Volume 8 | Issue 6 | Number 1 | Article ID 3299 | Feb 08, 2010

Sorge's Spy is Brought in From the Cold: A Soviet-Okinawan Connection ゾルゲのスパイ正体を現すーーソヴィエトと沖縄のつながり

Edan Corkill, Chalmers Johnson

Sorge's Spy is Brought in From the Cold. A Soviet-Okinawan Connection

Edan Corkill with an introduction by Chalmers Johnson

Long reviled in his homeland and all but forgotten by Moscow, an Okinawan former Soviet agent in Tokyo is finally accorded the recognition and respect that his devoted niece has sought for so long

Introduction: The Case of Miyagi Yotoku

The Sorge espionage case concerns one of the most spectacular instances of clandestine influence in the history of international relations. In the mid-1930s, the former Soviet Union enlisted the German national, Dr. Richard Sorge and four others in Tokyo, secretly to collect information on the likely policies of the Japanese government and to do what it could to alter them in favor of peace. This concerned above all whether Japan would join Nazi Germany in an attack on the U.S.S.R. Since Germany had already virtually defeated Russia in the summer of 1941, had Japan joined Germany it would have meant the probable victory of the Axis powers over Russia. As it was Russia and Japan maintained their neutrality vis-à-vis each other until the final months of World War II, one of the most amazing achievements of Soviet espionage and secret operations in history. Sorge did not survive the defeat of Nazi Germany, but the Soviet Union and its successors have celebrated his achievements ever since.

Sorge found the following four individuals to assist him in his mission: Ozaki Hotsumi, senior Japanese journalist on China and a clandestine conspirator hoping to prevent a Sino-Japanese war; Max Clausen, who worked as a rich businessman in Tokyo in the export-import industry to cover his activities as the ring's chief radio operator for contacting Russia; Branko Vukelic, a senior journalist for the French Havas News Agency and a major source of information for the ring on trends in international relations; and Miyagi Yotoku, an artist from Okinawa who was living penuriously in Japan and assisting Sorge by translating Japanese documents into English. They were all crypto-Communists but each had personal motives for being involved in the work of the Communist International, motives that often clashed with the official policies of the Soviet Union. The diverse functions, abilities, and networks of the five principal members of the ring never melded easily, and the complexities of their personalities and interactions contributed greatly to the emergencies and misunderstandings that often influenced their work as spies. The Japanese government hanged Sorge and Ozaki during the war, Vukelic and Miyagi died in prison, and only Clausen survived the war.

Thus far in the history of the ring, we have comprehensive biographies and analytical studies of the lives of the two most prominent members -- Sorge and Ozaki. But we know rather less about Vukelic, Clausen, and Miyagi. Ideally we would like to know about their families, motives for supporting the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

internationalist leftist movement, and doubts (if any) about the overt leadership of the communists. We now have the excellent report of the Japan Times' journalist Edan Corkill on what friends and descendants of Miyagi have discovered about one of the most enigmatic figures in the Sorge ring. Corkill's most important informant on Miyagi was Tokuyama Toshiko, today aged 81 and living in Los Angeles, who knew her famous uncle, Yotoku, for only a short period before the war when they were living in Okinawa, Nonetheless, she has devoted much of her adult life to refuting the official Japanese line that Miyagi Yotoku was a "treasonous communist" in favor of the belief that he was an idealist, deeply disturbed by the racial discrimination he encountered in California and by the official Japanese mistreatment of Okinawans. Miyagi also disliked the Japanese contempt for the illustrious history of the Ryukyu kingdom (contemporary Okinawa) before it was forcibly annexed into the Japanese empire. These attitudes had as much to do with his growing communist radicalism as Bolshevik ideology.

