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# Kōzō Izumi and the Soviet Breach of Imperial Japanese Diplomatic Codes

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**ABSTRACT** Japan's diplomatic codes were broken by the Soviet Union in the late 1930s. This was due to Kōzō Izumi (1890–1956), a Japanese diplomat and Soviet specialist stationed in Eastern Europe, who provided Japan's code books and keys to the Soviet secret police. Married to a Muscovite of noble origin working for the Soviet Foreign Intelligence, Izumi was entrapped and ultimately chose love over country. He thus led an unwitting Japan to conduct 'open diplomacy' towards the Soviet Union.

Kōzō Izumi (1890–1956) was a Japanese diplomat of no special note. He was exposed as a Soviet spy code-named 'Nero' by Iurii Rastvorov, an important Soviet intelligence officer based in Tokyo, who in 1954 defected to the United States and named dozens of Japanese spies for the Soviet Union. Izumi's contribution to Moscow was enormous: it was Izumi who allowed Moscow to break Japanese diplomatic codes in the late 1930s. This was precisely the kind of intelligence that Stalin coveted. As a result Moscow was well versed in Imperial Japan's foreign policy manoeuvres (such as its 1940 triple alliance with Germany and Italy and the process leading up to the 1941 pact of neutrality with Moscow). Tokyo had unwittingly revealed its hand to Moscow. Thereafter Tokyo's policy towards Moscow was destined to fail.

Moscow certainly intercepted the diplomatic and military correspondence of many foreign countries. There is no evidence, however, that in the tension-filled years of the late 1930s and early 1940s Moscow succeeded in breaking other foreign diplomatic codes to the extent that it did Japan's. Clearly, Izumi was one of the foreign spies most cherished by Moscow at the time. This explains why Izumi has been so protected by Moscow and why he

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is almost completely unknown even to specialists of international intelligence.

As far as can be ascertained, Izumi is not mentioned in any English-language publications on Soviet and Japanese intelligence. Information on Izumi has been known mainly through Rastvorov, as little material has been available apart from Rastvorov's revelations. As a result Izumi's activity has been largely hidden until recently when an exposé on Izumi's intelligence work for the Soviet Union was published in Moscow by V. Motov, a retired colonel of Russian Foreign Intelligence. His essay entitled 'The Time to Speak Has Come' was published in the Russian-language *News of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, an organ of the Russian Federal Security Service, successor to the KGB.<sup>1</sup> Motov's essay is clearly based on Izumi's personal file compiled by the Soviet secret police and is the most informative source available.

The present article examines Izumi's activity in light of the Russian, Japanese, and American material that has become available. Because Izumi is utterly unknown in the Anglophone world, the article also details his life and that of his Russian wife as well as the circumstances in which he began to work for Moscow. This also helps to illuminate an important method of Soviet espionage: entrapment through love and sex.

Rastvorov's records collected by the United States have now been released by the Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>2</sup> In Japan Rastvorov's records remain classified, although some were leaked in the 1960s, resulting in a confidential book in limited copies compiled in 1969 by the Japanese police about the Rastvorov affair and privately circulated, which later found its way to the outside world.<sup>3</sup>

### Izumi's Career and Marriage

Born in 1890 into the family of a government official near Tokyo, Izumi was educated in traditional Japanese fashion. While he enjoyed the reputation of being a kind and decent person,<sup>4</sup> his career course was unremarkable. In fact, he dropped out of the top Japanese college (Ikkō) without graduating,

<sup>1</sup>V. Motov, 'Prishlo vrmeia rasskazat': Slomavshaiasia "Os", *Novosti razvedki i kontrrazvedki* (2004) nos. 3–4 pp.14–15 (hereafter Motov-1), nos. 5–6, pp.14–15 (hereafter Motov-2). The author (Kuromiya) of the present essay has for some years attempted in vain to contact him in Moscow.

<sup>2</sup>National Archive and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland (NARA), Interagency Working Group, XA546786, Box 305 Yuri Rastvorov file.

<sup>3</sup>Based on this, Yoshiaki Hiyama, *Sokoku o soren ni utta 36 nin no nihonjin* [36 Japanese Who Sold Their Country to the Soviet Union] (Tokyo: Sankei shuppan 1982) wrote a book which includes Izumi. I am grateful to Mr Hiyama and Mr Hiroyuki Noguchi of *The Sankei Shinbun* for allowing me to consult this book. The title is not spelled out here to protect the source of the leak, for each copy is said to have been entitled slightly differently to identify the source of a possible leak. Here it is referred to as *The Rastvorov Affair* (Tokyo 1969). On Rastvorov, see Aleksei Kirichenko, 'Polkovnik Rastvorov', *Sovershenno sekretno* 4 (2004).

