

The Tanaka Memorial (1927): authentic or spurious?

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FEW documents in recent history have provoked such controversy as the so-called 'Tanaka Memorial'.¹ 'Document' is perhaps a misnomer, for the original (assuming that there was one) has never been seen by anyone willing to admit its existence. The memorial is said to be a 13,000-word secret petition presented by Prime Minister Baron Tanaka Giichi to Emperor Hirohito on 25 July 1927 outlining a program of economic penetration into Manchuria, China, and Mongolia that would prepare for Japan's subjection of Asia and Europe. Exposed by the Chinese in 1929, the document gained global notoriety during the 1930s. Over vehement Japanese objections and disclaimers, it was translated and circulated in Europe and the United States. Grandiose designs expressed in a language that might have aroused incredulity or mirth in calmer times sounded uncomfortably authentic in the context of Japanese behavior in East Asia and the Pacific between 1931 and 1945.

The impact of the Tanaka Memorial proved to be both profound and durable. It served as a potent means to mobilize international sentiment against Japan in the 1930s much as the 'Twenty-one Demands' had done two decades earlier. Like the 'Pentagon Papers' of 1971, it shocked and fascinated readers by unveiling the cynicism and opportunism that supposedly underlay the pious façade of government leadership. It confirmed the suspicions of those susceptible to seeing Japanese overseas expansion as the product of an imperial, military, or capitalist conspiracy. The memorial served as a polemical instrument well after Japan's defeat in 1945. In an address to the Indonesian parliament on 26 February 1960, Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev warned that the Japanese ruling classes were reviving Tanaka's plans to subjugate the peoples of Asia.²

¹ Other appellations include 'Tanaka Memorandum' (Soviet and some Japanese works), 'Tien Chung tsou-che' (Chinese works), and 'Tanaka jōsōbun' (Japanese works). *Nihon rekishi daijiten* refers to it (perhaps inadvertently) as a 'memorium'. XII (Tokyo, 1958), 206.

² *Asahi shinbun*, 27 February 1960.

No consensus exists on the Tanaka Memorial's identity or significance, despite the fact that over forty years have elapsed since its appearance—forty years during which important documentary evidence and research have become available. Official Japanese spokesmen have repeatedly denounced it as spurious. Most Japanese scholars regard the memorial itself as a fabrication, although they disagree sharply over how to evaluate Tanaka's foreign policy.³ Soviet works invariably treat the memorial as a *bona fide* expression of Japanese imperialism.⁴ Chinese publications (both Nationalist and Communist) share an unchanging conviction that the memorial is a genuine government document and thus irrefutable proof of premeditated Japanese aggression.⁵ Most Western observers dismiss it as a forgery. However, there are exceptions. They include a distinguished historian,⁶ a retired rear-admiral,⁷ a former American advisor to the Japanese Foreign Ministry,⁸ and a journalist with long experience in China who in 1970 characterized the Tanaka Memorial as a blueprint of global conquest comparable to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.⁹

A re-examination of the Tanaka Memorial is needed to scrutinize some persistent but questionable impressions regarding its authenticity,

³ Some Japanese scholars dissociate the memorial from Tanaka's foreign policy. Others concede that the memorial itself may be spurious but insist that it reflected Tanaka's continental aspirations. For the former view, Inō Dentarō, '“Tanaka jōsōbun” o meguru nisan no mondai', *Kokusai seiji*, no. 26 (1964), pp. 72–87. For the latter, Eguchi Kei'ichi, 'Tanaka jōsōbun no shingi', *Nihonshi kenkyū*, no. 80 (1966), pp. 60–5.

⁴ 'Tanaka Memorandum' in *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsyklopediia*, 2nd ed., XLI (Moscow, 1956), 586. E. M. Zhukov (ed.), *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia na Dal'nem Vostoke (1870–1945 gg.)* (Moscow, 1951), pp. 386–8; Kh. T. Eidus, *Ocherki novoi i noveishei istorii Iaponii* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 163–4; V. N. Nikiforov (ed.), *Novaia i noveishaia istorii Kītaia* (Moscow, 1950), p. 80; L. N. Kutakov, *Portmuskii mirnyi dogovor* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 200–1; Kh. T. Eidus, *SSR i Iaponiia* (Moscow, 1964), p. 5.

