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## The Russian Officer Corps of the Manchukuo Army

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*The officer corps of the Manchukuo Army was formed on a multinational basis in accordance with the fundamental state principle of the “common home” for the five Nations of Manchukuo. The formation of the Russian officer corps in the Manchukuo Army started with the organization of the Asano detachment in 1938. The Japanese commanders relied on émigré youth, not the Russian Imperial Army’s officers. The nucleus of the Russian officer corps was émigré activists of anti-Bolshevik organizations who considered the Asano detachment the basis of a “White Army.” However, the leadership of émigré units was in the hands of the Japanese secret services, and the training of Russian regulars was based on the ideas of Bushido. Despite all efforts of the Japanese commanders, Russian officers did not meet their expectations in the fight against the Soviet Army in August 1945.*

It is common knowledge that the Russian refugees from the October Revolution and Russian Civil War, many of whom were military veterans, have served in the armies of their host countries.

In China, where more than 200,000 Russian refugees concentrated in the early 1920s, Zhang Zuolin, the dictator of Manchuria, recruited willing Russian officers for military service. Originally, some Russian officers served as military instructors in the troops of Zhang Zuolin. In 1924, the Russian division was organized in the army of warlord Zhang Zongchang, who was subordinate to Zhang Zuolin. This unit (Vanguard Russian detachment) was

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under the command of Lieutenant-General Konstantin Nechaev. Later the Vanguard detachment grew into a Russian group of forces, including infantry, cavalry, artillery, armored, and aviation. The number of Russian mercenaries in the army of Zhang Zongchang, which had headquarters in Tsinan (Shandong), was about 3,000.

Some Russian officers in the army of Zhang Zongchang were not mere mercenaries; they were ideological opponents of the Bolsheviks. They believed that serving in the Chinese army allowed them to save the military potential of White emigration and that China would support them in a future struggle against the Bolsheviks. However, defeats of Zhang Zongchang in the fight against the southern National Revolutionary Army forced his troops to evacuate from North China. The remnants of the Russian units were disbanded in the end of 1928.

The idea of formation of Russian armed units appeared again in 1929, during the armed conflict between China and the USSR over the Chinese Eastern Railway (hereafter CER). However, the idea was never implemented. Once again, the attempt to organize the Russian armed units was made after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in the autumn of 1931. The initiator of the Russian units' formation was the Japanese military mission (Tokumu Kikan). The Japanese used the anti-Bolshevik frame of mind of White emigrants and their desire to overthrow the hateful regime in Russia. To do this they needed forces. In turn, a few Russians foresaw Japanese support for anti-Soviet activities. Russian armed detachments were assigned guard duty along a few railways and property of Japanese concessions. In 1935, Russian guard detachments joined the Mountain Forest police of Manchukuo.

The first military detachment of the Russian émigré youth came into existence in the spring of 1938 under the leadership of Tokumu Kikan. Formally, it was a component of the Manchukuo Imperial Army. The Russian unit of the Manchukuo Army was called the Asano detachment (Asano Butai) after its first commander, Japanese Major (afterwards Colonel) Asano Makoto. The detachment was quartered near the railway station Sungari Two, 130 km south of Harbin. Subsequently, the number of emigrant units increased to three, and the number of Russian officers and soldiers expanded to 700 men.

In this article, I have focused on the problem of the formation of the Russian officer corps in the Manchukuo Army.

Initially, most of the Asano detachment's officers were Japanese. Major Asano was assisted by several Japanese officers from the Manchukuo Army, namely Major Minami; Captains Adachi Heitaro, Asakura Toshiharu, Wasio, Kodama, Kumada, Matsura, Oono, Oomura, Saito Sanatoshi, Tominaga, and Ueda; and Lieutenants Aida, Ikeda, Ishino, Isobe, Katahira, Kitamura Riiti, Murata, Simase, Tomizawa, and Hiromatsu.<sup>1</sup> The Kwantung Army staff officer

<sup>1</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv administrativnykh organov Sverdlovskoi oblasti (GAAOSO). F. R-1. O. 2. D. 33169. L. 27.

