

About my grandfather Higuchi Kiichiro and
Japan's Wartime Policy for Jewish Émigrés (PP1)

Em . Prof. Dr. Higuchi Ryuichi Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo

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On October 11, 2022, a statue of my grandfather Kiichiro Higuchi was unveiled at Izanagi Shinto Shrine (伊弉諾神宮) on Awajishima Island (淡路島). More recently he has been venerated in Japan as the savior of the Jewish refugees in Manchuria from the last war and as the defender of Hokkaido against the unjustified invasion of the Soviet Army after the end of the war in 1945. (PP2)

On May 21, a memorial stone was installed in Engakuji Buddhist Temple, Ryoinan (円覚寺塔頭龍隱庵) in Kamakura in Kanagawa Prefecture on a citizens' initiative. This temple was completed in 1282 under the rule of the regent Hōjō Tokimune (1251-1284). The temple was dedicated to the victims of Mongol invasions of Japan (1274

and 1281) . Victims include not only Japanese but also Mongolian soldiers. A typical Japanese way of thinking. (PP3, 4)

Kiichiro Higuchi was born in 1888 on the island of Awajishima. (PP5) After the two wars against China (1894-96) and Russia (1904-05), he spontaneously decided to pursue a military career. After graduating from the War School and Military Academy, he became an intelligence officer. In the course of the Siberian Intervention (1918-22) he was sent to Vladivostok and stayed with a Jewish family, through which he learned about the tragic history of the Jews. (PP6)

From 1925-28 he worked as a military attaché in Warsaw, where he deepened his knowledge not only of the political situation in Europe, but also of the situation of the Jewish population at that time. (PP8-13)

In 1937 the General Staff sent him to Berlin for a short time to critically examine the politics of the Third Reich.

Following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, he was recalled to Tokyo and then sent as head of the “special forces” to Harbin in Manchuria, the center of the Jewish community in the Far East. It was probably the friendship with its chairman, Dr. Abraham Kaufman, that prompted him to establish a pro-Jewish policy first in Manchuria and then within the Japanese government. (PP 14-17)

A strong protest by Germany against the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the General Staff over his pro-Jewish speech at the first Jewish Congress in the Far East in 1937 was followed by his recall to Tokyo, where he was promoted to head of the 2nd Section of the General Staff. In this

function, he succeeded behind the scenes in drafting, under Army Minister Seishiro Itagaki, the "Resolution among Five Ministers ", the basic principles of Japan's Jewish policy at the time in favor of the Jews at the end of 1938, and as a result, several thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing from the Third Reich etc had their way to freedom paved.

Prof. Meron Medzini of the Hebrew University writes in his book, "Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun. Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust Era", Boston 2016: "in the empire the Japanese created beginning in 1931 (Note: Manchukuo Empire), numbering a total of some thirty-five to forty thousand Jews who were lucky compared to their brethren who were exterminated in Europe". (PP 18-19)

When the German-Russian non-aggression pact 1939 was signed in Moscow on August 24, Higuchi was serving as head of the 2nd Section of the General Staff and organized the information network in the Baltic Sea area. He ordered

General Onodera in Stockholm, General Onouchi in Helsinki and also relied on Deputy Consul Sugihara Chiune in Kaunas in Lithuania so that Japan can get the more accurate military information in this area as early as possible. Poland also helped Japan in this intelligence. The rescue of the Jewish fugitives through Mr. Sugihara's visas was a gratifying by-product of this measure. Not only Higuchi but also Sugihara knew better than politicians in Japan at the time that the Jewish refugees were in danger of existence.

In 1942 he was appointed Commander of North Japan.(PP22-23)

As a specialist on Russian affairs, he still believed that Soviet Russia under Stalin would attack Japan. In fact, Russia broke the Japanese-Soviet neutrality pact unilaterally, and penetrated, first into Manchuria, then into Korea and South Sakhalin. On August 18, 1945, 3 days after the armistice, the Russian troops began their land operation against Shumushu

Island. Stalin intended to occupy not only the Kuril Islands but also Hokkaido. Higuchi allowed his troops on Shumushu to engage in defensive battles and at the same time, through Army Headquarters in Tokyo, requested General MacArthur in Manila for his appropriate action. The next day, August 19, Stalin received a reply from US President Truman that Russia must not own the desired half of Hokkaido. At that time my mother was living as the commander's daughter-in-law in Sapporo and secretly received cyanide for suicide. Thank God she is still living with us as a 98-year-old widow and was able to give birth to me the following year, 1946. (PP 24-31)

In 1972, I, a Bach researcher, visited Leipzig, the time in East Germany. 27 years after the end of the war, a large number of Russian soldiers were still stationed, carrying a bayonet and touring the city. Looking at the situation, I realized for the first time that my grandfather's Hokkaido defense was right. Until September 26, Stalin had claimed to

the United States for Japanese split rule like Germany.

The American international political scholar Edward Nicolae Luttwak gave me the following email. "It was great to save Jews at that time, but it was even greater to protect Hokkaido. General Higuchi belongs to the world."

Thank you for your attention.