



JOHN RABE

A German Witness to
the Nanjing Massacre



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Huang Huiying



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Introduction

In 1882, a hero was born in Hamburg, a major city in the north of Germany. His name was John Heinrich Detlev Rabe.

Return the world to man, and return man to themselves. This is the core of humanitarianism, a philosophy that purifies the human soul. It also forged Rabe's outlook on life.

Rabe came to China in 1908, and successively held management posts with Siemens offices in Beijing, Tianjin and Nanjing. Living in China for three decades, he had extensive contacts with a wide range of social circles, which helped to form his distinctive attitude towards Chinese society.

Rabe returned to Nanjing from Beidaihe shortly before the Japanese armies attacked Nanjing in 1937. He was elected chairman of the International Committee for the Nanjing Safety Zone. The Japanese captured Nanjing on December 13 that year, and carried out a bloody massacre in the city. Taking advantage of his privileged position, Rabe opened up his property to house over 600 Chinese refugees. Moreover, he and his ten colleagues sheltered 250,000 Chinese people in the safety zone that was less than four square kilometers in extent, defending the justice and dignity of humanity. Rabe's diaries during those days were later published under the title of *The Good German of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe*.

Rabe went back to Germany in 1938. He delivered speeches exposing the atrocities committed by the Japanese, which resulted in him being persecuted by the Gestapo.

After World War II, Rabe was treated unreasonably as a result of his membership of the Nazi Party. Learning of his dire situation, the citizens of Nanjing quickly raised money and sent assistance to him and his family.

Rabe died of a stroke in 1950. Half a century later, his heroic conduct finally became more widely known. His diaries were published, his residence in Nanjing was transformed into a memorial hall, and his tombstone was moved to Nanjing as a monument. Those refugees who had been saved by his efforts told his story to the world. The people of China expressed their deepest gratitude to this hero.

Today, in his former residence in Nanjing, whether he is thought of as laughing happily, or sighing in sadness, his image will be imprinted forever on the minds of the people of China.

Dream of a Raven