⁵ For the Nationalist view: Chiang Kai-shek, *The collected wartime messages of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, 1937–1945* (2 vols., New York, 1946), I, 142, 358–9; II, 486, 515, 618; Kuofang Yenchiu Yüan, *K'angjeh chanshih* (Taipei, 1966), p. 4; Yu Te-jen, *The Japanese struggle for world empire* (New York, 1967), p. 79; for the Communist view, see the editorial by Chang Hsin-ts'ai in the party newspaper *Jenmin jihpao*, 5 November 1958.

⁶ Louis L. Snyder (ed.), *The imperialism reader* (Princeton, 1962), p. 93. Snyder subtitled the memorial 'Japan's blueprint for colonization of the Far East' and remarked that 'it at least had the historical value of summing up Japanese imperialist ambitions'.

⁷ Rear Admiral Joseph K. Taussig, Ret., in testimony before the House Naval Affairs Committee, April 1940. Cited in Robert A. Smith, *Our future in Asia* (New York, 1940), p. 248.

⁸ Frederick Moore, *With Japan's leaders* (New York, 1942), p. 19. Moore served intermittently as an advisor to the Foreign Ministry between 1927 and 1941.

⁹ Bruno Shaw in his foreword to *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung* (New York, 1970), x.

and to clarify the circumstances behind its composition and publication. This essay is limited to an inquiry into the alleged memorial itself. It does not attempt to judge Tanaka's foreign policy, about which excellent studies have already appeared.¹⁰

The Eastern Conference and the genesis of the Memorial

The appearance of the Tanaka Memorial is inextricably entwined with the fateful collision of international forces in the 1920s and 1930s over China. Japan's determination to safeguard and promote her economic interests on the continent clashed with a growing Chinese nationalist movement dedicated to the termination of those interests. Successive Japanese governments sought to cope with the problem through the conclusion of multi-national agreements, through bilateral arrangements with various Chinese representatives, and, increasingly after 1931, through unilateral action supported by military force.

The Tanaka Memorial is said to have originated at the Eastern Conference which convened in Tokyo between 27 June and 7 July 1927 for the purpose of discussing various issues arising from the civil war in China. Summoned by Tanaka Giichi (who then served concurrently as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister), the Eastern Conference was attended by twenty-two high-ranking civilian and military officials.¹¹

What transpired at the Eastern Conference is known through the Japanese Foreign Office records which give the minutes of each session.¹² An exchange of opinions took place regarding Chiang Kai-shek's chances of success in the civil war and the merits of assisting the Nanking government, punctuated by reiterations of concern for the preservation of peace and order in Manchuria. Recent scholarship has convincingly argued that the Eastern Conference defined no new

¹⁰ See, for example, Iriye Akira, *After imperialism: the search for a new order in the Far East, 1921-1931* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965); Etō Shinkichi, 'Kyōhōsen shadan mondai no gaikō katei: Tanaka gaikō to sono haikai', in Shinohara Hajime (ed.), *Kindai Nihon no seiji shidō* (Tokyo, 1965), pp. 375-429.

¹¹ In addition to Tanaka, the participants of the Eastern Conference included the commander of the Kwantung Army (Mutō Nobuyoshi); the governor of the Kwantung Leased Territory; the minister to Peking (Yoshizawa Kenkichi); the consuls in Mukden (Yoshida Shigeru), Shanghai, and Hankow; representatives from the Army Ministry and General Staff (including Minami Jirō and Abe Nobuyuki); the Navy Minister (Okada Keisuke); Foreign Ministry officials (including Mori Kaku, Hotta Masaaki, and Saitō Yoshie); and representatives from the Finance Ministry.

¹² Japan, Foreign Ministry, Archives of the Foreign Ministry (microfilm), PVM 41, pp. 176-407.