Yamaoka Michitake was assigned as adviser of the detachment.<sup>2</sup> In addition, two Russian officers from the headquarters of the fourth military district of Manchukuo were included in the detachment command. They were Major Nikolay Kossov and Captain Gurgen Assyrians (Nagolian).

Both officers started their military service in the Guard staff of CER in the time of the Chinese authorities, before the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Kossov, who enlisted in the Guard staff in the late 1920s, was consistently the brigade staff aide, the assistant commandant of Harbin station, and chief of the 3rd Department of the operations division of the Railway Guard staff. In the beginning of the 1930s, Captain Kossov was transferred to the Manchukuo Army. Assyrians, an Armenian by birth, enlisted in the Department diplomatic of the Railway Guard staff in 1931. In 1935, Kossov and Assyrians had already served in the headquarters of the fourth military district of Manchukuo. Kossov graduated from the military school at the Russian All-Military Union in Harbin (1934), officers' school of infantry (1937), and the higher officer school of infantry (1939) in Mukden. Unlike Kossov, Assyrians had no regular military education, and he held non-combatant positions in the Asano detachment. In addition, Kossov and Assyrians, having a good knowledge of the Japanese language, were translators in the detachment.<sup>3</sup>

Tokumu Kikan decided to prepare a sub-officer corps of Russian émigré youth. For this purpose Tokumu Kikan needed persons with sufficient education, basic military training, and, most importantly, who were politically reliable. The Japanese enabled all groups of Russian political emigration to participate in the recruitment of candidates for sub-officers: groups such as fascists, monarchists, and Cossacks. As a result, they selected 32 candidates. On 15 March 1938, candidates for sub-officers arrived at Sungari Two.

The Russian Fascist Party sent eight of its members to the Asano detachment. Seven of them graduated from a secret Fascist school of organizers in 1937. This school was subsidized by Tokumu Kikan to teach young volunteers the techniques of reconnaissance, propaganda, and sabotage. The graduates were Alexander Berdnikov, Yuri Vitvitsky, Konstantin Kuznetsov, Anton Makarevich, Yiliya Prikaschikov, Alexander Shabelnik, and George Sheherev. Their ages ranged from 23 to 28 years. Descended from poor families, they did not have higher education (only Sheherev studied at the Harbin Pedagogical Institute for a short time) and had been working for a living from a young age. Prikaschikov and Shabelnik were drivers/mechanics. Kuznetsov worked as a clerk in the famous Churin Trade Company in Harbin until his dismissal in 1936. Vitvitsky served in a guard detachment for a short

<sup>2</sup> J. J. Stephan, 'Russian Soldiers in Japanese Service: The Asano Brigade // Shikan', *The Historical Review*, Tokyo, 95 (1977), p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Arkhiv Upravleniya Federal'noy Sluzhby Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (UFSB RF) po Khabarovskomu krayu. D. P-97686; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Khabarovskogo kraya (GAKhK). F. 830. O. 3. D. 23191. Kossov served in the Asano detachment until the end of 1939, Assyrians served until 1944.

time at the newly built Lafa–Harbin railway. Later he was a daily worker. Berdnik worked as a clerk, a painter, a door attendant, and a tractor driver. He studied at the Shandong military instructor school (Zhang Zongchang Army) in the mid-1920s but never graduated. Later he served in the Russian Division of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps for about six months. Except Berdnik and Vitvitsky, other candidate-fascists received military training at the military-training unit of the Fascist party.<sup>4</sup>

The eighth member of the Fascist Party in the group of sub-officers' candidates was Ivan Yakush, former Captain of the White Army and chief of the military training unit of the Fascist party.<sup>5</sup>

Associates of Boris Shepunov, an active anti-Bolshevik and the ideological opponent of the fascists, formed another group of Russian candidates for sub-officers. Shepunov was a member of the guidance BREM (Bureau of Russian Émigrés, established in 1934 to regulate all émigré activities), and was closely associated with the Japanese intelligence service. In 1937, Shepunov organized training courses for the study of the USSR with the support of Tokumu Kikan in Harbin. Four graduates of these courses (Nikolay Rychkov, Vissarion and Leonid Mustafin, and George Dzakelli) went to Sungari Two in March 1938.<sup>6</sup>

