

Preface



RESEARCH ON THIS subject area of relations between Germany and Japan in the first half of the twentieth century was initially begun in 1960, when a choice was being made of a doctoral degree topic for study at the University of Oxford. That it was a researchable topic was confirmed by the availability of verified primary evidence with reference to German military archives held at the US National Archives in Washington DC and diplomatic archives held in the Foreign Office Library in London. With the assistance of the Hon. Dr Margaret Lambert and Professor John Erickson, contact was made with Sir William Deakin and Professor Dick Storry at St Antony's College, Oxford, who were then preparing a monograph from German and Japanese source materials on the Sorge case.

Given the history of the racist fanaticism manifested in the inter-war era by the Nazi Party, the possibility of collaboration with non-Aryan societies was curious, at least superficially, and especially as there were numerous complaints voiced by individuals of Japanese nationality about their treatment on German streets in the early 1930s. Further researches in London, Washington and Tokyo in archives were accompanied by interviews and correspondence with a number of individual witnesses of events between 1930 and 1945. This period of research coincided with extensive press coverage of the trial of Admiral Paul Wenneker in Hamburg, which elicited strong denials of any intentional wrongdoing on the part of a personality whose whole career had hitherto been marked by a widespread recognition of his professional and personal integrity.

After his death in 1979, many of Wenneker's friends and colleagues continued to question the whole basis of the prosecution case and in the course of the publication of the first four volumes of the war diaries of successive German naval attachés in Japan, which had been obtained with the surviving records of the German Navy from Coburg by the British Admiralty in 1945, the family and many of these friends and colleagues kindly provided this author

with access to reminiscences and photographs relevant to these years. In this phase of research, access was obtained rather slowly to many of the records which were not available to Wenneker's defence team in the 1960s, who helpfully permitted copies of all the defence documents to be made available to the author. Many individuals involved with the Nazi regime, whether they liked it or not, have made statements or revealed in their own accounts details of their experiences within the context of the reintegration of Germany into the Western alliance and of the evolution of the Cold War. Former officials, such as Ambassador Eugen Ott or Counsellor Karl-Otto Braun, for example, have commented on their interpretation of events at some length, but it has always remained something of a mystery that Wenneker avoided making any public representations about his conduct outside the judicial process. When so many junior officials who worked closely with him asked why he rejected such approaches and remained silent about the past, it remains an unresolved dilemma.

These issues, nevertheless, appear not to have given rise to any kind of questioning by other authors who have specifically examined the naval relations of the two countries. In particular, it is quite glaringly clear from the monograph compiled by former German and Japanese officers, Krug, Hiram and Sander-Nagashima that the names of Richard Sorge or Max Clausen do not receive a single mention of any relevance to relations between 1933 and 1941 even though Ambassador Ott himself singled out relations between Sorge and Captain Joachim Lietzmann between 1937 and 1940 as relevant.¹ Since this author's publication of a brief article on 'Richard Sorge and the Pacific War' in 1991,² a much fuller amount of declassified wartime decrypts has been released alongside the author's edited series of *The Price of Admiralty – The War Diary of the German Naval Attaché in Japan, 1939–1943* and associated documents ending in 1945 (POA: Vols.1–7).³ These

¹ See Krug *et al.* *Reluctant Allies – German-Japanese Naval Relations in World War II*. Annapolis, Naval Institute Press, 2001; Ott (Tokyo) Tel.No.980 of 29.3.1942 to Foreign Minister Ribbentrop at: *Auswärtiges Amt (AA): BRAM: 'Dr.Richard Sorge.'*

² 'Rikhard Sorge i Voina na Tikhom Okeane,' *Problemi Dalnego Vostoka* 6 (1991): 122–135.

³ POA 1 (1939–40) is still in print; POA 1 (2nd ed.) is available as a DVD from 2019; POA 2–3 is out of print; POA 4 is still in print; POA 5–7 are available on DVD: see <www.price-of-admiralty.com.> There is a fuller list of the most recent available monographs and source materials of the Sorge Affair, although

demonstrate conclusively that Admiral Wenneker's representation of the strategic preferences of the Japanese Navy was entirely at odds with the efforts by Hitler and the Nazi Party to destroy the Soviet Union, but entirely in line with the instructions issued by the GRU (*Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravlenie* – 'Chief Intelligence Office') to the Sorge Ring. Wenneker admitted directly to German Navy heads that he had been as closely connected with Sorge as Eugen Ott, who was dismissed from office in November 1942, though Wenneker was explicitly told by his superiors that it was not an issue that concerned them, not least because it is clear that the German Navy itself was not in favour of the attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941.

This central contradiction in the combined conduct of World War II was sustained by the fact that Hitler persisted in believing that Japanese strategy was controlled principally by the Japanese Army; also in believing the assurances of General Ōshima Hiroshi that the Japanese policymakers would act in line with Hitler's long-held notion that Japan would cooperate with Germany in a joint destruction of the Soviet Union. By contrast, Stalin was briefed to recognise, though he did act only partially upon the advice of his agents in Japan, the need to offer the Japanese a pact of neutrality that would encourage an advance into South-East Asia and thus discourage them from pursuing any previous inclinations to have a showdown in Siberia. The heroic status accorded to Sorge emerged only in 1964, many years after Stalin's death, but it has also emerged that Stalin paid not the slightest attention to the inside knowledge gained by Sorge about the intention to launch Operation Barbarossa any more than he paid to any of the other purveyors of Hitler's real intentions. The scale of the movement of reinforcements from the Soviet Far East to the East Front was also limited. In line with Sorge's earlier revelations to the GRU, some units from Central Siberia were moved in time for participation in the Timoshenko winter offensive, but such movements were geared directly to the fact that military operations in the Soviet Far East could not be conducted effectively by the Japanese Army between October 1941 and May 1942 under prevailing climatic conditions. The evidence from German Army intelligence and consultations with the Japanese confirmed that

a number of citations tend to be sloppy and citations of documentary sources are limited and imprecise: see the account by O. Matthews, *An Impeccable Spy*. London, 2019.

Soviet forces were held in the Far East, often being reinforced with units that had previously been depleted in frontline operations. It was not until the winter of 1942 that substantial forces were transferred from the Soviet maritime provinces to the west and participated in the decisive Stalingrad offensive.⁴

Entries in Wenneker's War Diary for the latter half of 1941 indicate the points at which it was possible to conclude that Japanese strategy was increasingly being geared to an offensive in the Pacific and for the frontiers in the North to be reinforced defensively. These entries reflected Wenneker's assessment of hints obtained from discussions with Japanese naval officers and were to some extent reflected in the radio signals despatched by Clausen and subsequently decrypted by the Japanese side. It is clear from Clausen's post-war account that the balance of evidence obtained by members of the Sorge Ring confirmed the smaller number of reinforcements to the Kwantung and Korea Armies, but a larger number of troops and units were designated for operations in the South. When added to the evidence derived from Wenneker and Ott, the conclusions available to Stalin were positive. By contrast, Wenneker's first indication of the Japanese Navy's willingness to serve as a mediator between Germany and the Soviet Union, though relayed by Ott to Ribbentrop, was utterly ignored in October 1941 and evaded repeatedly in succeeding years of World War II.

⁴ The compilation of units appearing on the Eastern Front by the *Fremde Heere Ost* Section of German Army intelligence is referenced in POA 7 and is linked with the efforts via Ribbentrop and Ōshima in Berlin and the enquiries by General Kretschmer with the Japanese General Staff to encourage the Japanese to commit themselves to participation in the German-Soviet war.