

We were There

A Collection of Firsthand Testimonies about Raoul Wallenberg saving people in Budapest

RAOUL WALLENBERG



August August
1912 - 2012

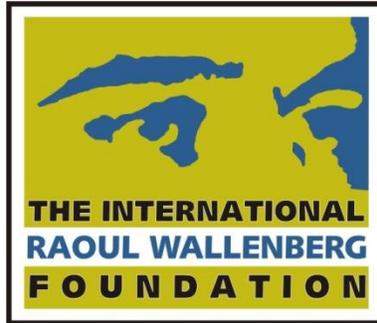
Centenary of his Birth



THE INTERNATIONAL RAOUL WALLENBERG FOUNDATION

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**A Collection of Firsthand
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Budapest**

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Introduction

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Raoul Wallenberg. In an effort to crystalize Wallenberg's legacy, the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation sought out the diverse parties who either believe they were saved by Wallenberg during the war or who had contact with him during his humanitarian mission in Budapest so that they could provide a fitting tribute to the man that inspired them all.

Following the successful publication of an e-book entitled "Documenting Wallenberg" in 2011 that focused on interviews of survivors who were saved from Nazi persecution by Raoul Wallenberg, the IRWF launched a similar initiative to celebrate the centennial of this great hero's birth. Intended to provide respondents with an open forum that was not restricted by the interview format, the initiative received a strong response. From young children that Wallenberg saved from the jaws of death by rescuing them from a deportation train to messenger boys and typists who worked tirelessly to produce the desperately needed *Schutzpässe*, we received many testimonies that all praised the remarkable humanitarian efforts of Wallenberg. These testimonies, while incredibly varied and unique, all trumpeted a common message: Raoul Wallenberg, despite the mountainous obstacles that he faced and the long odds that he was given, rose above the tide of hate and indifference that existed in Hungary in 1944-1945 and followed his moral compass to save the lives of tens of thousands of Jews.

It is the goal of this e-book, published by the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation, that these stories be preserved as memories of the past and as reminders for the future. By publishing a selection of these testimonies available to libraries, archives, schools and the general public, the IRWF hopes to inspire future generations to follow Raoul Wallenberg's humanitarian example.

Testimonies

Judit Brody

Swedish House

Hungary, 1944: By October, the Russian front was very near. To prevent Hungary from making a special peace with the Russians, the Arrow Cross¹ seized power. Things were moving fast. In November, the select few who had foreign protective passes had to move into specially designated blocks of flats. This "International ghetto", as it later became to be known, was not fenced in. It consisted of a handful of buildings interspersed among other blocks of flats where gentiles could stay put, and it was in a newer part of town, the home for many middle class non-religious Jews. The hoi polloi² were ordered to move to the hastily established ghetto proper³. The fenced ghetto was behind the big synagogue in the area of town where mostly religious Jews lived. The few gentiles who had previously lived there had to move out. There was some reason in madness.

How and why did we come to possess a protective passport, a *Schutzpass*? Sometime during the summer we had to undergo a house search conducted by two plainclothes detectives. We had no idea whether the documents they found and took with them would amount to any incriminating evidence or not, since we had no idea what they were looking for. They left with a threateningly serious expression on their faces.

By then a rumor circulated that the Swedes were giving out protective papers. So as soon as the detectives left, my parents went to the Swedish Embassy to ask for protection. The trip to the Embassy in the Buda hills was in itself a dangerous undertaking because when they went it was not during permitted hours and they had to be on the streets without a star⁴. They just hoped nobody would recognize them, or if they were recognized that nobody would call the police or the gendarmes. The staff at the Swedish Embassy considered our case serious enough to issue passports to the whole family. The house search had no further consequences, but it resulted in us having those important documents that more than likely saved our lives.

In the Swedish protected house our family was assigned one room in a flat that we shared with three other families. Then the agonizing time began, as we tried to decide what to take with us, what to leave behind, and "what to do with the rest" (a question I first asked at the beginning of the occupation in the spring, when my father assured me that he was going to surrender everything he was obliged to surrender. Later it became an often used expression in jest). A trunk full of clothes and other important items, such as the family silver, was buried in the cellar of the "little house." My eight teddies stayed behind; I was getting too old for them anyway. The "strawberry graves," jars of jam into which my mother buried some of her jewelry, came with us. We took all of the dry provisions we possessed, as well as a few tins of tuna and one precious tin of pineapple that we were planning to open at our liberation. The single piece of furniture we took with us was the "chair during day/bed at night" for my grandmother. We kept assuring her how lucky she was that it was not a bed during day/chair at night.

We hired a cart and the vice-caretaker to help us pull it. One employee from the printing works was affiliated with the Arrow Cross and we managed to persuade him, with good money, to accompany us as protection. He dressed in the full regalia of black riding boots, black trousers tucked into the boots, black shirt, and an Arrow Cross armband. A revolver and a baton completed his outfit.

¹ See the glossary for more on the Arrow Cross

² A term for the working class

³ The Central Ghetto, as opposed to the more genteel International Ghetto. This is where most of the Jews were forced to live during the last few years of the war.

⁴ Jews were forced to wear an identifying Jewish star on their clothing whenever they went outside. To be outside without the star pinned on was a criminal offense.

And so we left our flat, our home for more than my lifetime. We simply closed the door, leaving behind practically everything we owned. It was not the only time this happened to me: twice more I left everything behind. In 1944 we were driven out, but on the other occasions I left at my own will, which is a very big difference!

When we finally installed ourselves in our new "home" (one room for the five of us) we were exhausted but not entirely downhearted. We felt a certain sense of achievement. The family was still together, and we had survived the mile long walk without falling into the hands of the Arrow Cross brigands.

Father immediately became involved with the local government⁵; he was elected to be a member of the Block Committee. This gave him the opportunity to meet other men roughly the same age as him, and for him to escape our female dominated household for a few hours daily. Although the committee had no real power, it was still important and had plenty to do. It helped resolve disputes between residents, establish rules and regulations, and was ready to make important decisions should the need arise.

For me, the change of scene brought new difficulties. The six of us children had been a close knit group in no. 34. True I was a peripheral character, but among only six even the outsider feels good. This new block was enormous; built around a rectangular courtyard, it had six floors with corridors all around. Hundreds of children ran around playing wild games in those corridors and in the courtyard. The original inhabitants, who already had their own groups, were not interested in the newcomers.

I stayed indoors, reading books by Stefan Zweig. They were above my head but Zweig's wonderfully easy style carried me along. Our room had one huge window that looked out onto a wide street, with a side street just opposite. The streets were deserted much of the time, so I was surprised when one afternoon I heard a commotion outside. I was on my own. Watching from a safe distance because I had been warned not to go close to the window, I saw a bunch of Arrow Cross men with their batons drawn, standing in a group and looking at something on the ground. Soon I realized that it was not something but somebody on the ground. The noise came from him; he was crying for help. No other soul was around, and the man repeatedly cried "help, help!" while the Arrow Cross men kicked him and beat him. Eventually, they dragged him away, but I could still hear his cries getting weaker and weaker.

Five days passed in this relative calm, and then the thunderbolt struck. Count Wallenberg managed to have new buildings opened for his protégés in order to ease the congestion. The committee decided that our family was one of those who had to move into one of the newly designated buildings. We were far from happy in our crowded situation, but we had come to a resting point and were beginning to get acquainted with our flat-mates. To have to move again, without the cart and the protection of the sham Arrow Cross man, seemed a catastrophe. My mother broke down. Or rather, she broke out in hysterics. She screamed and shouted and trembled and started to chain-smoke. We stood around feeling utterly helpless. By evening she composed herself, and a couple of days later we moved. It was our salvation.

When we arrived at our newly acquired flat, the original inhabitants, a mother and her teenage daughter, were still getting their belongings together. They had to move to the ghetto. Where the father was, nobody knew. Was he in a forced labor camp, or was he already dead? We certainly did not care much about these poor people whose home we had to occupy - we had our own problems.

But now we had space. We had three rooms entirely to ourselves; that is, until Auntie Etelka, a distant relation, moved in with my grandmother. She was dumped on us by her son and his wife who went into hiding and could not take her with them. In the maid's room lived a peculiar trio: a woman in her thirties and her two brothers. This was the first time in my life that I saw religious Jews praying in the morning,

⁵ The ghetto had a governing body of Jews. It had little power, but it was able to organize events inside the ghetto for the Jewish residents.

with their prayer shawls and with phylacteries fixed on their foreheads and wound around their arms. We all shared one bathroom, but compared to the previous situation this was luxury.

Father was appointed commander-in chief for the building. It is not an exaggeration to say that for the following six weeks he was master of life and death. He posted guards at the main entrance of the building with orders not to let anyone in or out, except messengers from the Swedish delegation. One day an irascible elderly man who felt he was unduly restrained shoved the guard aside and let himself out. He was never seen again.

Originally, there were only about 300 people in the building, but gradually this number grew to about 500 by the end of the siege. The deal between Wallenberg and the Arrow Cross had been that only those with Swedish protective papers were allowed to stay in the protected houses, and it was my father's responsibility to see to it that the rules were upheld. But could he turn away anybody in need of help? Could he send anybody out on the street to certain death? As far as I know, he never refused shelter to anyone who asked for it. At the end of December, a group of young men without any papers arrived. Wallenberg rescued them from a train transport. They had not eaten for days. It would have caused a rebellion to disperse these unfortunates among the families already ensconced in the flats, so they were asked to stay in the cellar. There they sat, praying silently most of the time, never venturing outside. Food brought from the Swedish headquarters nearby, only a welcome supplement for most of the residents, was their only nourishment. But they survived.

Food was scarce for everyone. After the second week we could not leave the building at all to go shopping, and later on shops were not open anyway. Our own reserves became slowly depleted, but it was a matter of pride for my mother that not one single day passed without us having at least one thin slice of bread. How did we make bread? My father kneaded the dough, and a flickering candlelight kept it warm enough to rise a little. Yeast was not available and the bread was made the good old fashioned way by saving a little from the previous batch and letting it ferment. Our staples were pulses. We could hardly have survived on what we had brought with us had it not been for three additional sources. The first was unsweetened fruit sherbet ice base. My father brought this home in a big drum from one of his foraging expeditions when we could still leave the building. It was not great tasting stuff, but it probably contained quite a lot of vitamin C. The second source of extra food was a friend, Leo Hochner. He roamed the streets of the "International ghetto" in an SS car, taking food to his friends. One morning he arrived with a sack of almonds and a tub of goose-fat. Here was nourishment indeed. Where he got it from is a mystery, and how he persuaded the SS to drive him around (and he was a Jew!) is another mystery.

Our third food source was the Swedish delegation's office in the International ghetto. We received one meal a day from there, usually a watery tomato soup or a pot of beans. My father had a communal kitchen set up on the ground floor with a cook in charge who reheated the food and dished it out to the needy. As we still had some food of our own, my parents decided not to ask for any food from the communal kitchen. In spite of their admonishments, and driven more by curiosity than hunger, I often sneaked down for some. By the end of the siege however, our stores were so low that we had to resort to being fed by Wallenberg.

January 6-16

On the 6th of January rumor reached us that the people in the Swedish protected houses were being taken to the ghetto. Indeed, looking out the window we saw groups of people carrying bags, sacks, suitcases, and rucksacks, trudging slowly in the deep snow and escorted by Arrow Cross men. It was true; it seemed that our turn had come too.

