

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT. VII¹

BY CAPTAIN NICOLA POPOFF

I do not know whether the telegrams Major Maori wrote out when he was arrested in Chita were dispatched to their destination, or simply filed with the papers in the case, but five or six days later a telegram came from our War Minister, General Sukhomlinoff, ordering us to release the fellow and to return him his documents. This order was immediately obeyed, except that we kept the plans of the railway, which I later sent to our General Staff at Petrograd. The military authorities at Chita naturally protested against letting Maori go, and photographed every document they found in his possession before it was returned to him. In fact, they decided to bring a formal charge of espionage against him notwithstanding their instructions from higher up, and to place him on trial before a military tribunal. This action started an endless exchange of notes between the two Governments, which continued until the outbreak of the World War and then stopped.

I was convinced that Major Maori had bought these plans from Mr. G——, the chief construction engineer of the Transbaikal Railway at Irkutsk. We learned that this man had visited the Japanese brothel the night before the Major left, and discovered afterward that Maori had stopped at Omsk for twenty-four hours on his way from Petrograd to Irkutsk and had procured the plans of the western sec-

tion of the railway at that time. We had previously learned that Mr. G—— also was living above his means. He spent large sums every night carousing in bars, music halls, and brothels. But our closest observation of his movements showed no more than that he was spending money lavishly on wine and women. We were unable at the time to learn of any direct communication between him and the Japanese spies in the city. Later we discovered, through Miamura's talks with Lieutenant M——, that he had his dealings with the Japanese in the brothel just mentioned. Upon presenting proofs of the fact he was promptly removed from his post. At Omsk we suspected a draftsman who became suddenly rich and had resigned his position, but we were not able to present sufficient evidence of his treason to convict him.

Miamura remained at Irkutsk about a month. At times he drank so much vodka that he could not return to his own lodging and slept at the Lieutenant's. When sober he was silent and reserved, but when intoxicated he talked constantly.

A few days before he left Irkutsk he arrived at Lieutenant M——'s room already under the influence of liquor and started to describe a plan he had of giving lessons in Japanese to Russian officers of the Intelligence Division. He thought this an exceedingly bright scheme. First of all, he could learn a good deal of interest directly from the officers themselves. In the second place, he thought he could persuade the offi-

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cers to give him some Japanese documents to translate. Last of all, he planned to feed up the officers with false information about Japanese espionage service in Siberia, and thus put the Russians on the wrong track. He also talked a good deal about the Intelligence Department at Port Arthur, which was training agents for spy service in several foreign countries, and boasted a great deal about what these men would be able to accomplish.

A few days after this conversation my agents reported that Miamura was sitting in a little drinking place called The Volga, not far from the building occupied by our military map division. It was a place to which officers and soldiers employed in that department frequently resorted. Miamura engaged in conversation with one of these soldiers and parted from him on very friendly terms. That same night we learned from Miamura's conversation with Lieutenant M—— all the details of this talk. The spy wanted to get several maps prepared from the latest surveys made by our topographers. The man who had been supplying such maps to him had completed his term of service in the army and had returned home, and Miamura was looking for someone to take his place. That had been the reason for his visit to the restaurant. His new acquaintance had told him that the maps he desired were still in the process of drafting and would not be printed for three or four months. He added that it would be impossible for him to get them anyway, for such papers were now carefully guarded, that Cossack sentries were posted around the machinery and in all parts of the building while maps were being printed, and that every piece of paper used was numbered and accounted for.

Miamura concluded his relation of these events to Lieutenant M—— by

saying that he had made up his mind to come back to Irkutsk nevertheless, and to get the maps he wanted even if it took several months.

'In spite of the Cossacks?' the Lieutenant asked.

Miamura laughed and said: 'The Cossacks are there only while the work is being done. Then they leave with the rest of the employees. What is to prevent my getting into the place with my own paper and printing my own map from their plates? It won't be as fine a piece of workmanship, but it will be quite sufficient for our purpose.'

