavior of the occupying powers, and the Emperor was "humanized." Democratization became the rallying cry. The imprisoned local Communist leaders, rubbing their eyes, found themselves back in the political arena. The police state was discredited, and the exercise of police power seemed suddenly not only immoral but unnecessary.

The philosophy that floated into the vacuum in the Japanese national psyche in these times was first anti-militarism and then a broader pacifism. Japan's great national distinction became the fact that its people had been the first to suffer the horrors of the atomic age. With all the militarist gods from the Emperor on down exposed supine and broken on their rubble altars and no equivalent available to take their places, a widespread national masochism grew up about the new and unlikely shrines of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. While the dullness of defeat which fostered this affliction could not persist after things slowly fell into their new places and economic weal and national pride returned, the Communists have seen to it that the atomic Meccas remain holy, and nowhere else outside the Bloc do so many non-Communists join in the pilgrimages of the Peace Movement. They do not need an intelligence system to help them find their way.

Steps Toward a System

In this psychological milieu, it is thoroughly understandable that such organized Japanese intelligence work as was carried on between 1945 and 1952 was done by scattered groups or individuals, mostly under the direction and control of occupation authorities. The only investigative service, as such, which evolved within the Japanese Government during this period was the Special Investigation Board created under SCAP directive and influence within the Attorney General's Office. The main cadre of this organization came, not from trained military or foreign intelligence ranks, but from among the procurators of the prewar Justice Ministry. In this context of judicial investigation the Special Investigation Board was able to don a mantle of respectability which permitted its survival and indeed growth as a security agency with some intelligence and gray propaganda functions. A few of the mainland operatives of the tokumu kikan, mostly from the China theater, joined this service, which emerged in a sovereign Japan in 1952 as the Public Safety (chian) Investigation Agency, taking on as well some senior military intelligence analysts who at last were no longer proscribed from such duty by the purge.

The PSIA continues as a nationwide security agency, but with inherent disabilities which restrict its effectiveness in the intelligence picture. It has no police powers of arrest, a lack which renders hollow its frequent boast that it is the "FBI of Japan." It does conduct extensive investigations of Communist, rightist, and foreign subversive activities, but action on its findings is hampered officially by a timid executive and legislature and unofficially by intense rivalry with the National Police Agency. Its analytical product is both voluminous and of respectable quality, but is more likely to be used in massive annual "White Papers" or thinly disguised propaganda blasts at the Communists than in the orderly identification of subversive elements and counter-action against them. And its placement in the Justice Ministry makes it subject to a constant turnover of procuratorial personnel, untrained in operational intelligence techniques.

In contrast to the PSIA, the police resumed quietly and without apparent Occupation support their place in the internal security structure. The return to sovereignty, of course, made the reconstitution of a respectable police force a practical necessity, and it became again a national service. Many of the most experienced police intelligence officers had lost their seniority while sitting out the purge, and their places in the reassembled hierarchy were at first taken by temporarily

more fortunate colleagues who had had no service in the Special Higher Police or other sections directly affected by the purge. One such officer, Murai Jun, whose good fortune and undoubted energy was compounded by service as Prime Minister Yoshida's secretary, was instrumental in creating in the National Police Agency the Guard Division (now a Bureau), which remains the police element directly concerned with the control of internal Communist activity and the surveillance of foreign intelligence operations by Bloc and other governments in Japan. A subsequent irony finds many of the now rehabilitated former Special Higher Police officers in key posts in the National Police Agency and particularly in the Guard Bureau and its regional counterparts, while Murai is now more profitably but less dramatically devoting his energies to the complexities of staging the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo.

The National Police Agency is an impressive and effective service. Virtually all of its senior "commissioned officers" are graduates of the law department of the Tokyo or other topflight Imperial Universities. They, and their postwar counterparts in more junior positions, are well trained and well disciplined, have a sense of mission and esprit de corps which dates back to the origins of the Home Ministry, and as a group were less disrupted by the abolition of the Ministry than any other bureaucratic complex. For the most part not vulnerable to the lingering popular distaste for military activity which has characterized Japanese public opinion since August 1945, and discreetly underplaying their internal security role, they formed and continue to form the overwhelmingly dominant force in the Japanese postwar intelligence apparatus. The great paradox of this setup is that, while no Home Ministry has resumed its place among the other principal government departments since 1945, the disciplined cadre of former Home Ministry bureaucrats play the major roles in almost all of today's Japanese security and intelligence agencies, whether internally or externally oriented.

The two chief outward-looking government offices are the Defense Agency and the Foreign Ministry. The Defense Agency (still frustrated in its ambition of attaining ministry status) grew out of a National Police Reserve created by SCAP when the Korean War suddenly sheared the Occupation of its combat units. Since few of the senior imperial military and naval officers had been rehabilitated from the purge at that time, Home Ministry alumni of the police system were called in, put in military uniform, and given charge of the Reserve. While this peace-preservation organization in due course evolved into a military force (because the constitution is interpreted as prohibiting any army, navy, or air force, the

military services bear the euphemisms Ground, Sea, and Air "Self-Defense Forces") and while officers with wartime military service have been given senior command positions, it is significant that police officers have continued to staff the intelligence components. Most of the army G-2's, for example, have been former Home Ministry officials, and the civilian bureau which controls the three military intelligence services has consistently been headed by a police officer. This is not illogical, in that the police have little qualification for the tactical command posts. And it is not inappropriate, considering the fact that no Japanese troops are stationed abroad and there are few attache offices from which foreign collection can be undertaken. Thus even within the Defense Agency the emphasis tends to be on internal security.

