

РОССИЯ И ВОСТОК

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**The collapse of the USSR in the views of the third party:
Analysis of memoirs of Japanese diplomats
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The final years of the USSR and the person of its president M. Gorbachov are the focus of numerous Russian researches connected with history, politics, economics and other fields of social science. This topic also has attracted a great deal of attention from researchers in Western countries and Japan. The Gorbachov epoch is viewed in a very particular way in Japan: the former Soviet president is very popular up to the present among people and scholars and he was supported by the Japanese politicians and authorities because of his 'perestroika' course. In recent years the historical period from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s is being reconsidered in Russian social science, especially due to the 25th anniversary of the USSR's collapse. This article aims to cover these events as they were seen by Japanese diplomats who became the witnesses of the dramatic transformations in our country.

Keywords: Japan-soviet relations, M. Gorbachov, perestroika, the USSR's image in Japan, Sato Masaru, Edamura Sumio, self-collapsed empire.

Recent years have demonstrated an explosion of scientific interest in the history of the USSR, more specifically, the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In modern Russian historiography, topics associated with the final years of the USSR, the collapse of this

great power, and formation of the Russian Federation has drawn the focused attention of historians, sociologists, economists, publicists and journalists; the memoirs of partakers in those events are being published¹. Japanese Sovietology and Russian studies maintain interest in the recent history of the USSR and Russia, especially the period of Gorbachev's reforms and the collapse of the Soviet Union. As early as the 1990s, the well-known Russia experts Vada Haruki, Kimura Hiroshi, and Simotomai Nobuo have made contributions to the field. The monograph of Ishigooka Ken (a journalist and professor at Nihon University) *The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991* (‘ソ連崩壊 1991’, Tokyo, 1998) provided a detailed historical overview of the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, archetypal for Sovietology and Russian studies in Japan, which tend to qualify manifestations of crisis in the Soviet economy, striving for independence by the national elites, and rows between political groups within the Communist party as major reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a rule, little attention is paid to the cultural issues, everyday life, involvement of foreign actors in the process of the USSR's disintegration, whereas the crisis in domestic policy and economy is regarded by Japanese experts as a backbone of power and the degradation of statehood in the USSR.

The author of this paper focuses on the history of the collapse of the Soviet Union as viewed by the diplomats in service of the Embassy of Japan in Moscow from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, namely the memoirs of Edamura Sumio, Ambassador of Japan to the USSR and the Russian Federation (*How the Empire Collapsed: Memoirs of Ambassador of Japan in Moscow, 1990–1994*) and Sato Masaru, analyst of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (*The Self-Destructing Empire*). The study of these sources enables us (1) to assess the Japanese vision of crisis phenomena in the USSR in the context of changing policy towards our country during the collapse of the Soviet statehood; (2) to identify the ‘dispersed’ ideas, following M. Foucault's concept [1, p. 51, 92–95, 253], as it relates to a critical stage of Russian history (it can be noted preemptively that the assessments of S. Edamura and M. Sato are ‘trivial’ and common to Japanese Sovietology and Russian studies, and this make them interesting as a subject of imagology and history of ideas reflected in shaping the image of Russia and its history in Japan); (3) to analyze, upon a specific material, how the history of the ‘Empire's’ collapse is treated in Japanese literature. To achieve the above goals, two sources were selected, which formed the basis for identifying the existent ideas in Japanese literature and social mind and influenced directly the formation of Russia policy in the early 1990s.

Edamura Sumio: *How the Empire Collapsed: Memoirs of Ambassador of Japan in Moscow, 1990–1994*

The book of Sumio Edamura, former Ambassador of Japan to the USSR and then the Russian Federation between 1990 and 1994, took a critical standpoint in describing life in the Soviet Union. At the same time, it cannot be argued that the author deliberately cre-

¹ A number of recent prominent studies on this topic can be mentioned: Yanik A. A. The history of modern Russia: the origins and lessons from the last Russian modernization (1985–1999) (M., 2012), The year of 1990: the experience of studying recent history, in 2 volumes (ed.: I. Prokhorov, M., 2011), The collapse of the USSR: documents and facts (1986–1992), in 2 volumes (ed.: S. M. Shakhray, M., 2016); Bashkirova V., Solovyev A., Dorofeev V. The heroes of the 90's. People and money. Recent history of capitalism in Russia (M., 2012); Gaydar E. T. The demise of the Empire. Lessons for modern Russia (M., 2006), etc.