At a farewell supper which the two had together in Lieutenant M——'s room just before Miamura left Irkutsk, the spy was particularly loquacious and free-spoken. He told the Lieutenant that Major Siraisi did not consider him a good man for intelligence work and had asked the Department to send another student officer in his place. He added that the Department heads in Chang-Chun also considered Major Siraisi unsatisfactory, that they were keeping him only on account of his former services, and intended soon to replace him by another officer who would be put in charge of all Japanese espionage of Siberia. The Major had built up a very extensive organization, to be sure, but it was not giving the results they wanted. The whole service needed to be braced up. Henceforth the Military Intelligence Section was going to send only carefully trained agents to Siberia and would no longer employ volunteers and amateurs. The new men were to be stationed not only in Irkutsk but at other important points. Then the Department planned to take up the Korean matter again. Miamura attributed the failure of Japan's previous work among these people to Siraisi's mismanagement and ill-advised choice of agents.

A number of technical secrets came

out in the same conversation. For instance, all secret correspondence thereafter was to be written in chemical ink — a two-per-cent solution of sulphuric acid, which leaves no trace on the paper when dry. This writing was to be interlined between ordinary Japanese correspondence. Especially confidential communications were to be written in what Miamura called 'water ink,' whose composition he did not reveal. In order to read a letter written with it the paper had to be soaked in water for two or three minutes, after which the text became legible, but only until the paper dried, when the writing again vanished.

Maps and plans were photographed with an ordinary standard Kodak, and the films were returned to Japan undeveloped, in special light-proof cases; so that if they were opened at the custom-house they were immediately flashed and the secrets they contained remained undiscovered.

In forwarding documents of great importance the copy was written with water ink and then cut into narrow ribbons transversely to the vertical columns of the Japanese writing. These strips were numbered, also in water ink, and mixed with other ribbons of blank white paper as packing material for articles sent back and forth between Japan and Siberia. To an ordinary observer all this paper looked just alike. Odd-numbered strips and even-numbered strips were generally sent in separate parcels and the parcels dispatched to different addresses. Moreover, the parcels containing different parts of the same message were differently wrapped and packed and had dissimilar contents, so that they would not be suspected of having come from the same person.

We also learned from Miamura's conversations that Vladivostok was full of Japanese spies. In 1914 extensive addi-

tions were begun on the city's defenses. No Chinese or Japanese were employed on these works, but Koreans were. Profiting by the latter fact, the Japanese managed to get complete information regarding these improvements. Two years earlier our Government had erected a great railway bridge across the Zeya River in order to join Khabarovsk with the Transbaikal Railway. This junction had great strategic importance, for before that communication between Vladivostok and Russia had been only by means of the Chinese-Eastern Railway through Harbin. As the latter line crosses Chinese territory, Vladivostok and the Maritime Province might be cut off from the rest of Siberia in case of war. With the completion of the new road, however, we had an all-Siberian line lying exclusively in Russian territory. Miamura said that the Japanese had employed a great number of spies at this point during the construction of the road and that the Japanese intelligence service had made such complete surveys of the bridge and the surrounding territory that they could easily blow the structure up with a floating mine in case of war. They had also made a careful survey of the long Khingan tunnel, which they could likewise blow up and thus paralyze the whole Russian system of communication; because the other lines could not accommodate one tenth of the trains called for in our mobilization plans. A similar survey had been made of Vladivostok harbor, and exact data had been procured regarding our aviation school at Vladivostok, including the number and design of our airplanes, the supply of spare parts in stock, and the like.

Miamura also said that the Japanese War Office was making every effort to organize a large staff of soldiers able to speak Russian. Recruits were encouraged to learn that language by promises

of promotion to the rank of noncommissioned officers, and many young Japanese had migrated to Russia expressly to acquire this accomplishment before joining the ranks.

On the thirtieth of July, 1914, we received our mobilization orders, and three days later were informed of the declaration of war against Germany. Almost immediately Japan became our official ally, and naturally all our old discords and suspicions had to be dropped at once. This put an end to our official counterespionage work.

The following winter official business took me to Harbin. Chao, who accompanied me, told me that on the first day after our arrival he had seen Miamura in company with several Russian officers, and had learned that Miamura spent most of his time with our officers, who were being sent forward in parties to the German front, but were frequently detained at Harbin while waiting for transportation. Chao felt sure that Miamura was spying, but of course I could hardly believe it, in view of the fact that Russia and Japan were allies.