Nikolay Rychkov, who was born in 1901, was the son of Lieutenant-General Veniamin Rychkov, first chief of BREM. After graduating from the Moscow cadet corps, he enrolled in the Alekseevsky military school in 1917. He participated in the uprising of cadets of military schools in Moscow, was arrested by the Bolsheviks, and spent several weeks in Lefortovo prison. In 1918, Rychkov was sent to the fourth epidemic medical-nutritional mobile unit, where he worked combating epidemics of typhoid and cholera in Ukraine, Orenburg province, and Siberia until 1922. In 1923, Rychkov illegally crossed the Chinese border and soon joined his family, who had been in China since 1920. In Harbin, Rychkov graduated from electrical engineering courses and studied in Harbin Law School for two years. Later he kept a small electrical workshop and worked at the power plant of Sungarian Mills Company. In addition, Rychkov actively participated in the Harbin Russian Sokol association, leading the first company (stan). In 1932–1933, Rychkov served in the Harbin Russian self-defense group for a time. Then he went to the Pogranichnaya station (on the border of the Soviet Far East), where he enlisted in the border police unit led by Shepunov.<sup>7</sup>

The large Mustafin family (six sons and one daughter) evacuated from Vladivostok and went to China in October 1922. At that time the head of the family, Nikolay Mustafin (in the past, he was regimental priest of the

<sup>4</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 33401. L. 10; GAKhK. F. 830. O. 3. D. 7953.

<sup>5</sup> Yakush served in the Asano detachment until the end of 1940 and later was transferred to serve in the second Department of the Harbin Tokumu Kikan.

<sup>6</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 37624. L. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Arkhiv UFSB RF po Khabarovskomu krayu. D. P-93433; GAKhK. F. 830. O. 3. D. 41212.

Yenisei brigade), lived there. Later, the Mustafin family lived in Changchun and Mukden. All Nikolay Mustafin's children started to work at an early age, not having received any regular education.

Born in 1910, Vissarion Mustafin graduated from school as an external student and held various jobs: store deliveryman, gas-station attendant, and bodyguard. In 1933, he went to Pogranichnaya station and enlisted in the border police unit.<sup>8</sup> Soon his younger brothers, Leonid and Arkady, enlisted in the same police unit. Four years younger than Vissarion, Leonid graduated from the sub-officer course at the Russian All-Military Union in Mukden before enrolling in the police force. The Mustafin brothers also participated actively in the Russian scouts' organization.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth protégé of Shepunov was George Dzakelli, Georgian by birth. He had been a sergeant-major of the White Army. As did the Mustafin brothers, Dzakelli served in the border police unit of Pogranichnaya station.

Ignatius Ovchinnikov, Gregory Tobolov, and Vasily Tyrsin were sub-officer candidates from the Cossack Trehrechie (the territory lies along three tributaries of the Argun River). The most prominent of them was Tyrsin, whose life had had many bizarre twists even though he was only 32.

Tyrsin descended from a family of a Major General of the Orenburg Cossack Army. By the beginning of the Russian Civil War, he studied in the Orenburg cadet corps. In 1919, the Orenburg cadet corps was evacuated to Irkutsk. After the capture of the city by the Red Army, Tyrsin stayed in Irkutsk. He graduated from the Soviet school here. Suddenly, in November 1923, leaving his mother in the USSR, he fled over the border into Manchuria. In Shanghai, Tyrsin graduated from the last class of the Khabarovsk cadet corps and then went to Canton, where he enlisted in the river police. Soon Tyrsin illegally went to Marseille. In the summer of 1926, not having a permanent job and feeling homesick, he filed a petition in the Soviet Consulate to return home. His petition was granted, and he returned to his mother in Orenburg in the autumn of the same year. Just a year later, not wanting to cooperate with the NKVD, Tyrsin fled to China for the second time.<sup>10</sup> Once again, in China he served briefly in the Russian units of the Shandong Army and later in the Russian detachment of the Shanghai Volunteer Corps. Leaving the Shanghai Volunteer Corps, he was an officer of the British Maritime Police in Hong Kong. Here he was arrested for smuggling and spent 10 months in prison. Finally, Tyrsin arrived in Manchukuo in August 1933. He was a police officer in the township's police, a frontier guard, a Japanese translator for the gendarmerie, and the agent of Tokumu Kikan in the Cossack Trehrechie.

