



The Good Man of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe

By John Rabe

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This unique and gripping document contains the recently discovered diaries of a German businessman, John Rabe, who saved so many lives in the infamous siege of Nanking in 1937 that he is now being honored as the Oskar Schindler of China. As the Japanese army closed in and all foreigners were ordered to evacuate, Rabe mobilized the remaining Westerners in Nanking and organized an "International Safety Zone" which guaranteed safety to all unarmed Chinese by virtue of Germany's pact with Japan. As hundreds of thousands of Chinese streamed into the city, all that stood between them and certain slaughter were Rabe and his committee, and it is thought that he saved more than 250,000 lives. After the siege, when he was arrested by the Gestapo in Germany, he survived the war and the starvation that followed with help from the Chinese government. His journal is a record of inhuman horror and unpretentious heroism.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In November 1937, the Japanese Imperial Army took Nanking (Nanjing), the capital of China and home to 1.3 million people, and began an orgy of murder, rape, and looting. By the time discipline was restored two months later, hundreds of thousands of Chinese were dead, with hundreds of thousands more homeless, starving, and traumatized. The Rape of Nanking, as it is commonly known, still causes international controversy, as Japanese politicians refuse to apologize unequivocally to China and school textbooks continue to misrepresent the events.

Like Oskar Schindler of *Schindler's List*, John Rabe was an enterprising and fundamentally decent German businessman caught up in war. Head of the Nanjing branch of Siemens, the German electronics firm, he had lived and worked in China for almost 30 years. Rather than flee from the threatened city, he stayed to organize a safety zone as refuge of last resort for Chinese civilians. *The Good Man of Nanking* is his firsthand description of the terrible events and his ultimate success in saving perhaps a quarter of a million lives. The diary format provides a forum for the extraordinary power and immediacy of John Rabe's words, including his gallows humor, placing the reader there in Nanking as the bombs explode and the Japanese soldiers begin their massacres. Rabe's trials were not over when he returned to wartime Germany; diary entries that he wrote during the occupation of Berlin by the Soviet army form a fascinating coda to this book.

--John Stevenson

From Publishers Weekly

Considered the Oskar Schindler of China, Rabe was a German businessman who saved the lives of 250,000 Chinese during the infamous siege of Nanking. But Rabe was also a member of the Nazi party and a man whose motto was "Right or wrong-my country." This gaping paradox adds a fascinating complexity to his newly translated diaries, which primarily focus on the six-month Nanking siege in 1937 and 1938. When the Japanese air raids began over Nanking?where Rabe was regional director of the German industrial giant Siemens?Rabe's wife, along with most foreigners, evacuated the city. But Rabe stayed to protect his Chinese staff and co-workers; as he put it, "I cannot bring myself for now to betray the trust these people have put in me." As the magnitude of the Japanese assault became apparent, Rabe, along with American doctors and missionaries, created an International Committee whose purpose was to set up a Neutral Zone where Chinese civilians could take refuge. Six hundred of the poorest Chinese were soon living in Rabe's own house, symbolically protected by an enormous canvas painted with a swastika; thousands more took shelter in the arbitrary Neutral Zone that Rabe continually begged the Japanese to respect. Lacking food and medical supplies, Rabe was mobilized to continue his good works by the atrocities he witnessed; his descriptions of the sadistic rapes, torture and slaughter perpetrated by Japanese soldiers are chillingly vivid. Similar in some ways to Giorgio Perlasca, the Italian fascist businessman who helped save Budapest's Jews (Enrico Deaglio's *The Banality of Goodness*, Forecasts, June 1), Rabe was a complicated figure whose ultimate reasons were very matter-of-fact: "You simply do what must be done."

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From Library Journal

Joining the ever-growing shelf of World War II memoir literature, this carefully edited book recounts the wartime experiences of an obscure German businessman who is now known as the "Oskar Schindler of China" and revered as a saint by the Chinese. Rabe (1882-1949) lived in China for almost 30 years, most notably as the director of the Siemens branch in Nanking during the infamous 1937 siege. Working closely with American friends, he organized an International Safety Zone that offered relative security to 250,000

Chinese during the brutal Japanese occupation. This book, based on a journal he kept then, describes his rescue efforts as well as the atrocities he observed. Called back to Germany shortly thereafter, he was arrested by the Gestapo and forbidden to speak of his experiences. The editor, a friend who first met Rabe in China in the early 1930s, explains the general political and military background and, more importantly, summarizes the political information that was available to Rabe himself. Recommended for academic and informed lay readers. A Marie Marmo Mullaney, Caldwell Coll., NJ
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