ates a negative image of Soviet (and post-Soviet) society. Edamura's position was largely shaped by the publication (1951) of a well-known American political scientist, diplomat and Russia expert George F. Kennan, who argued that the internal collapse of the socialist system was inevitable [2, p. 31; 3, p. 151–152]. S. Edamura had no expertise in Russian studies and was appointed as Ambassador to Moscow on his return from service in Indonesia [2, p. 13–14]. When aware of the upcoming appointment, he took a careful study of the internal political situation: the diplomat went to the USSR fully aware that the changes taking place in the country were of great importance for international politics.

Before leaving for the Soviet Union, S. Edamura delivered a lecture at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, in which he stated his opinion for the main reasons for the changes observed in the USSR: 1. crisis of the socialist system; 2. economic stagnation. He especially emphasized the social inequality in the USSR, where 'the Soviet people got used to poverty in conditions of 'equality', rather than to progress under conditions of competition' [2, p. 18]. The Ambassador noted the special importance of the changed milestones of the Soviet leaders, who strived for 'universal human values' by introducing the policy of 'perestroika' and 'new thinking'. S. Edamura spoke as a man of the Western world, an advocate of liberal democracy and market economy, who took this system of values as the true and the only for all peoples. In the same historical period, Japan was criticized by American and European economists, sociologists and political scientists for its unique economic system (a non-market market economy with a high level of state regulation and 'crony capitalism') and the functioning of its democratic institutions (the 'Iron Triangle' of the current electoral system) [4]. However, S. Edamura omitted this complex discourse from his memoirs and presented Japan as a country of a developed market and democracy, which was opposed to the inefficient Soviet socialist system. The same assessments still persist in Japanese public opinion of today, which means that this idea is anchored in perceptions and the historical image of the breakdown of the Soviet Union has become a rigid one.

S. Edamura paid special attention to illustrating the economic stagnation in the USSR through social and everyday narratives as witnessed by foreign diplomats. For instance, one of his colleagues, a diplomat from Indonesia, during his visit to the Soviet Union could nowhere, as he said, order a salad, which in the Soviet catering meant just cucumbers and tomatoes. Another acquaintance of S. Edamura was shocked by the fact that the Soviet soap did not foam. The third one was surprised that all Muscovites, when going to their offices, carry shopping bags in addition to their briefcases [2, p. 20]. These narratives interested S. Edamura and from his point of view they showed the aggravation of economic stagnation in the USSR. Accordingly, when moving to his place of service in Moscow, he had certain expectations as to what he would have to face in the country of destination. Describing his arrival in the Soviet capital, he further expands the theme of distress and dependency in the USSR. He sees the capital as dull and colorless, and the sight of the fire in the fireplace at the embassy residence wrenched him from within [2, p. 36–38]. It should be noted that S. Edamura was appointed Ambassador to Moscow on the eve of the first visit of the Soviet leader to Japan and largely with the aim of preparing this visit, in the context of adjusting the political line of Tokyo towards the USSR (in 1989, the Japanese government formulated a new 'balanced equilibrium' concept intended to boost bilateral relations and promote them to a new level). The appointment of this experienced diplomat coincided with a period of reforms and instability in the USSR.

S. Edamura believed that the reforms launched by the government of M. S. Gorbachev and the end of the Cold War announced in the course of the meeting of presidents of the USA and the USSR in Malta in December 1989, caused global-scale consequences in all regions [2, p. 24]. At the same time, he was skeptical about the policy of 'new thinking', since he did not observe fundamental changes in the Soviet system and in internal policy. This comes off as somewhat inconsistent, probably due to the fact that the gist of the Soviet reforms remained unclear for the Japanese diplomat. Moreover, conflicts arose when speaking about changes in foreign policy: S. Edamura regarded the course of E. A. Shevardnadze, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, as the most tangible confirmation of changes. He wrote: 'The time has come when Soviet foreign policy, previously protected by the myth of its infallibility, is now mercilessly criticized by its own Minister of Foreign Affairs' [2, p. 67]. S. Edamura viewed Shevardnadze's statements positively and believed that Japanese diplomacy had been given a great opportunity to defend its state interests. Apparently, the ambassador of Japan did not notice changes in domestic policy but considered changes in the USSR foreign policy to be substantive.

