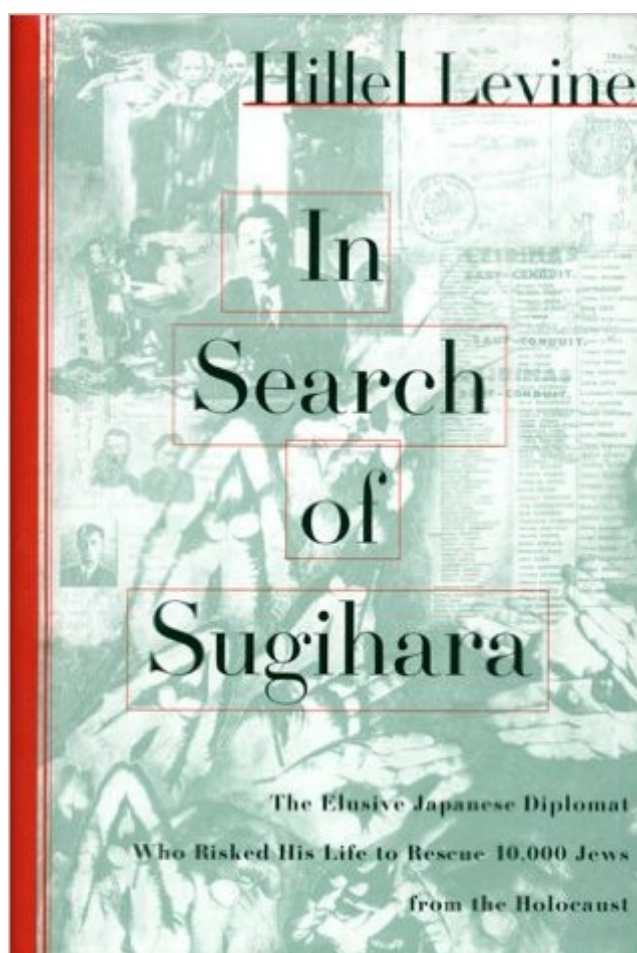


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In Search Of Sugihara: The Elusive Japanese Diplomat Who Risked His Life To Rescue 10,000 Jews From The Holocaust



Synopsis

On August 2, 1940, as on every other morning for weeks before, a long line of Jewish refugees waited outside the Japanese consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania. Many had already witnessed Nazi atrocities in Poland and other Axis-occupied lands, and they were desperate to escape. To leave Europe they needed foreign transit visas. And at the window, the smiling Japanese consul was issuing them. Before his government closed down the consulate and reassigned him to Berlin, he would issue thousands of such visas. This is the story of Chiune Sugihara, a diplomat and spy who saved as many as 10,000 Jews from deportation to concentration camps and almost certain death. Because of his extreme modesty, Sugihara's tremendous act of moral courage is only now beginning to become widely known. Unlike Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat whose government sent him to Hungary with the express purpose of saving Jews, and Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who at least initially had a vested economic interest in protecting the lives of "his Jews," Sugihara had no apparent reason to perform his acts of rescue. Indeed, he acted in direct violation of official Japanese policy, which directed all government and military personnel to cooperate with the murderous policies of their Nazi allies. Examining Sugihara's education and background -- a background shared with the colonial administrators and military men who committed "the rape of Nanjing" -- author Hillel Levine finds nothing that explains his extraordinary behavior. Levine's search has taken him from the old Japanese consul building in Kaunas (now Kovno), Lithuania, to the Australian outback; across Japan from the rice fields of Sugihara's native town to the boardrooms of conglomerates where his younger schoolmates still hold power. But the more Levine sought answers to Sugihara's puzzling behavior, the more he encountered questions. Remarkably, Chiune Sugihara was not the only Japanese official to save Jews. Yet none was ever punished for insubordination. Was there a secret Japanese plan to save Jews from Nazi genocide? Much Holocaust scholarship focuses on the perpetrators of evil, trying to illuminate what drove ordinary men and women to commit horrifying and murderous acts. But perhaps as difficult to understand is the phenomenon of rescue: what inspired courageous individuals to swim against the tide of cruelty and indifference. This sensitive and nuanced biography concludes that there is no link between a person's background and his moral inclinations. Mercy remains a divine mystery despite our human craving to reduce it to behavioristic formulas. This book does not attempt to explain "man's humanity to man." Instead Levine has woven a fascinating narrative of one man's heroic efforts to save lives, in the midst of so many seeking to destroy them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was born in Japan, and grew up in America in a Jewish community. So when I heard about Sugihara-san, I thought "Ah, something that links communities I feel part of!" I sought out this biography and read it eagerly. The author spent two years tracking down the evidence of what Sugihara did in Lithuania. He reviewed the Japanese foreign ministry records, talked to survivors, talked to those who had known Sugihara. The author appears to have deeply grappled with his sense of the man, and the moment, trying to understand... and he takes the reader along on that journey. It wasn't always enjoyable... reading about the things that made it necessary for Sugihara to do what he did is not enjoyable. But his reaction to his times, and the situation in which he was placed, is simple and decent, and adds to one's understanding of the holocaust, and the character of Japan in the years leading up to World War II.

An in depth biography of a courageous compassionate man. Book has much historical information and brief biographies of many of the rescued. My only criticism is too much information. Needed some tough editing. Having said that, I will recommend it to anyone interested in this remarkable man.

Prof. Levine fills in many of the gaps and intentional omissions of Mme. Sugihara's "Visas for Life", notably his whole first marriage. His access to the vast array of WWII deciphered Japanese government communiques is a major contribution to separating fact from myth. However, his personal musings are an intrusion to an otherwise well told tale and the leading rhetorical questions

and speculation are more worthy of cable TV than of even a quasi-scholarly publication. The acts of Sugihara, Zwartendijk, and others along the way that save our family and many others should simply be allowed to speak for themselves.

Author spends too much time agonizing about writing the book and not enough on Sugihara. Less analyzing and more Sugihara facts.

IT WILL TAKE ME AWHILE TO READ THIS LITTLE BY LITTLE. I AM SO FASCINATED BY THIS MANS LIFE I WANT TO READ ANYTHING ABOUT HIM. THOSE WHO KNEW HIM ARE MOSTLY GONE BY NOW. MY DREAM IS TO INTERVIEW THE SURVIVING ADULT CHILDREN AND OR GRAND AND GREAT GRANDCHILDREN IN THEIR NATIVE JAPANESE IF I CAN STILL REMEMBER ENOUGH OF THE LANGUAGE I HAVEN'T SPOKEN SINCE RETURNING TO THE STATES IN 2001. MR. SUGIHARA'S WIFE WAS STILL ALIVE AS RECENTLY AS THE EARLY 2000'S BUT I'M SURE SHE IS ALIVE NO LONGER AS SHE WOULD BE OVER 100 YRS OLD.

An excellent book, an amazing read, a well written story of Sugihara, the man, his family and how he, through life based his life decisions on his humanitarian principles. Powerful and inspirational.

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