<sup>4</sup>Motov-1, p.14.

and worked as a provincial government clerk. In 1914, through personal connections, he was given a position in the Security Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Tokyo. When the October Revolution made Russia a Communist state in 1917, Izumi was ordered by his Ministry to study the Russian language. The following year he was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and engaged in managing 'economic assistance' to western Siberia. For the next two years Izumi worked in various capacities in Japanese military and political offices in Vladivostok. In 1920, he was decorated by the Japanese government for his work (the details of which are unknown) in Vladivostok. In 1921 he was appointed a secretary at the consulate of Japan in Vladivostok and in late 1922 Izumi returned to Tokyo and worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Soviet specialist. The following year he was sent to Poland as a secretary at the embassy. Shortly thereafter he was appointed a vice-consul in Warsaw from where he was sent to Riga, Latvia, on several occasions. Finally, in 1925, when Soviet-Japanese diplomatic relations were established, Izumi was sent to Moscow as a staff member at the Japanese Embassy.<sup>5</sup>

In Moscow he rented a flat in the house of Elizaveta Vasil'evna Perskaia at 15 Merzliakov Lane. Perskaia was the widow of a Russian Army general. This suggests that her husband was either killed in World War I or the civil war or possibly executed by the Bolsheviks. She was a noble by birth and taught at a school in Tver' until 1914 when the family moved to Moscow. She had two daughters, Elena and Vera, and a son Dmitrii Aleksandrovich. Dmitrii was a military officer and in 1925 was executed by the Bolshevik government on charges of taking part in a 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy'. Because of their noble origins, the Perskaia family were politically suspect under the Soviet regime. As often happened in such cases, Elizaveta was forced to work for the secret police in 1925. Almost certainly she would have had no choice if she wished to protect herself and her daughters. It is also almost certain that the secret police, which carefully controlled all foreign diplomats, arranged for Izumi's flat with the Perskaias. The older daughter Elena, born in 1902, worked at the library of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (which at the time was separate from the secret police, the OGPU) while Vera worked as a teacher at a day care. Both were healthy and well educated. It was a cultured family and Japanese diplomats, among others Naotake Satō (1882–1971) then Acting Ambassador and subsequently (1942–45) Ambassador to the Soviet Union, often visited the Perskaias.<sup>6</sup>

In 1927 Izumi proposed to Elena and married her in March 1927.<sup>7</sup> Izumi, Elena, and Elizaveta, now his mother-in-law, then moved together to Harbin, China, where Izumi had been appointed Vice Consul. It was around this time that Elizaveta's handler, Vasilii I. Pudín (1901–74) of the OGPU

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<sup>5</sup>*Gaimushō nenkan* [Anal of the Foreign Ministry] (Tokyo: Gaimushō daijin kanbō jinjika 1942) p.249.

<sup>6</sup>Motov-1 p.14.

<sup>7</sup>*The Rastvorov Affair*, p.308.

Counter-Intelligence Department,<sup>8</sup> recruited Elena as well, code-naming her 'Daughter'. In 1930 Izumi was transferred north to Blagoveshchensk, across the Amur river from Heihe, China. Meanwhile Elena had returned to Moscow to give birth. Her baby boy was named Tōyō (meaning 'Orient' in Japanese). Elena was detained in Moscow until she was briefed by the OGPU concerning an operation involving the stealing of secret documents (code books) from Izumi's safe, and only then was she, with her baby, allowed to rejoin her husband in Blagoveshchensk. Upon arriving in Blagoveshchensk, however, Elena refused to give access to the safe to the OGPU operative (the husband of the Japanese Consulate's cleaning lady). Although the details are not clear, it seems that at this point the Japanese Embassy began to suspect Elena.

Because of this incident, in the summer of 1931 Izumi was summoned to the Japanese Embassy in Moscow. Soviet accounts at the time noted that Elena was given to impulsive behaviour, while, according to Izumi, she was threatened by the OGPU. In any case, Elena confessed to Ōta (probably Hideo Ōta, an interpreter at the Embassy who was also married to a Russian) that Soviet authorities were forcing her to steal Japan's diplomatic code books. Izumi, Elena, and their son were then sent back to Tokyo.<sup>9</sup>

In 1932 Izumi was sent to Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka, Russia, where Japan held a consulate. Later in the same year Izumi was transferred to Manchuli, Inner Mongolia, China, on the Soviet border. Elena's mother, Elizaveta, who had returned to Moscow and had not accompanied the Izumis to Tokyo and Petrovavlovsk, rejoined the couple in Manchuli. A year later, in December 1933, Izumi was sent to Tehran, Persia, as an interpreter, where he was needed in order to promote work with White (i.e. anti-Soviet) Russian émigrés.<sup>10</sup>

Izumi's relationship with Elena became complicated by the fact that their baby boy had serious medical problems. When Izumi was sent to Tehran, Elena and her mother returned to Moscow with the baby for an operation, after which Elena took Tōyō to Berlin for a second operation. From Berlin Elena went to Paris where the uncle of her brother-in-law, Vera's husband Sergei Bolotov, had been living since before the 1917 Revolution. According to Motov's account, on her way to Tehran from Paris Elena returned to Moscow to visit with her sister and her family.<sup>11</sup> Izumi's account was

<sup>8</sup>For Pudín, see *Razvedka i kontrrazvedka v litsakh* (Moscow: Russkii mir 2002) pp.407–8 and Vladimir Antonov, 'Dobytkhik shifrov', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 30 March 2007.

<sup>9</sup>Motov-1 p.14 and *The Rastvorov Affair* pp.306–9. According to a Japanese account, Izumi was summoned to Moscow in November 1931. The couple left Moscow for Japan on 26 November 1931. See Eiji Amau, *Nikki shiryōshū*, vol. 2, part 2 (Tokyo: Amau Eiji nikki shiryōshū kankōkai 1989) pp.499–500. On Ōta's marriage to a Russian, see Hajime Takeo, 'Nisso no nami ni odoru hitobito: chūso gaikōkan no maki' [People Who Dance on Japanese–Soviet Waves: On Japanese Diplomats in the Soviet Union], *Gekkan Roshiya* 1/6 (December 1935) p.94.