As Miamura did not know me, however, I decided to look into the matter; so I asked Chao to make his acquaintance and introduce me to him as a Staff officer from Irkutsk who expected to leave shortly for the front. Chao managed the affair so expeditiously that the next evening found him, Miamura, and myself sitting together in a box of a café chantant. Miamura was profuse in his compliments upon the excellent form of the Russian troops going forward to the war, and said everybody in Japan felt sure that Russia would win. He represented himself to be a merchant on a business trip, but said that he hoped to be in uniform before long as a Reserve officer.

A few minutes later several young

Russian officers joined us. Miamura was evidently pleased at their arrival. After a few drinks had loosened their tongues, Miamura began to inquire with great tact and caution about the units that were being sent to the front. He asked how many troops were still left at such and such points, what classes had been called out, and other questions of that sort. Some of the officers answered reluctantly or evaded answering at all, evidently distrusting any Japanese, no matter how profuse he was in his professions of friendship for Russia. But others were not so prudent. Miamura soon fastened himself to a talkative young battalion aide-de-camp, who had just finished his studies in a military academy. He drew this indiscreet youngster a little apart from the rest of the company and started an animated conversation with him. The young fellow was flattered by Miamura's show of respect and did his best to be agreeable and to answer Miamura's questions.

I was now convinced that Miamura was working for somebody, but the question was, for whom? Knowing his weak point, I decided to get him drunk, hoping that he might then betray himself. I therefore manœuvred matters so that the young officers left our box and only Chao, Miamura, and myself remained. In less than half an hour Chao managed, by means of some terrible concoctions, to get Miamura desperately intoxicated, but to my great disappointment he completely lost his powers of speech, and became so nauseated that he had to be taken out by a waiter. During his absence I requested Chao to be a little less zealous in carrying out my instructions and to try to sober Miamura up with soda water.

Fifteen minutes later the Japanese reappeared. He was still intoxicated,

but had recovered his powers of speech. Stammering and mixing his words, he said that he had lost his pocketbook and all his money. I called the waiter and told him that the pocketbook must be recovered at any cost; but though the frightened fellow searched everywhere, he could not find it.

Chao then told Miamura to look through his pockets again, but the latter only moaned and made a hopeless gesture with his hands. Chao thereupon tried to help him, and soon pulled out of his hip pocket the pocketbook, the very existence of which he had forgotten in his muddled condition. At the same time a small envelope fell to the floor.

By this time Miamura was sound asleep. Chao picked up the envelope, opened it, and drew out a sheet of paper. Glancing at it, Chao saw that it was a communication from the Japanese Staff Headquarters of the Kwangtung district, thanking Lieutenant Miamura for his excellent work in investigating the first Russian mobilization in East Siberia and the Chinese Eastern Railway zone.

Considering that a personal explanation would be useless, I decided to let Miamura know that his secret work had been discovered, and to advise him to leave Russian territory as soon as possible. So I wrote the following note on a sheet of paper, which I thrust into the envelope and put it into his pocket together with the pocketbook:—

‘Shame on you, sir, and on your Staff. You are abusing the confidence of your allies and spying among Russian officers on their way to the front to fight our common enemy. I therefore advise you to leave our territories before to-morrow noon. If you are here at that hour I shall show the letter you have received from the Kwangtung Staff to the Russian mili-

tary authorities in Harbin, and shall bring the matter to the attention of the Japanese Consul at Harbin.’

Directing Chao to sober up Miamura as much as possible and to take him home, in order to discover where he lodged, I immediately left the café.

The following morning Chao told me what happened after my departure. With the assistance of the waiter he had given the intoxicated Japanese a few drops of ammonia, which sobered the man considerably. Half an hour later he was quite himself again, and rose to leave. In pulling out his pocketbook to settle a check he came across my note. When he read it his expression changed instantly. Chao pretended not to notice this, however, and offered to accompany Miamura to his lodgings. To this the Japanese willingly assented.

