

*Speech by H.E. Mr. Kentaro SONOURA, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan at the Presentation Event of the book “Smuggled in Potato Sacks: 50 Stories of the Hidden Children of the Kaunas Ghetto”*

ラーバス・ヴァーカラス！（“Good Evening” in Lithuanian）

I am honored and pleased to have this opportunity to share a few thoughts this evening. Let me first express my congratulations regarding the publishing of “Smuggled in Potato Sacks” in the Lithuanian language.

I learned of the brave citizens in Kaunas who saved a number of Jewish children by risking themselves, at the time of the Nazi occupation. I would like to pay my deepest respects for their courageousness.

Publishing “Smuggled in Potato Sacks” in the Lithuanian language will inform many Lithuanians about the great deeds of their predecessors. They believed in justice and fought to bring about universal freedom to Lithuanians, and Jews, in the effort to realize a world free of discrimination.

At that same period, Mr. *Chiune Sugihara*, a Japanese diplomat who served as a Vice-Consul, here, in Kaunas, issued “Visas for Life”..., transit visas to Japan for the displaced Jews fleeing persecution from the Nazis. He saved lives. According to one estimate, the visas issued by Mr. *Sugihara* is said to have saved over 6,000 (six-thousand) people. This year marks the 75th (seventy-fifth) anniversary of the “Visas for Life”.

The opera “Memoir of Sakura” inspired by Mr.Sugihara’ s life was premiered in Kaunas, January last year, and another opera portraying the life of him will be performed in Vilnius in May.

70 (seventy) years has passed since the end of the Second World War. Japan’s orientation as a peace-loving nation will never sway. Japan will further contribute to global peace and stability based on our foreign policies of “Proactive Contribution to Peace”. To make this possible, it is important in honor of those who experienced the war, to retain the past, and to pass it on to the next generation, not as personal history, but simply as a human record.

The Government of Japan highly appreciated the activities of the Sugihara House, co-sponsor of today’s event, to share the dauntless and humane acts of Mr. *Sugihara*. We would like to request your kind support for the activities and contribution to maintain the Sugihara House.

Finally, I hope that the Lithuanian version of “Smuggled in Potato Sacks” will show the fearlessness of the citizens of Kaunas and serve as a shining example to the children, the future, and perhaps that example will inspire them towards courageous and philanthropic acts.

アチユー。 (“Thank you” in Lithuanian)

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