

From the Editors

The present publication includes 91 excerpts from documents in Russian, Japanese, Israeli, Lithuanian, Polish and Finnish Archives. These materials were gathered in the course of a joint Japanese-Russian research project begun in 2012 by the three editors of this collection. Thanks to the untiring efforts of the Russian Holocaust Center co-Chairman, Professor I. Altman, cooperative agreements were reached with a wide range of formerly Soviet archives. We thank the colleagues and leadership of various archives who have made available their documents: Maria Altman (Russian State Archive of the Economy), Larisa Rogovaia (Russian State Archive), Andrei Sorokin and Tatiana Tsarevskaia (Russian State Archive of Social-Political History) and Aleksandr Kuznetsov (former Director of the Historic Document Department of the Foreign Ministry, now Russian ambassador to UNESCO).

Gratitude is equally due to the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Foreign Policy Archive, where Japan's top expert on Sugihara, Dr. Shirai-shi Masaaki gave generously of his time and knowledge. We are also in debt to Tatiana Bruskina (Vilnius, Lithuania) and Johan Backman (Helsinki, Finland) for their valuable research contributions to the project. First fruits were presented and analyzed at academic events in Helsinki, Moscow, Sapporo, Tokyo and Kaliningrad. Many of these materials are being published for the first time. All three editors look forward to further growth of studies in this area and to further illumination of Sugihara's times and deeds. The completion of the project relied heavily on the SRC Platform for Explorations in Survival Strategies. Credit is due to Viktoriia Antonenko for preparing the chro-

nologies and for catching many mistakes in the final editorial process. David Wolff also thanks the Schlaikjer-McIntyre Foundation for its generous support of this publication.

Following introductions by each of the editors who treat different aspects of Sugihara's activities, the documentation part of the book is divided into eight sections. The First Section covers materials from Sugihara's fifteen years associated with Harbin, a treaty port on the Sungari (Songhua) river in Northeast China. First as a student, then as a government employee responsible for relations with Russians and the Soviet Union, Sugihara experienced the complex international history of this rapidly growing city located at the point where Chinese, Japanese and Russian influences met in the first half of the twentieth century. The very first document (Doc.1), Sugihara's speech on the "Development of Asia" provides an excellent introduction to his breadth of international knowledge and analytical skills. His activities in Harbin and Manchuria/Manchukuo were highly visible and in the early 1930s his name appears many times in Soviet diplomatic documents, newspaper articles and even the correspondence of top Soviet leaders as they responded to the conflicts that led to the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway, under Japanese pressure, to the government of Manchukuo. Sugihara's interview given to the *Harbin Times*, a Russian-language newspaper that reflected Japanese official views, appeared on 31 August 1934 and *Pravda*, the organ of the Bolshevik party, responded on 5 September 1934. Russian Foreign Ministry materials are crucial both for this section and later sections, with some documents already published.¹

Soviet officialdom's negative views on Sugihara developed during his Harbin period are closely related to the Second Section regarding the Soviet refusal to give Sugihara a visa in 1937, ostensibly because of his ties to anti-Soviet "White Russians." Although he had served at the Japanese consulate in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka, the Soviets would not let him come to Moscow, causing an unprecedented scandal in

1. Гусева Елизавета. Японский Валленберг.// Международная жизнь, №9, 2013. С. 154-174

Soviet-Japanese relations and several unpleasant conversations at the ambassadorial level. Sugihara himself was required to write an explanation, “The Report of Translator Sugihara” (Doc.20) that included a detailed narration of his ties to “White Russians,” the many thousands of Russian emigres who had escaped the Soviet Union to Harbin.

Japanese authorities protested and even threatened countermeasures, but the Soviets were obdurate and Sugihara was assigned to Japan’s Helsinki embassy during 1937–1939, from where he could observe the Soviet Union. The Third Section has a small group of materials from the Finnish police archives held in the National Archives of Finland. We are indebted to Johan Backman for discovering these. They showcase Sugihara’s budding intelligence skills, as he continued a long tradition of Japanese-Finnish cooperation against a neighboring Russian threat, again working with emigres, but now in Russia’s western borderlands. The Finnish period would soon be succeeded by a new focus on Japanese-Polish joint efforts, an equally venerable tradition dating back to the Russo-Japanese war, when Colonel Akashi Motojiro tried to stir up and support discontented minorities under Romanov rule.