On their way there Miamura became tremendously excited and began to curse the Russians. Chao defended them half-heartedly in order to lead on his companion. Thereupon Miamura completely lost his temper. He called Chao a scoundrel, accused him of being in the service of the Russians, and charged him with selling the interests of the yellow race to the whites. Chao, who was a quick-tempered fellow, promptly punched Miamura in the head, so that he fell out of the sleigh into the snow. In his excitement and anger Chao let the driver go on for a while; then, recalling my instructions, dismissed him and returned on foot to the place of the quarrel. There he saw Miamura walking down the street, and shadowed him until he entered a house. Early the following morning he telephoned the address to my office. Agents sent to investigate reported to me two hours later that Miamura had given up his lodgings at eight o'clock and had left for the railway station, carrying a

small bag. He bought a ticket for Chang-Chun and departed by the 9.15 train.

In the spring of 1915 fate brought me once more face to face with Miamura. He was certainly a daring and an enterprising spy. I received a wire from my Manchuria office informing me that three Japanese, including Miamura under a false name,³ had left Irkutsk for Moscow with passports stating that they were clerks in the employ of a Japanese firm in the latter city. I ordered Miamura taken off the train, and secured instructions from the General Staff to imprison him for three months, as it was war time and this could be done by the military authorities without a trial. When he was brought to the railway station to be deported after his term had expired, I told him that if he came to Russia again he would be tried before a military court and heavily sentenced.

Although my regular counterespionage duties ceased when the war broke out, we still kept an occasional eye on our Japanese friends. Siraisi had reason to thank the outbreak of hostilities for the retention of his post. For a time he kept perfectly quiet; then he began to collect all kinds of data concerning our mobilization work. His carriers, the brothel women, continued to travel back and forth. Finally I got tired of the thing and ordered that these women should be searched at the frontier and all their papers taken from them. Siraisi's communications were always written with chemical ink. My agents developed them with water and candles and then destroyed them; for we had neither the time nor the attention to devote to such matters then. Siraisi was greatly disturbed upon learning that his chemical mysteries had been discovered and his carriers identified; but as nobody was arrested, he eventually resumed his activities. My agents

at Irkutsk, Omsk, and Chita noticed that twice a month, always on the same date, an official of the Japanese Foreign Office traveled from Petrograd to Chang-Chun on the mail train. He invariably met Siraisi at Irkutsk and the other chiefs of the Japanese espionage service at Omsk and Chita, where they would hand him certain packages. The official was able to travel undisturbed, thanks to his diplomatic immunity, and his luggage was not examined; but we knew his business perfectly well.

I finally decided to show the Japanese that it was only because they were our allies that I did not put a stop to this work. So the next time the Japanese official reached Omsk and the representative of the Japanese secret service in that city met him with a package in his hand, several children twelve to fourteen years old, who were playing around the station, chased down the railway platform in an excited game and one of the boys managed to fall directly in front of the local Japanese and trip him up. The Japanese stumbled and fell and the package slipped from his hands. A boy snatched it, and the whole crowd ran away shrieking with laughter.

The Japanese who had fallen was very angry and complained to the nearest policeman, who ordered the children to return the package at once. They did so quite obediently; the Japanese handed the package to the official, and both entered the train. A few minutes later the two men rushed out of the train in great agitation, and hurrying up to the policeman complained that the children had abstracted the contents of the package and had substituted old newspapers for them. They asked him to find the children at once and to put an end to stupid pranks, as these might have serious consequences. The policeman inquired what was in

the package, whereupon they told him it was a manuscript by a well-known Japanese scientist. While this parley was going on the train started, and the Japanese official ran hastily to his car and jumped aboard, while the other man slunk away from the station as unostentatiously as possible and made for town.

Several hours before the same train reached Irkutsk Siraisi left his laundry with a small leather hand-bag and strolled leisurely toward the station. As he crossed the bridge he saw a sleigh approaching at a high rate of speed. He jumped to one side, but it was too late and the sleigh knocked him over in the snow. The peasants who drove it whipped up their horses, and disappeared in a trice. Several spectators who happened to be standing by rushed up to Siraisi and helped him to his feet.

He was pale and frightened, but only slightly hurt. He thanked the gentlemen who helped him, and started to continue on his way to the station, but could not find his hand-bag. A policeman turned up, and the men around Siraisi explained to him volubly what had happened. But the Japanese showed no great eagerness to lay his troubles before the authorities. When asked as to the contents of the bag, so that it could be identified if recovered, he merely said that it contained his own traveling kit, and gave his address.