Among the many contributions made by Tokuyama to our understanding of Miyagi's willing participation in the Sorge ring is the information that he was born and raised in Nago, Okinawa. This bit of data has come to have great ironic significance in contemporary times because Nago is the site of the American military base, Camp Schwab, and because the American military has chosen it as the future location of Marine Corps Air Station, Futenma (Okinawa) despite the enormous controversy this continued American presence has generated. Even though during the war and after Miyagi's arrest, the Japanese and Okinawans themselves shunned his relatives, today Nago takes credit for its early opposition to America militarism and the idealist model Miyagi exemplified. It is extremely doubtful that American soldiers based in Nago have any idea that Miyagi Yotoku ever lived there or that he devoted his life to fighting Japanese militarism, just as his Japanese and Okinawan descendants today have finally become mobilized to the threat to Japanese peace and prosperity posed by the American occupiers and their official Japanese allies.

Edan Corkill and his Okinawan informants have made several important contributions to our knowledge about not only Miyagi Yotoku but also the misuse of Okinawan territory by Japanese and American militarists. I strongly endorse his treatment of Miyagi as communicated to him by Tokuyama Toshiko. We must now hope that his work stimulates successors to come forward and reveal to us the details of the recruitment, activities, and destinies of Branko Vukelic and Max Clausen. We will then have a much fuller understanding of the role of the Sorge ring in the liberation of the Japanese people.

I am also amazed and gratified that 46 years after I first published my book about Ozaki (An Instance of Treason, Stanford University Press, 1964) and 20 years after Stanford issued a revised and updated edition, Iwanami is re-translating the book into Japanese. I hope this is a further sign that young Japanese are re-evaluating the role that the Sorge ring played during the war. CJ

Tokuyama Toshiko was 14 years old when she found out that her uncle had been a spy, and that he had just died in a prison in Tokyo. It was 1943 then, and she was too young to really know what the word "spy" meant, let alone allow it to alter her impression of the man she respected like a father.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Proud moments: Tokuyama Toshiko (above left, and below) at the Russian Embassy in Tokyo on Jan. 13, 2010, as she received the Order of the Patriotic War (Second Class) posthumously awarded to her uncle, Miyagi Yotoku, in 1964. She is pictured above with a Russian military attaché and Omine Rinichi, a journalist who helped her lobby Moscow to present the Soviet-era medal. (Yoshiaki Miura Photos)



Of course, for most people around her, and most of the Japanese population, in fact, the knowledge that between 1933 and 1941 Miyagi Yotoku had spied for the Soviet Union against Japan, and that he had been a member of one of the most successful spy rings in history, meant only one thing: that this Okinawa-native was a traitor to be despised.

But Tokuyama, who is now 81, could never bring herself to doubt her uncle. For the last two decades, in fact, she and a small group of supporters have worked, and to a large extent succeeded, in reversing history's appraisal of Miyagi.

Was he a dedicated communist willing to betray his own country for the good of the Soviet Union? Or was he a more complex character: an idealist with a strong social conscience, perhaps, or a pacifist hoping to avert war between the USSR and Japan? Gradually Tokuyama and others have challenged the once prevalent view of Miyagi as a "treasonous communist," and they have managed to present a more nuanced picture of the man. Their efforts were given an unexpected, if slightly awkward, boost this month.

Two weeks ago, Tokuyama traveled from her home in Los Angeles to the Russian Embassy in Tokyo. There, in a low-key ceremony, she was presented — on her uncle's behalf — with a Soviet-era medal, the grandly-named Order of the Patriotic War (Second Class). Russia's belated recognition of its former spy, prompted, some believe, by the intervention of either President Dmitry Medvedev or Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, has precipitated another flurry of interest in the rapidly evolving legacy of a problematic man.

Tokuyama's affection for "Uncle Yotoku" has lasted a lifetime, but it grew out of just four months they spent in each other's company when Miyagi returned to his native town of Nago in Okinawa in 1937.

The catalyst for his visit was the 60th birthday of his father, Yosei (Toshiko's grandfather), and it represented one of the first times that the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

surprisingly itinerant extended Miyagi clan had all come together in one place.

