

Chapter 8: The Problem of Rescuing Jews

"JAPAN'S ADHERENCE TO A DOCTRINE of racial superiority presented a unique predicament – it found itself in competition with its allies for the claim of genetic, eugenic, and cultural greatness."

(Japan's Holocaust, Chapter 2, p. 33)

Japan has never believed in any doctrine that espouses racial superiority. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Japan was the first country ever to propose the global abolition of racial discrimination at the Paris Peace Conference on February 13, 1919. Many Japanese people believed that Japan was not inferior to the white West which dominated the world at the time. There were, of course, people who had their own thoughts on race. However, racial superiority was not state-sanctioned or on any government checklist.

For example, let's take a look at the *Charter Oath of Five Articles* that the Emperor Meiji presented to the people in 1868 (Keio 4) as a guideline for the Meiji Restoration, and swore to his ancestors and the gods.

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided upon by open discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall be united in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule.

These were the official guidelines that people followed in the new Meiji era—where is there a mention of race or racial superiority?

Next, the *Imperial Rescript on Education* was issued in the name of the Emperor in 1890 (Meiji 23) as moral guidance. What does it say? Here is a translation:

Know ye, Our Subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial state; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.

October 30, 1890

The Charter emphasized our country's laudable national character and traditions, but there is no mention or allusion to "racial superiority". Some argue that our traditions include the idea of *Hakko Ichiu*, allegedly an espousal of world domination, but the original text in the *Kojiki* is *Hakko Ooite Ie To Nasan*, translated as "Universal Brotherhood" at the Tokyo Trials, which means "the whole world is one family". There is a famous poem that Emperor Meiji wrote at the start of the Russo-Japanese War:

Yomono Umi Mina Harakara to Omou Yoni
Nado Namikaze no Tachisawagu ramu

Where all within the four seas
Should be as brothers
Why is it that waves and wind

should rise and cause such tumult?

At the start of the Russo-Japanese War, the Emperor Meiji lamented the existence of tumult when mankind was supposed to as brothers, as envisioned by the idea of *Hakko Ichiu*.

The *Imperial Rescript on Education* was very much respected worldwide.

The Japanese government disseminated the *Imperial Rescript on Education* worldwide by translating it into English, Chinese, French, German, and other languages. In particular, Britain, believing that moral education based on the *Imperial Rescript on Education* was the driving force behind Japan's development, requested that a lecturer be sent from Japan. Former Tokyo Imperial University President Kikuchi Dairoku was sent and gave lectures throughout Britain for six months. A journal of the British Association of Teachers stated that, "A nation with an educational spirit consistent with the *Imperial Rescript on Education* will be able to dismiss any difficulties as evolutionary events and will never deviate from the great path of progress... This patriotic and courageous nation will continue to evolve in education and, as a result, will progress nationally with the spirit so eloquently expressed in that great rescript." Japan was not obsessed with "racial superiority," but rather strove for moral leadership based on "universal truths that are valid anywhere in the world, both now and in the past."

"The Germans propagated the notion of Aryans superiority, placing the Japanese in an inferior position within this hierarchy. Yet Japan itself also espoused a master-race theory that positioned the Germans in a lower position – thus, there couldn't be two chosen people: The *Yamato* race was distinct from the *Aryan* race."

(Japan's Holocaust, Chapter 2, p.33)

Hitler, subtly took a dig at the Japanese in the preamble that the "strongest" race (i.e., Aryans) would ultimately prevail in the ongoing global conflict. In response, Prime Minister Konoe, Foreign Minister Matsuoka, and War Minister Tojo skirted the issue Hitler had raised saying if Japan should fail in "her grand mission of spreading the Imperial Way," then she did not deserve to exist.

Anyway, Japan did not bother giving the Nazis' "racial superiority" much thought. In

fact, despite an alliance with the Germans, Japan's policy toward Jews and the rescuing of Jews, as exemplified by Sugihara Chiune, was the exact opposite of that of the Germans. I think Japan's role in saving Jews is not well known, so I'll give a brief overview.

Sugihara Chiune rescues 6,000 Jewish refugees

On July 22, 1940, Foreign Minister Matsuoka sent telegram No. 469 to the Japanese Embassy in Berlin regarding the issuance of transit visas to Japan for Jews. He supported compliance with the rules to issue transit visas only to those who had completed entry permission for their country of destination and ordered thus to the relevant overseas missions.