'positive policy' toward China or Manchuria. Far from making any dramatic departures, it did little more than offer officials an opportunity to exchange information and endorse the rather confused existing policies.¹³

The Eastern Conference concluded on 7 July with a public announcement summarizing its deliberations. However one chooses to judge the government's articulated determination to protect Japan's interests in China and Manchuria, there is no evidence that Tanaka drew up any 'program' at the conference which was omitted in the public announcement.

In Japan, the Eastern Conference aroused little interest, but some Chinese attached considerable significance to it during the ensuing months. These Chinese observers interpreted Tanaka's pronouncements as thinly disguised euphemisms for aggressive designs. Unsettling events during 1927-29 (three Japanese interventions in Shantung, Sino-Japanese hostilities at Tsinan, the assassination of the Manchurian warlord Chang Tso-lin, and a Sino-Soviet clash over the Chinese Eastern Railroad) reinforced Chinese suspicions. Rallies held in Mukden and Kirin in the summer of 1929 castigated Tanaka's 'positive policy' in China as a scheme to take over Manchuria. Popular agitation against Tanaka persisted even after the Prime Minister's resignation (2 July 1929) and death (29 September).¹⁴

In September 1929, Tokyo began to receive signs that the Chinese had in their possession a 'secret memorial' allegedly presented two years previously by Tanaka to the emperor. The memorial was described as a master plan for Japanese expansion, involving the absorption of Manchuria and the total subjection of China. On 16 September the Japanese consul in Peking reported that English- and Chinese-language pamphlets to this effect were circulating in the city.¹⁵ On 9 September an employee of the South Manchurian Railway Company notified consular authorities in Mukden that Chinese delegates then in the city on their way to attend the Kyoto Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations (28 October to 9 November) had purchased such a document 'from a friend in Tokyo' for 50,000 yen (\$25,000) and were planning to use the conference as a forum to publicize it and condemn Japanese aggression.¹⁶

¹³ Iriye, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-9, 162-72; Etō, *op. cit.*, pp. 399, 416-24.

¹⁴ Inō, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81. Members of the American Council of the IPR visiting Mukden in the summer of 1929 also heard reports of the memorial. Their informants were from the entourage of Marshall Chang Hsüeh-liang. *New York Times*, 15 May 1932, IX, 3.

Indeed, shortly after the Kyoto Conference convened, some of the Chinese participants did approach Japanese delegates with a request that they be allowed to bring up the memorial for open discussion at one of the sessions. One Japanese acceded to the proposal on the condition that there would be an opportunity for a rebuttal of the accusations. His colleagues, however, urged the Chinese to abstain from a formal announcement in favor of distributing written materials among the conference delegates. Apparently, the Chinese thereupon concluded that the occasion was not opportune for such a major disclosure. The memorial in question was never referred to for the duration of the conference, although the proceedings witnessed heated exchanges on the subject of Sino-Japanese relations.¹⁷

Publication and dissemination of the Memorial

Barely one month after the Kyoto Conference, the memorial made its public debut in the Chinese language. A Nanking magazine with close ties to the Kuomintang,¹⁸ the *Shihshih yüehpao* (Monthly Report of Current Events), carried a 40,000-character exposé in its December 1929 issue: 'Shocking Policy of Japan in Manchuria and Mongolia: Tanaka Giichi's Memorial to the Japanese Emperor'. The memorial was described as a secret petition incorporating the decisions reached at the Eastern Conference and presented to Emperor Hirohito on 25 July 1927. In an introduction to the text, the editor remarked that this extraordinary document had been obtained in Tokyo. He did not elaborate.

If the Chinese involved had hoped for a wide reaction to these disclosures, they were surely disappointed. The first publication of the memorial drew little attention outside China. In 1930 the Japanese Foreign Ministry sent a note of protest to the Nationalist government, but Tokyo was tolerant enough to permit a Japanese translation of the Chinese 'translation' to be published that year.¹⁹ The impact on the West can be gauged from the fact that the public media ignored (or were ignorant of) the matter before late 1931.