<sup>8</sup> GAAOSO F. R-1. O. 2. D. 37624. L. 10, 16.

<sup>9</sup> GAKhK. F. 830. O. 3. D. 32296; Lukin U. N. *Kratkii ocherk istorii, sostoyaschei pod rukovodstvom E. I. V. Velikoi Knyagini Ksenii Aleksandrovny, Natsional'noi Organizatsii Russkikh Razvedchikov*. Kharbin, 1936, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Arkhiv UFSB RF po Khabarovskomu krayu. D. P-160183; GAKhK. F. 830. O. 3. D. 48319.

He quickly gained notoriety for his cool temper and cruelty in the Cossack villages.<sup>11</sup>

The other candidates for the sub-officer's rank were selected by the direction of the Far Eastern Military Union from a young staff of the Russian units of the Mountain Forest police. They all had sufficient level of military training (many of them graduated from the military police school at Handaohezi station), experience of participation in hostilities, and good recommendations. Some of them were members of anti-Bolshevik youth organizations, in particular, the Musketeers' Union.

Many Russian candidates for the sub-officer's rank believed that they would take part in the organization of the Russian military units and were unpleasantly surprised when they found themselves in the 'Japanese army'. Japanese officers taught Russian soldiers exclusively in Japanese. The life of Russian soldiers was subordinated to Japanese regulations and Bushido principles. This practice was typical for the military sphere in Manchukuo, where Japanese moral values were the ideological basis of military training. Émigré anti-Bolshevik organizations had no influence over the training of Russian recruits.

In addition to lessons in drill and military training, Russian cadets studied the Japanese language. Cadets also had to learn to get along, pushing aside party differences. Yesterday's fascists, Musketeers, and legitimists now marched in one order under the command of the Japanese officers.

Russian cadets got their first ranks of Sergeant (*gong-so*) and Staff Sergeant (*so-sbo*) after a month-long training course. Then they were appointed commanders of the sections of the Asano detachment.

According to the plans of the Japanese command, the Asano detachment was to consist of four divisions: infantry, sapper, artillery, and communications. These divisions were named for their commanders: Captains Vasio (later Kodama), Asakura, Kumada, and Oomura. Lozhenkov, Makarevich, Vissarion Mustafin, and Sheherev were attached to the infantry division; Berdnik, Ejovsky, Lisietzsky, and Makarov — sapper division; Vitvitsky, Tyrsin, and Shabelnik — artillery division; Efimov, Leonid Mustafin, Rychkov, and Tobolov — communications division.<sup>12</sup>

The first Russian sub-officers of the Asano detachment later formed the basis of the Russian officer corps in the Manchukuo Army.

In the spring of 1940, general conscription was introduced for all national groups in Manchukuo. At the same time, Russian emigrants were included in the fraternal family of the peoples of Manchukuo as a fifth nation. The introduction of general conscription increased the numbers of the Asano detachment and necessitated forming the Russian officer corps. Availability

<sup>11</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 39452. L. 11; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Primorskogo kraya (GAPK). D. PU-5094. T. 1. L. 17.

<sup>12</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 40291. L. 34.



of Russian officers facilitated a more rapid adaptation of new recruits in the detachment and improved relations between the Japanese command and Russian soldiers.

