

Preface

Without cooperation between a Japanese Foreign Ministry official, Sugihara Chiune, and many Soviet comrades, the path to survival for thousands of mainly Polish Jews stranded in Lithuania could not have been opened. Similarly, without cooperation between Japanese scholars and Russian archivists, it is hard to imagine the creation of the book that lies before you. The Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, the Japanese National Center for the study of Russia and surrounding areas, is proud to have this chance to honor Sugihara Chiune's great deed by promoting the study of his training and activities as one of the top Russianists of his day. We are also honored to have had the chance to produce this volume jointly with the Russian Holocaust Center and its co-Chairman Professor Ilya Aleksandrovich ALTMAN.

In addition to the 91 documents that lie before you, primarily from Russian and Japanese archives, there are also three expert essays focusing on different perspectives from which the documents observe Sugihara's life and times. Professor TAKAO Chizuko presents compelling evidence of Sugihara's formative influences and his long years at Harbin working both for the Japanese and Manchukuo foreign ministries. Professor Altman provides the inside story of the visas, both Japanese and Russian, that allowed the transit of the thousands of refugees across Siberia by train to Vladivostok and then by boat to Japan. For me it was new to learn from Professor Altman's essay that many Sugihara visas were made by forgers, copying the real visas, during the months after Sugihara himself had departed from Lithuania. The NKVD (the KGB's predecessor) "captured" almost 500 such visas, but maybe many

more saved lives. Exactly how many lives Sugihara saved remains an uncountable mystery, but we know there were many thousands. Professor David WOLFF connects the great transit with the almost simultaneous signing of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Treaty of April 1941. The Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yosuke, traveling West to meet Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin, passed the refugees coming East all along the Trans-Siberian Railway.

In addition to excerpts from Russian and Japanese archival documents, this volume holds citations reproduced from Lithuanian, Israeli and American archives. On the Russian side, five archives contributed information and we thank their archivists. But one archive has yet to release its file on Sugihara Chiune, the FSB (formerly KGB). Why this file remains closed and unavailable is also a mystery. Clearly, there is still room for further research on Sugihara, his relationship with the USSR and the great deed they performed in cooperation.

This volume finishes with the famous list of visa recipients sent by Sugihara to Matsuoka. How many of these names actually travelled to safety we do not know. This research also remains to be completed. SES Series Volume No. 35 is only a next step in the study of this important historical topic that always has contemporary relevance. We hope that scholars in many countries will find it useful.

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