When the train reached the station, Siraisi met the Japanese official on the platform. After a cordial greeting he related his experience. The official listened without uttering a word. Then, taking Siraisi by the arm, he strolled along the platform with him, telling him something in a low tone of voice. Evidently they were both seriously troubled. Afterward they went into the refreshment room and drank tea to-

gether in silence. The Foreign Office official continued his journey, looking very glum, and undoubtedly guessing that there was some connection between the accident at Omsk and the accident at Irkutsk.

His third and last disappointment awaited him at Chita, where he was to meet another secret agent. At one of the last stations before reaching that town a man came aboard the train and entered his first-class compartment, which accommodated two persons. The newcomer greeted the Japanese civilly and introduced himself as the owner of certain gold mines in Eastern Siberia. A huge collie accompanied him. The Japanese glanced at the animal with some distrust, but the gold miner assured him that it was a very gentle and intelligent beast. To prove this he took off his fur coat and, seating himself, made the dog go through a number of different tricks. The Japanese was greatly entertained. He fed the dog sugar, and the animal licked his hand in gratitude.

Time passed so quickly while this performance was going on that the train was already approaching Chita before they noticed it. The Russian rose, leaving his fur coat behind him, and, saying that he had some business at the station, went out, ordering the dog to stay in the compartment. But a moment later, when the Japanese tried to leave, he was stopped by an ugly growl from the collie. All his attempts to placate the animal and to pet her were in vain; she absolutely refused to be propitiated, but growled savagely and threatened to spring at the Japanese whenever he made a move to leave. Of course the details of this little tête-à-tête were never known, but, judging from the noise inside the compartment, listeners outside surmised that it was a lively one.

Meanwhile the spy who came to meet

the Japanese official searched in vain for him. The frosted windows of the train did not allow him to look inside. At length he rushed into the first-class car and began to search through the compartments. When he came to the one that the official occupied he discovered a sheet of paper fixed to the door, bearing the words, 'Entrance forbidden.' In spite of that he started to enter; but the gold miner barred the way with his huge body and silently pointed to the paper.

Twenty minutes later the train again started. The Russian took the paper from the door, thrust it in his pocket, and entered the compartment as if nothing had happened. The Japanese was furious and berated the Siberian gentleman, calling him names in both Japanese and Russian. The latter feigned unbounded astonishment and absolute ignorance of what had happened. When the poor official explained how 'the beastly cur' had treated him, the owner apologized profusely. The

Russian scolded his dog and offered the Japanese some refreshments from a small lunch bag he carried with him. But the latter refused his hospitality. No doubt the Japanese had already made a shrewd guess that the gold miner was only a new link in the chain over which his other agents in Siberia had tripped. When half an hour later the train stopped at a little way station, and the Russian rose and bade him adieu with more profuse apologies, the Japanese stared at him so furiously that he could not help smiling as he hurried to the door.

So far as I know this was the last attempt of our allies to spy upon our military operations in Siberia. The Foreign Office official's abortive trip, which I have just described, occurred in January 1917. Less than two months later the Revolution broke out, and, being a marked man on account of my work in the Tsar's secret service, I was promptly placed under arrest by the new Government.

RUSSIA AND GERMANY¹

BY ANDRÉ PIERRE

BREST-LITOVSK has been a heavy burden for the Bolsheviks to carry. Certainly, when they signed a separate peace with Imperial Germany, they did great injury to the Allies and compromised hope of an ultimate victory, which was by no means assured in March 1918. Nevertheless, the more we study the memoirs written by different generals, and the diplomatic

archives made public since the Revolution, the readier we are to extenuate in some degree the action of the Bolsheviks and to hold the Imperial Government itself in part responsible for the action of Lenin and his friends.

It is no longer possible to-day to doubt that the Russian aristocracy contemplated the possibility of a separate peace with Germany long before the 1917 revolution. Thinly veiled allusions to such a plan appear in

¹ From the *Gazette de Prague* (Prague French-language information weekly), May 5