Even the patriarch of the family, Yosei, had spent much of his life abroad, chasing work opportunities on farms in the Philippines, Hawaii and finally California. He had been a member of the first generation of Okinawans to venture to the United States, having arrived there in around 1906. Before heading abroad, he and his wife, Kamado, had two sons, one also named Yosei (Toshiko's father) and Yotoku. By 1919, both boys had joined their father in the United States — Yosei found work on a farm and Yotoku studied painting.

In 1928, the younger Yosei returned to Okinawa and stayed there just long enough to find a wife and have one child — the now elderly Toshiko. Soon after that he went back to the U.S. and then Mexico, leaving his daughter in the care of his parents. It was with them that she was living, aged 9, when her uncle visited from Tokyo in 1937.



Stamp of honor: Richard Sorge, the Soviets' Tokyo masterspy executed in Tokyo in 1944, was commemorated on this 1965 4-kopeck Russian stamp.

Tokuyama remembers him clearly. "He was so kind and gentle," she recalled, adding that while he was in Okinawa she often watched him as he did a little work as an artist.

"He made two paintings during those four months," Tokuyama recalled. "One was a portrait for a neighbor and the other was a funeral portrait," she said.

Miyagi had been working as an artist in Tokyo, too — it had become an effective cover for the clandestine work that in 1933 brought him back from California to Japan: spying.

Miyagi can't have been too comfortable in Okinawa in 1937. He had left his colleagues —

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in particular, Ozaki Hotsumi, a journalist with the Asahi Shimbun newspaper, and his boss, Richard Sorge, a Russian with a German passport who was working as a journalist — at the very time that the political situation between Japan and China was reaching boiling point.

So much was happening that was of vital importance to Moscow: Regular military flare-ups between the Japanese and Chinese; the threat of Japanese incursions into Siberia; and the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact concluded in November 1936 between Nazi Germany and Japan that united the Soviet Union's western and eastern neighbors against it.

Tokuyama remembers the day that Yotoku's sojourn in Okinawa was cut short. Sorge, she said, sent a letter demanding the prompt return of his protege to Tokyo. "After he read it, Yotoku got my cousin to burn the letter," Tokuyama said.

Miyagi was gone shortly afterward, leaving behind two promises he was destined to break. One was to return a bag he borrowed from a painter friend, Terada Takeo, who went on to become a leading artist after the war. The other was to return to Okinawa to paint portraits of his niece and his other relatives.

Miyagi's adoption of the communist cause occurred while he was living in the U.S. in the 1920s, but the seeds of his proletarian social conscience had been sown as he grew up in Okinawa.

In his testimony to the Japanese police after his eventual arrest, in 1941, Miyagi explained, "I gained my first political consciousness at the age of 14 or 15 as I listened to my grandfather."

What his grandfather told him was about the history of their island home, which had been part of the Ryukyu Kingdom before it came under the influence of southern Japanese domains during the Edo Period and was formally annexed by Japan in 1879.

"My grandfather taught me that one should not oppress the weak," Miyagi told his police interrogators. "This provoked in me an antagonism toward the arrogant officials and physicians who came to Okinawa from Kagoshima (the Kyushu city from where Okinawa was administered)."

Miyagi headed to California in 1919, after discontinuing his studies at Okinawa Prefectural Normal School due to a chest ailment. Like many Okinawans who crossed the Pacific at the time, he hoped to find equality, freedom and opportunity in the United States. He did, to an extent, but he also found that many Americans looked down on him and his fellow Asian migrants. Around 1925, in Los Angeles, he established the Shakai Mondai Kenkyukai (Association for Research into Social Problems), a platform to try to improve their situation.

The group eventually changed its name to Reimei Kai (Society of the Dawn), and around 1927 it came under the influence of the Communist Party of the United States.