Father did not take long to decide what it was that he had to do: he threw a thick winter coat over his pajamas, grabbed a piece of paper identifying him as the commander of our block officially appointed by

Count Wallenberg, and rushed over to the temporary headquarters of the Swedish Delegation. This amounted to near suicide, but he put his trust partly in that scrap of paper signed by Wallenberg and partly in the hope that the Arrow Cross men would be busy supervising the file of marchers. And so it was - he reached the delegation without being apprehended. At the office he was reassured that Wallenberg had already acted and stopped the further evacuation of any Swedish houses. He could not halt those already evacuated, and four houses were taken to the ghetto that morning. Had we stayed in the originally allotted flat we would have ended up in the ghetto as well.

That day Father got home safe and sound, but this was not the fate of "little Perl", our regular liaison officer. He was one of the bravest men we ever knew. Maybe in his late twenties or early thirties, he was a meek, soft spoken, slightly flabby young fellow. Little Perl commuted indefatigably between the Swedish delegation and the protected buildings. He brought messages, he took messages, he arranged for the desperately sick to be transported to the makeshift hospital, and he arranged for the daily food to be delivered. But the day came when he failed to turn up. He disappeared without trace. We never found out what happened to him.

After the 6th of January we breathed a little easier. It was clear that Wallenberg had some power over the brigands. What conferred power on him remains a mystery to this day. Was it his personal courage, his determination, or his charisma that stopped the murderers?

With the increase of the intensity of the siege many people moved down into the cellar, but we stuck it out in our flat. It became bitterly cold; snow was lying in the courtyard and on the streets. Our stock of water in the bath turned into ice. There was no more wood to burn in the big tiled stoves, and we gave up the idea of heat. By then there was a German army supply corps stationed outside on the street, and we watched the soldiers scuttling around. They did not seem to be in a much better position than we were. One of the soldiers knocked on the entrance door of the building and asked for asylum. This was readily granted. Both sides were happy with the arrangement reached with Herr Lembke. He secured accommodation for himself a little warmer than the street corner, and the meager food provided by the Swedes was better than his rations. He probably hoped that the Russians would not take him as a POW. We on the other hand were happy to have an official guard person. Herr Lembke escorted our foraging parties on the street. When our water supply failed completely, other, more fortunate houses still had a trickle coming from a tap in their cellars. Herr Lembke, with his rifle on his shoulders, pretending to escort prisoners, accompanied the water carriers with their buckets.

By the morning of the 16th of January, all the Germans outside our building were gone! This was strange indeed, and even stranger was the behavior of the character behind the huge piece of furniture on the balcony of the house opposite. He would intermittently emerge from behind the wardrobe and fire a gun. But he did not fire in the direction the Russians were coming from - he fired in the direction the Germans were leaving.

The whole building was in turmoil: the Russians are here! Eventually a Russian soldier walked in. No ordinary soldier was he but a character from an opera, maybe the Khovanschina. On his head was the regulation Russian army fur cap with the ear flaps, he had a brilliant white fur coat, and in his hand he carried a sword. Shining riding boots completed his attire. He was invited into the office and people flocked to admire him, to thank him, even to kiss his hands. We made him understand that we were Jewish, that our lives had been in danger and that we were grateful to him for liberating us. The soldier made a gesture with his sword, indicating that in his eyes all people were equal and that henceforth we were free.

This is how I remember that day, January the 16th. Did I dream the soldier?

Steven Erdos

I was born in Budapest, Hungary, and, as all Hungarian Jews were, was recruited into forced labor camps⁶. Luckily we served in Budapest (our regiment was assigned to save lives and property after serious Allied bombings), but in February 1944 we were led like sheep to the Nyugati Palyaudvar (railway station). There we were lined up along the ramps, waiting for the cattle cars to arrive, when suddenly, from out of nowhere, a black limo pulled up. An impeccably dressed gentleman got out and, shouting loudly in German, insisted on seeing the Hungarian commanding officer. After showing his credentials, he shouted, "all with Swedish *Schutzpässe* (exemption papers) step forward." About twenty-five of us had those. During that time the gentleman paced in front of our line, at one point stopping in front of me and looking at me with questioning eyes. Unfortunately, I had no *Schutzpass*, so he walked by. This was the first time I met Raoul Wallenberg.

The wagons arrived shortly after and, like cattle, eighty of us were pressed into a wagon and shipped to the west. After four days of suffering - with a handful of bread and one drink of water a day - we arrived at Petruzalka (the Slovak name), or Engerau in German. This place was located about twenty kilometers south of Bratislava.

Our job was to build anti-tank barriers: first we dug four-foot-deep bases into the frozen earth, then we erected in them concrete pylons that supposedly would stop tanks from passing over. It was a daily minimum of ten hours of work in snow, sleet, and wind, and if the quota was not completed then the day lasted twelve hours, sometimes into the night. After ten days I had had enough. With a close friend I plotted my escape. By foresight, months before, we had bought false "Aryan" ID papers, which we had hidden until then.

One chilling night, instead of going back to the barracks with our group, we hid under the pylons in the ditch, and when it was all quiet we started walking towards the border separating Hungary from Slovakia.

Always lying low and watching for noises, walking all night, exhausted and cold, we arrived in a small community, and, to our great relief, heard Hungarian spoken. In a bombed-out railway station we had an opportunity to tidy ourselves a little bit. And with our false papers we could obtain two railway tickets back to Budapest! We were the first to escape from deportation.

Hiding for the first few days in bombed-out buildings, we found out that a friend of ours was the cook in Tatra-u6 – in the "auxiliary Swedish embassy"⁷.

We contacted him and begged him to let us hide in the building. Not willing to jeopardize his position, he said that only with Raoul Wallenberg's permission could we stay there, and he could arrange for us to meet him. The next day we were led into a small office where we stayed for hours. Finally, in late afternoon, the door opened and an impeccably dressed but very weary-looking gentleman walked in, still giving orders for his entourage. He sat down, showing us to do so too. I talked to him (I am fluent in German), telling him about our "saga." He listened carefully, shaking his head, without interrupting. Finally, he spoke. We could hide in the building – without his official knowledge. The cook could give us food, but if we were caught at any time by anyone, we were on our own! We thanked him for his generosity and he walked out of the room with his aides. This was the second and last time I met Mr. Wallenberg.

⁶ According the National Hungarian Holocaust Museum, all Jews, but the ones in the city of Budapest were forced into labor camps initially.

⁷ According to Research Work on Budapest, addresses related to Raoul Wallenberg by Hasse Nylén, there were safe houses located at Tatra u.5, 5/a, 6, 12/a.

George Farkas

My late father, Janos (John) Farkas, was Raoul Wallenberg's right hand man. My father was a member of the Hungarian underground who, with a false name and papers, joined Raoul, who never knew he was Jewish as he thought he would not allow him to help on the grounds of it being too dangerous for a Jew to do so.

He accompanied Raoul everywhere - to the railway stations and while he intercepted the death marches - and together they handed out the *Schutzpasses* that saved so many lives.

He was in fact the last person in the "free" world to speak to Raoul before he went to the Russians⁸, having failed in repeated attempts to dissuade him from going with them.

A very humble, shy and modest man who never regarded what he did as anything extraordinary, my father never spoke of his wartime activities until a television program was being made about Raoul. A person who was saved by Raoul said to the producers, "Why are you speaking to me? Why don't you speak to the man who actually saved my life - he's living here in Sydney," and thus my father's close connection to Raoul and his mission came to light.

It was for this reason that Mrs. Nane Annan, the former U.N. Secretary General's wife⁹ (and Raoul's niece) asked to meet me when she was in Sydney, as she had heard of my father's close involvement with Raoul.

I have done some extensive research on Raoul's fate and the activities of both him and my father, and I have given addresses on the subject of their exploits to both B'nei Brith and the Sydney Jewish Museum. I am also on the Board of the Sydney Jewish Museum, where my father's involvement with Raoul is featured.

I have also met Jan Anger, Per Anger's¹⁰ son, who has provided me with extensive information on his father and Raoul's exploits, and in particular on the Swedish government's failure to capitalize on a number of opportunities with which it was presented to ascertain Raoul's fate and possibly save him.

⁸ Editorial Note: This is a large claim, and the editor was unable to verify its veracity. Thus, it remains in the testimony as unsubstantiated information.

⁹ Kofi Annan served as the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 1997 until December of 2006.

¹⁰ Per Anger (1913-2002) was the second secretary of the Swedish Legation in Budapest, Hungary from 1942 until the end of World War II. He worked closely with Raoul Wallenberg and helped save thousands of Jews from their deaths at the hands of the Nazis.

Erwin Forrester

My life was saved by Raoul Wallenberg personally more than 60 years ago in Budapest. As a young man, I was called into the Hungarian labor army in May 1944¹¹, and I served there until the end of November. Our duty was mainly to clean up, and possibly save lives, after bombing attacks by Allied aircrafts.

One night towards the end of November, our barracks were surrounded by Nazi Arrow Cross¹² thugs, and we were marched to a rail yard, pushed into cattle-wagons --up to seventy of us per wagon -- and sent off towards Germany. On the Hungarian-Austrian border they suddenly stopped the train, herded us into a small border village, and pushed us into stables. The following morning we were given spades and sent out to nearby fields to dig trenches for the Nazis to help stop the advancing Red Army units.

A few days later, I found out that after finishing this work we were going to be sent to an Austrian concentration camp. So I decided to escape.

I guessed that my chances of survival were about 50-50. After an eventful journey, I arrived back in Budapest. The only place I could hide and find shelter was the cellar of the Hungarian Red Cross building. There were already about 20 people hiding there, most of them young.

One night the building was entered by a group of the Arrow Cross thugs and all the inhabitants were taken by truck to the Gestapo¹³ headquarters on the Buda-side¹⁴ of the city. From here men of military age were transported to the infamous Hadik military court building¹⁵.

The following day I was court-martialed for desertion and sentenced, without a trial, to death by firing squad.

When they ordered me to sing an acknowledgement of my sentence, I refused by saying: "I am not a Hungarian citizen. I have a Swedish passport and consequently this court has no jurisdiction over me."

They then asked me to produce the evidence of my Swedish passport, and I told them that the Arrow Cross had taken away all my papers. After a short deliberation they decided to make a phone call to the Swedish embassy to check my details. I was then led back to my cell.

What I did not know was that the previous day my mother, who had heard what had happened to me, went to the Swedish embassy requesting their assistance. She had even left a photograph of me for a passport.

About two hours after my return to the cell a tall man in a leather coat and a hat came into the cell and asked for me by name. He approached me and in German whispered in my ear the words: "We are going to save you."

I had no idea who he was – for all I knew he could have been a Gestapo agent.

In fact, he was Raoul Wallenberg.

¹¹ Jews were required to serve in the *munkaszolgálat*, a labor unit that served as an alternative to military service. Jews were prohibited from joining the regular Hungarian military, and instead they were forced to serve in these labor units.

¹² See the glossary for more information on the Arrow Cross party

¹³ See the glossary for more information on the Gestapo

¹⁴ The city of Budapest is bisected by the River Danube. The area on the west bank is known as Buda and is more residential in nature, while the area on the east bank is known as Pest and is more industrial. The two areas were separate cities until unification was achieved in 1873.

