

Seven Years at the SRC

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I was born in Tokyo, but after graduating from Tokyo University, I went to study Russian history at the University of Washington in Seattle. After finishing my PhD, I obtained a position at the State University of New York at Oswego in 1969, and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1976. My good friend, Professor Ito Takayuki, with whom I studied at Tokyo University, was the center director, and alerted me about the change of Japanese laws that made it possible for a national university to hire a foreigner as a permanent member of a national university.

On September 1, 1983, I was appointed as the first foreign professor in a national university. By the time of my appointment, Professor Ito had completed his term as the center director, and had left for Berlin for his research, and the new director Professor Mochizuki Kiichi and I went to a news conference. I did not realize it then, but my appointment was a major turning point for Japanese national universities to break the state of isolation. It was a time when “kokusaika” [internationalization] was the catch-phrase that was bandied around in the press.

It so happened that my appointment day was one day after the Soviet Air Defense force had shot down the South Korean passenger plane, KAL007, off Sakhalin, killing all passengers on board. It was in the middle of the Second Cold War initiated by President Ronald Reagan, who had declared that the Soviet Union was an “evil empire,” and called for the crusade against Communism. In Japan as well, the media was abuzz about the Soviet threat. Alarmed by the new deployment of Soviet troops on the contested Northern Islands, conservative newspapers and journals were printing alarming scenarios about the imminent Soviet invasion of

Japan. The Soviets shooting down a passenger plane appeared to validate the image of the Soviet Union as the evil empire.

Many correspondents who came to the news conference were more interested in the KAL incident than my appointment as the first foreign faculty. It so happened that before I came to Japan, I had studied comparative nuclear strategy, arms control, and Soviet military doctrine at Columbia University as a post-doctoral fellow under the Ford Foundation fellowship. Thanks to this, I knew something about Soviet military doctrine, and the heightened tension between the Soviet Union and the United States. I was strongly influenced by the liberal school of U.S. Sovietologists, represented by Seweryn Bialer, Robert Legvold, and Marshall Shulman (all at Columbia), and very critical of the belligerent anti-Soviet line advocated by the Reagan administration. I cannot remember exactly what I said at the news conference, but I must have said something that put the incident in the context of the heightened tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union since Reagan took office. So began my tenure at the SRC.

When I left the SRC at the end of August 1991, my departure coincided with the failure of the August coup against Gorbachev. I vividly remember that I received a telephone call from the local NHK correspondent about the news, while I was feverishly cleaning up my apartment before my departure. I was called upon to comment on the implications of the failure of the coup at the local NHK station for its program called *Midnight Journal*. One night before I flew from Narita, I was asked by Mr. Miya Kazuho, the editor of *Chuokoron* to write a piece on the coup. So I sat in the *Chuokoron* editorial office in the early morning hours to write an article, predicting the difficult time ahead of the coup after the euphoria of Yeltsin's victory against it.

So my life at the SRC coincided with the turbulent period of the Soviet Union from the last years of the interregnum after Brezhnev's death through Gorbachev's perestroika. I was going to pursue my research on social history of the Russian Revolution, but the unprecedented change that was taking place in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev forced me to focus on Soviet foreign and military policy, pushing my research on the Russian Revolution to the backburner. Also, surrounded by several specialists on Russo-Japanese relations such as Professors Togawa

Tsuguo, Kimura Hiroshi, Akizuki Toshiyuki, and Hara Teruyuki at the SRC, and also especially Professor Wada Haruki of the Tokyo University, with whom I had established friendship since my last years at the Tokyo University through the Association of Russian History [Roshiashi kenkyukai] I became interested in Soviet-Japanese relations, especially the thorny Northern Territories question. I thought my training in Soviet military-foreign policy studies in the United States would add a special dimension to the question.