The memorial's second public exposure (which Western accounts

¹⁷ Inō, *op. cit.*, p. 83; W. W. Willoughby, *Japan's case examined* (Baltimore, 1940), p. 149.

¹⁸ *Shihshih yüehpao's* chief editor was Ch'en Li-fu who together with his brother led the Kuomintang's 'Organization clique' ('CC clique').

¹⁹ Nikka Kurabu (ed.), *Shinajin no mitaru waga Manmō seisaku* (Tokyo, 1930).

then considered the first) proved to be much more consequential. On 24 September 1931, a Shanghai English-language weekly, *The China Critic*, published the text of the memorial under red headlines in the same issue carrying the story of the Manchurian Incident (18 September).²⁰ The temptation to assume a causal connexion between these two events is hard to resist. However, closer examination of the *China Critic* itself reveals that this assumption cannot be supported. The 17 September issue of the *China Critic* (printed several days *before* hostilities erupted at Mukden) carried a short editorial announcing the intention to publish a certain 'Tanaka Memorial' the following week in view of the heavy influx of Korean settlers into southern Manchuria, where tensions between Korean and Chinese peasants were reaching serious proportions.²¹ What was the connexion? The memorial had specifically recommended the encouragement of massive Korean immigration into Manchuria as a device to extend Japanese influence and eventually to provide a pretext for annexation. Therefore, the issue of Korean immigrants, not the Manchurian Incident, revived the document from obscurity.

But if the timing of publication was not related to the Manchurian Incident, events in Manchuria assisted the memorial's dissemination. In 1929 the memorial's revelations had fallen on deaf ears. In 1931 these same revelations were greeted by an eager audience. Japan's advance into Manchuria seemed to echo the memorial's instructions, and subsequent armed penetration of China, South-east Asia, and the Pacific all but confirmed the document's ultimate vision—world conquest. More than anything, Japan's own actions enhanced the memorial's credibility.

During the 1930s the Tanaka Memorial quickly acquired an international readership. All of the many texts in circulation derived from either the Nanking (1929) or the Shanghai (1931) disclosures. The Nanking version was distributed in pamphlet form throughout China and was translated into Japanese (1930) in an edition that has been reprinted several times in postwar Japan.²² The Shanghai (*China Critic*) text was reproduced in innumerable pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers in the United States, Canada, and Europe.²³ The Shanghai text

²⁰ 'The Tanaka Memorial', *The China Critic*, 24 September 1931, pp. 923-34.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 17 September 1931, pp. 889-90.

²² For example, Rekishigaku kenkyūkai (ed.), *Taihei'yō sensō shi*, I (Tokyo, 1953), 250-8; *Chūgoku*, Vol. 14 (January 1965).

²³ The Chinese National Salvation Publicity Bureau (San Francisco) published it in 1937. 'The Tanaka Memorial: An Outline Presented to the Japanese Emperor on July 25, 1927 by Premier Tanaka for the Japanese Conquest of China and other

also served as the basis for several editions issued by the Comintern: (1) a Chinese translation published by the Foreign Engineers' Press in Moscow (1932); (2) a Russian translation published in Moscow (1932); and (3) another edition (language unclear) reportedly smuggled into Japan, translated by underground members of the Japan Communist Party in 1932, and eventually published in Tokyo in 1946.²⁴

Judging the Memorial's authenticity

Debate regarding the Tanaka Memorial's authenticity dates back to private discussions between Chinese and Japanese delegates at the Kyoto Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations in the fall of 1929. It has persisted with varying degrees of intensity to the present. There are few signs of any resolution. However, the weight of evidence and responsible opinion point unmistakably to the memorial being a spurious document.

Japanese that conceivably might have been connected with the memorial have unanimously denied its existence. The Foreign Ministry denied it in 1930. Inukai Tsuyoshi, Tanaka's personal friend and successor as head of the Seiyūkai and later as prime minister, denied it two months before his own assassination by ultranationalists in May 1932.²⁵ Matsuoka Yōsuke denied it with florid incoherence in the League of Nations and even volunteered his own explanation of the document's pedigree.²⁶ Okada Keisuke, Navy Minister in Tanaka's cabinet, denied it at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal in 1946.²⁷ Other officials denied it in their reminiscences.²⁸ If the memorial were genuine, it is difficult to imagine how such a colossal deception could be sustained for so long by so many individuals.