¹⁵ Presumably named for Andres Hadik, a Hungarian nobleman who lived from 1710-1790, the Count Hadik Barracks (24-26 Horthy Miklos ut, today Bartok Bela ut) was used as a prison during the war.

The following day I was removed from my cell and taken to a regular army barrack. I knew then that my life had been saved. Shortly after that I was sent to do kitchen duty, where I was able to sneak away.

I went straight to the Swedish embassy – the place was like a madhouse with people everywhere pleading for passports. I was able to collect my own *Schutzpass*, which had been prepared for me.

It was here that I saw Raoul Wallenberg for the second and last time. I was able to speak to him and briefly convey my thanks.

Raoul Wallenberg saved up to 30,000 Jews in Budapest by issuing Swedish passports and housing people in special buildings under the protection of the Swedish government. He also provided food for these people, which enabled them to survive the last horrible weeks of the war.

In addition, there were also about 80,000¹⁶ people crammed into the Budapest ghetto, mostly elderly people and children, who were cut off from the outside world and left without food and water. When Wallenberg found out that Hungarian Nazis planned to eliminate the whole ghetto by burning it down before the arrival of the Red Army, he immediately went to see the German commander in Budapest, General Schminhuber¹⁷. He warned him that unless this massacre was prevented, the General would be made personally responsible for this crime after the war. Schminhuber⁵ immediately placed his own soldiers around the ghetto to stop the Arrow Cross.

Wallenberg was arrested by the Red Army on the 17th of January 1945 and has not been heard of since. He actually approached the Red Army commander asking him for food supplies for his Swedish protected houses. He was arrested because the Russians thought he was an American spy. They had information that he had been sent on his mission by the American Refugee Board¹⁸ to try to save the Jewish population of Budapest. But they could not comprehend this information. He was sent to Moscow and imprisoned there.

News about his disappearance came from Stockholm. There is a Joint Swedish-Russian Committee¹⁹ working to discover his fate, and they were contacted by an elderly Russian woman, a retired nurse who had worked in a psychiatric hospital in Moscow in the sixties and seventies. This woman was shown a large number of photographs of different men and picked out two of them, both of Wallenberg, as one of her patients on the seventies.

This contradicts the official KGB report stating that he died of a heart attack in 1947 in a Moscow prison.

Raoul Wallenberg has been made an honorary citizen of Canada and the USA, only the second person to receive this honor, along with Winston Churchill. He has been named a Righteous Gentile in Israel. There are countless monuments around the world celebrating his courage and sacrifice, including our own in Woollahra, a suburb of Sydney, Australia. My son Peter was fully instrumental in this endeavor²⁰.

HIS MEMORY AND INCREDIBLE WORK FOR HUMANITY WILL LIVE FOREVER!

¹⁶ Most historians estimate that there were actually about 70,000 people in the ghetto at that time

¹⁷ Original spelling in the testimony was Schmidhuber. August Schmidhuber was a high ranking SS officer who was prosecuted in the Neurmberg Trials. However, he was not known to have been in Budapest during the war or to have had any dealings with Raoul Wallenberg. Therefore, the editor changed the spelling to Schminhuber, as Gerhard Schminhuber was the Major General of the German forces in Budapest. He died during the Battle of Budapest, and he was known to have had dealings with Wallenberg.

¹⁸ Better known as the War Refugee Board. It was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in January of 1944. The goal of this board was to aid civilian victims of the Nazis.

¹⁹ Created in 1991 with the goal of clarifying the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, the committee spent ten years researching Wallenberg's activities while in Soviet custody.

²⁰ The monument is the Raoul Wallenberg Garden, which located on the corner of Queen Street and Edgecliff Road in Woollahra, Australia. The monument was built in 1985.

Paula and Erno Friedman

I am a Holocaust survivor. I was born in Hungary. In 1944, I was taken with my loved ones to Auschwitz. We were liberated from Bergen-Belsen in April 1945.

We are grateful to the Swedish government for being the first to come to our aid in such a dreadful time. King Gustav V invited 10,000 of the sick Holocaust survivors and their relatives to come to Sweden²¹. The Swedish supplied them with boats and medical personnel, cared for them, and put them up in sanitariums, convalescent homes, hospitals and schools. King Gustav V was surely sent from Heaven to save these remaining Jews, and his reward is great. As it says in Judaic sources, one who saves one life is considered to have saved the whole world. How much more so if he saved so many!

A Raoul Wallenberg office was established in Stockholm. A family friend, Vera Muller, worked there. The office sent ten krona²² to all the Hungarian children for their birthday. Every youngster was a recipient ... except for one. This little girl was crying and carrying on. "What's wrong with me?" she wailed. "Am I not Hungarian? Why was I left out?" It broke my heart. I wrote a letter to the Raoul Wallenberg office, describing the situation and requesting that they rectify it so that she would not feel orphaned. To this day, I still feel gratitude for their kind cooperation.

My husband, Erno Friedman, was born in Hungary. Hiding as a gentile in Budapest in 1944, he saw how Raoul Wallenberg traveled all over rescuing Jews. He pulled them from the death march and off cattle cars. He supplied them with documents that identified them as Swedish subjects and established safe houses. We believe he was the only one in the Second World War who risked his life to confront Nazi officials and try to reason with them or threaten to have them hanged as war criminals if they proceeded with their heinous plans²³.

These are a few of the memories that have stayed with me and my husband for more than six decades.

²¹ While it is certainly true that many Jews were welcomed by Sweden in the immediate post-war years for rehabilitation, we could find no evidence of direct intervention on their behalf by King Gustav V. However, it is well documented that King Gustav V strove to save Jews during the Holocaust. The famous evacuation of the Danish Jews was aided by the support of King Gustav, and he was active and outspoken when it came to the plight of the Jews in Hungary.

²² Krona is the Swedish form of currency.

²³ While this is the belief of the testifiers, the fact is that many righteous gentiles have been recognized by Yad Vashem for their outstanding efforts to save Jews during the Holocaust. For a complete list, visit the Yad Vashem website at yadvashem.org/righteous

Ivan Z. Gabor

Echoes of My Footsteps

Excerpt from "Chapter VI: The Red Danube" from the book Echoes of My Footsteps. An autobiography by Ivan Z. Gabor as told to Jeffrey Beal. To read the complete chapter, click here http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/wp-content/files_flutter/6789.pdf].

...My rescue was due to the intercession of kind strangers. And that obvious principal is nothing more than random chance. Certainly those people who opened their mouths in my defense were noble and good, and deserved to carry the mantle of true Christendom. But, as far as it related to me, it was blind dumb luck, something over which I had no control. I got lucky, and that's all there was to it. Nobody in my circumstance could claim otherwise. Most Jews who were saved from extermination during the war were likewise the beneficiaries of *mazel*, good fortune. It's true that there were some fighters who took matters into their own hands, and bought their salvation through guts and guile. And there were cells of armed Jewish partisans in the forest, as well as occasional ghetto uprisings, and even a camp revolt. But the vast majority of Jews were emaciated and powerless prisoners, living and dying at the whim of their captors. The rest just hid. Any among those who rode out the storm will be the first to admit that they only have inexplicable *mazel* to thank. Relying on fickle and unpredictable luck as a survival plan does not sound like a prudent tactic, but in retrospect it seemed as if we had little choice. As proof I submit the two most terrible and traumatic incidents of our lives.

With mere months remaining to the conflict, not that we knew as much at that time, the round up and deportation of Jews intensified. My grandmother, pregnant mother, and I were all living together in one small apartment in a Jewish designated building, venturing out only for food. After my beating I was more scared than ever to go out. I was a mass of welts and scars. My eyes were both blackened, there were cuts along my scalp, and every bone and joint ached. In addition to all that, puss was oozing out of sores on my neck. By then I had developed a condition, caused by a lack of vitamin D, and it caused running sores to develop on my neck. Many died from this and other such conditions caused from malnutrition. The war had claimed my body even if death had not yet performed its *coup de grace*. I almost constantly felt as I did during my beating. My whole body throbbed. Why couldn't it just end? Then, it almost did.

Had we known how deliciously close the Allies were we would've been encouraged. But we never heard any news of the outside world, and confidence eluded us as long as the fascists kept their strangle hold on the city. They controlled the radio, newspapers, and the posters on the round metal kiosks that dotted the city. All of this media boasted endless German triumph and served to keep us in fear and anxiety. And while some Russian artillery units might have been approaching our eastern outskirts the Nazis still held the population in its grip. Nothing can demonstrate that perfect power more than the mass arrests that were now a daily part of life in the capital, and we felt no surprise when we fell under their shiny cold boots. We accepted it as our inevitable, predetermined fate.

In the early winter of 1944 a mass arrest occurred, and all the inhabitants of our building were taken out and marched toward the ghetto, the next step in our destined deportation to a concentration camp. The significance of this was unmistakable. Our turn had finally come. We were doomed, along with the countless other Hungarian Jews who had gone this route before. Our entire building was cleared of Jews. We slogged along like zombies, abandoned and alone. There were no Yankee GIs coming to the rescue, and the Russians were just a mirage. All our options were closed. We were dead. But as we marched toward our black fate a most bizarre and unmistakably surreal event was coming toward us from a plateau so secret we had no idea it even existed. It came roaring up to us in the form of a shiny black limo. It caught everyone's attention equally, brutal tormentors and frightened victims alike. Its brakes squealed as it careened to a stop, and out jumped a man who then leapt up onto the magical car's running boards. As soon as he did he broke out in loud glorious speech.

“We are with the Swedish Embassy and have *Schutzpässe* -visa- for many of you here!”

Next he started to call out Jewish sounding names. He spoke with great authority and without fear. He looked absolutely heroic. Then my mother and grandmother blurted out at the same time, “My God, it’s Nandorbaci!”

It was true! My ardently religious uncle Nandor, now free of facial hair and dressed like a typical Hungarian peasant, was standing a few meters away from us, waving these papers, these *Schutzpässe*, and calling out names. If anyone would have told me that I had an uncle that was still alive in Budapest I would have cackled at the irony of such a ridiculous statement. And if you would have added that he was about to jump out of an ambassador’s limousine right in front of me I wouldn’t have even taken it seriously enough to be offended by the cavalier indifference of such callous whimsy. No such reality was possible. It was unimaginable and inconceivable, yet here he was. He had hidden underground, and survived long enough to be rescued by the very same man who was now about to rescue us. Nandor stood on the running boards, making him taller than anyone else around, imbued with authority, calling out names and saving lives. When he called out a name happy people ran forward and claimed their sanctified Swedish visas. Uncle Nandor issued *Schutzpässe* and bold announcements.

“We are with the Swedish Embassy and we have visas for many people here!”

I didn’t really comprehend what all of this specifically meant, and it contributed to my usual state of confusion. Apparently, even death was incomprehensible to me. But our marching had stopped, and excitement replaced mother’s and grandmother’s usual terror. It must have been good. And as I grasped for these threads of understanding I heard our own names called out by Uncle Nandor.

“*Schutzpässe*, *Schutzpässe* for the Gabor family. Ilus, Freddy, Zelma.”

My mother and grandma looked at each other with dismay, and Nandor continued.

“Please come forward for your *Schutzpässe*.”