Nevertheless, Miyagi's political activities appear to have been tempered by his interest in art. Skilled at drawing since childhood, he had studied at two art schools since arriving America: the California School of Fine Arts (now the San Francisco Art Institute) and the San Diego Public Art School. And it appears there were some in his adopted country who recognized his talent. In the January 1930 edition of the New York-based journal, "The Art Digest," he is singled out in a review of an exhibition of 24 young Los Angeles-based Japanese artists: "Y. Miyagi is young, only 27 years of age. He has worked (in the United States) for the last ten years. He provides, in my opinion, the 'clou' of the show. He cannot be classified in any school. His portrait of a lady is beautifully designed and placed in the

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

frame with rare sensitiveness. The sympathetic, intelligent and beautiful head is finely modeled and interpreted."

A year before that article, in 1929, Miyagi had found a way to combine his two passions. He and some friends joined together to form the Puroretaria Geijutsu Kai (Proletarian Arts Association) – and although it is difficult to ascertain exactly how this affected his artistic output, it seems likely he had resolved to put his artistic talent to use as a means for social activism.

Meanwhile, as the artist Miyagi was beginning to flirt with communism in California, the man who was to become his boss, Richard Sorge, was plying his trade of espionage in Shanghai. While working as a journalist there for the German newspaper Frankfurter Zeitung, he established contacts with members of the Chinese Communist Party and reported to Moscow on the rising tension between the Chinese and the growing number of Japanese soldiers then being stationed in the country.

Sorge was recalled to Moscow in 1932, and it wasn't long before his handlers in the Red Army's Fourth Department (its military-intelligence wing), set in motion a plan to have their Asia specialist sent to the country that had emerged as the most important in the region — Japan.

But as Sorge didn't speak any Japanese, it was clear he would need a Japanese assistant who was also fluent in English – if not Russian or German – and committed to Soviet ideals. The search led to the U.S., then to California — and finally to a promising painter-cum-activist named Yotoku Miyagi.

Tokuyama, Miyagi's niece, is well versed on how her uncle responded to the request from Moscow, channeled through the American Communist Party in autumn 1932, that he return to Japan as a spy.

"He refused," she said. "He had no experience in spying and he asked them to find someone more suitable."

When they pressed him, she continued, "he sought a commitment that it was only for a short time, and that as soon as a replacement was found he would be able to quit." Needless to say, a replacement was never found.

Miyagi left America in October 1933, found a place to stay in Tokyo and laid low. Then, following instructions he had been given in Los Angeles, he became an avid reader of a local English-language newspaper called The Japan Advertiser — a publication that seven years later was acquired by The Japan Times.



Art and artifice: A painting of Inagamurasaki, a coastal promontory near Kamakura, south of Tokyo, by Miyagi Yotoku. His work as an artist was convenient cover for his key role in the Sorge spy ring, and also provided him with a wide range of useful contacts. (Nago Museum)

Some time between Dec. 6 and 9, 1933, Miyagi came across the classified advertisement he had been told in Los Angeles to look out for in the Wanted to Buy section: "Ukiyoe prints by old masters. Also English books on same subject. Urgently needed. Give details, titles,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

authors, prices to Artist, c/o The Japan Advertiser, Tokyo."

He answered the advertisement and so came to be in contact with an intermediary, Branko Vukelic, who arranged his first meeting with Sorge.

The venue for that fateful encounter was an art museum in Ueno — probably the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum. Sorge's identification was a black necktie; Miyagi's was a blue one. And, just to make sure there was no mistake, they had each been supplied with consecutively numbered $1 bills.

Despite having no training, Miyagi took to spying quickly. By the time of his trip to Okinawa in 1937, he had become an accomplished pro.

For one thing, he had established a surprisingly diverse network of informants: Yasuda Tokutaro, a Tokyo physician who quizzed his prominent patients for information; Yamana Masazano, a former member of the Communist Party who Miyagi dispatched to various locations to make observations of military facilities; Yabe Shu, a secretary to an Imperial Army general named Issei Ugaki; and others.

Miyagi's success in cultivating informants stemmed in part from his commitment to the communist cause. If he was merely a left-leaning artist in the late 1920s, by 1936 he had developed into quite an ideologue, reportedly expressing his disapproval of one Manchuria-based collaborator by saying that "According to my standards, he was not a genuine communist because he was going to Manchuria to make money."

