

Visa proving existence of second, unsung WWII

'Japanese Schindler' found in US

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[Japanese version](#)

Saburo Nei is seen in this photo taken in around 1941 and provided by the Saburo Nei appreciation society in the city of Miyazaki.

A visa issued by Saburo Nei for passage through Japan is seen in this image provided by Akira Kitade.

Saburo Nei is seen when he was a foreign affairs clerk, in this photo collected in August 1936.

TOKYO -- New evidence has emerged showing that during World War II, Japan's acting consul-general in Vladivostok in the then Soviet Union issued transit visas for Jews escaping persecution from Nazi Germany to pass through Japan.

Records showing that Saburo Nei (1902-92) had granted the visas were known to have been kept in Russia, but now for the first time the existence of one of the actual documents has been confirmed. Another Japanese diplomat, Chiune Sugihara (1900-86), is known internationally for having helped Jews in Lithuania during wartime. But a person connected to the new findings said, "We want many people to know that there were Japanese diplomats other than Mr. Sugihara who saved Jewish people."

The visa was found by Akira Kitade, 76, a freelance writer living in Tokyo who has written books on Jewish refugees. While pursuing leads on survivors' stories he learned that Polish Jew Simon Korentajer had been to Japan on travel documents issued by Nei. Korentajer's grandchild

Kim Hydorn, 53, who resides in the United States, sent him pictures of the visa.

The visa was issued on Feb. 28, 1941, and permits travel to the U.S. via the ports of Tsuruga in Fukui Prefecture on the Sea of Japan and Yokohama, which lies on the Pacific side of the country, in Kanagawa Prefecture south of Tokyo. Nei's signature and the consulate in Vladivostok's official seal are also included. It was printed on a separate document to his passport.

According to Kitade, Korentajer was born in Warsaw, and escaped from Poland to Lithuania with his family after it was invaded by Nazi Germany in September 1939. In early February 1941, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow rejected their application for visas to enter the United States. They then traveled via the Trans-Siberian Railway across the Soviet Union to Vladivostok on the country's eastern coast.

At the time, the Japanese government would not grant transit visas to people without permission to reach their final destination, but it appears that Nei made an independent decision to issue them. In March 1941, Korentajer and his family set foot on Japanese soil by entering from Tsuruga. They then traveled from Kobe, in the western prefecture of Hyogo, to Shanghai. They finally reached the U.S. after the war in August 1947, when they arrived in San Francisco.

Until now, it hadn't been known that Nei had issued visas. But recent joint research by professor Yakov Zinberg at Kokushikan University and in Russia found records in the state archives of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs showing that on March 3, 1941, Nei told an official stationed in Vladivostok for the Soviet Union's People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that he had "issued a set number of transit visas without permission from Tokyo." He reportedly said he felt sorry for the many refugees staying in the area, so he granted the documents. Professor Zinberg said, "The visa that's been found now is an important document in support of the written records found on the Soviet side."

Acting consul-general Chiune Sugihara also issued many visas between

July and August 1940. He did so on humanitarian grounds, and his actions were in opposition to the policies of the Japanese government at the time. But Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was put in a difficult position due to the conditions of Sugihara's issued visas for refugees to Japan being insufficient, and demanded the Japanese Embassy in the Soviet Union re-examine the documents in March 1941. However, when questions were put to Nei about them, he sent back a telegram saying he was "unamused" by the query.

After the war, Nei reportedly never talked about having issued the visas, or about the diplomatic climate at the time. But in 2016 an appreciation society for him was established in the city of Miyazaki, the capital of the southwestern prefecture of the same name and the area he grew up in. Efforts to bring recognition to his achievements are continuing. Kitade said, "I want to see light shed on Nei, whose presence has been hidden in the shadow of Sugihara."

Saburo Nei was born in the village of Hirose, now part of the city of Miyazaki, in 1902. He studied abroad with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1921, and learned Russian at the Nichiro Kyokai Gakko school for Japanese and Russian cooperation, now Harbin University, in what was then occupied Manchuria and is now northeastern China. Chiune Sugihara was two terms above him at the school. As a diplomat, Nei was stationed in the Soviet Union and in Iran, and from December 1940 took up the post of acting consul-general at the consulate in Vladivostok. After the war he resigned from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and joined the Immigration Services Agency of Japan. He went on to serve as the head of the regional immigration bureaus in Kagoshima and Nagoya.

(Japanese original by Hiroyuki Tanaka, Cultural News Department)

Monument unveiled to Japanese diplomatic couple who saved 1,000s of Jews fleeing Nazis

November 3, 2020 (Mainichi Japan)

NUMAZU, Shizuoka -- A monument to honor Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese diplomat who defied instruction from Tokyo and issued thousands of transit visas to Jews fleeing Nazi persecution during World War II, and his wife Yukiko -- a Numazu native -- was unveiled at a park here on Nov. 1.

Chiune Sugihara was the Japanese consul in the Lithuanian city of Kaunas in 1939-1940. In the weeks before the consulate was closed in September 1940, the Sugiharas decided that Chiune should issue transit visas to Jewish refugees who had fled Nazi-occupied Poland, allowing them to escape to a third country via Japan.

Chiune spent over a month writing the visas, issuing 2,139 before he was forced to leave Kaunas after the Soviet Union had occupied Lithuania that summer. Accounts say he was still passing out the documents from the window of the train that would take him out of the country. According to Japan's Foreign Ministry, transit visas were issued to heads of households and applied to every family member listed in the recipient's passport, meaning the visas in fact saved thousands more people.

The Nov. 1 unveiling ceremony in Numazu's Minatoguchi Park was attended by Lithuanian Ambassador Gediminas Varvuolis, an Israeli Embassy public relations officer, and other figures.

(Video by Hiroshi Ishikawa, Numazu Bureau)