Gabriel has sounded his trumpet and Saint Peter opened the gateway to Heaven. We rushed to the car and grabbed our papers, affording one incredulous look deep into the eyes of my uncle who returned the glance with a brief but equally intense stare. During this exchange we stood next to the shiny limo, which looked like a vision from a dream to me. I peered within it and beheld the man who was our true savior. I didn’t know it at the time, but the dignified, aristocratic looking and well-dressed young man sitting in the back seat was one of the most famous saviors of the Jews of World War Two. Raoul Wallenberg was the ultimate Righteous Gentile, but he looked as if he could have been one of the Aryan occupiers. His saintly actions did indeed contradict his physical countenance, for he was determined to save as many Jews from the Nazis as possible. I stood there transfixed by the beatific image of this true Aryan as my uncle continued.

“You have all been issued Swedish visas and are now under the protection of the neutral Swedish government. Take your papers to one of our Swedish Protective Houses at once. You will be safe there. Hurry!”

Not if God Himself had descended from the clouds would we have been more awestruck. Here was a Germanic looking man interfering with others of his type on our behalf. Blessed surrealism.

At once, several angry and uniformed SS officers approached the car. They ordered him to get out, but he blithely rolled down his window and produced some papers and made his own demands which included respecting his authority. The famed Swedish diplomat did not falter, and he persuaded the bewildered Nazis to stay their bloody hands. As bloodthirsty as the Third Reich was it always sought to exude the aura

of propriety. They claimed the mantle of civilization, and as such always gave the impression it obeyed the established laws of civilized men. They didn't even persecute the Jews until they changed the laws to make it legal to do so. Thus, they were duty bound to honor the official state of neutrality that existed between their two countries. There were a handful of European nations that enjoyed such political indifference, and Germany begrudgingly honored those treaties, keeping a simulated smile of toleration on their frustrated faces through all their dealings. For example, a bearded Rabbi bearing a passport from a country such as Spain or Sweden could theoretically approach Adolph Eichmann and wish him a good *shabbos*, and escape retribution. And Wallenberg exploited that loophole to the max. He even bent those rules. In this case the Swedish Embassy had issued three thousand visas to Jews, and he printed up ten times that many. As a matter of fact, Nandor's wife was part of the crew that produced the counterfeit papers. The *Schutzpass* was an impressive looking document, and all its recipients felt secure and protected. And, as the Nazi officials had no proof to the contrary, they had to honor them all, even if ninety percent of them were forgeries. They would do so, at least for the time being. As my uncle was handing them out he repeated his instructions of salvation to the chosen few of the chosen people who were to make their way to a Swedish Protective House. These were buildings that housed members of the Swedish Diplomatic mission to Hungary, and all such places granted diplomatic immunity to anyone seeking asylum within its walls. Without hearing another syllable we ran off in search of one.

This incident, a mere footnote in the history of the war, saved our lives, at least for the time being. As luck had it we were marching along the very spot where the limo pulled up. Not everyone heard him, and most of the sad parade marched on as Nandor made his speech. But we heard him, as did those around us, and received the blessed fake documents. However, had that car stopped fifty yards behind us we'd have been goners. That day he only managed to save the last two hundred people on that line, and we were part of that group. Ultimately he saved a hundred and fifty times that many ...

Eliezer Grinwald

I was born in Budapest, Hungary in November 1935. My childhood passed normally until I went to school at the age of six. It was then that I began to feel that I was different from my friends because I was Jewish. We, the Jewish children, suffered continuing abuse. Thanks to a few Christian friends, I was able to manage with the abuse.

The real troubles started at the beginning of 1944. During this period, Jewish men were conscripted for labor battalions, and my father was taken from us. Our only contact with him was by letter. In August 1944, if my memory does not deceive me, they took my mother as well. We were left alone in the house. It was my brother, aged two, and myself, a nine-year-old boy, who remained. Word spread in the Jewish community that we were alone without parents, and we were brought to a house under the protection of the Swedish Embassy. To the best of my knowledge there were about 900-1000 Jewish children without parents with us in that house. A small staff of women volunteers, probably Jewish, took care of our needs as far as possible. Conditions were hard. We slept on the floor, not always with a blanket, and ate only one meal a day. In October or November 1944, my mother appeared at the protected house after escaping from the death march of the Germans and the Hungarians.

The protected house, which was extraterritorial, was not always undisturbed. Anti-semitic gangs knew about us and Nazi armed forces tried to drag us out and send us to the death camps or drown us in the Danube. I remember that on those occasions an invisible hand prevented this from happening, and even when we were about to be transported, we were returned to the protected house.

In January, 1945, when we were liberated, I was told that the invisible hand that protected us belonged to the Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg. It is due to him that my brother, myself and thousands of other Jews are alive today.

Tomas Kertesz's Story

As told in an article published by Clarin Newspaper (Argentina)

Thanks to Wallenberg I'm Alive!

"I was among the people that they were going to put on the trains, and he himself took care of saving those of us who had Swedish passports," remembers the Hungarian architect Tomás Keretes, at his Belgrano apartment. It was the year 1944 and Tomás was 16 years old. His sight blurs when he tells how Raoul Wallenberg moved among the platforms of Budapest railway station to save thousands of Jews who were being taken to the Nazi concentration camps.

Tomás, today a 73 year old with white hair and serene face, recalls, "Thanks to him I am alive." Through a friend of his father, Tomás obtained, from the hands of the diplomat, a Swedish passport that saved him more from death more than once. On another occasion he was also close. It was when he was coming back from working in a field on the outskirts of Budapest with his father and they had walked under the rain for a whole day.

"Those who could not follow the pace or sat down were shot," remembers Tomás and points out that he fell asleep standing supported by a shovel. The following day a person appeared asking whether I knew any Swedes. "I showed him a negative of my passport, measuring 24 by 36 millimeters, and that was enough. It saved our lives."

Tomás gave out hundreds of safe-conducts with his own hands. He says that, in order to offer greater protection, Wallenberg employed him as an office boy at the Swedish Embassy and thus Tomás himself delivered passports to Jewish families signed by the diplomat.

But in spite of Wallenberg's huge work, the Nazis continued slaughtering people. Tomás says that he was removed from the building where he lived together with his parents under the excuse of identification. He was able to escape from the line to hide in a telephone booth and later in a house of some friends where he spent a few weeks until the Soviet troops arrived in Budapest. He never saw his parents again.

Tomás is one of the "Children of the Shoah," the surviving children of the Holocaust, some 100,000 around the world. After spending some time in Transylvania, he came to Argentina to work with an uncle who had settled here in 1930. "I survived the war because that was my destiny. And that destiny was helped by my Swedish passport," he points out.

About the mysterious disappearance of the diplomat, Tomás says, "It is an irony: Wallenberg saved thousands of lives, but no one could save him."

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Erwin K. Koranyi

The Passport to Death and the Passport to Life

Years before the Germans occupied Hungary, a segment of the semi-fascist Hungarian army of the day, fighting on the Nazi side, embarked on the project to liquidate as many young Jewish men as they possibly could.

The gray military booklet issued to all soldiers had been modified for the Jews. It was emblazoned with a bright red, hand-painted sign: “zs”; that is, “zsido,” or Jew. This booklet became the “passport of death:” good for two destinations, to the east or to the south.

East meant the Russian front with starvation and backbreaking labor. The Jews wore their civilian clothes, and some worked while wearing their city shoes in the dead of the Russian winter. It often happened that the slave laborers were herded into stables or barns to be set ablaze and incarcerated alive, while those who tried to escape the inferno were machine-gunned down. My cousin, Stephan, died this way. The other direction was south, and it meant the infamous lead and copper mines of Bor, Serbia, from where only a few returned. Sixty thousand Jewish boys were murdered by the Hungarian military in those remote work camps. This was the passport to death.

The German troops took over Hungary on March 19, 1944. In the following fourteen months, more than half a million (569,000) Hungarian Jews were killed by the Hungarian-German efforts...that is sixty-nine percent of the Hungarian Jewish population, quite an accomplishment²⁴.

I was twenty years old then, and was fervently in love with Alice-Lici. I married her in May of the same year, thus saving her from the obligation of having to return to the rural ghetto, Kormend, from where Lici's mother, father, and sister were deported to Auschwitz, never to come back. Of the four hundred Jews who lived in that little town, fewer than ten survived²⁵. At the same time, Lici's brother languished in one of those forced labor camps.

One day, Lici was arrested by the Hungarian police in Budapest for having left the house where we lived one minute before 11:00 a.m. The Jews were allowed to be on the street for only two hours each day, from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. According to regulations, the house where we were assigned to live before the formal ghetto was established had been marked with a huge yellow star.

Lici was taken to Kistarcsa, a holding camp on the way to Auschwitz. I was desperate. In trying to save her, I even negotiated with some gangsters. It was a futile effort.

It was then that I first heard that a young Swedish diplomat had arrived in Budapest with the explicit task of saving Jewish lives. I could not believe it, but just the same, I went to the Swedish Embassy in Budapest.

²⁴ According to the National Hungarian Holocaust Museum, there were approximately 800,000 Jews in the country. By the end of Nazi occupation, 596,000 Jews lost their lives or 74% of the Jewish Population.

²⁵ For a detailed list of the Jews who lost their lives in Kormend, see

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Kormend/Kormendcivilregistrationrecords.html>²⁵ According to the National Hungarian Holocaust Museum, there were approximately 800,000 Jews in the country. By the end of Nazi occupation, 596,000 Jews lost their lives or 74% of the Jewish Population.

²⁵ For a detailed list of the Jews who lost their lives in Kormend, see <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Kormend/Kormendcivilregistrationrecords.html>

It was there that I met that intense, energetic young man, Raoul Wallenberg. He listened to me, and issued a Swedish “defense passport” not just for me but for the entire family, for Lici, and even for Lici’s brother. My passport number was “196,” a very low number indeed. This was our passport to life.

Wallenberg brought Lici out from the camp, and he freed me from the forced labor where I had to toil under the command of Adolph Eichmann, in Swabenburg of Budapest, Eichmann’s notorious headquarters²⁶. Thus, Wallenberg saved our lives, as he saved probably one hundred thousand other people.

The number of Jews he actually saved is difficult to tell; some people who he saved one day may have been murdered at a later time.

But Wallenberg daringly appeared at train-stations, where the Jews were already locked in the cattle carts, waiting to be deported. Meanwhile, Per Anger, Wallenberg’s Swedish assistant, collected as many names from the doomed group as he could, and then handed the list to Wallenberg, who vigorously negotiated with the murderers.... Or else Wallenberg turned up unexpectedly, like a “red pimpernel,” at places where mass executions took place, to save people from their sure death...

For us too this was not the only occasion when Wallenberg saved our lives! Some six months later we fell into a ghastly situation, and at the very last minute Wallenberg brought Lici and me back from the threshold of execution by the Hungarian Arrow Cross murderers when we were destined to be killed at the shore of the river Danube, like so many others²⁷. There were still other times when either our good fortune, or our then keen senses and premonitions, rescued us.

Though Lici and I are divorced, we remain friends and we are in contact. Lici lives in Stockholm, a Swedish citizen and a practicing physician.

We all know, of course, the tragedy that befell Raoul Wallenberg, although the details are still shrouded in mystery.