Despite his stringent standards, Miyagi's network ultimately became so diverse that he even received notice of orders placed for Japanese soldiers' uniforms — useful in determining whether the troops were to be dispatched north, to cold climes, or south.

His other job was to translate Japanese reports and newspaper articles into English for his boss, Sorge.

However, the first task that awaited Miyagi when he returned to Tokyo in mid-1937 was to analyze the reasons for a recent flare-up between Chinese and Japanese forces in China — the epochal, so-called Marco Polo Bridge Incident.

Miyagi's ultimate advice to Sorge was that the confrontation — which came about after a Japanese soldier went missing during night-time maneuvers — was largely engineered by the Imperial Japanese Army to direct attention away from domestic problems in Japan, and also to provide an excuse for further expansion of Japanese territory beyond that already grabbed in the northern region of Manchuria. Sorge duly relayed the information to the Soviet Union by radio.



Family secrets: Members of the Miyagi family gathered in Nago, Okinawa, in 1937, during the spy Miyagi Yotoku 's visit to his home town at the time of his father's 60th birthday. His niece, Tokuyama Toshiko, then aged 9, is in the center of the front row, between her grandfather, Yotoku's father, Yosei, and her grandmother, Kamado. Her uncle Yotoku, then already a key member of Sorge's spy ring for four

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

years, is on the far right. The writing on the photo reads: "In commemoration of the 60th birthday of Miyagi Yosei." (Tokuyama Toshiko Phtoo)

To the extent that the incident mushroomed into eight years of war in China, Miyagi's analysis was spot on.

For Sorge and his handlers in Moscow, however, there was another particularly interesting dimension to Miyagi's report: that Japan's latest engagement with China made northward military incursions into Soviet territory unlikely, at least for the moment.

As it turned out, Japan refrained from engaging the Soviet Union militarily for about one year. Then, in May and June, 1939, near the town of Nomonhan on the Manchurian- Mongolian border, the Emperor's forces launched a small-scale attack.

Sorge and his spies were unable to forewarn Moscow of the move, but once hostilities began, they swung into action.

Their key objective was to determine whether or not the attack was the first part of a large-scale push, or merely a tentative prod.

Working with one of his newest recruits, an Imperial Army corporal named Koshiro Yoshinobu, Miyagi determined that Japan was not committing large numbers of troops to the campaign and, most importantly, that no reinforcements were being sent from Japan. Hence, the conclusion was reached that this was not the start of a concerted campaign, and Sorge was able to convey as much to his Soviet masters.

Moscow, however, was unwilling to take any chances, and directed more than enough resources to counter the Japanese. By September 1939, they had prevailed.

Both Miyagi and journalist Ozaki — who by then, extraordinarily, had been working for two years as an adviser to Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro (who had recently resigned) — next predicted that the unfortunate outcome of the so-called Nomonhan Incident would likely deter the Japanese from messing with the Soviets again. This and other analysis enabled Sorge to advise his handlers, in September 1941, that Japan would not invade the USSR.

Some historians have suggested that this was one of the most important pieces of intelligence gained in any theater of World War II, because it allowed the Soviets to divert troops from the eastern regions of the USSR to the west, where they could fend off, and ultimately repel, a German invasion that at one point took the Nazis to within sight of Moscow.

Sorge of course was not entirely reliant on Miyagi and his other Japanese collaborators.



Crime scene: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum in Ueno prior to its rebuilding in the 1970s. Research by Yoneda Tomoko, an artist who has made a series of photographs about the Sorge spy ring, suggests that Miyagi first met Sorge here, in December, 1933, before going on to work for him until he was arrested in 1941. (Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

One of his greatest achievements — as a supposedly German journalist in Tokyo — was gaining intelligence on Operation Barbarossa, the blitzkrieg advance that launched the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Through his contacts in the German Embassy, he reportedly gave Moscow prior warning of that operation — and even correctly predicted its starting date to within days.