<sup>10</sup>Motov-1 p.14, Motov-2 p.14, and *Gaimushō nenkan*, p.349.

<sup>11</sup>Motov-1 p.14.

somewhat different: Elena was denied a Soviet transit visa to Persia and travelled by boat via India to Persia.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, after the Blagoveshchensk incident, the OGPU no longer trusted the Perskaia and ordered contact with them be cut. In August 1934, M.S. Gorb, the vice-director of the Special Section of the secret police (now called NKVD) became suspicious of Elena, informing the NKVD Foreign Section that Elena and Vera were being 'actively investigated'. Pudín, Elizaveta's former handler, now working in the NKVD Foreign Section, sought to rescue the Perskaia by contending that they, agents of the Special Section, be released to his Foreign Section. The Special Section, however, arrested Elizaveta, Vera, and Sergei Bolotov, and accused them of espionage and terrorist intentions against the leaders of the Communist Party and the Soviet government. Bolotov and Vera were executed, Elizaveta was given 10 years in the Gulag.<sup>13</sup>

### In Prague

In late 1936, Izumi was transferred to Prague, Czechoslovakia, as a third secretary of the Japanese Legation, in order to carry out further work with Russian émigrés. (Later, for two months in early 1937, Izumi served in Prague as temporary acting head of the Legation.)<sup>14</sup> In the meantime, Elena, not having heard from her family in Moscow, began to suspect that they had been repressed and exiled without the right to correspondence. She subsequently confessed to her husband that she had collaborated with the Soviet secret police. How Izumi reacted to her revelation is not known. In September 1937, at the height of the Great Terror in the Soviet Union which swept away numerous Soviet diplomats and intelligence officers, Elena reported to the Consul Section of the Soviet Embassy in Prague asking for the restoration of her Soviet citizenship. (She was probably deprived of Soviet citizenship when her mother and sister were charged with espionage.) She stated that she wanted to raise her son in the Motherland – the Soviet Union – and further that her son was not Izumi's son, although conceding that Izumi loved him as if he were. She claimed that her relationship with her husband had become 'purely formal', although he was as 'deeply attached to her as a woman as ever'. She had informed her husband of her decision to sever their relationship, to which he refused to agree. She cried that her family suffered because she was married to a Japanese.

The following day Elena returned to the Consulate with a statement of repentance, confusingly written, in which she explained in detail what had happened in Blagoveshchensk in 1931 and other incidents which might have contributed to the suspicion of her patrons in Moscow. At the end of her

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<sup>12</sup>*The Rastvorov Affair*, p.309.

<sup>13</sup>This and the following passages are from Motov-1, p.14.

<sup>14</sup>Ikuhiko Hata (ed.), *Senzenki Nihon kanryōsei no seido soshiki jinji* [The Institutions, Organizations, and the Personnel of the Pre-War Japanese Bureaucracies] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press 1981) p.47.

statement, she said that she vouched for herself, and her family, including Bolotov, all of whom were innocent, and she demanded their return. Clearly Elena did not know that her sister and brother-in-law had already been executed. Regarding her husband, she stated that he was engaged in cipher work and coded correspondence as well as studying French and German. Lately, Izumi had become more interested in Russian émigré publications for his work. She did not know whether he was engaged in intelligence work, although like many Japanese diplomats of the time, he probably was.<sup>15</sup> She then began to inform on her husband's work (for instance his secret meeting with a visitor from the Soviet Union). In March 1938 Elena gave to her handler nine notebooks of her husband, a card catalogue of Russian émigrés in Iran (Persia), replicas of keys to Izumi's safe, and his briefcase.

Thereafter Elena worked carefully to recruit him to the Soviet side. Elena insisted that he was resentful of the Japanese government, because he had not been promoted for eight years. This was not entirely true: he was acting head of the Legation in Prague (and later in Sofia); in terms of bureaucratic ranks, Izumi had been promoted several times and was even decorated by Tokyo with various awards for his work.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible that he was dissatisfied with his work, not feeling trusted by his own government because of his marriage to Elena. (If so, the Japanese government was extraordinarily lax in appointing him acting chief in Prague, and later in Sofia.) In return for her cooperation, Elena asked Moscow to send to her mother packages, a letter, and ten pounds sterling. In Moscow, Pudín handled Elena's case. At the outset Pudín did not sanction attempts to recruit Izumi, cautioning that it was necessary to study him thoroughly. Perhaps to protect Elena, Pudín stated to his representatives in Prague that Elena was less responsible for the Blagoveshchensk incident than the local operators there.

During their trip to Italy in the spring of 1938, according to Motov, Elena finally broached with Izumi the subject of working together for the Soviet Union. Izumi 'expressed his understanding', noting his disagreement with those ruling military circles that ran Japanese politics, internal and external. To demonstrate his willingness to collaborate with Soviet Intelligence, Izumi suggested that he deliver the secret correspondence of the Embassy to Elena's handler. On 3 May 1938 Elena brought to her Prague handler, Mikhail. M. Adamovich (1898–1979),<sup>17</sup> seven code books and their keys. She asked for 10,000 pounds sterling. When she did not receive a clear answer, she took them back.