A few years ago, I got a note from Lici along with the copy of a particular page from Wallenberg’s 1944 diary. This had been found in the Lublinka Prison in Moscow and was brought to Sweden and reprinted page by page in the newspaper Expressen.

The diary shows, in Wallenberg’s handwriting, my name and my appointment with him, at 16:00 hour on Saturday, August 5th, 1944.

The next Monday, on the 7th, Lici was released along with four other prisoners, and this was marked in Wallenberg’s diary in his handwriting: at 10:00 a.m. the “five fanger,” or five prisoners, were released.

This is the brief history of my “passport of death” issued by the Hungarian military, and my “passport of life,” granted by Raoul Wallenberg.

²⁶ Karl Adolf Eichmann was a German Lieutenant Colonel of the Nazi. He was captured, tried, and hung after being convicted of war crimes.

²⁷ See the glossary for more on the Arrow Cross party.

Ladislao Ladanyi

The Diplomat Who Saved 100,000 Jews From the Nazis

By Paula Lugones

He was sent to Budapest in 1944. He issued Swedish passports that he distributed among the Hungarian Jews. It is not clear whether he is dead or alive. Two survivors remember him in Buenos Aires.

Ladislao Ladanyi eyes fill with tears when points to the portrait of an aristocratic looking young man with his hair plastered down and dressed in a dark suit. "This is my savior," he announces with solemnity and he smiles gently. Ladislao adds, "He means my life," as if it was necessary, and introduces the man in the picture who saved him from death in 1944: He is Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who rescued around 100,000 Hungarian Jews from the Nazis and disappeared in 1945. Today he would be 90 years old.

Ladislao, an active 81 year-old man, comes and goes from a wardrobe in his Barrio Norte apartment, full of pictures and documents, where he stores his most intimate and painful memories. Finally, he returns with a yellowish paper, written in Swedish and German that was his passport to life. It has a picture of a young Ladislao -at that time he used the surname Loewinger -, and the indication that the bearer "is under the protection of the Embassy of Sweden in Budapest." In the inferior angle the signature of Wallenberg, at that time First Secretary of the diplomatic branch at the Hungarian capital, devastated by the Nazi regime, can be seen.

Wallenberg had been born into one of the most prominent families in Sweden, of several generations of bankers and statesmen. He was just 32 years old when in 1944 he was asked to lead a high-risk mission to help the Jewish community in Budapest that was under threat of extermination. The young man, who was the manager of a firm involved in to the export and import of food, accepted the challenge.

Ladislao, who in 1940, had ran away from his native Berlin to Budapest with his family, escaping from Nazism remembers that "pressures against the Jews of Hungary began little by little." "Laws against Jews began to appear little by little: we could not obtain work permits, we could not go to public places, we were excluded from society and from work."

Soon, Hitler's plans to annihilate all the Jewish population in the territories occupied by Germany started to become real in Budapest. Hungary, that had supported Germany in its war against the Soviet Union which began in 1941, had 700,000 Jews in its territory at the beginning of 1944. Hitler ordered the occupation of Hungary in March of that year, and soon started the deportation of Hungarian Jews to the terrifying concentration camps.

Ladislao, who was 19 years old at that time, started to wander call on embassies in search of a visa to leave the country because the situation "was desperate." "But all of them closed their doors," he assures. At the Argentine delegation, on the other hand, at least he was able to leave the papers. And he suspects that somehow from that place they somehow ended up in Wallenberg's hands. Shortly after Ladislao and his parents were confined to live in the Jewish ghetto in Budapest, crammed in rooms with seven or eight people in "horrible" conditions, he remembers. The mass deportations had started.

It was then that the document of salvation arrived. "It was an invention of Wallenberg," Ladislao says. It was the yellowish paper saying that he and his family were under the protection of the King of Sweden. They left the ghetto and went to live to in a building flying the Swedish flag.

When Wallenberg arrived in Budapest, in July 1944, the Germans had already deported more than 400,000 Jews. There were only 200,000 left in the capital and it was not a matter of wasting time. The young Swede used all the means, conventional and otherwise, to save lives. He surprised everyone with the design of a protective passport, with highly visible coats of arms of the Swedish royal house (neutral during the war), with no international value, but impressive in the eyes of the German bureaucracy.

He also created the so-called "Swedish homes" that accommodated families like Ladislao's and in a short time these buildings with Swedish flag protected more than 15,000 Jews. When conditions were totally desperate, Wallenberg issued a rustic version of his passport, consisting of a sheet of paper bearing his signature. In the middle of the chaos, that paper was, at times, the difference between life and death.

The diplomat did not hesitate to threaten or bribe Germans so that they liberated those who had no Swedish passport. When mass deportations by train started, there are people who saw him on the roofs of the trains handing out piles of safe-conducts to the people inside the cars (see "Thanks...").

By the time the Soviet troops arrived in Budapest in the middle of January 1945, Wallenberg is supposed to have rescued around 100,000 Jews from death. But he could not save himself. On January 17th of that year he was last seen, under Soviet escort, with his driver on a visit -in theory- to a USSR military base in southern Budapest. He never returned.

It is not known whether he is alive or dead but the Russians themselves said that he had passed away in 1947, in a Soviet prison. The reasons why he had been arrested remain a mystery. Maybe the Russians suspected that Wallenberg was an American spy, or that maybe they did not trust the Swedish contacts with the Germans.

Today some people call him "Hero without a grave." But for Ladislao, Wallenberg is more than that. In Buenos Aires, where he arrived in 1948 to meet up with his sister once again, the grandfather gives a thankful look at the portrait of the young man. "He is my God," he mumbles about the man who saved his life.

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Lucia Laragione

A Piece of Faded Yellow Paper

Translated by María Lía Macchi

Ignacio, my grandson, looks baffled at a yellow piece of paper, faded by time, which I have just put in his hands. I tell him that it is part of his birthday present and he smiles, thinking that I am kidding. Then, I look into his eyes and I add that this aged piece of paper that seems worthless today meant the difference between life and death when I was thirteen. (It was my grandson's thirteenth birthday). I insist, saying that if it hadn't been for that slip of paper probably neither of us would have been celebrating here today.

Now Ignacio looks at the faded document again and sees a seal that he hadn't noticed before.

"What's that?" he asks.

"The Coat of Arms of the Swedish Royal House."

My grandson understands that there is a story behind this document, and I begin to reminisce.

The sound of water is the music that accompanied my childhood. The most intense and distant memories of Budapest, the city of my birth, are associated with water. Not only because the two historical centers, Buda and Pest, are divided by the Danube river, but also because the whole capital of Hungary abounds with fountains and thermal baths.

During the summer, my family and I used to go to Gellért, the most popular bath. I can still feel the excitement of sinking into the pool with artificial waves that would lift me up to the crest with undulating movements. In those days I was only eight, and my world was a safe place, sheltered by my parents' love. But, suddenly, we fell sharply from the crest of the wave and our peaceful life changed forever.

Soon, Janos, my father, and Bartha, my mother, understood that, apart from the calamities of war, there was a great additional menace for us: persecution because of our origin. One had only to see what had happened in Poland: as soon as the Nazis occupied it, the manhunt of Jews was unleashed.

"But if we Hungarians are friends of the Germans," I argued, "Why would they hurt us?" Perhaps in order to set my mind at rest, I thought that my parents were exaggerating. During the following years, in spite of the war, I continued going to school and leading a life that, even with fear and hardships of every kind, seemed normal. Then the fateful year of 1944 arrived.

That year, Germany and her allied countries, among which was Hungary, were definitively headed for defeat. The Russians, who, allied with England, France and the U.S.A., fought against the Germans, and were advancing without stopping over Rumania and Bulgaria and threatened to arrive in my country. Commandant Horthy, head of the Hungarian government, asked the Russians for a truce²⁸. The Nazis considered this petition as treason. They feared that the enemies would finally penetrate Germany by going through our territory. To avoid this eventuality, they invaded Hungary.

²⁸ See the glossary for more information on the war-time alliance and Commander Horthy.

At that time I was thirteen. I harshly had to learn how correct my parents' fears had been. The invaders immediately put in practice against Hungarian Jews the policy of death that they had enforced in all the occupied countries.

My parents and I, together with thousands of others, were torn from our homes and confined to the enclosure of the ghetto. That winter was a harsh one, and we were crowded in dark, miserable rooms under the constant menace that any gesture would cost us our lives. Once a day we would manage to eat a piece of bread. I remember that, despite everything, I went on hearing the sound of water, the music of Budapest, and that kept my hope alive.

Finally, on a day when the April sun was beginning to show itself, we were violently driven from the ghetto and dragged to the East Railway Station.

In happier times we used to leave from there to visit my grandparents who lived in the country, the country that in springtime is filled with flowers. Instead, we now left from there in cattle trains towards death.

I walked together with the others, striving to keep back my tears. I was so afraid! Beside me walked a woman with a baby in her arms. We were already at the station platform when one of the huge dogs that an officer was holding threw itself against me. Terrified, I fell to the ground. The soldiers laughed at my panic. The dog's enormous mouth was baring its sharp teeth centimeters from my head when I suddenly heard an unfamiliar voice exclaiming: "Leave him! That child is under the protection of the King of Sweden!"

The man who held the menacing beast pulled its leash and withheld it. I looked at the person who had spoken: he was a young man of about thirty, slim and elegant. He wore a long blue overcoat and his blonde straight hair was combed back from his forehead. With a determined gesture he extended before the officer a yellow paper that bore the coat of arms of the Royal House of Sweden. I never really found out why the Germans, who stopped at nothing, showed such respect for seals and documents.

That day, Raoul Wallenberg (I later learned that this was my savior's name) managed to save dozens of Jews from the trains of death. During the following months, I worked by his side at the Embassy of Sweden, a neutral country during the war.

Employed as an office messenger, I myself distributed among my brethren those yellow papers that meant the difference between living and dying. More than fifty years have passed and I cannot forget the image of that brave and caring man, climbing on the roofs of the cattle trains, giving out the saving documents with full hands. And I cannot but think of the irony of destiny.

In 1945, when the Nazis surrendered and the Russians finally entered Budapest, Wallenberg had succeeded in rescuing from the hands of the victimizers more than a hundred thousand Jews. However, he was not able to save himself. On January 17th, 1945 he was seen for the last time when entering the Headquarters of what was then the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Russians, who made him a prisoner, maintain that the Swedish diplomat died in prison in 1947. But there is no proof of this being true. It is thought that those who captured him suspected that he was a spy in the service of the United States, or maybe they suspected him because of his contacts with the Germans.

"There wasn't a saving paper for Raoul Wallenberg, just as there isn't a tomb to pay him homage."

And with that I concluded my story.

Ignacio looks once more at the paper he is holding in his hands, telling me that he is going to keep it carefully and that when the son that he expects to have is thirteen he will bequeath it to him, together with my story. We hug each other, and then, to my absolute surprise, he whispers in my ears the following words: "Isten eltessen sokaig/a fuled erjen bokaig."

"Who taught you that?" I ask, bewildered.

"My Dad. Who else? But the truth is... I don't know what it means. He told me to ask you."

To surprise me, my son had taught his son the most enigmatic of my people's greetings: "May God give you a long life and may your ears reach your ankles."

I translate the strange words for Ignacio. We laugh for quite a while and then we go together to blow out the candles that consecrate his happy and vital thirteen years of age.