The attitude to the 'territorial issue', which was of the foremost interest to the Japanese party under the scope of Soviet diplomacy, was considered by S. Edamura as a barometer of the democratic atmosphere in the Soviet government. He mentioned discussions with representatives of the Soviet intellectual circles held between 1990 and 1991, which demonstrated their willingness to listen to the arguments of the Japanese party. The diplomat emphasized the fact that under expanding contacts with the Soviet government, parliament and mass media in 1991, prior to the visit of M. S. Gorbachev to Japan, both he and the Embassy staff had the impression that 'opinions on the territorial issue have not got more rigorous' [2, p. 121]. It is obvious that in the new reality, the Japanese diplomatic mission got the opportunity to expand contacts with representatives of Soviet society.

However, it is also clear that these contacts were mostly sought by representatives of the Soviet public, which were disposed to Japan and more loyal to the Japanese territorial claims, while the position of the USSR leader on this issue constantly eluded the Japanese Ambassador. Ahead of the visit of M. S. Gorbachev to Japan, the Japanese Embassy attempted to hold informal talks with the Soviet leader, resorting to the 'nemawashi' principle (literally, 'digging around the roots' — preliminary coordination of positions) but Japanese diplomats and politicians failed to find the proper line [2, p. 124–125].

The Ambassador of Japan gave an ambiguous estimate of M. S. Gorbachev's personality. The President of the USSR appeared an outstanding person to him: 'His name will remain in the history as the name of an outstanding political leader of the second half of the twentieth century. However, a powerful historical current can occur, which can not be governed by a single person' [2, p. 33]. Thus, M. S. Gorbachev is viewed by S. Edamura as a person, who appeared at the right time but unable to manage alone historical processes in the USSR launched by himself — like a genie out of the bottle.

Further, Ambassador Edamura underlined that 'Gorby', as he was called in the American and Japanese press, was incredibly popular in Japan as a leading figure in world politics, and many Japanese politicians arriving to the USSR desired to meet him [2, p. 41]. On the other hand, he pointed out the unpredictability of the Soviet leader. To illustrate this feature, he cited the case related to the presentation of credentials, a formal event, during which the President of the USSR arranged private talks with the Ambassador of Japan and then and there the dates of Gorbachev's visit to Japan were announced [2, p. 57]. Accord-

ing to S. Edamura, the unpredictability of the Soviet leader was manifested most vividly in the course of his official visit to Japan in April 1991, when he left the car in Nagasaki, in violation of the Protocol, and went out to communicate with the people [2, p. 133–134, 140–141]. This action was not coordinated with the Japanese security service and caused their resentment, but at the same time, it increased the popularity of the Soviet President in the eyes of the Japanese public. In his memoirs, S. Edamura reiterated that the Soviet President had charisma and charm, but actually he was a Kremlin leader, rather than the focal point of democratic forces in the country [2, p. 110–111]. According to the Japanese diplomat, Gorbachev's position was one of the reasons for the increasing popularity of B. N. Yeltsin, who, on the contrary, sought to communicate the people directly and positioned himself as a people's leader.

Here, the author brings readers to realize the fact that the Soviet system was doomed to collapse due to the inability of the President, even the most open to the outside world, to lead the masses. However, a different context can be perceived, too — since the government of the Russian Federation intended to pursue separate policy and negotiations with Japan, the Japanese establishment made a bid on B. N. Yeltsin's team in 1991 and lost its interest in M. S. Gorbachev.

S. Edamura paid much attention to the events of August–December 1991. He found confirmation for the ideas reflected in the theoretical works of Western experts dedicated to the life of 'empires', since he regarded the USSR as such. For example, he mentioned the book 'Invertebrate Spain' by Jose Ortega y Gasset, the valued Spanish philosopher, where the main reason for the collapse of the Roman Empire and Spanish colonial power is seen as the loss of ideological and cultural attractiveness of the metropolis, which created a 'project of living together' [5, p. 16]. S. Edamura draws an analogy with the situation in the Soviet Union by comparing between the 'degradation' of Castile in the Spanish Empire and the communism losing its appeal in the eyes of many peoples that lived on the USSR territory [2, p. 100–101]. Consequently, in the above-mentioned presentation the former Japanese Ambassador brought the readers to the idea of the inevitable collapse of the Soviet Union based on the existing world historical experience, which, from the point of view of S. Edamura, was realized by the Western community in the early 1990s.