However, that intelligence — which should have accorded Sorge enormous kudos in Moscow — had been, unknown to him then, largely ignored. The reason was that his initial handler, the one-time head of the Red Army's Fourth Department, Ian Berzin, had fallen foul of the Soviet dictator, Josef Stalin, and been executed in 1938 in one of Stalin's many murderous and paranoid purges. Suspicion then fell on all Berzin's agents, and soon Stalin reportedly decided that Sorge was a double agent. After that, it is unclear how much of the information he provided to Moscow was acted upon.

By 1941, however, Sorge and his associates had more to worry about than how they were perceived in Moscow.

In September that year the Tokubetsu Koto Keisatsu (Special Higher Police) arrested one of Miyagi's associates, who one of their informants had told them was a spy. In a successful bid to clear her own name, that associate denounced Miyagi, who then named Ozaki and Sorge. By the end of October, all the members of Sorge's spy ring had been rounded up, and they had all made confessions.

Miyagi, who had never fully recovered from the chest ailment he suffered in childhood, died in Sugamo Prison in Tokyo in the middle of his trial in 1943. He was 40 years old. Ozaki and Sorge were tried, convicted of spying and eventually hanged, in 1944.

The tug-of-war struggle over Miyagi's reputation began almost as soon as he had passed away.

News of his demise and of his involvement in a spy ring arrived in his hometown of Nago in late 1943, in the form of a short notice in the Asahi Shimbun.

The local reaction was swift and ruthless. Miyagi was denounced as a traitor. The town office erased his family-registry entry, meaning that he had officially never existed, and the townsfolk ostracized his mother —Tokuyama Toshiko 's grandmother, Kamado.

"I was still a student and I had friends at school, so it was OK for me," Tokuyama explained. "But my grandmother had a terrible time."

Miyagi's niece never wavered in her support for her uncle. "We didn't even know what a spy was when we first heard the story," Tokuyama said. "It didn't matter what people said. To me, he was always my uncle and I never doubted him."



Vindication: At the Russian Embassy in Tokyo on Jan. 13, 2010, Russia's Ambassador to Japan, Mikail Bely, presents Tokuyama Toshiko with the Order of the Great Patriotic War (Second Class) awarded posthumously to her uncle,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Miyagi Yotoku, in 1964. (Yoshiaki Miura Photo)

Nevertheless, things didn't improve for the members of the Miyagi clan who remained in Okinawa. By 1958, Tokuyama had had enough. On May 1 that year she left the island to join her father, who was then in Mexico.

"Because of the way the people in Nago were treating my grandmother," she said, "I decided I would never return."

Oddly enough, just one year before Tokuyama abandoned Nago, a chain of events was set in motion that would ultimately lead to a sharp reversal in her uncle's reputation.

In 1957, the French film director Yves Ciampi married Japanese actress Keiko Kishi. Three years later he made a film about Sorge and his fellow spies, titled "Qui êtes-vous Monsieur Sorge?" ("Who are you Mr. Sorge?"). Released in Europe in 1960, the film also came to the attention of then Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who saw it in Moscow in mid-1964.

Ironically, at this point in history, Sorge's tale was largely unknown in the Soviet Union — the lingering result of him having been denounced by Stalin. (The story was better known in the U.S., as the Occupation forces in Japan looked into it after the war, and released a report in 1949.)

Khruschev's reaction to the film is recorded in the memoir of a former Red Army general named Vyacheslav Bunin, portions of which were translated into Japanese and published in 2003 by the private Japan-Russia Historical Research Center under the title "Isshun" ("Moment").

According to Bunin, Khruschev saw the film and asked, "Why didn't we know anything about his activities? He's our spy. Why didn't we make such a great movie about him?"

The Soviet Premier commissioned a report and in late 1964 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet decided that the long-forgotten Richard Sorge would be made a "Hero of the Soviet Union" — the nation's highest honor. The families of both Sorge and another deceased Russian member of the group, Branko Vukelic — who had arranged the first meeting between Sorge and Miyagi — would also be awarded the equivalent of ¥1.5 million each.