Julio Milko

I was born as a Catholic, since my father, Elemér Milkó, converted before my birth, and I was raised as a Catholic. My mother, Erzsébet Gyárfás (Guttman), was born Jewish but converted at age 12 to the Lutheran faith. I also had a sister, Eva, who was born in 1930.

According to Hungarian law, the boy follows the father in his religion, and the girl follows her mother. Therefore, I was considered a Catholic, while my sister was considered a Jew.

The first anti-Jewish laws went into effect in 1938²⁹. Father was exempt from the anti-Semitic laws enacted in Hungary until March 19th 1944. On this date Nazi Germany occupied Hungary militarily, due to the fact that the Horthy³⁰ Government was trying to make peace with the Allies. The Germans imposed a Nazi friendly and virulently anti-Semitic government. Father continued working in the paper mill firm for another two months after the German occupation. Then he was drafted into a labor battalion³¹, and he was released after two months; it was July 1944. The Nazi friendly government was dismissed by Miklos Horthy in June 1944. He was negotiating with the Soviets for an extra peace.

Father had a lot of contact with Sweden, especially with regard to raw material purchased from Sweden for the paper mill industry. The firm, Hazai Papirgyár R.T., was controlled by the Fellner family; it was the second richest industrial group in Hungary.

Father then offered his services to Raoul Wallenberg. There is a picture of the two that I saw in one of the Wallenberg exhibits in a castle in Buda, some 15 years ago. Raoul Wallenberg is receiving a committee representing the Jews of Budapest. My father is the last one standing up behind Wallenberg and to his left.

In 1941 I was a youth swimming champion, but when people discovered that my grandfather was Jewish in 1942, (until then even I did not know this), I was removed from the swimming group. I then started my contacts with the illegal Communist party, and at the same time I was allowed to finish my studies at the Gymnasium³². In May 1944, my home became a "White Star" home for Christians of Jewish origin.

Tátra Street, number 6 was the center of Swedish activity in the International ghetto³³. My father was responsible for the organization of this Ghetto in every respect. He had several other people working with him.

After October 15th, when the Germans took Horthy prisoner and imposed an Arrow Cross Hungarian Nazi Government³⁴, I went definitively underground. We were ordered to manufacture false identity papers, birth certificates and so on. We had only one contact to the resistance movement. I don't remember his name but I know he reported to Rajk, who was later executed by the Soviet controlled communist regime.

²⁹ Passed by Hungary under the leadership of Miklos Horthy, the first set of anti-Jewish laws restricted the number of Jews in certain occupations to 20 percent. Additional laws were passed in 1939 that further restricted Jewish businesses and occupations, as well as defining Jews racially.

³⁰ Miklos Horthy (1868-1957) was the Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary until he was deposed by the Nazis in 1944.

³¹ Known as the *munkaszolgálat*, these labor battalions were reserved for Jewish Hungarians, who were restricted from serving in the regular army due to anti-Jewish legislation.

³²le: Highschool

³³ Established by Ferenc Szalasi, the Hungarian leader after October 15, 1944, the International Ghetto was intended for the protection of diplomatically protected Jews. Most of the Jews were confined to the Central Ghetto, as opposed to the International Ghetto.

³⁴ See the glossary for more on the Arrow Cross party.

In order to improve our cover we joined the Arrow Cross party and used their uniforms. We had some arms but were under orders not to use them unless discovered.

In mid-November or maybe a bit later my Father sent a message that I should join him in Tátra-u. 6. I helped from then on with some paperwork, serving as a messenger boy, and assisting wounded people as much as I could. I used to be a boy scout and had some first aid training. In the summer of 1944 I worked during the daytime in a hospital training nurses and doctors, both of whom were in very short supply. So I had some experience. I also sorted food and medicine and helped distribute it. I was somewhat safer on the streets than others, since my name does not suggest Jewish origin, my original birth certificate was Catholic, and I have not been circumcised.

While working with Wallenberg in Tátra-u. 6 Father used to go to the bank of the Danube River with a large book of the Embassy with names of persons on the *Schutzpass* list. I did not accompany him on these dangerous forays. He would return bringing along people with him, whom he saved from being shot; people with names that were either in the book or slightly similar to the names in the book. The Arrow Cross bandits used to tear up the *Schutzpässe* when they could get ahold of Jews, taking their valuables and shooting them into the Danube. In his book³⁵, Gabor Forgacs mentions my father as being a part of the Wallenberg operation.

One day, Father received a handwritten note from Wallenberg. It stated, "I cannot guarantee the protection of Swedish houses and others in the International ghetto. Therefore, distribute medicine and food to the people to have with them when the Arrow Cross people will come to take them to the Jewish ghetto" (which was fenced or walled-off).

Father organized the execution of the orders received from Wallenberg. In actuality, it proved to be a false alarm, since the Arrow Cross did not come to the Tátra – u. 6 location, but to another Swedish protected house in Nagymező u. In the early morning hours Father tried to commit suicide, along with my mother, my sister, and me. The morphine he gave us was not enough, and we all survived.

Why did Father decide to try and commit suicide? Since he knew the exact location where Wallenberg was staying, he was afraid that he would give away the location if subjected to torture. Or, maybe he just lost control. Mother told me that he was totally exhausted; disillusioned that he could not go on protecting the people entrusted to him. After all of us in the family swallowed the morphine, I was taken to Lazaretto³⁶. They at first thought I was already dead, but I regained consciousness. Sometime later, on January 7, 1945, Father died suddenly of a heart attack while Budapest was under siege and being shelled by the Soviet army. He collapsed at his table. The Soviets were only 4 house blocks away. He was at his desk trying to get in contact with Wallenberg when he had the fatal attack.

Soon after the liberation of Budapest, I believe it was January 15, 1945, I witnessed Wallenberg appearing in front of the Tátra u. 6 building. He was in a black Embassy limousine, accompanied by two Russian officers in full dress uniform and a NKVD³⁷ agent. In German, Wallenberg expressed regrets at my father's

³⁵ *Recollections and Facts: My Days with Raoul Wallenberg*, by Gabor Forgacs. Forgacs was a teenage messenger boy working for the Swedes who became Raoul Wallenberg's runner during his time in Budapest.

³⁶ Another city in Hungary.

³⁷ A forerunner of the KGB, the NKVD was a secret police force of the Soviet Union.

passing, and he said he was going to Malinovsky's³⁸ headquarters to get food, medicine, and provisions. He added that we should not to worry; he would be back in two days.

I left Hungary in 1948 and moved to Brazil. There I manufactured screws. I have three sons; one heads a Staples outlet in the Boston region. I am married for a second time, as my first wife died from a cancer illness.

In 1973 while on a business trip to Geneva, I met Mr. Lindberg, a business associate from Stockholm in a restaurant. He pointed Wallenberg's sister out to me, as she was sitting at his table. I had a long talk with her. When I returned to Brazil, I sent her a copy of the Wallenberg note.

³⁸ Rodion Malinovsky (1898-1967) was a Soviet military commander in WWII and later became Defense Minister of the Soviet Union. He was a leader of the Soviet liberation of Budapest, and widely testified to be the person who escorted Raoul Wallenberg to meet with the Soviets in Russia soon after the liberation of the city.

Joseph Reich

Translated from Hebrew by Micki LaVine

I was born in the Czech Republic and grew up in Budapest. I studied Torah at the Heder³⁹.

My mother died at a very young age, and my father remarried. I lived with my sister and a brother. I was sent to live with my grandmother. We were very poor, so for seven years until Hitler arrived, I would go to eat at a different house every day.

From 1938-1944 we felt the anti-Semitism everywhere. Jews were not allowed to enter their schools. They cut our side locks. When the Germans entered Budapest in April 1944, my parents were sent to Auschwitz.

My brother and I were placed in a labor camp in a brick factory in Budapest. We were separated because they did not want us to be together. I was sent to the town of Ketcka near the airport. Later in November we were taken and put on the transport train to be sent to Auschwitz. We crossed Budapest again, which was already bombed, and the communist commander told us that whoever can should escape. So a lot of us escaped, including my brother. My brother bribed the commander, who helped us find a job at the beer factory. All those who were able to escape were working there.

A month later I entered the Ghetto. When I returned to the barracks there was no one there. It was empty. An old gentile man told me to run, so I ran back to the ghetto. My brother disappeared and I never heard from him again. He probably died on his way to Russia.

In the Ghetto the Hungarian Militia was in charge. One day they ordered us to go out to the courtyard and started counting us.

There I saw Wallenberg.

He was nice and friendly, and he looked at us, pointed at me and said to get out of the line. How did he save me? He told me to return to the Ghetto, just like that, without knowing who I was. I was young, only 16 years old. He did not give me the *Schutzpass*.

There were however a few Jews who were dressed as Germans who were able to give the *Schutzpass*. Wallenberg was not sitting alone. He was a pleasant man, dressed in a leather coat, handsome. He looked like a detective.

In the ghetto I was always hungry, so I would go out to look for food. It was not kosher. Once the militia caught me. They hated the Jews like the Nazis did. They took me by the arm and asked if I was Jewish. I had a Hungarian and a Swedish passport, but I was afraid to tell them because I knew the Russians were coming. The Russians were bombing, and they were surrounding the city. I was caught, beaten, and tied up; my teeth were pulled out. I was thrown into a shelter that was filled with men, women, and children. They were all crying. In the evening we were ordered to go out and stand in line. Men and women were separated. We all wanted clothes. Men were told to step forward, women back, behind.

³⁹ A traditional Jewish school that taught subjects such as Talmud and the Bible to young children.

We were taken to the center and were accused of always causing trouble. They started shooting around us with a machine gun. The women were screaming for mercy. I jumped into the river. That is how I was saved.

The Swedish officers sent their men and they were told to try and save anyone who escapes. It was very cold. The river was frozen. One man grabbed me and put me in an ambulance. We were taken to the Swedish hospital on Tatra St. Once we arrived, the personnel refused to take us, so one of them stayed with us and waited for the Russians⁴⁰.

The Russians took us in. I was swollen, cold and beaten up. When I left the hospital, a Russian policeman found me and asked if I was a Nazi. When I told him I was Jewish, and he asked me if I was a speculator. He took me to work with other people to help build the bridges in Budapest that were bombed. I stayed there for 2 days until a Russian soldier asked if I was Jewish. When I said yes he said, "I will show you a way to escape, run and don't look back". So I did, just like Lot's wife⁴¹.

⁴⁰ According to Research Work on Budapest addresses related to Raoul Wallenberg by Hasse Nylén, there was a hospital located at Tatra u.14-16.

⁴¹ Lot is a personage in the Old Testament who escapes with his family from the burning city of Sodom. His family is instructed not to look back upon the destruction of the city, but his wife does not adhere to this warning and she is turned into a pillar of salt.

Juraj Szanto

My worst memory from the time when Czechoslovakia was annexed by Hungary⁴² is how my father, a village doctor, was called up into the army, into a so-called punitive company. They sent him to the Russian front, not expecting him to return. At the same time, Hungarian gendarmes took my mother into custody. She had been involved in the illegal resistance, and they took her away to a prison in Budapest. As a teenager I was left alone, quite dependent on the goodwill of neighbors, friends, and people I did not even know.