<sup>15</sup>Japanese archives contain dozens of reports Izumi sent to Tokyo from his posts abroad. They include diverse topics mainly on the Soviet Union ranging from economic and political to military affairs. (See under the keyword of Kōzō Izumi at JACAR, The Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (National Archives of Japan): <<http://www.jacar.go.jp>>). Izumi also dealt with White Russian émigrés (as anti-Soviet subversives) in Manchuli, Tehran, Prague, Sofia, and Istanbul.

<sup>16</sup>See *Gaimushō nenkan*, p.349.

<sup>17</sup>*Razvedka i kontrrazvedka v litsakh*, p.15.



Moscow instructed Adamovich to meet with Izumi. In the meeting Izumi presented a condition for his cooperation: 5000 pounds sterling in advance and 100 every month for his work. How much money, if any, was exchanged is not known. In June 1938 Elena returned to Adamovich and asked for help to re-establish correspondence with her mother. Elena also brought her husband's notes with which he conducted his cipher work. Soviet cipher experts confirmed that Izumi's notes were the keys to deciphering Japan's actual diplomatic codes, probably the same codes as the Americans called 'Purple'. In the meantime, Elena's mother was transferred from the Gulag in northern Russia to a clinic in the Butyrka Prison in Moscow, and a letter arrived from her in Prague. Izumi provided information on Japan's intelligence activity against the Soviet Union as well as additional code books and secret telegrams. These included the names of Japan's agents in Prague to be dispatched into Soviet territory and Japan's intelligence network elsewhere.<sup>18</sup>

### In Helsinki, Sofia and Istanbul

In September 1938, in light of the imminent advance of German forces into the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, the families of Japanese diplomats in Prague were evacuated, and Elena left for Helsinki. Before his own departure for Helsinki in late October 1938, Izumi gave to Adamovich 25 coded messages from Berlin, 29 from London, 13 from Rome and 15 from Moscow. V. Motov, who first publicly acknowledged Izumi's contribution to Soviet Intelligence, notes that the value of the information Izumi provided to Moscow could not be over-emphasized, particularly at a time when Stalin's Great Terror had devastated Soviet foreign intelligence operations.<sup>19</sup>

After her move to Helsinki, Elena was given permission by Moscow to travel to Switzerland, purportedly for the treatment of Tōyō. (By this time Elena regained her Soviet citizenship.) Elena was already suspect among the Japanese. Her frequent travel abroad, which would have been highly unusual for ordinary Soviet citizens, led some of the Japanese in Helsinki to wonder whether she was in fact a Soviet spy.<sup>20</sup> After Izumi's arrival in Helsinki, an official named 'Sugimara' questioned him about whether he intended to bring his wife to Japan's diplomatic quarters, openly expressing

<sup>18</sup>In this connection, Izumi may have provided crucial information on those agents allegedly sent in early 1939 from Bulgaria to the Soviet Union in order to assassinate Stalin. See *The Rastvorov Affair*, p.309, and Hiroaki Kuromiya and Georges Mamoulia, 'Anti-Russian and Anti-Soviet Subversion: The Caucasian-Japanese Nexus', *Europe-Asia Studies* 61/8 (2009) pp.1430–1.

<sup>19</sup>Motov-1, p.14. Elena's handler in Helsinki was Zoia I. Voskresenskaia (Rybkina) (1907–92). See Zoia Voskresenskaia and Eduard Sharapov, *Taina Zoi Voskresenskoi* (Moscow: Olma-Press 1998). Stalin's Great Terror repressed 275 (or 68%) of 450 Soviet foreign intelligence officials in Moscow and abroad. I.A. Damaskin, *Stalin i razvedka* (Moscow: Veche) p.205.

<sup>20</sup>Yukiko Sugihara, *Rokusen nin no inochi no biza* [Visas for Six Thousand Lives] (Tokyo: Taishō shuppan 2005) p.70.

his concern about Elena's activity.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Elena expressed to her handler that she now wished to return to Moscow, adding that her husband had no family left in Japan and was willing to stay with her.<sup>22</sup> Moscow judged that such a move would jeopardize Izumi, now nicknamed 'Green', by revealing Elena's ongoing connections to the Soviets, and therefore she was not allowed to return.<sup>23</sup> The outbreak of war ('Winter War') between Finland and the Soviet Union in November 1939, however, made it impossible for Soviet Intelligence to operate in Finland, and Elena and Izumi lost contact with their Soviet handlers.

In December 1939 Izumi was transferred by the Japanese government to Sofia, Bulgaria.<sup>24</sup> In March 1940 Elena visited the Soviet Consulate in Sofia, informing them that she and her husband wished to resume contact, adding this time her desire to divorce her husband and return to the Soviet Union. Again Moscow did not allow her to return but encouraged her to continue to work with her husband. In order to keep Elena tied to Izumi, Moscow allowed Elena to have correspondence with her mother through the Soviet Consulate in Sofia. In Sofia Izumi's confidence in Japan was further eroded, at least according to an unflattering Soviet account, when he witnessed Japan's Ambassador Teruo Hachiya (1895–1979) hold an official reception with one of his alleged mistresses as hostess. Elena demonstratively boycotted the reception.<sup>25</sup>