It was also decided that Ozaki Hotsumi and Miyagi Yotoku would be honored with the Order of the Patriotic War — an award for service in World War II. However, the next-of-kin of the Japanese spies were not informed of this.



Mastermind: Soviet spy Richard Sorge pictured in Japan in 1940, a year before his arrest. (German Federal Archive)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Soviet awakening to Sorge's story prompted a new wave of interest in the spy ring in Japan. One of the journalists to start snooping around was Rinichi Omine, a freelancer who, like Miyagi, hailed from Okinawa.

In 1990, Omine played a role in organizing an exhibition of paintings by Miyagi Yotoku that was held in Nago and Naha, Okinawa. According to Omine, it was this event that started to sway local opinion about the son they had renounced.

"When I first went to research Miyagi in Okinawa, the whole atmosphere was bad," the 72-year-old journalist recalled. "He was seen as a traitor. Some people said they had nothing to talk about. Others threw buckets of water at me."

But then, articles and essays written to coincide with the exhibition started filling out the details of Miyagi's life, in particular, the fact that his adoption of communism had stemmed in part from a desire to resist discrimination against Japanese and other Asian migrants in the United States.

In 2003, further reconsideration of Miyagi's life was made in a symposium held in Nago to commemorate the centenary of Miyagi's birth. The event, which was organized by Omine and others, was sufficient to tempt his niece Tokuyama back to Okinawa for a brief visit.

In 2006, a monument to the painter-spy was erected in a small park near Nago Museum. Articles in local newspapers at the time hailed him as "an artist who longed for peace," explaining that his ultimate goal in spying against his country was to avoid war between it and the USSR.

"With the monument, I felt we had managed to restore Miyagi's reputation in Japan," Tokuyama said.

What played on Tokuyama and Omine's minds, however, was Miyagi's reputation in Russia, the country, or at least the present-day manifestation of the country for which he gave his life.

Particularly grating was the fact that the Soviet members of the spy ring had been turned into national heroes.

About two years ago, Omine and Tokuyama began sending letters to Russia to try to ascertain what had happened to the awards that the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet had earmarked for Ozaki and Miyagi in 1964.

Drawing on Bunin's writings, they directed their inquiries to Vyacheslav Sivko, president of the Regional Public Fund for Support of Heroes of the Soviet Union and Russia, in Moscow.

Sivko's reply, which Tokuyama received in January last year, wasn't encouraging.

"In response to your inquiry, a specialist in the Department of Awards at the President of the Russian Federation explained to us that in the case of your uncle, who was awarded posthumously, the corresponding Order/Certificate of the President of the USSR was issued, but the actual medals and documents for them have not been produced, because the relevant person was no longer alive."

Not easily discouraged, Omine decided that there was only one course of action remaining: writing directly to President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

With the help of a recently acquired Russian friend, Vera Varshavsky, and Tokuyama's daughter, San Diego-based Noriko Chung, the letters were prepared and sent in mid-2009. They were deliberately blunt, pointing out in particular Tokuyama's disappointment at the perceived unequal treatment of the Russian and Japanese members of Sorge's team.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The response came in late December. Omine received a letter from the Russian Embassy in Tokyo saying that the original medal intended for Miyagi Yotoku — an Order of the Patriotic War (Second Class) — along with its accompanying certification, had been "discovered" in a government building in Moscow. Both the medal and certificate were awaiting collection at the Tokyo embassy.

Omine and Tokuyama wasted no time. Omine flew in from his home in Okinawa; Tokuyama from hers in Los Angeles.

It was on the morning of their initial appointment at the Russian Embassy that they spoke to The Japan Times.

In his excitement, Omine had left both the Embassy's letter and the charger for his digital camera at home. Tokuyama, by contrast, was composed, but nevertheless thrilled at the thought of receiving the medal.

"When I get the medal I will take it down to Nago and donate it to the Nago Museum, where Yotoku's paintings are kept," she said. "They have all his things now."