When Hitler's hordes occupied Hungary in March 1944, I wanted to be closer to my mother, so I traveled to Budapest. My mother was released from jail, but she was kept under police supervision. We sought and found sanctuary at the Swedish Embassy, where a person from our village worked as a chauffeur. It was my job to wash cars.

In December, the Red Army surrounded Budapest, which was being fiercely defended by Hitler's men. We were living in the middle of the crossfire and daily air raids. Bombs were also falling on civilian buildings, and their inhabitants were buried in the ruins. To this day I can feel in my fingers and palms how heavy the soil was when we dug out the already stiff body of a woman who had worked at the nearby Danish Embassy. Those were the first occasions when – as a fifteen-year-old boy – I saw dead bodies.

I shall never forget the Swedish diplomats who were quite fearless and used all possible means to save Jews and illegal workers who were in danger. The bravest of all was Raoul Wallenberg, who I only had the chance to see rarely. I vividly remember his words of praise, thanking me for being so thorough in washing and cleaning his mud-covered car.

It wasn't until after the war that I found out how Wallenberg had risked his own life; how bravely he had handed out Swedish protective passes, filling in the names of those he was rescuing as he went along, even going to the banks of the Danube where Hungarian and German fascists were shooting Jews and letting their bodies fall into the river.

⁴² Czechoslovakia was invaded by the Nazis in 1939 and divided into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak State. Much of Slovakia and all of Subcarpathian Ruthenia were annexed by Hungary at this time as well.

Peter Tarjan

Excerpted from:

What is my Debt to Wallenberg?

The focus of this account may not be as sharp as others, but I was not quite eight when the Germans rolled into Hungary on March 19, 1944. My parents, my grandparents and most of our relatives perished in less than a year after that date; hence my recollections are mostly from a young child's perspective.

Two men escaped from the death camp and issued what has come to be known as the "Auschwitz Protocols"⁴³. This detailed document was smuggled out from Bratislava through Budapest to Switzerland and later to Washington, D.C., where President Roosevelt finally seemed to react to the magnitude of the Nazi's genocide. As its indirect result, the deportations stopped in July, also the time that Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest with the mission to try to stop the destruction of the remaining Jewish population there. As it is widely known, Wallenberg, in his capacity as the First Secretary of the Swedish diplomatic mission, began to issue large numbers of Swedish *schutzpass*, documents, which placed the bearer under the protection of the Swedish Crown. Whether my parents tried to obtain such papers I'll never know, but Swiss diplomats, under the leadership of Carl Lutz⁴⁴, also issued thousands of similar documents. My parents obtained at least three of Lutz's documents, which appeared to be a little different from each other as the underground movement began to produce huge numbers of forged passes; our papers were probably counterfeit.

The summer seemed to pass rapidly. My father was in *munkaszolgálat*⁴⁵ around Budapest and he frequently managed to come home for a day or two. On several occasions, my mother also received orders to report for forced labor. One night, just before dawn, she awakened me as I was sleeping under her piano. She kissed me goodbye and promised to return soon from the infamous Brick Factory, where she was to report. That evening she was back. This might have happened more than once. I don't know whether it was her ingenuity, courage, bribes or good luck that she was able to return, but she managed.

On October 15, Miklos Horthy⁴⁶, the nominal Head of State, once again tried to get Hungary out of the war. It was a beautiful, warm autumn day; the trees had turned gold and red. My father was on leave with us. There was some commotion and we all rushed out to the long gangway on our floor to join our neighbors who were all listening to a radio placed in a window by one of our remaining gentile neighbors. The voice of Admiral Horthy -- who the Germans had kept in office during the occupation -- blared from the radio. He announced Hungary's neutrality. We thought it would be the end of the war! It is hard to describe the joy and the sudden burst of optimism among our neighbors. Miraculously, all those present felt that they had survived the war. Little did we know... The Nazis kidnapped Horthy's son and he was threatened with his son's execution unless he yielded power to the Hungarian Nazis, the *Nyilas* (Arrow Cross)⁴⁷ Party, and he yielded. Within hours, young Arrow Cross hoodlums took over the streets and the final terror began to unfold under Adolf Eichmann's direction. My father returned to his unit and I never saw him again.

⁴³ Also known as the Vrba-Wetzler report, the Auschwitz Protocols was a 32 page document that contained eye witness testimony about Nazi activities, primarily regarding the death camps. Most of the document was written by two Jews who escaped the Auschwitz concentration camp. The document was circulated to high ranking government officials in Allied countries, including President Franklin d. Roosevelt of the United States.

⁴⁴ See the glossary for more information on Carl Lutz.

⁴⁵ A forced labor army that was specifically created for the Jews of Hungary, due to the fact that anti-Jewish legislation restricted them from participating in the regular army.

⁴⁶ See the glossary for more on Miklos Horthy.

⁴⁷ See the glossary for more on the Arrow Cross Party.

I mentioned that my parents acquired three different Swiss *schutzpass*, which stated that the bearer was under the protection of the neutral Swiss government and should be treated as a Swiss citizen. Similar papers were issued not only by the Swedish consulate under the direction of Raoul Wallenberg, but also by the Vatican, Portugal, and Spain, as well as the European Consulate of tiny El Salvador in Geneva, whose First Secretary was George Mandel-Mantello⁴⁸, a brave, extremely clever and dedicated Hungarian Jew. Carl Lutz headed the Swiss mission, and Angelo Rotta was the Papal *Nuncio* in charge of diplomatic affairs⁴⁹. Aside from the legendary Wallenberg, Giorgio Perlasca's name also became a legend⁵⁰. Perlasca, a former Italian Fascist, had fought on Franco's side during the Spanish Civil War in the thirties. After that adventure, Signor Perlasca became a meat salesman for the Italian army with an assignment in Hungary. He broke with the Italian Fascists. He was arrested by the Nazis, but he found a haven at the Spanish consulate. When the Spanish diplomatic mission was recalled in November 1944, Perlasca accepted the responsibility for the protection of all Jews with Spanish protective papers. Thanks to Perlasca's determination and cunning, the majority of "his people" did survive...

... At the end of November a gang of young Arrowcrossmen entered our building and ordered all women, including those with children over two years of age, to report with their packs in the courtyard within a few minutes. Our quarters were on the sixth floor. My mother made some quick arrangements for me with Jolán and left to join the others. I don't remember what she said to me before she left. My last memory of my mother is waving to her from the window of our room as she was waiting with her pack on her back among other women in the small courtyard. She was one of the estimated 30 or 40 thousand people who were marched toward Austria when there were no longer cattle-cars available for their deportation. This was Eichmann's solution to this technical problem.

Jolán knew a gentile military tailor who appeared at our Swiss-protected house and took me off her hands. Presumably, my mother had left some money with Jolán to pay for this. The tailor tried to place me in one of the many improvised orphanages for Jewish children. Not one would take me. At night he ordered me to hide in the loft of his shop, in the dark, and not make the slightest peep or else! I had never before or since experienced such fear as I did while I was left alone in that creepy place in total darkness. By this time all the windows had to be covered with black cardboard to prevent any light from leaking out and calling the attention of the Allied bombers to the place. It was pitch dark in there, as no light could seep in from the outside on account of the seal on the window...

... The Ghetto was saved at the very last minute by Wallenberg, Perlasca and others from getting blown up. They threatened the German commander that he would have to stand trial after the war not as a soldier but as a mass murderer if he allowed the Ghetto to be blown up. Ágnes was saved along with tens of thousands of residents of the Ghetto. She returned to my parents' building to find the apartment empty. Jolán's mother was already back in her tiny one-room apartment, and it was well heated with chopped up furniture and other debris from the bomb damaged buildings. "Aunt Róza" took her in, along with her own children who began to return from their various hiding places. Jolán and Trudi also had survived in hiding. Jolán's blond hair and blue eyes let her pass for a refugee with false papers, but Trudi's beautiful dark hair and black eyes almost gave them away. Of all places, they found shelter in one of the Arrow Cross offices, where Jolán was hired as a cleaning woman. A man suspected that Trudi, not quite three, was a Jewish child. The man asked her:

"Did your mommy ever have a star?" – referring to the Star of David mark.

"Yes," answered Trudi, "my mommy always calls me her little star!"

⁴⁸ George Mandel-Mantello (1901-1992) was a Jewish diplomat working for El Salvador for the Salvadorian Consulate in Geneva during the war. He is credited with saving thousands of Jews from Nazi deportations by issuing them fictive Salvadorian papers that granted them citizenship.

⁴⁹ See the glossary for more on Angelo Rotta.

⁵⁰ See the glossary for more on Giorgio Perlasca.

My gratitude to Wallenberg and to Sweden:

After my mother was forced to go on the Eichmann March, I was placed in an orphanage operated by the Swedish Red Cross. When the orphanage was to be evacuated, I was allowed to leave.

For the final three weeks prior to our liberation in January, 1945, I was hidden by my parents' friend, Anna Kertész, and her family in the International Ghetto in a "Swiss protected apartment," in a building under Swedish protection at Tátra utca 4 on the Pest side.

One of Wallenberg's apartments was at Tátra utca 6, from which he and his chauffeur departed at the request of Marshal Malinovsky.

Wallenberg and other diplomats pressured the German commander to call off the plan to blow up the Budapest Ghetto, thus saving the life of my Aunt Ágnes - who became my guardian - and about 70,000 other Jews in the Ghetto.

My debt to Wallenberg had lingered in the back of my head for a long time, but I was busy with my work and my family. One day in January, 1985, I had some business in downtown Miami, near the old central library. I decided to see if they had any books about Raoul Wallenberg. I found two and began to read them. Soon, I realized that he was taken by the Soviet military authorities exactly forty years earlier. I was stunned, but ever since then I have been searching for information and spoken to various groups about that great man.

Wallenberg's acts of heroism have inspired me to serve as a volunteer speaker at schools in South Florida for more than two decades, talking about the Holocaust to teach the students about the necessity to be tolerant, critical and independent thinkers and if they can't help others, at least do no harm to anyone.

Marianne Vaney

“There but by the grace of God go I”

(John Bradford 1510-1555, English Protestant martyr)

Prologue

Would it be blasphemy if I added, “and there but for the help of Raoul Wallenberg go I?” It is December of 2001, a cold winter day, the sun is shining in Stockholm and I am standing with tears in my eyes in front of the Wallenberg monument. The tears are not only of remembrance and reverence but also of frustration. Was this insignificant construction here on the ground, in a small square partly hidden by tall buildings, sufficient to honour the memory of one of the heroes of the Second World War? He was the modern St. George who saved thousands of people; fighting the ferocious occupying power, his only arms being sagacity, temerity, and wit; motivated by compassion for the persecuted, the tortured, while he himself became the victim of another totalitarian power.

I close my eyes and try to remember when it was that I saw him for the last time. It was around 16th of January 1945. Budapest was “liberated” - or occupied, depending on one’s ideology - by the Soviet troops. We were a small group of Swedish Special Mission employees, staying at the vaults of the former British Embassy and the National Bank, and we were supposed to spend the night in the air raid shelter. It was probably too dangerous to go home in the evening. Somewhere in the building there must have been a burst pipe, as water was rising always higher and we were moving up from one wooden shelf to a higher one, wondering if, having survived the German occupation and the Szalasy Arrow Cross government, we were now going to be drowned or frozen to death? But our Guardian Angels saved us; the water stopped and we fell into an exhausted sleep.