In the summer of 1940, regimental officers' courses (courses of candidates for the officer rank) were organized at the Asano detachment for the most prepared Russian warrant officers (*yongsbi-kang*). The courses lasted one year. The levy of cadets was very small, only four persons: Vissarion Mustafin, Rychkov, Prikaschikov, and Tyrsin. They all had worked well for two years of military service, showing zeal not only in military training but also in the understanding of the 'spirit of Bushido', which was the basis of moral education in the Japanese army and cultivated in the Asano detachment. After graduating from the regimental officers' courses, the four men became officers with the rank of Second Lieutenant (*sho-yi*) of the Manchukuo Army in the autumn of 1941.<sup>13</sup>

After the outbreak of war between the USSR and Germany, Japan started to increase its military presence in Manchuria, waiting for the results of the German blitzkrieg. The possibility of military confrontation with the Soviet Union intensified the value of Russian military units. Their main task was to have been reconnaissance and sabotage in the rear of the Red Army.

In this regard, more soldiers were needed for the Asano detachment to improve their reconnaissance and sabotage training. During the summer and autumn of 1941, the Asano detachment, a cavalry unit from late 1939, had three squadrons. The separate squadron of the Asano detachment was organized at Handaohezi station (the infantry squadron). A Cossack cavalry platoon was organized in Hailar. In turn, these steps were intended to increase the number of Russian officers.

At that time, the training courses of candidates for the officer rank had continued at the Asano detachment. In 1942, Konstantin Lisietsky and George Sheherev graduated from the officer training courses. Immediately after completing the training courses, they were sent to a training campaign on the Soviet–Chinese border as platoon commanders. This training campaign was named the First Amur campaign.<sup>14</sup>

In the same year, warrant officers Daniel Lozhenkov, Leonid Mustafin, and Vladimir Lukesh, and sergeant-major Nikolai Postovsky had been nominated for the rank of officer. Lozhenkov and Mustafin had just returned from a training campaign. New candidates for the officer rank completed the courses in the spring of 1943. Mustafin and Lozhenkov gained the rank of Second Lieutenant and became platoon commanders. Postovsky was appointed assistant commander of the First Squadron, holding the rank of

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, D. 37624. L. 17.

<sup>14</sup> The First Amur (July 1941–June 1942) and the Second Amur (June 1942–August 1943) campaigns were aimed at testing of the Russian unit's reconnaissance and sabotage skills. Dislocation marching units was carried out near the Soviet border, in the areas of the proposed crossing the border in case of war between Japan and the Soviet Union.



warrant officer.<sup>15</sup> Not having passed the exams, Lukesh remained a warrant officer and was dismissed in reserve in September 1943.<sup>16</sup>

The last training courses of candidates for the officer rank were held in February 1943. Only five persons were selected, namely Sergeant-Majors Anatoly Bogatyr, Andrew Vrashtil, Nikolay Ejovsky, Sergey Kozyrev, and Alexey Makarov, a veterinarian. Later Sergeant-Majors Gavriil Efimov (radioman) and Yakov Fedoreev (orderly), who had just returned from the Second Amur training campaign, joined them. All of them had served in the Asano detachment from March 1938 and had been junior commanders a long time.

Graduating from the courses in December 1943, cadets got the rank of warrant officer and were assigned to hold officers' practice in units of the detachment. In May 1944, having passed all the exams, Warrant Officers Bogatyr, Ejovsky, Efimov, Makarov, and Fedoreev got the rank of Second Lieutenant. Initially a platoon commander, Bogatyr became the chief of the company detachment. Ejovsky was in charge of ammunition, Makarov headed the veterinary division, Efimov was in command of platoon communications, and Fedoreev was assistant commander of the First Squadron. Vrashtil and Kozyrev, not passing the exams, remained at the rank of warrant officer as commanders of platoons in the First and Second squadrons.<sup>17</sup>

In the spring of 1942, the Japanese command introduced a new conception of training officers for the Russian units of the Manchukuo Army. It was decided to organize a Military School at the Asano detachment, where young emigrants could study. Supported by the émigré administration, this idea had long been proposed to develop military education among the Russian youth.

The purpose of opening the Military School, according to its statute, was the satisfaction of desires of Russian youth for military training. Entering the Military School, emigrants had to be between 18 to 23 years old, with a level of secondary school and sufficient mental and physical development. In the school, they had to pass the medical examination and written and oral examinations in history, chemistry, and mathematics. The period of study in the Military School was two years. After completing a full training course and successfully passing exams, a cadet earned the rank of Second Lieutenant and could continue his military service or work for the Russian émigré civil service administration<sup>18</sup>.