The ceremony took place on the afternoon of January 13 — exactly 67 years since Miyagi died and 46 years since the Soviets had originally decided to honor him. The medal itself was a red enamel star emblazoned with a hammer and sickle and an inscription in Russian that read "The Great Patriotic War." The Russian Ambassador commended Miyagi's contribution to the "defeat of fascism," as a stout-looking military attache looked on. After thanking the Russians, Tokuyama Toshiko turned to the 20-odd Japanese journalists who had witnessed the ceremony.

"My uncle, Yotoku," she stated, "just wanted to contribute to peace."

Those interested in reading more about the Sorge spy ring may care to consult: An Instance of Treason *by Chalmers Johnson (Stanford University Press, 1964; 2nd edition 1990),* Stalin's Spy *by Robert Whymant (I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996)* Target Tokyo *by Gordon Prange and others (McGraw-Hill, 1984).*

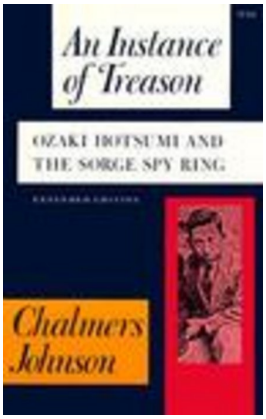
Edan Corkill is a staff writer in the arts, entertainment and features department of The Japan Times. *This is a revised and expanded version of an article that appeared in* The Japan Times *on January 31, 2010. His articles at* The Japan Times *can be accessed here.*

Chalmers Johnson is the author of An Instance of Treason *and of three books on the crises of American imperialism and militarism. They are* Blowback *(2000),* The Sorrows of Empire *(2004), and* Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic *(2006). All are available in paperback from Metropolitan Books. He wrote this introduction for* The Asia-Pacific Journal.

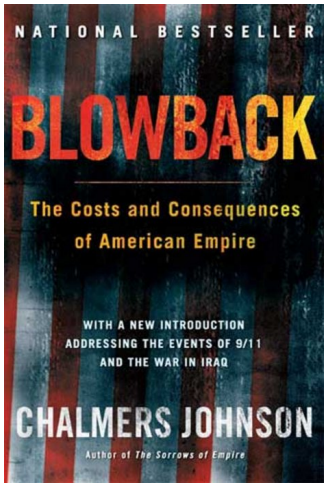
Recommended citation: Edan Corkill and Chalmers Johnson, "Sorge's Spy is Brought in From the Cold. A Soviet-Okinawan Connection," The Asia-Pacific Journal, 6-1-10, February 8, 2010.

See also Roger Pulvers interview with Director Shinoda Masahiro on his film "Spy Sorge".

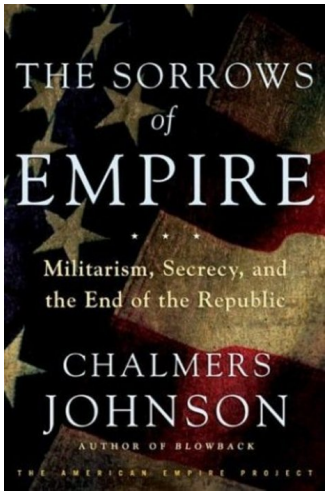
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press



Click on the cover to order.

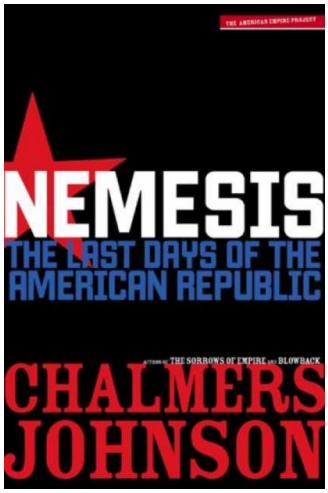


Click on the cover to order.



https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Click on the cover to order.



Click on the cover to order.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466010009277 Published online by Cambridge University Press