Nations'. 17 pp. Hereafter, citations from the memorial will be taken from this text (referred to as 'Tanaka Memorial').

²⁴ *Isukura sōsho*, I, (Tokyo, 1946). For more on the memorial's distribution and translation see Inō, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-7.

²⁵ Inukai Tsuyoshi in an introduction to K. K. Kawakami, *Japan speaks on the Sino-Japanese Crisis* (New York, 1932), xi-xiii.

²⁶ In the course of an exchange with Wellington Koo before the League Council on 23 November 1932, Matsuoka averred that the memorial had been forged by a military attaché (nationality unspecified) in Peking and sold to the Chinese for \$50,000. Willoughby, *op. cit.*, p. 152 n.

²⁷ International Military Tribunal for the Far East. Affidavit of Okada Keisuke. Documents no. 1749, 11525. Exhibits no. 175 and 176.

²⁸ Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Showa no dōran*, I (Tokyo, 1952), 33; Arita Hachirō, *Baka-hachi to hito wa iu* (Tokyo, 1959), pp. 40-1

Today, an overwhelming majority of Japanese scholars consider the memorial to be a forgery. It is true that immediately after the war, a national compulsion to expose the culpability of former leaders fostered an almost exhilarating conviction that Tanaka had indeed drawn up a plan to conquer the world. But careful investigations in subsequent years have dampened this credulity. At present, scholarly opinions on Tanaka as a statesman diverge sharply, but there is a general recognition (possibly reluctant in some quarters) that the memorial which carries his name is a fabrication.²⁹

To be sure, official and scholarly opinion alone does not constitute proof. The most impressive evidence that the memorial has no claim to legitimacy derives from the document itself. Analysis of the text has uncovered a catalogue of stylistic discrepancies, factual errors, and internal contradictions.

The memorial's rough, even earthy style has no parallel in the annals of imperial petitions in which precisely prescribed formal usages are *de rigueur*. One can hardly imagine a prime minister (even a man so forthright as Tanaka) addressing His Imperial Majesty in the following manner (regarding the planned emigration of Korean settlers to Manchuria): 'We can always sell dog's meat with a sheep's head as sign board.'³⁰ An indiscriminate mixture of apocalyptic visions (world conquest) and mundane trivia (the merits of bean curds and horsebreeding) make the memorial a model of cluttered turgidity which even an enlightened emperor could hardly be expected to comprehend. Moreover, comparisons of Tanaka's known writings with the memorial indicate that the stylistic differences are unbridgeable.³¹

While these and many other stylistic discrepancies may be ascribed to the imaginative interpolations of a translator, factual errors cannot be accounted for so easily. Fallacious figures and dates abound in the text. The memorial states that Manchuria's and Mongolia's combined area is 74,000 square miles.³² In fact, it is closer to one million square miles (Manchuria—382,000 sq. mi., Outer Mongolia—604,250 sq. mi.). Japan's total investment in Manchuria is put at 440,000,000 yen when the correct amount was 2 billion yen (1928).³³ Strangely (and perhaps significantly), the former figure coincides precisely with the capitalization of the South Manchurian Railway in 1928.³⁴ The Chinese

²⁹ Eguchi, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

³⁰ 'Tanaka Memorial', p. 4.

³¹ Hashikawa Bunzō, 'Tanaka jōsōbun no shūhen', *Chūgoku*, Vol. 15 (February 1965).

³² 'Tanaka Memorial', p. 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ According to Horinouchi Kensuke, Japanese Consul-General in New York. *New York Times*, 15 May 1932, IX, 3.

are described as 'our sole customers'³⁵ when China accounted for less than one-quarter of Japan's exports in the late 1920s. In the memorial, Tanaka recalls an attempt on his life by a Chinese in Shanghai during his return from a trip to America and Europe where he had supposedly consulted foreign leaders about abrogating the Nine-Power Treaty (1922).³⁶ In fact, Tanaka visited neither the United States nor Europe after 1914. A Korean had tried to assassinate him in Shanghai in 1922 while he was returning from a visit to the Philippines.