By this time, the Asano detachment has lost its secret character and selection of cadets to the Military School was free. The announcements were placed in the exile press. Not relying on the duteousness of Russian youth, BREM and the Russian sector of Kyowakai Society had been active in efforts

<sup>15</sup> Arkhiv UFSB RF po Khabarovskomu krayu. D. P-85622; D. P-93433.

<sup>16</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 33756. L. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Arkhiv UFSB RF po Khabarovskomu krayu. D. P-85622; D. P-97860.

<sup>18</sup> GAKhK. F. 831. O. 2. D. 11. Ll. 1–4.

to attract applicants. In fact, military service in the Manchukuo Army was unpopular in émigré circles, especially in Harbin. Besides, the financial position of an officer, despite its considerable social status, was not very high. The annual salary of a Second Lieutenant was 1,140 Gobi,<sup>19</sup> i.e., less than 100 Gobi per month. It was two to three times less than what could be earned working in a trading company.

In early May 1942 about a hundred applicants arrived for a medical examination in Harbin. The Commission has selected 10 persons for training in the Military School. They all had secondary education, and some of them had completed one or two university courses. In addition, they had already received basic military training. Another five persons were selected to study in the School from Mukden, Lishuzhen, and stations of the East railway line of CER.<sup>20</sup>

Cadets of the Military School for the Asano detachment were accommodated in a separate barracks near the headquarters. Originally, chiefs of the school were Russian officers (Lieutenant Rychkov, then Second Lieutenant Dzakelli). Soon they were replaced by Japanese (Captain Hashimoto and Captain Tomashita), who led the school prior to the beginning of 1944. At the beginning of 1944, the school was again headed by a Russian officer, Second Lieutenant Sheherev.<sup>21</sup>

The first six months of cadets' training differed little from the initial training course of the ordinary soldier of the Asano detachment, except for more significant theoretical and ideological instruction. In mid-October 1942, the quota of cadets increased to 25 persons. The new cadets had already served in the detachment for one year and held the rank of corporal. Many of them were participants in the First Amur campaign.<sup>22</sup>

Initially, the relationship between 'old' and 'new' cadets was tense. 'Old' cadets feared that Japanese 'squealers' could be among the newcomers. However, as it turned out soon, 'old' and 'new' cadets had the same attitude to military service and Japanese command. As cadet Sergey Golubenko noted, 'Cadets filtered what lecturers treated them, and threw Japanese spirit out of Russian mind'.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, after a couple of months cadets lived as one united team.

The second year of training in the Military School was focused on the deepening and consolidation of the knowledge gained in the first year of study.

Changes at the fronts of the Second World War changed the Japanese command's attitude toward the Russian military units.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 5.

<sup>20</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 39955. L. 10; D. 33249. L. 12.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, D. 33196. L. 30.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 45.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, D. 36813. L. 85.

In January 1944, three Russian military detachments (RMD) were formed, based on existing Russian military units, namely the Sungari cavalry detachment (former Asano detachment), the Handaohezi infantry detachment (former separate squadron of the Asano detachment), and the Hailar cavalry detachment (former Cossack cavalry squad). Russian officers occupied all command positions in the RMDs. Japanese officers, whose number had decreased significantly, became advisers and instructors in the units.

Colonel Yakov Smirnov of the White Army headed the Sungari cavalry detachment. Before that, he served for a long time in the Tokumu Kikan of Harbin. The Handaohezi detachment commander was assigned to Major Alexander Gukaev Ossetians, a former officer of the White Army. The Hailar detachment commander was assigned to a Cossack officer, Captain Ivan Peshkov.

There was a 'russification' of émigré military units. Now Russian military detachments were declared by the émigré administration to be national military units, 'the pride of the Russian emigration', where 'the best representatives of émigré youth fulfill with honor their honorable military duty'. Military training now based itself on Russian and Soviet military regulations, in the Russian language. Former officers of the Russian army, who rose to the leadership of military detachments, brought some elements inherent to the life of the old Russian army.