During my tenure at the SRC, I wrote 13 articles on Soviet foreign policy, 21 articles on Soviet military policy, and 10 articles on Soviet-Japanese relations. I am especially proud of the articles in which I called attention to the significance of Gorbachev's new political thinking foreign policy, in which I predicted the fundamental change in the framework of the Cold War paradigm. I also argued that in this context, Japan should be well-advised to alter its inflexible policy toward the Northern Territories conflict and achieve rapprochement with the Soviet Union, criticizing Japan's "Northern Territories" syndrome. My research on Soviet-Japanese relations later became a two-volume book, *The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations* (1999). One chapter of this book was further developed into a book, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman and the Surrender of Japan* (2005). In addition, when I was at the SRC, I wrote a series of essays on social conditions in Petrograd during the Russian Revolution, contributing to the column called "Gyoganzu" in *Hokkaido Shinbum*, which became a small book on the everyday life in Petrograd during the Russian Revolution, *Roshia kakumeika Petorogurado no shimin seikatsu* (1989), published as a Chu-ko-shinsho. My SRC period thus provided important foundations for all my future research activities.

Looking back on my years at the SRC, I recognize several important characteristics that emerged as unique features of the SRC activities.

I. Interdisciplinarity

As David Wolff indicated in his paper on the founding of the SRC, the interdisciplinary nature of the SRC was from the beginning intended. But it was difficult to achieve this characteristic with the traditional Japanese

university tradition where scholars were trained in the narrow disciplinary confines. I believe perestroika forced everyone at the SRC to step out of narrow disciplinary boundaries and venture into areas we were not familiar with. For instance, political reforms that Gorbachev intended to achieve were integrally connected with the economic reforms. Also the intellectual ferment that emerged during perestroika could not be understood without taking into consideration the roles played by writers and philosophers. Interactions among colleagues in different disciplines within the SRC and outside fostered this interdisciplinarity.

II. Internationalization

Internationalization was another important feature that developed while I was at the SRC. This feature took several different forms. First, we actively participated in international conferences, where we exchanged views with leading Soviet and East European specialists in the world. Without a doubt, Professor Kimura Hiroshi took a leadership role in this respect. He was generous enough to invite me to some conferences. Two notable conferences I participated in were, first, the Joint U.S.-Japanese conferences on perestroika, that lasted three years. Led by McGeorge Bundy on the U.S. side, the conference participants included such renowned scholars as Ed Hewett, George Breslauer, David Holloway, Robert Legvold, and Gregory Grossman on the U.S. side, and Sato Seizaburo, Kimura Hiroshi, Shimotomai Nobuo, Sato Tsuneaki, and I represented the Japanese side. Another memorable conference was the Joint Conference with Chatham House. The first conference was held in London, and the second conference in Oiso. Especially notable was that the Oiso conference was held in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident. These exchanges with the leading U.S. and British scholars greatly contributed to our understanding of perestroika.

Internationalization was also facilitated by the SRC's own international symposia and its invited guest speaker series. The first international symposium was held shortly before I came to the SRC in 1983. While I was at the SRC, four international symposia were held ("The Soviet Union at the Crossroads: Foreign Policy, the Economy, and the Military" in 1985, "The Soviet Union Faces Asia: Perceptions and Policies" in

1986, “The World Confronts Perestroika: The Challenge to East Asia” in 1990, and “Re-Institutionalization of the Soviet Political System and Its Impact upon the World System” in 1991). This meant that almost every two years we held an international symposium, inviting specialists from abroad. Also this demonstrates that the SRC played a crucial role in convincing Euro-centric world scholars of the importance of taking the Asian dimension into consideration. Scholars such as Donald Treadgold (my mentor), Peter Berton, Gilbert Rozman, Peter Reddaway, Vladimir Treml, Marshall Goldman, and many others came to the SRC. These international symposia served as truly two-way dialogues, not merely eminent foreign scholars teaching us their scholarly views, but also Japanese scholars “educating” them on the uniqueness of the Asian context of the great change. In this sense, the SRC served as one of the global centers of Soviet and East European studies, and became known as such.

