

## **The Arrival of Jewish Refugees to Wartime Japan as reported in the local newspaper *Fukui Shinbun* (Part I: 1940)**

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It is now quite well known that in the summer of 1940, Chiune Sugihara (1900-86), acting Japanese consul in Kaunas, Lithuania, issued a great number of Japanese transit visas – so-called ‘Visas for Life’ – to Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. There has been a concomitant historical revaluation of the particular role played by the port of Tsuruga (Fukui Prefecture) as point of entry into Japan.

This work is based on thorough investigation of articles from the local newspaper *Fukui Shinbun* concerning the refugees’ landing at Tsuruga (the present initial part covers the period May-December 1940 and the second part will treat the period January-July 1941).

Through these press articles we learn that the first two Sugihara visa holders of Lithuanian nationality arrived in Japan on 10th August 1940 and the first large-scale arrival of Polish Jews was on 9th October 1940, apparently provoking alarm among the local police and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Their large-scale entry into Japan must have continued during the autumn and winter of 1940. Curiously enough, however, posterior to 9th October, *Fukui Shinbun* doesn’t allocate any space to the phenomenon. Could this sudden silence be explained by the signing of the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany and Italy (27th September 1940), or by the visit of a delegation of *Hitler Jugend* in October-November 1940, including an overnight stay at Eiheiiji, the most famous Zen temple, also located in the Fukui Prefecture, on 19th November?

It is particularly interesting to remark that 1940’s Japan, which warmly welcomed the Nazi Youth delegation, was simultaneously and unexpectedly a platform for the safety and survival of the Jewish refugees escaping persecution under Hitler.