Fabrications provide another basis for questioning the authenticity of the memorial. References are made to a Fukuoka army division when that city had none.³⁷ A will of the Emperor Meiji calling for a 'New Continent' is cited.³⁸ No such document existed. The daughter of General Fukushima Yasumasa (commander of the Kwantung Army, 1912-14) is described as marrying a Mongol prince and acting as an instrument of Japanese expansion during her father's period of service in Manchuria.³⁹ In fact, the daughter never wedded a Mongol (aristocrat or otherwise). If she had been active in Mongolia during her father's tenure in Manchuria she would not only have been precocious (she was born in 1898) but truant (she was enrolled for those years at the Peers School in Tokyo). Perhaps the most egregious invention in the memorial is the assertion that following the ratification of the Nine-Power Treaty (6 February 1922), Emperor Taisho summoned the elder statesman Yamagata Aritomo and others to discuss means to nullify the restrictions which the treaty placed on Japan in China.⁴⁰ Such a conference is hard to imagine. Mental disabilities had forced Taisho to retire from active affairs in November 1921 when his powers were formally delegated to Crown Prince (later Emperor) Hirohito. Yamagata had died five days before the treaty's ratification and thus could hardly have responded to an imperial call.

In addition to stylistic discrepancies and factual errors, the memorial betrays some internal contradictions that render parts of it unintelligible. The shifting identities of real and potential allies and antagonists would confound the most consummate Machiavellian. At one point, it is asserted that Japan must crush the United States in order to control China. Immediately afterwards, it states that China must be conquered first. Moreover, to achieve domination over China, American and European capital investment in Manchuria and Mongolia should be encouraged.⁴¹ The memorial's attitude towards the Soviet Union can

³⁵ 'Tanaka Memorial', p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 15.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 13.

charitably be described as inconsistent. War with the USSR over Manchuria and Mongolia is seen as inevitable. Yet the Soviet Union is envisioned as assisting Japan against China by transporting Japanese troops on the Trans-Siberian Railway from Vladivostok to points in Manchuria.⁴² Aside from exercising a dubious command of geography, the memorial's author appears to have been innocent of elementary political logic.

Notwithstanding the above opinion and evidence, an unanswered question remains: who wrote the Tanaka Memorial? Even those who share a conviction of the document's falsity disagree about its authorship. Several hypotheses have been advanced. Matsuoka Yōsuke ascribed authorship to an unnamed military attaché in Peking who sold a distorted version of the Eastern Conference proceedings to the Chinese for \$50,000.⁴³ A defense attorney at the Tokyo War Crimes Trial declared the memorial to be a Chinese Communist forgery.⁴⁴ General Suzuki Tei'ichi, who attended the Eastern Conference, recalled that a similar document had been penned by Mori Kaku, a Seiyūkai official with expansionist inclinations. According to Suzuki, Mori's unofficial jottings were purloined and surreptitiously sent to Chiang Kai-shek by an (unnamed) enemy of Tanaka in the Kenseikai, a rival political party.⁴⁵ Recently, Japanese scholars have speculated that the author was a *tairiku rōnin* (Japanese continental adventurer), an activist army officer, or a Chinese nationalist who had studied in Japan.⁴⁶

Internal evidence suggests the possibility of collaboration between Japanese and Chinese individuals. A Japanese could have provided data on the Eastern Conference and might have assisted in its embellishment. But there is a Chinese flavor in the memorial, namely, the reference to Soviet-Japanese collaboration.⁴⁷ Chinese suspicions of Soviet-Japanese collusion mounted sharply during the summer of 1929 when Russo-Chinese hostilities erupted in northern Manchuria over possession of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Not a few Chinese in Manchuria perceived Russian pressures from the north and Japanese penetration from the south as anything but coincidental. Tanaka's long and

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

⁴³ Willoughby, *op. cit.*, p. 152 n.