Despite the fact that throughout the entire text dedicated to his service in the USSR, S. Edamura speaks of the instability of the political system, the moves and vagrancy in the power structures of the Soviet state, he flew away to Tokyo for vacation in August 1991, which raises the question, whether the Japanese diplomat assessed correctly what was happening in the country. Already on August 19, after the appearance of media communications on the initiated attempt of coup d'état in Moscow, the Ambassador had to come back promptly to the Embassy [2, p. 161–162]. On his return to Moscow, S. Edamura noted the rather subdued mood among the citizens. At the same time, according to his testimony, foreign diplomats could not have a stake in the situation and persons involved, and thus took the position of observers. At that same time, when interviewed on 20 August, the Ambassador of Japan, with reference to the official position of Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki, questioned the legality and constitutionality of the coup undertaken by GKChP (State Committee of the State of Emergency). The Tokyo position consisted in condemnation of the putsch and support of B. N. Yeltsin [2, p. 169]. Therefore, the Ambassador, as an official, recognized the only option to resolve contradictions in the USSR — the coming to power of 'defenders of democracy' headed by B. N. Yeltsin. He described coup leaders

as inconsistent: 'they don't have the guts to do what intended' [2, p. 172]. According to the Japanese Ambassador, M. S. Gorbachev was rescued by his policy of 'perestroika' launched a few years earlier, thanks to which the Soviet people did not turn against the President in favor of the GKChP [2, p. 176].

S. Edamura believes that after the failure of the August coup in 1991, the USSR was doomed to collapse. The Japanese diplomat paid special attention to the new status of M. S. Gorbachev and wrote that during the session of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR on August 23, the President of the USSR 'did not speak as vividly as before' [2, p. 181]. S. Edamura watched this session on television and saw the 'humiliation' of M. S. Gorbachev, when B. N. Yeltsin, in capacity of the President of the Russian Republic, made him acknowledge 'that his "blindness" had led to tragic consequences' [2, p. 182], i.e., to the coup d'état and the need to ban the Communist party. The Ambassador of Japan called this session a historic event and considered it as a start of the USSR's demise [2, p. 182] and a turning point when B. N. Yeltsin began to play first violin, despite Gorbachev's attempts to keep the established image and stay dignified.

In the autumn of 1991, the Japanese Embassy intensified its links with élites in the national republics: for example, S. Edamura established personal contacts and information exchange with A. Akaev, head of Kyrgyzstan. Separate negotiations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR were initiated. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan established successfully governmental relations with the republic leadership of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. In autumn, agreements with the governments of the former Baltic republics were concluded. Immediately after the coup, S. Edamura, together with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Saito Kunihiko, visited B. N. Yeltsin in the White House, and, in early September, R. I. Hasbulatov visited Japan with a personal message from the President of the Russian Federation.

In bilateral relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan tended to play two camps — to develop links with the RSFSR and retain the established contacts with the Soviet leadership. This suggests that the Japanese strategy towards the Soviet at that time considered the capacity of the all-Union government structures as a still-relevant issue. This suggestion is proved by the announcement of a new foreign policy concept in relation to the USSR and the RSFSR, i.e., 'Nakayama's Five Principles', which involved intensified negotiations with the Republican elites, against the legitimate status of the Soviet Union as the central all-Union government [2, p. 187; 6]. S. Edamura emphasized that the fundamental point of this concept consisted in establishing links Japan — Soviet Union, rather than Japan — Russia. Japan gave priority to the 'territorial issue', focusing on the statement that its resolution 'would facilitate the admission of the Soviet Union into the world community' [2, p. 189]. Thus, under conditions of tremendous changes and instability in our country, the Japanese party sought new ways to attract attention and resolve territorial disputes in their favor, and this approach continued until 1993; i.e., after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the new Russian government, when the Japanese party would exert serious targeted pressure to settle the territorial disputes [7, p. 51–53].