The Foreign Ministry has cautiously and very circumspectly provided for foreign intelligence collection of a sort, but its "service" is simply a small, personally and informally organized group of regular diplomatic officers who have unusually aggressive instincts and a penchant for acquiring informants. It is still unfashionable to admit to even a diplomatic research and analysis function in Tokyo, so the only analytical body in the Foreign Ministry is actually an intradepartmental committee composed of senior officers from the various bureaus, who meet periodically to consider information received from diplomatic posts abroad along with contributions from other foreign and domestic sources. In several of the key embassies and consulates-general the peripatetic police have stationed officers commissioned temporarily as foreign service personnel.

The Foreign Ministry has also provided the deputy chief of the intriguingly-named Cabinet Research Chamber ever since it was formed in 1952. This small group is the only government body which has an officially (but delicately) acknowledged foreign intelligence function. The CRC, like the police Guard Bureau, owes its existence to the busy Murai Jun, who became its first chief when it was created a "chamber" of the Prime Minister's Office in Yoshida Shigeru's first post-occupation administration. Now an adjunct of the cabinet as a whole and responsible to the Chief Cabinet Secretary, it is staffed primarily by police officers on two- to three-year assignments, along with some former military personnel and representatives provided by other government agencies having a security function. It has slowly and painfully attempted some foreign collection, mostly from Japanese travelers to Communist areas (a form of collection in which neither the PSIA nor the police have left the CRC an open field), but it has devoted

much of its effort to the analysis of the varied product of these competing services. It has always been headed by a senior police official.

While subject to the centripetal forces that seem to impel all Japanese intelligence bodies toward domestic and quasi-political problems, the Cabinet Research Chamber has made some admirable efforts to become a national foreign intelligence agency. Although it has never approached the image of a sinister "Japanese CIA" which both the Communist and the avowedly objective Tokyo press recurrently attempt to give it, its movement in the direction of a broader national function was evidenced in 1960, when an Estimates Division was formed. The purpose, achieved with spotty success, was to bring senior estimative attention to bear on problems of major foreign and security policy interest. The estimators, however, are a group of relatively prestigious and thereby busy private citizens, who have neither the time to devote to y concentrated study nor the access to highly classified material essential to success in such an effort. Even in this select group (first headed by a respected lawyer who is now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court) are to be found several retired Home Ministry officials nominated by the NPA, it might be noted. Because of presumed popular disapproval of the lodgment of such an office within the government, this "board of estimates" is presented to the public as the board of directors of a private research society. It meets as such to consider papers drafted by its tiny staff (three full-time government employees), the full complement of the Estimates Division of the CRC.

The comments of a frank and perceptive senior official of the CRC in late 1962 on the problems faced by the organization to which he (like most of his colleagues) was temporarily assigned provide a good catalog of the difficulties of an intelligence organization in the new Japan. He noted: (a) the CRC's placement as a staff office available to the Chief Cabinet Secretary for such odd jobs as he, the Cabinet's overworked chief of staff, might wish to assign it; (b) Prime Minister Ikeda's "low posture," a slogan which refers to a remarkably successful administration policy of avoiding controversial government programs; (c) bureaucratic rivalry, specifically manifested in the tendency of the National Police Agency to consider the CRC as one of its branches; (d) the lack of a career service for CRC officials; (e) Japan's system of parliamentary responsibility, as a result of which each cabinet minister fosters and protects his own intelligence organization as a necessary resource for meeting Diet interpellations; and (f) the pervasive absence

of a need for national intelligence in the minds of higher government officials.

To this thoughtful list of disabilities might be added the complete lack of security legislation for protecting the operations or, in fact, establishing the legitimacy of a Japanese intelligence system. Taken together, these clouds darken the view toward any effective national intelligence center. If the targeting is centripetal, the organizational forces are all centrifugal in Japan's intelligence complex.

The Future

Thus the prospects for an integrated Japanese national intelligence service remain poor. Apart from the negative pressures of public unreceptivity and institutional tradition, it cannot be expected that an orderly intelligence mechanism will be developed in the absence of an emerging national policy which demands it. While preoccupied with economic expansion-and adequately supplied with the commercial intelligence required for it-Japan is still largely and remarkably immune from the foreign responsibilities and commitments which would make felt the lack of a political and military intelligence collection system. If a demand for one were created by disaster in Southeast Asia or a significant shift in the comportment of Communist China, one cannot help judging that, in its delightfully irrational way, Japan would probably move quickly to supply it.

1 Butow, Robert J. C., *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, 1954), pp. 103-113.

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