

Student Worksheet #1: Brief Timeline of Lithuania in WWII and Chiune Sugihara's Actions (2 pages)



Name: _____ Date: _____

1930s–Early 1940s:

- Nazi Germany spreads propaganda and antisemitic laws across Europe.
- Many Jewish families in Poland and neighboring countries face growing danger and discrimination.

1939:

- Germany and the Soviet Union invade Poland, starting World War II in Europe. - Thousands of Jewish refugees flee to nearby Lithuania, hoping to find safety.

1940 (Spring–Summer):

- The Soviet Union occupies Lithuania.
- Chiune Sugihara serves as the Japanese vice-consul in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania.
- Desperate Jewish refugees line up outside the Japanese consulate, asking for transit visas to travel across the Soviet Union to Japan and then to other safe countries.

July–August 1940:

- Tokyo instructs Chiune Sugihara to follow strict rules and only give visas to people with complete documents and enough money.
- Seeing the danger the refugees are in, Sugihara decides to follow his conscience instead.
- He spends long hours hand-writing thousands of transit visas, sometimes 18–20 hours a day, even as the consulate is being shut down.

1940–1941:

- Jewish refugees use Chiune Sugihara's visas to ride the Trans-Siberian Railway across the Soviet Union to Vladivostok, then sail to Japan and other safe places.
- These visas became known as “visas for life” because they saved so many people from the Holocaust.

After the War:

- Chiune Sugihara loses his position in the foreign service and lives a modest life in Japan.
- Survivors and their families later find him and share his story.
- He is honored in Israel as a person who is “Righteous Among the Nations” for risking his life to save Jewish refugees.

Reflection:

1. Why do you think Chiune Sugihara chose to help, even when he was told not to?
2. Which Upstander Steps do you see in his timeline?
3. How might his story inspire you when you see someone being treated unfairly today?