Section Four covers Sugihara’s one year stint at Kaunas in 1939–40, that city’s last year as the capital of independent Lithuania, soon to be absorbed by the Soviet Union. It was here that he organized an intelligence network covering occupied Poland, just across the border, and committed his most memorable deed, the issuance of at least 2139 life-saving transit visas, without the sanction of the Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka who steadily refused to recognize the desperate situation. This section’s documents reveal the process of transit visa issuance, the motives of the Soviet and Japanese sides and the conditions under which the refugees transited the Soviet Union and left for Japan. Of particular interest are materials from the Russian Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI) about the approval of the transit process at the highest level, a Politburo meeting chaired by I. V. Stalin. (Doc.33) This document appears on the back cover. The official Soviet tourist agency for foreign visitors, “Inturist,” handled all aspects of transporting the refugees, so Inturist’s archives held in both the State Archive

of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the Russian State Archive of the Economy (RGAE) are important sources regarding the economic side of things and the actual number of refugees who crossed Siberia to the Pacific. This section concludes with a letter (Doc.43) written by Sugihara himself in 1967 to a Polish historian in which he described his work in Lithuania and how it led to his brave humanitarian act. In this letter, Sugihara also expressed his conviction that he had been fired from the foreign ministry precisely because of the issuance of the lifesaving visas. Doc. 69 makes it clear that Matsuoka publicized Sugihara's "misuse" of visa authority widely among Foreign Ministry personnel, something to be held against him when many diplomats were let go in the wake of World War Two.

Section Five is drawn from NKVD (internal police) files investigating the preparation of fake Japanese visas, bearing Sugihara's signature, between November 1940 and February 1941. In this way, several hundred additional lives were saved. These too should be credited to Sugihara. Documents here include agent reports and criminal confessions leading to charges and punishments in the "Fabricators' Affair (Fabrikanty)." All these materials come from the Special Archive of the Lithuanian Republic.

Section Six offers materials that cover the actual transit, including organizational mechanisms, problems encountered and the ways in which they were overcome. Without the active support of the Soviet government, the transit might have been aborted midstream, especially once Matsuoka finally learned the true dimensions of Sugihara's visa issuance on 5 February 1941. This document appears as a facsimile on the front cover. As the refugees arrived on the Pacific, Sugihara had already moved on to his next assignments in Europe, but fortunately another trainee from the same Harbin school as Sugihara, Nei Saburo was in charge of the matter at Vladivostok. Under his watchful eye, the final refugees left the Soviet Union, having escaped from the bloodlands of East-Central Europe and the Holocaust.

Section Seven, is brief and covers our limited knowledge of the Sugiharas themselves becoming transit passengers. Interned by Soviet troops in Bucharest in 1944, the Sugihara family members have individual files in the Soviet military archives, but Chiune's file, the most

important one, is missing. It has probably been united with other materials about him still kept secret in the FSB (formerly KGB/NKVD) archive. We eagerly await and request its release.

Section Eight includes materials from Sugihara's 15 years working in Moscow for various Japanese companies between 1960 and 1975. For reasons unclear, he changed the reading of his first name to "Sempo" from "Chiune" in order to sell goods and equipment to Soviet ministries and factories. Since Sugihara used "Sergei" as his Russian given name, it is possible that he considered "Sempo" easier to recognize with the same first two letters. He also changed his last name to Sugiwara. It was during his stay in Moscow that Sugihara was "rediscovered" both by grateful Jewish and Polish survivors.

The Appendix includes Sugihara's list of visas issued, all 2139 names in a facsimile provided by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. A chronology is also included for key dates in Sugihara's life and for the Siberian transit. The excerpted documents include notes on the originals. Some fragments unrelated to Sugihara or the transit visas have been left out, as indicated by square brackets. Handwritten texts, such as the Sugihara and Nei speeches, follow the originals exactly, including pre-revolutionary orthography. For foreigners writing in Russian, these are impressive expositions, mistakes and all. Archival references and publication data are provided below each excerpt.

Footnotes provide some biographical, geographical or explanatory information on points that might be unfamiliar for Japanese, Russian or other readers.

The Editors
Sapporo, Tokyo, Moscow