Also important was the SRC’s foreign visiting professorship. I remember Sam Baron, James Scanlan, Gordon Smith, Alan Kimball, Leslie Dienes, Victor Mote, Andrew Durkin, and Jean-Claude Lanne spending nine months at the center, interacting personally as well as in scholarly ways. Also these scholars from different disciplines facilitated the interdisciplinary character of the SRC I mentioned above. Having visited many universities and institutes, and having invited foreign scholars to the University of California at Santa Barbara, I can categorically state that nowhere are foreign scholars treated with such care, generosity, and warmth, making them truly at home, as at the SRC.

Especially important was the SRC’s attempt to invite Soviet scholars as foreign visiting scholars. Overcoming numerous difficulties, we managed to invite Leonid Evenko and Aleksei Sheviakov. In fact, active contact with Soviet scholars was another important aspect of internationalization. Before I came to the SRC, only two scholars had visited the SRC, but while I was at the SRC, the number of Soviet scholars who visited the SRC exponentially increased. Especially, the visits such as E. Ambartsumov, Aleksandr Tsipko, A. Migranian, and Lilia Shevtsova, who provided powerful intellectual force during perestroika were memorable moments. I vividly remember the discussion we conducted with Tsipko, Migranian, and Shevtsova in July 1991 on the crisis of perestroika, and whether or not the possibilities of a coup existed, one month before the actual coup was attempted.

As for the visits of Soviet scholars, I would also like to point out that a whole host of Soviet Japanologists came to the SRC, and exchanged views with us. This exchange of candid views, I suspect, had some impact on the change in Soviet approach to Japan, and especially toward the thorny Northern Territories issue. I remember the occasion when Georgii Kunadze, Aleksei Kirichenko, Konstantin Sarkisov, and others held a meeting with the Japanese islanders who had been evacuated from the Kuriles in 1945. Rather than confronting them with traditional intransigent attitudes, these specialists listened to the painful stories told by the islanders with sympathy and understanding. When later the Russian government under Yeltsin came up with the proposal to solve the Northern Territories issue with “law and justice,” I was certain that the brainchild of this idea was Kunadze, and the memory of these moving encounters with the islanders had some impact on this idea.

Two other aspects must also be mentioned on our increased contact with the Soviet Union. We had installed a television set that received Soviet programs directly in 1987. I remember we were glued to the broadcast on the 19th Party Conference, where Andrei Sakharov spoke and Yeltsin denounced Gorbachev for being too timid in carrying out reforms. We were all stunned by the display of glasnost, and felt the exhilarating sense of liberation sweeping in the Soviet Union. (I remember, however, that talking to scholars from Moscow—I cannot remember who—I detected the authoritarian streak of Boris Yeltsin, and became already convinced that Yeltsin, driven by his hostility toward Gorbachev, was an opportunistic politician far from a true democrat.)

Another important aspect of the increasing contact with the Soviet Union was that we initiated contact with the Soviet Far East. I was impressed by Gorbachev’s Vladivostok speech in 1986 in which he proposed to open the hitherto closed Vladivostok as the window to the Asia-Pacific region. Despite overwhelming skepticism in Japan about Gorbachev’s new political thinking foreign policy applied to Asia, I was one of the first, together with the late Nakajima Mineo, to predict that his foreign policy had the potential to change the framework of international relations in Asia. One of the key elements, which actually turned out to have failed eventually, was the economic revitalization of the Soviet Far East and its integration into the thriving Asia-Pacific economy. I cannot

remember exactly when—perhaps in 1987, I was invited by Peter Berton to attend the Komsomol congress to be held in Vladivostok. For some reason Peter Berton could not come, and Professor Shimotomai Nobuo and I were sent to participate in the congress. We arrived in Khabarovsk and took an overnight train to Vladivostok, together with a group of Japanese Communists, who were, to my amusement, assiduously reading Marx's *Das Kapital* in the train. The congress was a typical Soviet style of meeting, where all radicals passed the resolution denouncing the U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty. I raised my hand, and offered my opinion that if Japan were detached from the security treaty with the United States, Japan would surely go nuclear. That would not contribute to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region. After I expressed my view, Shimotomai-san and I were immediately invited to go on a ocean sightseeing trip on a grand sailing boat owned by the Oceanographic Institute. We gladly accepted the invitation to get out of the congress. One very interesting feature of this congress was that many South Koreans were also invited, and the Soviets and South Koreans were having informal conversations outside the official congress.