Moreover, the Ambassador of Japan wrote in such a manner as if the Soviet Union had never been accepted by the world community up to that time point, which raises several obvious questions — how, in this case, the USSR managed to represent one of the global poles throughout the previous forty years, what should be considered as 'world community', and whether this specific bilateral issue could affect the international politi-

cal balance of power on a global scale. Undoubtedly, this phrase reflects the ideological guidelines of the author and his circle. However, it also contains a key characteristic of the USSR from the point of view of the Japanese party — the Soviet Union, as an outcast country and an ‘abnormal’ state, as considered by the world community, that is, the ‘Western world’.

In the last months of the Soviet Union, as supposed by S. Edamura, ‘the reforms initiated by Gorbachev, left him behind’ [2, p. 197]. According to the Japanese diplomat, the referendum in Ukraine held on December 1, 1991, accelerated the collapse of the USSR. The Ambassador wrote that at that moment the Embassy sent to Tokyo a telegram with the following text: ‘The end of the Soviet Union as a state is close’ [2, p. 197]. He gave a chronicle of events related to the legal registration of the USSR collapse in December 1991 and noted specifically the statement of resignation made by M. S. Gorbachev on December 25. The memoirs of S. Edamura declare that the collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable and, at the same time, it was a positive historical event.

He wrote with great sympathy and compassion for the President of the USSR, who ‘was prepossessed with grief, because many of his fellow citizens did not understand the value of his deeds and, in the end, he was betrayed. [...] We can probably say that the reforms initiated by Gorbachev ‘caught him up’ first and then left him behind’. However, I felt a great disposition towards Gorbachev — a charming, witty man’ [2, p. 199–200]. The opinion of S. Edamura in this quoted passage is a kind of quintessence of his attitude to the ‘perestroika’, collapse of the USSR, and M. S. Gorbachev’s personality. This passage reflects the positive assessment of those reforms and emphasizes the importance of the last Soviet leader as a historical person. It is not intended to consider the role of M. S. Gorbachev and his policy in Russian research, but the way this policy is viewed from Japan, since it has not been revised until now. In the aggregate, the picture of events as described in S. Edamura’s memoirs reflects the most common ideas dispersed in Japanese public opinion, which indicate the rigidity of the above stereotypes about this critical stage of Russian history, as can be seen from both the literature reviewed by the author of this article, and interviews given by representatives of Japanese intellectual circles in 2017.

Sato Masaru: *The Self-Destructing Empire*

The work *The Self-Destructing Empire* is dedicated to the history of the USSR’s collapse. It was written by a diplomat, M. Sato, whose work in Moscow (1985–1991) is presented in the form of dialogues between the author and Russian and Japanese politicians and public figures. The book describes in detail his encounters with representatives of the Soviet intellectual and political world; they shared their views and some information about the situation in the country, which was of interest to him as an intelligence officer [8, p. 54–57].

M. Sato makes a lot of interjections across the text of the book, explaining realities of the Soviet life that are obscure to the Japanese reader. Among others, a large place is occupied by the description of the work of the KGB (Committee for State Security), the FSU and GRU (Russia’s military intelligence service), which was observed personally by the Japanese diplomat during collection of information in Moscow [8, p. 45–49, 91–92]. According to the author’s logic, the strong pressure from these state structures became one of the factors contributing to the collapse of the country.

According to M. Sato, the main term of his study work, 'self-destructing empire' was borrowed from G. E. Burbulis, Russian politician who used it in a private conversation with the author in February 1993. During this informal meeting, the interlocutors discussed the reasons for the collapse of the USSR. G. E. Burbulis compared the USSR under M. S. Gorbachev with an atomic bomb that exploded on August 19, 1991. "He [Gorbachev] self-destroyed himself. The Soviet Empire self-destroyed itself. The coup attempted by GKChP in August 1991 became a political Chernobyl. The core, 'the USSR Empire' and the nuclear reactor 'CPSU' caused melting of the core section and it exploded. Gorbachev is a waste. He only thought how to preserve the Communist state in the USSR. He mistakenly believed that during the reactor's destruction at a defective power plant called 'USSR' some energy would remain. As a result, the state collapsed... The USSR was already collapsing when Gorbachev came to power in 1985. My task was to help Yeltsin in understanding this situation. A new state — Russia — was able to emerge through clearing out the ruins of the USSR, but now it is facing difficulties' [8, p. 374–375] (author's translation from the Japanese).

