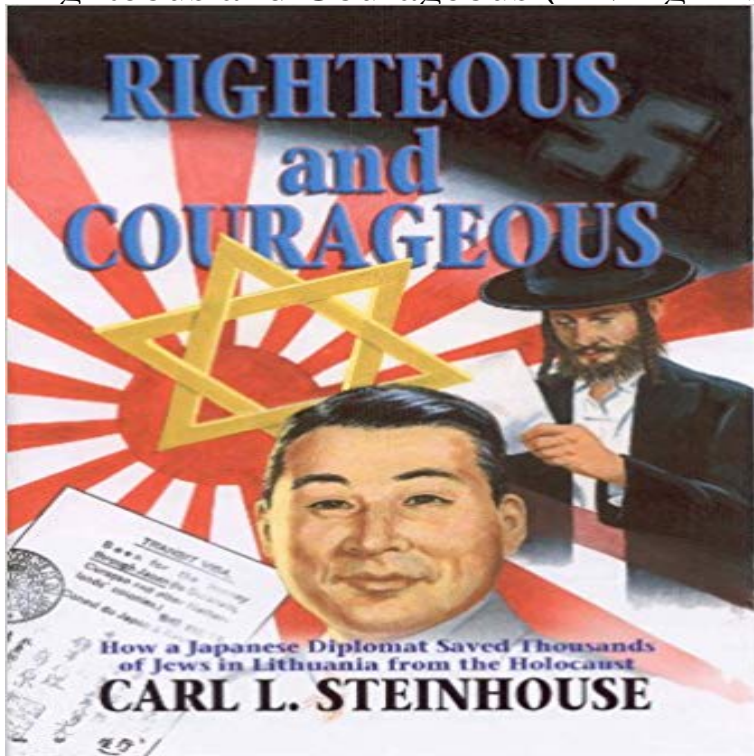


## Righteous and Courageous (Living History of the Holocaust)



Yes, the Japanese of Pearl Harbor infamy saved Jews from the clutches of their German ally out of gratitude for the help the Jews provided forty years earlier. Thus begins the true story of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania who risked his life and career to save thousands of Jews from certain death at the hands of the Nazis during the World War II. To understand the Japanese attitude toward the Jews, the story takes us back to the beginning of the twentieth century to a series of events. The birth of Sugihara in a small prefecture in Japan occurred on the first day of that century. Shortly thereafter, pogroms under reign and direction of Czar Nicholas II massacred Jews all over Russia while at the same time the czarist government prosecuted a war against the Japanese in Manchuria and China. Jews all over the world were outraged at the pogroms, but one, American financier Jacob Schiff, did something about it. After a chance meeting with a desperate Japanese Finance Minister in London, Schiff arranged over \$300 million in loans to the Japanese; loans that permitted them rapidly to modernize their fleet and to defeat the Russians. Thus was forged a strong bond between two peoples, Jews and Japanese, ultimately resulting in the dramatic rescue, much later in the century, of thousands of Jews. The author examines fascinating contrasts of the Japanese and Jewish cultures. After the Germans invaded and conquered Poland, tens of thousands of Polish Jews fled to Lithuania to escape the horrors of the Holocaust. Now, the Germans were on the border of Lithuania and Sugihara had no doubt that soon the Germans would attack this small Baltic country. Jews rushed from consulate to consulatenone, including America, would issue visas to them. Only Dutch Consul Zwartendijk stepped up to aid these desperate people. His response was to append a statement to the refugees travel

papers that no visa was required for the Caribbean Island of Curacao, a Dutch colony. But how could the Jews get there, blocked by the mighty Wehrmacht? Only one waygo east to Japan through the Soviet Union with a Japanese travel visaif the Soviets would permit it. The Jews gathered outside of the Japanese consulate in Kovno. Sugihara consulted his family. Would his conscience permit him to ignore these people? He and his family decided no, they could not do that. Working day and night, Sugihara issued, against his governments orders, thousands of visas and miraculously, he convinced the insular and suspicious Soviets to permit these Jews to travel across Russia and Siberia to Japan. But would they be admitted to Japan once they arrived in Vladivostok in eastern Soviet Union? There is little public awareness of the titanic struggle that ensued between the pro-American and pro-German factions of the Japanese Foreign Ministry and military. This story examines the conflicted thinking of the Japanese officials, torn between pleasing their German ally by not admitting Jews into Japan and their gratefulness to the Jews for saving Japan in the Russo-Japanese war and their fear of Jews through a startling misperception. Forty years later, the act of that American financier at the turn of the century would result in admitting these Jews into Japan and protecting these Jews from their German Axis allies.

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