During the trip, I was introduced to Dr. Pavel Minakir of the Khabarovsk Economic Institute, with whom I established close contact. My Soviet Far East contact was greatly facilitated by Professor Murakami Takashi and Arai Nobuo of the Japan Association for Trade with the Soviet Union and Socialist Countries of Europe (SOTOBO), who both later joined the SRC as faculty after I left Sapporo. Both were extremely helpful in my contact with the Soviet Far East. Especially Professor Arai Nobuo, who happened to come from the same part of Tokyo where I grew up, enjoyed a wide network of friends in the Far East. He also spoke impeccable Russian. Arai-san and I established a lasting personal relationship. The role played by Murakami and Arai in the SRC's close contact with the Soviet/Russian Far East, especially Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, and Sakhalin, was enormous, and although Murakami-san passed away, I am happy to see the seeds planted by both are blossoming into further closer contact.

III. Integration

When I came to the SRC, Soviet and East European studies in Japan were hopelessly divided along disciplinary and ideological lines. Marxist economists flocked to the Association for the Study of Socialist Economies [Shakaishugi keizai gakkai], who believed in the validity and the superiority of the socialist economic system over capitalism, and refused to breathe the same air with more conservative Soviet and East European specialists in the Association for Soviet and East European Studies [Soren Too Gakkai], who had a critical attitude toward the socialist countries. Specialists on Russian literature did not hold their conferences together with historians. In other words, in Japan there was no comparable association like the AAASS or now ASEEEES in the United States, which holds an annual convention where specialists on all disciplines and of varying ideological orientations gather at one place.

From its inception the SRC has played a unique role in integrating all disciplines and different scholars with different ideological orientations. As David Wolff's paper makes clear, this uniqueness owes its origins to the wisdom and perspicacity of the founders of the SRC and Dr. Charles Fahs of the Rockefeller Foundation, which, while providing funds, left the decision-making on the Japanese side alone. Therefore, the founding faculty included conservative Professor Inoki Masamichi of Kyoto University (politics), and a Communist historian, Eguchi Bokuro of Tokyo University (international relations). Professor Togawa remembers vividly how Inoki and Eguchi amicably interacted without any animosity. This was the tradition that the SRC inherited from the founding fathers.

In addition to the regular faculty, the SRC appoints several specialists from outside as affiliated faculty. These affiliated faculty come to Sapporo twice a year for symposia. Occasionally, they conduct joint research projects with the members of the regular faculty. This system has been instrumental in breaking disciplinary and ideological barriers, and integrating all the specialists in one place. Where else in Japan could we have a panel discussion on the Northern Territories issue with Kimura Hiroshi (on the right) and Wada Haruki (on the left)?

IV. Library Acquisition

Here I have to note how actively Ms. Akizuki Takako worked to expand the Slavic Research Collections. It was impossible to imagine, from this small woman with polite and modest demeanor, the energy and dogged determination with which she sought to expand our collection. I, too, played a minor part in acquiring the massive Bernstein collection. I remember visiting the bookseller in midtown New York, and how awestruck I was to see the collection that encompassed rare books on social and political movements in prerevolutionary days, the memoirs and reportage on Stalin's Russia, and a massive collection of radio lectures for propaganda and enlightenment right after World War II. I was thankful to Akizuki-san, who was instrumental in securing the fund for a large collection [ogata korekushon] from the Ministry of Education.