This reflection made M. Sato think about the history of Russia and the USSR, as well as the history of Japan. He compared the facts of the total collapse as experienced by these two countries in their history, the USSR and the Japanese Empire in 1945 [8, p. 17]. From his point of view, Russia was able to revive thanks to the collapse of the Soviet Union, just as the national state of Japan was able to revive after the crushing defeat in the World War II and the hardships of the first post-war decade. This correlation is very controversial though indicative in the construction of identity and national historical memory of the Japanese people, and M. Sato's analysis provides a representation of such approach.

M. Sato considers the Soviet Union an empire. This conviction was induced by the Soviet dissident A. Kazakov when they discussed this problem in private in 1988. Following that conversation, M. Sato assimilated an idea that the USSR became an 'empire without a suzerain state', since the Soviet state represented an equitable union of all included ethnic communities [8, p. 93]. At the same time, the colonies (i.e., the republics in M. Sato's opinion), where the Russian ethnic element was not predominant (republics of the Baltic region and the Central Asia), were included in the USSR artificially, by the will of J. V. Stalin [8, p. 14].

M. Sato assumes that the diversity of countries and peoples of the USSR was united upon a single ideological basis — the Communist idea. He viewed scientific atheism, or Marxism-Leninism as a substitute religion in Soviet society [8, p. 49]. However, society started losing its spiritual background with the start of the country's collapse. Republics were cemented by ideology and economy and were under the pressure of Central government bodies and supervisory authorities (KGB). According to M. Sato, their foundations were undermined by substantial ethnic collisions, especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, the main interest of the Japanese diplomat (largely due to close communication with A. Kazakov) was focused on relations between Moscow and the three Baltic republics. According to M. Sato, they were to initiate the disintegration process, since the ideological linkage demonstrated its weakness by the late 1980s [8, p. 89–90].

The author paid special attention to the events that immediately preceded the USSR's collapse between 1990 and 1991. According to M. Sato, conservative politicians (for example, the publicist V. N. Shved, member of the Communist party of Lithuania Central Committee, joined Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) of Russia in the 1990s, retired in 2004) evaluated negatively the prospects of the state collapse, while the opposition (most

of his informants at the time), on the contrary, considered these processes as a necessary course, since a 'window of opportunity' had emerged for them. During their encounter at a casino in the autumn 1990, the beginning of the USSR collapse was mentioned and V.N. Shved was rather pessimistic on the ongoing processes: 'the USSR will become an American or German colony. We are in a casino right now, it was opened with Australian money. ... The Union has become a hayfield for the Germans. We've lost Eastern Europe ... this process can not be terminated. The Baltic, Ukraine, and Moldova will withdraw from the USSR. Japan has a great chance to get the Kuril Islands' [8, p. 281–282] (author's translation).

The Japanese diplomat could clearly see the distribution of forces in the political life of the Soviet Union, namely, strengthening of the group of Democrats headed by B. N. Yeltsin. However, M. Sato highlighted the fact that the separation of politicians of the new wave was based on the old political platform and from the ranks of the CPSU members. Disagreements within the party had a serious impact on disintegration of the state. The role played by the strengthening of the Republican Communist parties with their own administrative structures was not negligible in these processes. According to M. Sato, advancement of the Communist party of the RSFSR (Russia) led by B. N. Yeltsin in 1990 was of key importance [8, p. 327–330]. Here, M. Sato is inaccurate, as after the Politburo meeting in 1987, B. N. Yeltsin was in disfavor caused by his criticism of the excessively positive presentation of the results of 'perestroika' [9, p. 107–116]. His rise in 1989–1990 was associated with his Deputy election. Apparently, M. Sato wished to simplify the complex situation in the Soviet political life of that period for Japanese readers. He intended to show that the power of M. S. Gorbachev was rapidly falling by 1990 and conversely, the power of the future first President of Russia was at the rise, though this situation was not as straightforward as *The Self-Destructing Empire* purports.