New military attributes appeared in Russian military units. The detachment banner was in the form of a white stripe with the image of St. George<sup>24</sup> and a metal badge in the shape of a cross. The badge was designed in the shape of a convex circular cross with expanding ends (the Militia cross) in red enamel with white piping on the edge. In the center of the cross, surrounded by the colors of the Manchukuo state flag, was a round medallion with the figure of St. George slaying a serpent.<sup>25</sup> The insignias were consistent with those used by the Japanese Imperial Army. The star, which was worn on the cap, was Manchukuoan, in five colors, symbolizing the five Nations of Manchukuo.

In May 1944, twenty-three cadets (two cadets were expelled) of the Military School at the Sungari cavalry detachment completed their training. After the final examinations, only nine cadets achieved the rank of candidate for officer (*Estandart-cadet*). In addition to those nine, this rank was assigned to Sergeant-Major Ivan Parygin, vet Eugene Grazianov, and dentist George Rasniuk.

As shown by later historical sources, a few cadets failed the exams deliberately to be dismissed from the detachment; however, this attempt

<sup>24</sup> A. V. Okorokov, *Russkie dobrovol'tsy*, Moscow, 2004, p. 201.

<sup>25</sup> A. M. Buyakov, *Znaki i nagrody rossiiskib emigrantskib organizatsii v Kitae (Daireng, Tianjin, Kharbin, Hunchun, Tsinanfu, Shanghai), 1921–1949: materialy k spravochniku*, Vladivostok, 2005, p. 80.

failed. Cadets who passed their exams with low scores were left in the units of RMDs as sub-officers.<sup>26</sup>

On 17 December 1944, after holding the officers' practice, *estandard*-cadets got the rank of Second Lieutenant by order of the Ministry of Armament in Manchukuo and were distributed to units of the Russian detachments for further service.

By the summer of 1945, the Russian officer corps in the Manchukuo Army consisted of about 50 men, most of whom received military education at the Asano detachment. Most of the Russian officers served at the Russian military detachments; a few officers headed special reconnaissance and sabotage units or worked at the *émigré* administration of Manchukuo.

In July 1945, the Japanese administration, not wanting to aggravate relations with the USSR, announced the dissolution of the Russian military and police units. Some soldiers were demobilized, but half of the contingent of RMDs remained in the garrisons. They amounted to labor brigades, headed by the officers. In the event of war, they could be easily mobilized.

However, hopes of Japanese support of Russian emigrants in the war with the USSR were in vain. In August 1945, the majority of emigrants greeted with joy the entry of Soviet troops in Manchuria. Mobilized Russian officers and soldiers of the Manchukuo Army surrendered to the Red Army at the first opportunity. Some of them participated in anti-Japanese guerrilla groups.<sup>27</sup> Suspecting Russians of wanting to defect to the Red Army, the Japanese killed more than 20 fighters of the Hailar detachment together with their commander, Major Peshkov.

The fate of Russian officers of the Manchukuo Army was unenviable. Most of them were arrested by the officers of the Soviet counter-intelligence agency SMERSH. Later they were repatriated to the Soviet Union by force and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in the reformatories.

In conclusion, we should raise the question: was the implementation of the Japanese project for the organization of the national officer corps of the Manchukuo Army feasible? Undoubtedly, this possibility existed. Mainly, in order to do so, it would have been necessary to implement fully the idea of a "common home" of free Nations of Manchukuo in conditions of peace. In practice, the construction of a "common home" turned into headship of the nation of Yamato, the desire to impose Japanese "moral values" on other peoples, as well as the attempt to use Russian emigrants, regardless of their desires, as an instrument in the struggle against the USSR. In turn, Russian emigration sought to preserve "Russianness" of *émigré* youth in contrast to the integrative activities of the Manchukuo authorities. In addition, Japan was a geopolitical rival of Russia in the Far East in the minds of the emigrants, and the growth of patriotic instincts during the Second World War only strengthened the anti-Japanese attitude.

<sup>26</sup> GAAOSO. F. R-1. O. 2. D. 28108. L. 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, D. 31517. L. 84; D. 31876. L. 47.