In addition to the SRC collections, the Hokkaido University Library has the Northern Region Collection [Hoppo Shiryo-shitsu], which was administered by Akizuki Toshiyuki, the husband of Ms. Akizuki, the librarian. I consider Mr. Akizuki to be the best historian on early Russo-Japanese relations. And he assiduously collected valuable materials related to the Far East, Sakhalin, the Kurils, and Hokkaido. There you can find a complete collection of *Morskii sbornik*, and other rare materials, for instance, on the interrogation records on the Golovnin Affair. Also important is a rich collection of old maps. For a long time until he retired, Mr. Akizuki was the guardian, collector, and protector of the Hoppo shiryoshitsu, who devoted his entire life to preserve and expand the collection, refusing to take up a number of opportunities for promotion. Mr. Akizuki was not officially affiliated with the SRC, but having this large collection and having this formidable historian on early Russo-Japanese relations next door also greatly contributed to the reputation of the SRC. I take my hat off to Akizuki Toshiyuki for his selfless dedication.

V. Russo/Soviet-Japanese Relations

This brings up another point: the importance of the SRC as the center for Russo/Soviet-Japanese relations. When I came to the SRC, I knew nothing about Russo/Soviet-Japanese relations. But when Gorbachev's new

political thinking foreign policy was undertaken, and began to change the framework of international relations, I began to reflect how Japanese policy toward the Soviet Union should adjust to this change. Gradually, I became drawn into Soviet-Japanese relations. I was fortunate to be surrounded by specialists such as Akizuki Toshiyuki, Togawa Tsuguo, Kimura Hiroshi, and later Hara Teruyuki, who joined the SRC in 1987. As I mentioned above, I was also greatly influenced by my friend, Wada Haruki of Tokyo University. I became critical of the Japanese obsession on the Northern Territories issue in the newly emerging international relations, and began to argue that Japan's policy to the territorial dispute would have to be placed in the context of the larger framework of what Soviet-Japanese relations should be in the formation of a new environment where a stable and prosperous Asian-Pacific security and economic international community could be created. I believe I staked out new ground in the national debate that was divided starkly between the right wing and the left wing.

Unfortunately, my opinion was a voice in the wilderness, and was never adopted by the Japanese government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But later I learned from Ambassador Togo Kazuhiko, with whom I was to establish a close friendship, that my opinion was seriously received by specialists in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am happy to see that this tradition of the SRC as the center of Russo-Japanese relations has been continued with Iwashita Akihiro.

VI. Teaching

While I was at the SRC, I proposed that the SRC, in cooperation with other departments, offer undergraduate courses to educate them on the important neighbor, and graduate courses to train future researchers. As a research institute, some colleagues were reluctant to take up my proposal, but teaching that began on a small scale, yielded some success. One of the students who took my course was Sakurada Jun, who came to my office to talk about his essays on national security. He won a number of essay contests, and went on to a higher position as a political commentator. Recently I also received an email message from a student who took my seminar, and went on to work in an NGO refugee program. But the

greatest early success in our graduate training program was that under Ito Takayuki's mentorship, Akino Yutaka received a PhD in the law faculty, and went on to teach at Tsukuba University. He was dispatched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a PKO worker in Tadjikistan, but unfortunately in 1998, the vehicle in which he and other workers were driving was ambushed by terrorists, and he was shot, and died a tragic death.

VII. Faculty Research Seminar

One of the accomplishments I am proud of while I was at the SRC was to propose that we conduct a research presentation by faculty on the results of his/her research. I believed that the life of a research center was research. Since we did not have heavy teaching obligations, we should at least, once a year, have the obligation to report on the findings of our ongoing research, and invite someone from outside of the SRC to comment on the presentation. I am happy to know that the faculty research seminar is still conducted regularly, and I am gratified to know that I have left some footprint on the development of the SRC.

VIII. Indebtedness

The SRC gave me the happiest pages in my career. It was at the SRC that I built the foundations for my future research. I was surrounded by excellent, unique colleagues at the SRC, who treated each other with civility and generosity. Since I left, the SRC has evolved into different, diverse directions with the changing name of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, but I am confident that no matter how the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center further develops in different directions, the collegiality, generosity, and civility I experienced at the SRC, will continue.