Sugihara, the acting consul in Kaunas, Lithuania, wrote the following in his *Chiune Notes*:

"It was early in the morning on July 18, 1940. Just before 6 o'clock, the window of the bedroom of the consulate facing the main street suddenly became quiet with the noisy voices of the crowd... I saw a scene of roughly 100 people leaning against the iron fence of the official residence, pleading with me."¹

Immediately, five representatives were nominated from the crowd. He then stated to the delegation the following:

"I understand very well the situation you are in. You deserve my sympathy. I would like to help you as much as possible within the scope of my authority, the rules that must be followed, and common sense. However, because there are so many of them, I would like to ask my superiors, namely the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to handle the situation peacefully, even though this is merely a transit trip, from the perspective of public security."²

Sugihara explained the situation to the Ministry and asked for a simplified procedure for issuing transit visas. In response, he received a telegram informing that he must abide by the rules.

¹ *The Jewish Refugees and the World of Hakko Ichiu [Universal Brotherhood]*, by Uesugi Sennen, published by Tendensha, Tokyo, 2002, p. 170.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

“However, even if I conveyed the Foreign Ministry's instructions to the refugees, they would not back down”:

"Starting on the unforgettable 29th of July 1940, I began issuing visas to Jewish refugees to allow them to transit through Japan, without a single minute's rest... We started with a plan to process an average of 300 refugees a day, and for the first three days we numbered each one consecutively, but when we reached nearly 1,000, I realized that even though we were being so careful, we would not be able to continue until the end. Realizing that we would not be able to process them all, we stopped numbering them to save time, and also stopped collecting the designated fees for the same reason as above."³

In fact, Sugihara issued visas in the form of Japan transit visas to holders of Curaçao visas issued by the Dutch Honorary Consul Jan Zwartendijk. The Curaçao visa stated: "The Dutch Consulate provides visas to Dutch territories in South America, including Curaçao in Suriname. "We hereby confirm that no visa is required for entry into Japan."

In any case, why did Sugihara help Jews? At the time, even if Sugihara had helped Jews, he would not have personally gained anything. In fact, helping Jews put his own position at risk since he was helping Jews just before the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany, and Italy was announced. Why did Sugihara help Jews when the Japanese government was in a position where it, at the very least, did not want anything to do with Jews?

Sugihara is said to have answered:

"That's because I was not only an official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also a subject serving His Majesty the Emperor. In front of the screaming Jewish refugees, I thought, what would His Majesty do if he were here? Would His Majesty leave the Jews to die, or would he show mercy? When I thought about it, the outcome was clear. All I had to do was do what His Majesty would have done."⁴

³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴ Monthly magazine *Jiyuu*, October issue, 1997, "Opposite peoples: Japanese and Jews" written by Rabbi Marvin Tokayer.

In spite of this, Rigg claims:

"...While Nazi Germany felt the threat of the Jews with their ability to "control money" among other deficiencies had signed their death warrants for Auschwitz, under the leadership of such types as Captain Inuzuka, the Japanese felt that if the Jews could control the world economically and the Japanese could control them, that would ensure Japan could rule the world with most efficient measures of domination. So, the help rendered to Jewish refugees, especially in Shanghai, by Chiune Sugihara, Japan's vice-consul for Empire in Kaunas, Lithuania, must be looked at with skeptical eye."

(Japan's Holocaust, Chapter 2, p.36)

Of course, there were financial considerations. However, when it came to financial gain, the Nazi persecution of the Jews went against Germany's interest. Nazis persecuted Jews solely because they were Jews. The important point is that Japan was not immersed in such raw racism. Furthermore, it is important to note that Sugihara Chiune's motivation was not for his own benefit. Chiune considered what the Emperor would do if he was in the same situation. Rigg grotesquely slandered the Emperor, but this is expected for a racist.

Major General Higuchi Kiichiro and the Jewish Far East Conference

Sugihara was not the only Japanese who saved Jews. Major General Higuchi Kiichiro, Army Colonel Yasue Senko [Norihiro], and Navy Colonel Inuzuka Tadashige also played important roles. Here, let us look at the achievements of Major General Higuchi Kiichiro (later Lieutenant General), who was the most important of them all.

The First Far Eastern Jewish Conference was held in Harbin, Manchuria, for three days, beginning December 26, 1937. There were 21 Jewish attendees representing Japan, Manchuria, and China. In addition, there were over 700 general participants. From the Japanese side, Harbin Special Agency Chief Higuchi, Vice-Governor of Binjiang Province of Manchukuo Yuki Seitaro, Colonel Yasue, Major Kawamura and others attended in their personal capacity. Major General Higuchi delivered a frank speech of congratulations that caused controversy both inside and outside the country. It is a little long, but it is a wonderful speech, so please take a look:

“I am cordially glad to find it a very timely step and a great demonstration of the peace in the Far East 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 the 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 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 the future as well.

“So long as we have known, the Jewish people have many great investigative minds and are hardworking in everything. I believe that especially in the economic and social fields 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 these were true, these are phenomena acquired 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.