⁴⁴ International Military Tribunal for the Far East, *Proceedings*, p. 2, 468.

⁴⁵ Takakura Tetsu'ichi (ed.), *Tanaka Giichi denki*, II (Tokyo, 1960), 668–72.

⁴⁶ Inō, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Eguchi, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁴⁷ 'Tanaka Memorial', p. 9; Inō, *op. cit.*, p. 86. Soviet writers are apparently unaware of this aspect of the memorial. Otherwise, they might be less energetic in upholding its authenticity.

intimate association with Russia⁴⁸ made him (in Chinese eyes) a natural suspect as the coordinator of this double encroachment. Just a few weeks before Japanese consular authorities in Mukden began hearing rumors of a certain 'Tanaka Memorial', popular rallies in the city accused Japan and the Soviet Union of plotting to detach Manchuria from China.⁴⁹ Recent research on Soviet-Japanese relations during the 1920s demonstrates that these Chinese suspicions were unfounded.⁵⁰ Yet the author(s) of the memorial shared this Chinese pre-occupation with Soviet-Japanese encroachment.

Any 'montage' of the memorial's author should in the last analysis be regarded as speculation. Until more conclusive evidence becomes available, the question of authorship will elude a final solution. The memorial itself, however, can hardly be treated as anything but a fabrication or at best an imaginative distortion of the Eastern Conference proceedings. As Etō Shinkichi has remarked, a few individuals in Japan may have nurtured ambitions along lines of the Tanaka Memorial, but it is unthinkable that the government ever drew up such a program as a state document.⁵¹

Lingering doubts

Despite all the evidence to the contrary, the Tanaka Memorial continues to impress many as at least a quasi-genuine document. Of course, Chinese and Soviet writers uphold its authenticity for reasons of political and ideological expediency. Others have done so out of habit or ignorance. But there are more compelling forces at work.

In Japan, the debate surrounding the Tanaka Memorial has shifted to new grounds. No longer is the authenticity of the memorial itself a matter of serious contention, for nearly all concede that it could hardly have been a state document authored by Tanaka Giichi. But many scholars believe that the memorial did reflect accurately the aspirations

⁴⁸ Tanaka spent four years in Russia as a young army officer (1898-1902) during which he learned the language and acquainted himself thoroughly with military, economic, and social conditions there. He served in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War and directed the Siberian War Planning Committee of the General Staff during the Allied Intervention (1918-22).

⁴⁹ Inō, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

⁵⁰ Tanaka and the Soviet ambassador, Aleksandr A. Troianovskii, did talk informally about the Manchurian problem on 8 March 1928, but this conversation entailed no subsequent cooperation. George A. Lensen, *Japanese recognition of the USSR, Soviet-Japanese relations, 1921-1930* (Tokyo, 1970), p. 357.

⁵¹ Etō, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

of Japan's leaders. Forgery or not, it forecasted all too well Japan's conquests in East Asia and the Pacific. Hence it must have some claim to legitimacy.⁵²

Some Japanese scholars consider this 'guilt by fulfillment' judgment too ambiguous and insist that the memorial's genesis can be traced directly to the Tanaka cabinet. They have scoured the records in an effort to unearth the memorial's prototype. One argument links the memorial to a Kwantung Army report at the Eastern Conference.⁵³ Another asserts that Tanaka himself entertained such thoughts although he may never have written them down.⁵⁴ Until more solid evidence is adduced, such theories will not be very persuasive.

Perhaps the most puzzling new 'find' that has come to light is a badly burned copy of the memorial (in German) contained in a folder of military documents retrieved from the Japanese Embassy in Berlin at the end of the Second World War.⁵⁵ While conforming in general to the Nanking and Shanghai texts, the Berlin 'edition' reads more coherently, puts more emphasis on Europe as an object of conquest, and even provides an estimate of how long the 'program' will take to fulfill (10 years).⁵⁶ As crucial sections of the document have been destroyed and as there are no visible watermarks or other identifying features, its origin is likely to remain a mystery.

