

Higuchi's Congratulatory Address to First Far-East Jewish Conference

Maj. Gen. Higuchi's congratulatory address on Dec. 26 was so frank that disputes arose at home and abroad.

I am cordially glad to find it a very timely step and a great demonstration of the peace in the Far East ~~peace~~ that you, the representatives of the Jewish communities from large cities such as Harbin, Heiral, Fentian, Dalien, Shanghai, Tianjin, Kobe, Chichihal, and Manchuri, have gathered, have confirmed the present position of Japan and Manchuria in the Far East, and have clarified your attitude to Japan and Manchuria which should be adopted in future by Jewish residents in the Far East. Originally, we have often heard of the relations, especially the disputes, between the Jewish people and other nations, but as no Jewish people have been blended among the Japanese people, we have never experienced in Japan any complicated problems concerning the Jewish people.

Accordingly, we believe we can treat the so-called Jewish problems in a very fair position in future, too.

So long as we realize it, the Jewish people have many great investigative minds and are hardworking in everything. I believe that especially in the economic and social field they have great abilities, and in the scientific field they have made enormous global contributions.

Incidentally, we Japanese have historically had no favor nor grudge vis-à-vis the Jewish people, so their merits are all the more evident to us Japanese. Nevertheless, in a few European countries very serious Jewish problems are found: The Jews' demerits they point out are materialism, internationalism, socialism, and the rejection of assimilation. Even if this is true, however, these are acquired phenomena which followed the loss of their homeland and the immeasurable agony of wandering among other nations for thousands of years, while their inborn characters are believed to be non-assimilation based on religious influence and strong nationalism. We Japanese have also been accused of dissimilation as immigrants abroad. In this respect, I believe both the Japanese and Jewish nations need to reflect on themselves to some extent. Therefore, if the Jewish people's strong nationalistic spirit should be satisfied with a complete reconstruction of their homeland, or if the Jewish people as well as other nations ponder over the matter for a moment, making full use of their natural gifts (mainly in the economic and scientific fields) as guests among other nations, I believe that the so-called Jewish problems could easily be solved all over the world.

Our ally Manchuria regards the spirit of “five nations in harmony and cooperation” — in other words, the spirit of every nation acting in cooperation — as the greatest ideal. I believe, therefore, that Manchuria, as well as Japan, is also anxious to give sufficient protection to each of the diligent and good Jewish people — just like Japanese - to let them live peaceful lives and to let them cooperate in building a peaceful and ideal paradisaic country.

At present, unfortunately, Japan and China are fighting each other. But Japan's aim is to overthrow the Chinese leaders' pro-Communist and anti-Japanese attitudes, rather than to have an army strive against four hundred million Chinese people. This is why in areas liberalized from Chinese warlords who had been inspiring anti-Japanese ideas, more and more voices recognizing a new Japan and Manchuria are being heard and understood as the people's natural will.

Explaining both Japan's and Manchuria's ideas of other nations like this, I expect that the valuable decision you have made will successfully be actualized without turning out to be a dead letter, and that you Jewish people will make a great historic contribution toward building a new Far East.

According to reports, Higuchi's congratulatory address impressed the audience so deeply that it was met with thunderous applause from all present, and the audience expressed much gratitude and deep emotion, while some were shedding tears.

Source: The text of Maj. Gen. Higuchi's speech is preserved in *The Detail of the First Far-East Jewish Communities Representatives Conference*, which was compiled by the Naval General Staff the 3rd Section, on Feb. 17, 1938; this is found in *Miscellaneous Matters Concerning the Racial Problems* in the Collection of the Diplomatic Archives of the Foreign Ministry of Japan. Offered by Mr. Shiji Junichirô, a staff of the Defense Research Institute.