In 1940, Japan undertook to deploy new codes for its European diplomatic communication. Moscow acted immediately, sending Pudín to Sofia. To his Soviet handlers' great fortune, Izumi was appointed temporary acting head of the Japanese Legation in Sofia on 9 November 1940, after Hachiya's departure,<sup>26</sup> allowing him free access to code books. (Again, this appointment was rather odd, given the suspicion raised about his wife's activity.) In his meetings with Pudín in November 1940, Izumi handed over to him Japan's new code books.<sup>27</sup> Izumi also expressed his desire to strengthen his position in Sofia so as to be able to render greater service to Moscow and asked for help. Believing that it was now hopeless to save their marriage, according to a Soviet account, Izumi requested that Elena be allowed to return to the Soviet Union, in order to strengthen his position among the Japanese community. (Earlier Moscow judged that Elena's return

<sup>21</sup>Motov-1, p.15. 'Sugimara' probably refers to Chiune Sugihara (1900–86), 'Japan's Schindler' and a Soviet specialist who in 1940, as Japanese Consul in Kaunas, Lithuania, saved thousands of Polish and Lithuanian Jews by issuing them Japanese transit visas.

<sup>22</sup>Izumi in fact had a sister, Sei, probably a war widow, in Japan, with whom after the war he shared a house. *The Rastvorov Affair*, p.307.

<sup>23</sup>Without naming Izumi, *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi vneshnei razvedki*, v. 4 (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia 1999) p.500 refers to him as 'Gray/Grey'.

<sup>24</sup>*Gaimushō nenkan*, p.250.

<sup>25</sup>Motov-1, p.15.

<sup>26</sup>Hata, *Senzenki Nihon kanryōsei no seido soshiki jinji*, p.52.

<sup>27</sup>A short biography of Pudín in *Razvedka i kontrrazvedka v litsakh*, p.408, mentions this matter without naming Izumi. See also V. Antonov and V. Karpov, *Tainye informatory Kremliia: Vollenberg, Artuzov i drugie* (Moscow: Geia iterum 2001) p.54.



to the Soviet Union would jeopardize Izumi's position. Now it appears to have concluded that ridding Izumi of Elena would strengthen his position, although her return to the Soviet Union was not to be revealed.) Lavrentii P. Beriia, head of the NKVD, intervened in this matter in view of Izumi's importance to Moscow. Elena was to be returned to Moscow, and her mother to be released from detention and to be informed initially that her daughter Vera (who had earlier been executed) was held at a psychiatric hospital and in due course that Vera had died. Within the Soviet Legation a technical station was created in order to facilitate the decryption of Japanese diplomatic cables with the help of the material given by Izumi. The result proved extremely valuable. Beriia came to control Izumi directly.<sup>28</sup>

Elena's return to the Soviet Union was to be camouflaged under the guise of a trip to Sweden for her son's treatment; their separation from Izumi was to be quiet and amicable; and Izumi was to be allowed to correspond with them. Her mother Elizaveta was released by a special order, dated 7 March 1941, of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union. Elena and Tōyō returned to Moscow at the beginning of May 1941 and moved into a temporary flat with her mother. Then, from Stockholm a telegram was sent to Izumi. Before Elena's departure Izumi requested that the 500 American dollars which he had been receiving for his work be given instead to Elena and her family in Soviet currency. This request was met, and Elena and her family found a permanent residence and lived at the government's expense.<sup>29</sup>

Izumi's interest was not pecuniary. After Elena's departure, Izumi did not accept money from his Soviet handlers. Izumi continued to provide vital information, however. (This suggests that his initial demand for financial reward was part of a plan to relocate to a financially secure life elsewhere in Europe.) The information Izumi provided included a warning (given 21 May 1941), received from Japan's Military Attaché in Berlin, that Hitler would attack the Soviet Union within the next two months. Izumi received the same information from the Polish intelligence officer Jan Kowalewski (the teacher of Japanese Army cipher specialists who collaborated closely with the Japanese in Tokyo, Moscow, and elsewhere in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s).<sup>30</sup>

On 23 June 1941, the day after Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, Japan once again changed its diplomatic code books, according to a Soviet account. Izumi's position as temporary acting head of the Legation in Sofia helped Soviet cipher experts to decode the new system with three diplomatic codes and their keys. Moscow thus was able to read the war-time correspondence that took place between Tokyo and Japan's European legations and among these legations.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Rastvorov's testimony in *The Rastvorov Affair*, p.306.

<sup>29</sup>Motov-1, p.15.

<sup>30</sup>For the Polish-Japanese collaboration (including Kowalewski), see Hiroaki Kuromiya and Andrzej Peplowski, *Między Warszawą a Tokio: Polsko-Japońska współpraca wywiadowcza 1904-1944* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek 2009).

<sup>31</sup>Motov-1, p.15.

### Izumi's Significance as Soviet Agent

Motov adds that during the war, apart from various code books, Izumi continued to provide much information vital to Moscow: Japan's position towards the Soviet Union after Hitler's attack, Germany's war plans in 1942 and 1943, and the like. In addition, on his official and personal trips to Italy and Switzerland, he acted as a courier for Soviet Intelligence.<sup>32</sup>

'The greatest wartime successes of Soviet cryptanalysts were against Japanese codes and ciphers', according to an influential book on the Soviet secret police. This success was engineered by its Research Section and its Japanese specialist Sergei Tolstoi.<sup>33</sup> Izumi's contribution was decisive, although no English-language literature mentions Izumi.<sup>34</sup>