Both M. Sato and S. Edamura witnessed the August putsch of 19–21 August 1991. These events were described in the chapter 'The fateful Morning' and he viewed them as a turning point that led to the collapse of the USSR. In his opinion, despite the growing tension within the country, the happenings of August 1991 came as a surprise for him. Early in the morning, on August 19, he was called by Osanai Takashi, Consul of the Embassy, and was instructed from Tokyo to find out whether the President of the USSR M. S. Gorbachev was alive or dead. The Japanese diplomat and intelligence officer contacted many of his acquaintances in the USSR and they were sure that the head of the state had already been killed. It was then that M. Sato became famous in diplomatic circles for he was the first among the Western diplomats to communicate that M. S. Gorbachev was alive (this information was provided on August 20 by A. N. Ilyin, Second Secretary of the Communist Party of the RSFSR; S. Edamura does not mention this fact) [8, p. 364; 10, p. 161]. During these dramatic Moscow events in August 1991, M. Sato collected information through his numerous informants, both among Conservatives and Democrats.

M. Sato described M. S. Gorbachev after his return from the Crimea on August 21 as exhausted and miserable. He wrote: 'the peoples of the Soviet Union ceased to feel threatened by him and displayed compassion' [8, p. 372]. The Japanese diplomat assumes that the subsequent transition of the state power from M. S. Gorbachev to B. N. Yeltsin became the last chord in the internal self-destruction of the Soviet state [8, p. 373]. After the ban of the CPSU and the Communist party RSFSR signed by B. N. Yeltsin, the pro-communist opposers of M. S. Gorbachev lost the ideological basis of the 'Empire of the USSR' and

found themselves in the position of kamikaze, as they destroyed both themselves and their opponents [8, p. 375].

Notably, that M. Sato finds it appropriate to compare the events in Vilnius, January 1991 and the Moscow events in August of the same year: he calls the barricades in the White House 'toylike', as compared with those around the Supreme Council of Lithuania [8, p. 360]. In his opinion, people in Lithuania really struggled for their independence and separation from the USSR, while in Moscow there was a coup d'état provoked by fights between the groups of politicians within the ruling élite. The fights for leadership between political forces within CPSU and the desire for independence in 'artificially joined' republics presented a characteristic picture and, from M. Sato's point of view, this was the way how the great Empire of the USSR collapsed.

Later, in his study entitled 'How to outlive the epoch of empires?' M. Sato complemented his theory of the USSR's self-destruction with the postmodernist factor [11, p. 36]. The influence of postmodernism on the collapse of the Soviet Union implied that the Soviet society started its disintegration from within, feeling the untruthfulness of the Marxist postulates imposed by the state machine.

The narration of dramatic events related to the collapse of the USSR presented by M. Sato is of interest as eyewitness evidence. However, these interpretations should be taken carefully, bearing in mind his contacts with Soviet dissidents and Democrats of the early 1990s and their possible impact on his views. However, the former Japanese diplomat presented interesting materials that did not overlap with the text of S. Edamura, though both studies feature a similar overall ideology and critical attitude to the processes in the USSR. In this regard, the above-mentioned ideas about the gist of the transformation and collapse processes in the USSR can be considered dispersed in Japanese public opinion just because of their general recognition and platitudes. Moreover, the Japanese state policy towards the USSR and the Russian Federation in late 1991 was shaped upon this analysis of the situation, when the stakes were placed on B. N. Yeltsin's team and the RSFSR government, and further, in 1992, when, against the weakness of the newly established Russian government, the Japanese government exerted an unprecedented pressure concerned with the 'territorial issue' on Russian president. Eventually this evolved into the crisis of bilateral relations in the autumn of 1992, in connection with the refusal of the President of Russia to pay a visit to Japan expressed a few days ahead of the scheduled date of the visit.

Conclusion

Several general conclusions can be drawn from the reviewed materials. First, both diplomats focused on the internal causes of the USSR's collapse, following the American tradition of social, political and historical sciences. Both diplomats present the USSR as an empire, which reveals a conceptual consonance with the approaches taken by political scientists from the USA. Both rely on the idea about the inevitability of the USSR's collapse and the inevitable collapse of empires in general as was expressed by J. F. Kennan. Similar assessments of the situation in the economy, politics and ideology, interpreted as obsolete and failing to meet the needs of the modern world, are traced in the book *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* by J. Matlock, the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR (1987–1991) and he considers socialism

to be doomed from the very beginning [2, p.10, 546]. S.Edamura directly referred to the work of his American counterpart, which indicates the unity of views, traditions and assessments between American and Japanese scientists and diplomats. The same line is followed by Russian liberal-minded public figures and representatives of science (see, for example, E. T. Gaidar's *Collapse of an Empire*, and the 'History of Russian culture' course of the Academy Arzamas online academy).