The ultimate source of the Tanaka Memorial's durability may well reside not in external evidence but in human nature. Unwilling or unable to accept complex interactions as explanations for historical causation, men have sought more easily comprehensible, more emotionally satisfying answers. The idea of a 'grand design' wilfully executed by militarists, capitalists, emperors, or collective enemies ('the ruling classes') exerts an almost irresistible appeal to those frustrated by the failure of events to conform to intelligible patterns.

'Conspiracy' as a theoretical explanation of Japanese expansion dates from the second decade of this century and still has its adherents today.⁵⁷ For those who subscribe to this view, the Tanaka Memorial fits

⁵² *Nihon rekishi dai jiten*, XII, 206. *Sekai dai hyakka jiten*, XIV (Tokyo, 1966), 428; *Nihon kindai shi jiten* (Tokyo, 1958), p. 368; *Taiheiyō sensō shi*, I, 71-2.

⁵³ Eguchi, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64, citing a 1951 Tokyo University dissertation by Inumaru Giichi. Kuhara Fusanosuke, Minister of Communications in Tanaka's cabinet from 23 May 1928 to 2 July 1929, admiringly recalled Tanaka's personal continental visions in *Kōdō keizai ron* (Tokyo, 1933), pp. 73-4.

⁵⁵ United States, National Archives, *National Archives Microcopy No. T-82*, Serial 198, Roll 157, frames 294027-294075.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, frame no. 029064.

⁵⁷ David Bergamini, *Japan's imperial conspiracy* (New York, 1971); for early

neatly into a sinister procession of statements which supposedly prove Japan's age-old determination to subdue the world: Lord Hotta's Memorial (1858),⁵⁸ Viscount Tani's letters (1888),⁵⁹ Kokuryūkai (Amur River Society) boasts, and Matsuoka Yōsuke's strident importunities. Unfortunately, far from elucidating the forces propelling Japanese expansion, the conspiracy approach obscures them by distracting the reader with dramatized antics of a gallery of clowns and rogues.

Of course, there were those who possessed the shrewdness to put the conspiracy syndrome to good use. In 1931, the Chinese were quick to perceive the impact of the Tanaka Memorial in the world press. Within months of its publication in Shanghai, worthy successors were put into circulation: 'General Honjō's Memorial'⁶⁰ and even 'Premier Inukai's Memorial'.⁶¹ But these never achieved the notoriety of their famous predecessor.

Circumstantial and textual evidence strongly suggests that the Tanaka Memorial is a forgery. But mystery cloaks the memorial's true identity—its conception, its authorship, its pre-publication movements. And mystery, as the author Matsumoto Seichō demonstrates, is the very thing that sustains the memorial's popular credibility.⁶²

examples, see Carl Crow, *Japan and America* (New York, 1916), and Frederick McCormick, *The Menace of Japan* (Boston, 1917).

⁵⁸ Hotta Masayoshi (1810–64), lord of Sakura han and senior councillor in the Tokugawa bakufu (1841–43, 1955–58). For a discussion of Hotta and global conspiracy, see Upton Close, *Behind the Face of Japan* (New York, 1942), pp. 100–5, and Otto D. Tolischus, *Tokyo Record* (New York, 1943), p. 23.

⁵⁹ Tani Kanjō (1837–1911), army officer and statesman from Tosa, known for his traditionalism, nationalism, and agrarian idealism. For Tani's letters, see Close, p. 103.

⁶⁰ Honjō Shigeru (1876–1945) commanded the Kwantung Army during the Manchurian Incident of 1931, although he played a passive role in the affair. Honjō retired in 1938 and committed suicide on 20 November 1945, reputedly out of a sense of responsibility for his role in the incident.

⁶¹ Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855–1932) is a bizarre candidate for an expansionist memorial. He paid with his life for his refusal to entertain such notions.

⁶² Matsumoto Seichō, *Shōwa shi hakkutsu*, III (Tokyo, 1966), 29–32.