Izumi's service to Soviet Intelligence was eminently material: by facilitating access to Japan's cipher codes, Izumi allowed Moscow to read Japanese diplomatic correspondence almost freely from 1938 to 1943/44. Japan's diplomacy towards the Soviet Union thus became by default 'open diplomacy'. Even though before 1938 Moscow possessed certain Japanese code books,<sup>35</sup> they were limited.<sup>36</sup> The code books and keys received from Izumi were nearly complete sets used by Japanese legations in Europe and thus gave Moscow objective ground on which to assess Japan's strategic moves. It should be emphasized that what Moscow obtained through Izumi was the kind of intelligence Stalin coveted. Indeed, Stalin used to say to his intelligence men: 'Don't tell me what you think, give me the facts and the sources!'<sup>37</sup>

It is not that Tokyo did not read Soviet coded messages. Certainly it did. In the summer of 1939, for instance, a warning was issued to Stalin from China that Japan appeared to possess the cipher codes which the Soviet Legation in China used to correspond with Moscow.<sup>38</sup> There is also evidence to show that at about the same time Tokyo read at least some of the

<sup>32</sup>Motov-2, p.14.

<sup>33</sup>Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story* (New York: HarperCollins 1990) pp.225–6 and 271–2.

<sup>34</sup>Recent Russian work based on Motov points out Izumi's importance: Klim Degtiarev and Aleksandr Kolpakidi, *Vneshniaia razvedka SSSR* (Moscow: Yauza-Eksmo 2009) pp.129–32.

<sup>35</sup>See W.G. Krivitsky, *I was Stalin's Agent* (London: Hamish Hamilton 1939) p.34 referring to 1936. According to one account, the code book used by Krivitsky was stolen from the Japanese Embassy in Moscow. Masaki Miyake, *Sutārin no tainichi jōhō kōsaku* [Stalin's Intelligence Operations Against Japan] (Tokyo: Heibonsha 2010) p.33. A former Japanese Military Attaché later noted that it turned out that one of the Japanese officials at the Embassy in Moscow was working for the Soviet secret police. Hikosaburō Hata, *Kunan ni taete* [Enduring Hardships] (Moscow: Nikkan rōdō tsūshin sha 1958) p.164.

<sup>36</sup>Motov-1, p.14.

<sup>37</sup>Alexander Orlov, *Handbook of Intelligence and Guerrilla Warfare* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 1963) p.10.

<sup>38</sup>V.I. Lota, *Za gran'yu vozmozhnogo: voennaia razvedka Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke 1918–1945 gg.* (Moscow: Kuchkovo pole 2008) pp.326–7.

messages sent from Moscow to the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, there is no evidence that Tokyo had systematic access to Soviet secret correspondence, whereas thanks to Izumi Moscow did have almost unfettered access to Japan's diplomatic cables.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in the turbulent years of 1938 through the War years (which include the Berlin–Rome–Tokyo Tripartite Pact of September 1940 and the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact of April 1941), Moscow had an incalculably greater advantage in its dealings with Japan.<sup>41</sup>

There is an interesting story testifying to Izumi's status within the Russian intelligence community. In the 1990s, after the Soviet Union collapsed, a Japanese interpreter visited one of the museums in Moscow celebrating Richard Sorge, a preeminent agent of Moscow who in the 1930s worked in Tokyo (where he was arrested in 1941 and hanged in 1944). There he observed a plaque honouring Kōzō Izumi along with Sorge. This museum appears to have closed since then.<sup>42</sup>

According to Motov, there is no evidence that Izumi was guided by his communist beliefs or sympathy: he remained a Japanese patriot. Motov suggests that Japan's misguided (anti-Soviet) policy was responsible for Izumi's treachery.

## Love and Espionage

Motov remains silent, however, on love as well as on the extraordinary methods that the Soviet secret police used systematically: sex, threats, blackmail, and murder. The Soviet Union was not unique in this, but, by all indications, it went further than any other country. The case of the Muscovite Nora Korzhenko is famous. Korzhenko was used in 1940 by the NKVD to seduce the Englishman John Murray. They ended up married in 1941 and managed to flee the Soviet Union in dramatic fashion.<sup>43</sup>

Dramatic but also tragic was the case of Hideo Kobayashi (1902–71). He was a Japanese correspondent for *The Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun*. Having studied Russian at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in 1925, he began

<sup>39</sup>An example from October 1939 is in 'Abe Nobuyuki kankei bunsho II-12' (Kokkai toshokan kensei shiryō shitsu, Tokyo, Japan). Abe was Japan's prime minister at the time.

<sup>40</sup>Of course, there might have been other sources as well. The Russian Foreign Intelligence Service website notes, for example, that in 1938 a Japanese diplomat sold the cipher codes of the Japanese Embassy in Vienna, Austria, to Soviet Intelligence. See <<http://svr.gov.ru/history/stage03.htm>> (accessed 27 July 2011).

<sup>41</sup>Similarly from 1940 onwards the United States was able to decipher Japan's diplomatic cipher codes ('Purple' codes), probably the same codes the Soviet Union broke, apparently without access to Japan's code books. See Carl Boyd, *Hitler's Japanese Confidant: General Oshima Hiroshi and Magic Intelligence, 1941–1945* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas 1993).

<sup>42</sup>I am grateful to Professor Ikuhiko Hata for this information.