“While we find quite serious Jewish problems in some European countries, Manchukuo with the national manifesto of ‘*Gozoku Kyowa*’ [five-family harmony] offers sufficient protection for the hard-working and righteous Jewish people and tolerates their peaceful existence just as Japan does. I am sure that Manchukuo hopes to cooperate in the construction of the peaceful world of the ‘*Odo Rakudo*’ [kingcraft paradise] together with the Jewish people.

“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 fight against four hundred million Chinese people. This is why in areas liberated from Chinese warlords who have instigated anti-Japanese ideas, more and more voices recognizing a new Japan and Manchuria are being heard and understood as the natural will of the people.

“Having described the views of Japan and Manchuria towards each other as nations, I hope that the valuable resolution passed by our sons today will not become mere empty words, but will be steadily put into practice and made manifest. I sincerely look forward to the Jews making a great historical contribution to the objective of building the New Far East.”⁵

Higuchi's speech left a deep impression on the audience. His speech was met with thunderous applause, some even crying in gratitude and overwhelming emotion.

Otpor Incident

On March 8, 1938, Higuchi, head of the Special Agency in Harbin, received news of Jewish refugees stranded at Otpor Station in Soviet territory, and advised Shimomura Nobutada, who was stationed in Harbin at the Manchuria Foreign Affairs Bureau, to make efforts to rescue them. He then immediately called Matsuoka Yosuke, president of the South Manchuria Railway, to arrange for a train.

⁵ *The Jewish Refugees and the World of Hakko Ichiu [Universal Brotherhood]*, by Uesugi Sennen, published by Tendensha, Tokyo, 2002, p.55-57. Original documented in, “Detailed Report of the First Far East Jewish Communities Representatives Conference,” edited by the Third Section of the Naval General Staff, February 17, 1938, in the possession of the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Matsuoka gave instructions to transport Jewish refugees free of charge, and free transport was eventually carried out.

Thanks to the wise decisions of Higuchi and Matsuoka, Jewish refugees were subsequently accommodated in Harbin and Dalian, and then moved to Shanghai and other places. Regarding the number of Jewish refugees in the Otpor incident, some have stated 20,000, such as in *Sea of Drift Ice - A Commander's Decision*⁶ and in *Japan and Israel*.

⁷ In Kawamura's paper, it stated: "12-car trains were sent to Otpor to pick up the Jews 13 times." However, there are also views that question the number "20,000".

Nazi Germany protested Japan's rescue of Jews and Major General Higuchi was questioned by then Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Tojo at Kwantung Army Headquarters. Tojo agreed with Higuchi's decision and said nothing about it thereafter.

Thus, the rescue of Jewish refugees was not an isolated incident, with Sugihara Chiune, this was carried out as policy by the Japanese military and the Japanese government. People need to recognize this.

In fact, the best evidence of Japanese Jewish policy is the following outline agreed upon at the Conference of Five Ministers (the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Finance Minister, Army Minister, and Navy Minister) on December 6, 1938:

Outlines of the Jewish Policies

Our diplomatic ties with Germany and Italy require that we avoid embracing the Jewish people, in light of their rejection by our allies. But we should not reject them as (Germany and Italy) do because of our declared policy of racial equality, and their rejection would therefore be contrary to our spirit. This is particularly true in light of our need for foreign capital and our desire not to alienate America.

1. Jews currently residing in Japan, Manchukuo, and China should be treated fairly

⁶ *Sea of Drift Ice - A Commander's Decision*, by Sagara Shunsuke, published by Ushiosyobo-Kojinshinsha, Tokyo, 2010.

⁷ Monthly magazine "Japan and Israel", November 1970 issue, 'Memories of 20,000 Jews Persecuted by the Nazis' written by Kawamura Aizo.

equally with other foreign nationals. No special measure would be taken to expel the Jews.

2. [Japan should] impartially deal with Jews who are arriving in Japan, Manchukuo, and China under the general regulations admitting foreigners.

3. [Japan should] avoid actively inviting Jews to Japan, Manchukuo, and China. However, people such as investors and technicians who can be used [by Japan] should be exceptions.⁸

The Imperial Government and the Army and Navy, in keeping with the "spirit of racial equality" that has been maintained since the Paris Peace Conference, have decided on an unshakable national policy that "Jews will be treated fairly equally with other foreign nationals," and "no special measures will be taken to expel the Jews."

Given actual Japanese policy, one can only say that Rigg's perception of Japan is completely clouded by ignorance and anti-Japan racism.

⁸ *The Jewish Refugees and the World of Hakko Ichiu [Universal Brotherhood]*, by Uesugi Sennen, published by Tendensha, Tokyo, 2002, p. 86-87.