The memoirs of M. Sato and S. Edamura had been written and published many years after the described events; therefore, both authors were well aware of the outcomes and consequences of the Soviet Union's collapse. Probably, years later this knowledge supported their belief that the collapse of the USSR was inevitable. These ideas are found in the works of other Japanese diplomats–experts in Russian studies² and specialists in Russian history (Simotomai Nobuo, Kimura Hiroshi, and others), which indicates that these ideas were anchored in Japanese social thought as a basic historical stereotype.

Moreover, M. Sato and S. Edamura sympathize visibly with the ideologists of 'perestroika' and 'new thinking'. They consider B. N. Yeltsin as an essential figure needed for the transformation of the USSR into the state adhering to Western values, which indicates that Japanese society gradually identifies itself as a Western society. In his book *State, God and Marxism*, M. Sato interpreted communism and Marxism as a religion [13, p. 287] and the loss of faith in Communist values led to the fall of the regime. The ideas of Japanese diplomats are in tune with the ideas formulated by F. Fukuyama, American sociologist and philosopher, in his famous work *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). A special affinity related to the global-wide victory of liberal democracy is observed between Fukuyama's concepts and the opinions of Ambassador S. Edamura [2, p. 12; 14]. The memoirs of the latter can be seen as a vivid illustration of the concept of the American philosopher. Thus, we can assert that this book of memoirs not only and not so much reflects the events in the USSR in early 1990s, but rather draws an ideological conclusion on the acceptability of the Communist development model to a Japanese citizen. Such politicized and biased approaches in analyzing the history of our country reveal the orientation and values of Japanese ruling and intellectual elites with regard to the basic milestones of the Japanese society itself.

Japanese diplomats insisted that they 'perceived' stagnation in the USSR while the emerging forces of 'reformers' made a kind of live stream in these processes. Hence, they perceived positively the image of M. S. Gorbachev as launching 'perestroika' and 'new thinking' policies. This perception is still kept in Japan up to the present, as evidenced, for example, by the publication of another collection of Gorbachev's interviews in 2015, and he is viewed in Japan as an authoritative expert on acute political issues of contemporary Russia [15].

It is obvious that the works discussed in this article focus on the problems of Soviet-Japanese interactions. These books reveal the activities of Japanese diplomacy in preparing the ground for negotiations on the 'territorial issue'. Consequently, the willingness to discuss this problem displayed by M. S. Gorbachev and B. N. Yeltsin's team, in particular, is viewed by M. Sato and S. Edamura as one of the most positive movements in Soviet politics at the turn of the 1990s. The future directions of research presented in this article

² See the memoirs, journalistic and research works of Togo Kazuhiko, Tamba Minoru, and Kawato Akio — this vision is shown most brightly in his novel about Russia Beyond the Horizon — the Tale of Ilya (M., 2001).

involve reviewing and performing a comparative and comprehensive analysis of the ideas and stereotypes already established and 'dispersed' in Japanese social thought in regard to the history of the fall of the USSR and the emergence of the Russian Federation, against the evaluation of these processes in the context of the evolution of Russo-Japanese dialogue from the point of view of its value orientation.

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Распад СССР глазами японских дипломатов Эдамура Сумио и Сато Масару

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Последние годы существования СССР и личность М. С. Горбачева привлекают внимание отечественных историков, политологов, культурологов и многих других специалистов. Эта тема оказалась не менее интересной и для зарубежных авторов. В Японии «эпоха Горбачева» выделяется особо: президент СССР пользовался популярностью среди населения, его поддерживали в политических кругах благодаря запущенной им политике перестройки. В настоящее время в российской исторической науке и публицистике происходит переосмысление периода заката Советского Союза. В Японии в целом и в японской исторической науке в частности особым авторитетом пользуются публикации очевидцев тех событий, которыми стали два дипломата — Эдамура Сумио и Сато Масару, работавшие в конце 1980-х — начале 1990-х годов в посольстве Японии в Москве. Их работам и посвящена статья.

Ключевые слова: советско-японские отношения, М. С. Горбачев, перестройка, образ СССР в Японии, Сато Масару, Эдамура Сумио, саморазрушающаяся империя.

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