<sup>43</sup>Both left separate memoirs about their experience: Nora Murray, *I Spied for Stalin* (New York: Wilfred Funk 1951) and John Murray, *A Spy Called Swallow: The True Love Story of Nora, the Russian Agent* (London: W. H. Allen 1978).

to work for the newspaper. Married with two children, he worked in Harbin and then was sent to Moscow sometime in the early 1930s. There he fell in love with the 17-year-old Nadezhda Vegener, the daughter of Maria Vegener, an interpreter at the Japanese Embassy. In December 1935, at the time of his return to Japan, Kobayashi, with the help of the Japanese Military Attaché, sought to smuggle his 17-year-old love and her mother abroad in two large suitcases. The two women had sought refuge at the Embassy a week before the departure. The NKVD rightly suspected that the two suspicious suitcases were being used for smuggling. At a station 10 kilometres from the Polish border, Kobayashi, the Military Attaché, and their belongings were isolated and, despite the Attaché's protest, the suitcases were opened, and the women detained. OGPU officials turned out to be travelling in the same train. The women and their relative L.A. Aue (who apparently helped them as well) were exiled to Voronezh for three years. Maria died the following year, while Nadezhda's fate is unknown. Kobayashi returned alone to Japan and subsequently became one of the top opinion writers at the newspaper and served as the head of the Education Board in Kyoto. The two suitcases are now displayed at the Border Guard Museum in Moscow as evidence of Japanese espionage operations (smuggling out of Japanese spies).<sup>44</sup>

Izumi's case is similar to Kobayashi's. Whether Elena Perskaia's marriage to Izumi was out of love, convenience (financial, material and other), a desire to flee the Soviet Union, or forced on her by the secret police is not known. Nor does one know whether Elena Perskaia's claim about her son Tōyō's paternity is true. It is easy to see, however, how the secret police used her for their political ends. The Perskaias were politically suspect by default because of the family's noble origin. Elena's father may have been executed, and certainly her brother was. All the remaining members of the family (including her brother-in-law) were arrested in 1935. Under these dire conditions, especially during Stalin's Great Terror, whatever love she may have felt for Izumi seems to have been overruled by her love for her family. Recruiting Izumi to spy for Moscow gave her additional protection. So she did. Izumi for his part obliged, seemingly out of his love for Elena.

During the War, Elena Perskaia was evacuated to Kyrgyzstan with her son and mother. When Tōyō entered the Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, the family followed him there. Taken ill, however, Elena lived in a psychiatric hospital. After the war, her mother Elizaveta repeatedly asked for permission to return with her family to Moscow. Motov is silent about what eventually became of them.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Elena Chekulaeva, *Ukradennaia zhizn'* (Moscow: IKAR 2005) pp.58–86. On Kobayashi, see *Shōwa 5 nen shinbun jinmei kan* [Directory of Journalists, 1930] (Tokyo-Osaka: Shinbun no shinbunsha 1929) p.165 and *Mainichi Shinbun*, 26 February 1971, p.19.

<sup>45</sup>Motov-2, p.15.

### **Izumi's Last Years**

Liberated from Elena and hence from the suspicions of the Japanese government, Izumi was able to continue to work for Moscow from his posts in Sofia. In May 1943 Izumi was transferred to Istanbul, where he had access to codes used only for correspondence with the Japanese Embassy in Ankara. (So in the end, it is possible to surmise that he was not much trusted by the Japanese government.) Although Beria himself was involved in acquiring new Japanese diplomatic cipher codes through Izumi, this does not seem to have succeeded. Thus Izumi appears to have become much less useful to Moscow at this time.<sup>46</sup>

Izumi kept working for Moscow, however. American documents confirm it. The American Office of War Information and the Office of Strategic Services (a predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency) watched Japanese diplomats, including Izumi, in Turkey. Istanbul was a major base for Japan to collect intelligence about the Soviet Union. Even when Japan was faced with defeat by the United States and the United Kingdom, it still considered the possible Soviet threat. According to American information:

In charge of the Japanese information office in Istanbul is Kozo Izumi. He is considered one of the best informed Japs on Russian affairs. He has spent many years in Russia as a consul and in other jobs, His wife is a Soviet Russian who now is working in Stockholm on a job similar to his.<sup>47</sup> He speaks Russian perfectly. Before coming to Istanbul in May, 1943, he was First Secretary of [the] Legation in Sofia and there he was on close terms with the Soviet Counselor of Legation, Mr. Ossoukin.<sup>48</sup>

Because of his position, he met Russian émigrés in Istanbul. Some of them probably worked secretly for Moscow, however. American watchers reported the following in February 1944:

In Istanbul it has been ascertained that Izumi in his apartment: Istanbul – Nisantas, Emlak Cadessi, 13/3, carries on secret meetings with Russian elements. Surveillance reports more or less regular meetings with at least four people of which one is reputedly identical with a White Russian named Gorschenin (Report being checked). Two others cannot be identified. It has only been determined that they speak Russian between them. The fourth finally in the course of the last two

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., pp.14–15.

<sup>47</sup>In fact, by this time Izumi's wife had returned to Moscow, which the OSS could not have known.

<sup>48</sup>National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, MD. RG263 Records Released under the Nazi and Japanese War Crimes Disclosure Acts, CIA Subject Files, 1934–2002 NND36821, Entry A1-87, Box 4 'Japanese in Europe (World War II)', Folder I, 12 February 1944 report. I am grateful to Professor Jeffrey Burds for providing a copy of this file to me.

months was recognized twice when entering the Soviet Trade Bank in Istanbul, Istiklal Caddesi. The determination of his name is still expected. His visits to Izumi are irregular, three times during the period from 1st to the 15th December 1943. Duration of visits 15 minutes to an hour. Description: About 45 years old, appearance not striking; dark, small moustache; dark accentuated, almond-shaped eyes, slim figure, height about 1.75. Caucasian type.<sup>49</sup>

The same report states that Izumi 'has at his disposal the Armenian journalist Shawliyan from Europe Press. Contact with different White Russian circles has also been established'.<sup>50</sup> It is not clear what Americans made of Izumi's contact with someone who also dealt with the Soviet Trade Bank.

According to Japanese sources, Izumi was transferred back to Sofia, Bulgaria, in August 1944. However, Motov claims that Izumi was interned in Turkey when in February 1945 it broke neutrality and joined the war on the side of the Allies.<sup>51</sup> At any rate, after Japan's surrender in August 1945, Izumi moved to Switzerland in January 1946 and returned to Japan in March of that year. Soon after his return on 31 May 1946 he reported to the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo, identified himself, and inquired about his family who had returned to Moscow. On 2 July 1946 an answer came from Moscow to Tokyo that Izumi was indeed a valuable Soviet agent. Izumi was given regards from Pudín and told that his son was studying, and living with his grandmother, and Elena was in a psychiatric hospital.<sup>52</sup> Izumi was given some money by Soviet representatives in Tokyo to re-establish himself in war-torn Japan. He left (or was dismissed from) the Foreign Ministry and ran his own small trade company in Tokyo.

Even though he was no longer in a position to acquire important intelligence, he provided to his handler what he could collect and received money in return. In the spring of 1947 Izumi, like many other Japanese officials and returnees from abroad, was summoned to the US Occupation Forces for counter-espionage purposes. He was interrogated about Japanese methods of intelligence against the Soviet Union. Moscow instructed Izumi not to cooperate with the US intelligence. Although what Izumi told the Americans is not known, Izumi was unlikely to give much useful information to the United States. By 1953 he had become ill with hypertension, and contact with his Soviet handler gradually came to an end.<sup>53</sup>

After Rastvorov's defection, Izumi was again interrogated by the US Counter-Intelligence Corps in 1954. Now identified as Soviet agent code-named 'Nero', Izumi 'confessed to being a Soviet agent to CI-IV-661 in June

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>*The Rastvorov Affair*, p. 305 and Motov-2, p.15.

<sup>52</sup>Motov-2, p.15. According to *The Rastvorov Affair*, p.308, Izumi was not told about the fate of his family.

<sup>53</sup>Motov-2, p.15.



[1954]. HIS [sic] interrogation and confession are in the Counter-Espionage Branch files'.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, the authors' inquiries into various US archives, including those of National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), CIA, and US Army Intelligence and Security Command, have not led to locating these files.

The Japanese police, too, interrogated Izumi. In June 1954 two officials visited his house in Tokyo where he was living with his sister and his *naisai* (common-law wife). He pretended to be calm, but was agitated and incoherent, flatly denying his work for Moscow. A week later Izumi was visited again. This time, he apologized and admitted that he had worked as a Soviet agent after the war, but denied his involvement in Soviet intelligence before and during the war.<sup>55</sup> Well aware how important his role had been, Izumi perhaps wished to minimize his responsibility. Two years later he died in Tokyo from complications of hypertension. He was 66.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusions

Love and espionage have been and still are intimately intertwined. Kōzō Izumi's case shows it well. Moscow used his love for his Russian wife to its best advantage, whereas Japan failed miserably in securing its diplomatic codes. Izumi chose love over country. His was far from an isolated case. There is much to be investigated in this area of Soviet intelligence.

One of Izumi's Japanese contemporaries who knew Izumi in Helsinki in the late 1930s expressed no surprise upon learning of Izumi's secret past.<sup>57</sup> The Japanese police who investigated Izumi after the Rastvorov defection concluded that it was not an overstatement to say that Izumi was the equal of Richard Sorge, a well-known Soviet spy who, through his Japanese collaborators, managed to penetrate the highest echelons of the pre-World War II Japanese political establishment.<sup>58</sup>

It is difficult to compare Izumi with Sorge. It is possible, however, that Izumi's contribution to Moscow was greater than that of Sorge's: Izumi enabled Moscow to acquire 'raw data', which Stalin wanted, whereas Stalin treated Sorge's dispatches from Tokyo with scepticism. Almost certainly Stalin was able to follow every important move of Japanese diplomacy from 1938 or 1939 to 1942 or 1943. Japan's diplomacy was destined to fail. As once noted on a plaque for Izumi in that mysterious (no longer extant) museum in Moscow, Izumi ranks alongside Sorge as an especially important agent in Soviet espionage against Imperial Japan.

<sup>54</sup>NARA, Interagency Working Group, XA546786, Box 305 Yuri Rastvorov file, Part IV, folder 1 p.4 (Headquarters, 441st Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment APO 500).

<sup>55</sup>*The Rastvorov Affair*, p.307.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p.311.

<sup>57</sup>Sugihara, *Rokusen nin no inochi no biza*, p.70.

<sup>58</sup>*The Rastvorov Affair*, p.309. Books about Sorge and his Japanese accomplices abound in many languages. One of the most recent is Elena Prudnikova, *Rikhard Zorge: chuzhoi sredi svoikh* (Moscow: Olma 2011).

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