The next morning, with bleary eyes we said goodbye to Wallenberg, who came for a short visit prior to going to Debrecen, where he was to meet the Provisory Hungarian Government. We never saw him again. The Swedish Mission was rounded up; their task of saving the remaining Jewish population of Budapest was accomplished as far as was humanly possible.

Now, while I looked down at the memorial on the ground, I recognized Wallenberg’s signature. The same signature that figured on my identity card, certifying that I was employed by the Special Mission of the Swedish Embassy. How proud I was when I received it - I didn’t have to wear the hated, humiliating yellow star. Was I as proud when I received my first Swiss passport after marrying my husband in 1949? The first was supposed to - with luck and cunning - save my life, but the second, the Swiss passport, what did it save me from?

The War

While I was working at the Jewish Council⁵¹ I met a young pharmacist, Dr. Ivan Szekely. He told me about a rumour that a Swedish diplomat is supposed to come to Budapest to set up a special rescue service at the Swedish Embassy to save the persecuted Jews who still lived in Hungary. Dr. Szekely was hoping he could work at this service, making use of his knowledge of German and English and helping with the organization. As we got on very well and shared opinions about the work and false efficiency of the Jewish Council, I asked him if there might be as possibility of my working there too. I had to offer my assets: my excellent knowledge of English, a working knowledge of German - even though I hated the German occupying power I always loved German poetry and literature - a moderate skill of typing and shorthand

⁵¹ Also known as Judenrate, these councils were present in almost all ghettos during the war. The Jewish Councils were established by the Nazis, who appointed Jewish officials to run the daily life in the ghetto.

and, last but not least, an indomitable spirit to do anything. Ivan Szekely promised to let me know if there was a post for me.

In the meantime, around May 15th, the deportations started in Hungary. We did not know exact details. The newspapers, if they mentioned anything at all, called it “the purification of the country” or “eliminating subversive elements.” We lived in one of the “Jewish houses.” My aunt came to live with us, and we also had to put up an unknown middle-aged lady. We were five people in our two and a half room flat, but we were still lucky because we could live in the same house where we had lived before, and we had our own kitchen and bathroom. The non-Jewish janitor, a fairly decent woman, had the list of all the inhabitants in the flats. She had the authority to check that after 6 p.m. everybody was at home and to report if anybody was missing, or if by chance there was somebody whose name didn’t figure on the list. She was powerful and had an important function she had never had before, however she didn’t abuse it.

Dr. Szekely didn’t contact me again, but through the grapevine and a business friend of my father, I found out that Raoul Wallenberg had arrived from Sweden at the beginning of July. He set up an office at the Swedish Embassy. One fine day I left home, covering my yellow star with a big shawl, and set out for the Swedish Embassy. Luckily, the janitor didn’t see me. I did not know what I was expecting. During the 40 minute walk (I did not dare to take the tram) I was imagining all kinds of scenarios: I shall not be admitted, I shall be arrested by the Hungarian police at the door, or maybe, just maybe, I shall be asked to stay. Whatever would happen, I had to try.

There was a long queue in front of the building; there was a guard, but luckily not a policeman. I had a letter from the Hungarian Red Cross thanks to my father’s business friend, and I insisted on seeing Dr. Szekely. I was not at all sure he was there, but I hoped for the best. After some argument, the guard let me in. Luckily Dr. Szekely was there, already functioning in one of the offices. He recognized me, and explained that the service had just started and that he was very busy, but he introduced me to the head of the Personnel Department and left. There I was! The Head of the Personnel Department, after hearing my name, found out that he used to know my father when they were both students at Debrecen, a large town where we came from. So he agreed to give me a job as a typist. Fortunately, he didn’t check my typing skills. The family connection was enough. I could start the next day. To say that I was pleased is an understatement! I was ecstatic! On the top of the world!

When I arrived the next day I realized that the “Special Service” of the Swedish Embassy was facing teething problems. Raoul Wallenberg was a young Swedish businessman. He had travelled extensively in Europe, studied in the United States, and worked in Haifa, where he met German Jewish refugees. He was deeply shocked when he heard about the atrocities committed by the German Nazi Government. He had also been in Hungary on business in 1942, and he was appalled to see how Jewish people were treated as a consequence of the law against Jews. When the Swedish Government was urged by Washington D.C. to undertake a humanitarian mission to save the Jewish population of Hungary, Wallenberg was the ideal candidate to carry out such a task, and he was more than willing to undertake such a challenging and perilous mission. At that time I only knew he was there trying to set up a rescue service to save people from deportation. The ways and means had to be organized and negotiated with the German and Hungarian authorities.

His plan was to issue a *Schutzpass*⁵², a document of safe conduct, for people who had close family or business contacts with Sweden. This document was to guarantee that these people would be admitted to Sweden as soon as possible. In the meantime, they were under the protection of the Swedish Embassy. It was written in Hungarian and in German, and it was supposed to be respected by the Hungarian and German authorities. The holders of these documents were to stay in protected Swedish houses. There were not a very large number of people with close Swedish contacts. Some people even took names and addresses from telephone directories of Stockholm, Göteborg and other Swedish towns. So we, the

⁵² See the glossary for more information about the *Schutzpass*.

typists, were working sometimes late at night filling in these so called passports, readying them so that they could be given, if possible, to people on the next day.

Unfortunately, there were people who had already been assembled in an unused brick factory, outside of Budapest, before being taken to the wagons to be deported to concentration camps, probably in Germany. So our task was to take the *Schutzpass* to the people who were entitled to receive them. It was not an easy assignment. We had to present our own identity card as employees, issued by the Swedish Embassy, present ourselves to the commander of the camp and give a list of the people who were to receive the documents. I volunteered gladly, as I was young, and did not look Jewish. I preferred it to typing anyway and I was probably not fully aware of the danger. But when I was inside the camp, the sight of the people, looking at us with hope in their eyes, taking my hand and imploring me to do something for them, was unbearable. But there was no way to take people out of the camp unless they were on the list. I had never felt so helpless. I also realized that I could easily have been one of them, sitting there, huddled in a corner, waiting to be deported. Those people who we were able to get out of the camp were taken to the Swedish houses. These houses had the Swedish flag on the door and the inhabitants were supposed to be protected from deportation.

The deportations from Budapest were in full swing. Wallenberg went to Hegyesshalom, the Austro-Hungarian frontier, several times, and he succeeded in liberating people who were en route to Germany and the various concentration camps. So, a few wagons arrived at Budapest with people who - thanks to Wallenberg - could return to relative safety. Once or twice, it was my task to go to the railway station, receive these people, and arrange for their transfer to the Swedish Houses. Their state of health was unimaginable, as they suffered from dysentery, exhaustion, and shock. I had never seen anything like this before. But it certainly confirmed the rumours about the conditions and suffering in the German concentration camps. There was a Hungarian police officer supervising the transport who was also supposed to check the papers of these unfortunate people. I was told to distract the officer while other employees of the Swedish embassy were taking care of the transfer to the safe houses. On one occasion I was politely questioned by the police officer what I – a nice Christian girl according to him – was doing with those miserable Jews. I had been prepared for any questions. I told him I had worked for the Hungarian Red Cross and was temporarily transferred to the Swedish mission. I smiled at him and I think he believed me. If he hadn't, I might not have been writing this report today.

There were several occasions when I was skating on very thin ice, but it was nothing compared to the danger that other Jewish people were facing. I must admit, I was quite proud of myself. By then, my parents were living in the building of the Swedish Special Service; they were relatively safe. I continued to work in the Special Service of the Swedish Embassy, keeping irregular hours, sometimes late working late into the night. Since I lived in the same building as my work it was not a problem; I wouldn't have liked to be on the streets after dark. Danger was everywhere, even in broad daylight. One of my colleagues, Peter Sugar, with whom I went to the camp at the brick factory to hand out *Schutzpass*, was arrested at the steps of one of the big Catholic churches. He was born Catholic after his mother, but his father was Jewish. Somebody had recognized him and alerted one of the ever-present Gestapo⁵³ agents. We never saw him again. It was a terrible shock to all of us at the Embassy. Wallenberg tried to find out where he was sent without success. This must have affected him, as he cared very much for the safety of his employees. He was such a role model for us, risking his own life while negotiating with the authorities and stopping convoys at the Austro-Hungarian border. Other evidence of his caring and compassion was when he offered his villa to the wife of one of his employees to give birth to her baby. As a Jew she could not have been admitted to a hospital.

⁵³ See the glossary for more information on the Gestapo.

The Last Year of the War

The Allied Forces disembarked at Omaha Beach in June 1944⁵⁴. We were hoping that the war would be finished for us too. There were rumours about Admiral Horthy planning negotiations with the Allies. On October 19th all our hopes were shattered. The Hungarian Nazis, the Arrow Cross Party⁵⁵, had taken over the country, forming a government of terrorist criminals. The concept of diplomatic immunity, based on international law was unknown to them. This was not surprising, as they were uneducated brutal, sadistic monsters, except for Baron Kemeny⁵⁶.

But Wallenberg did not give up his mission. With the help of Baroness Kemeny – who was of Jewish origin – he managed to maintain the validity of the Swedish *Schutzpass* and the protection of the Swedish houses. There were, however, tragic incidents. Even when the so-called Government was ready to negotiate with Wallenberg, uniformed members of the Party broke into several Swedish houses that were situated in the area of the Szent Istvan district near the Danube. The inhabitants, children included, were dragged to the bank of the river, shot, and thrown into the water. A very few escaped by keeping themselves under the water. Later, they came to the offices of the Swedish Mission to report what had happened. Again Wallenberg protested, but to no avail. His own life was also in danger; there were several plans to eliminate him, but he was fearless. He often said he came to Budapest to accomplish a mission that he was determined to carry through. His example induced the Swiss, the Spanish, and the Portuguese Embassies, as well as the Representative of the Vatican, Nuncio Angelo Rotta⁵⁷, to issue protective passes. But Wallenberg was the only one who was willing to risk his own life by negotiating with Eichmann, going to the Austrian-Hungarian frontier, trying to stop the deportations, and handing our *Schutzpass* to the people in the cattle-wagons, with or without Swedish connections.

The Soviet troops were approaching Budapest. The Headquarters of the Swedish Special Mission had already been transferred from the Tigris Street in Buda to the Ullői road in Pest. We continued to work in the office, listening to contradictory news, wondering how quickly the Soviet troops were advancing and if the Germans and the Arrow Cross soldiers would have time to carry out their diabolic plan, the final solution, by blowing up the Ghetto and killing all the remaining Jews. We must have been worrying about our own safety, but we had trust in Wallenberg. Indeed, he succeeded in negotiating with the Commander of the German troops, and the massacre was not carried out.

Sometime in the middle of December there were rumours that Eichmann was trying to eliminate Wallenberg and that the offices where we worked would be raided. We were advised that anyone who had the possibility should try to find a safe house elsewhere. I had an option. After certain hesitation, I decided to take it up. As I have mentioned before, I was more or less engaged. My fiancé, although Jewish, was considered an exception because he was protected by an important politician as a reward for his pro-Hungary activity in a territory formerly belonging to Hungary before the 1st World War but now occupied by Czechoslovakia. Thus, he was actually a soldier, wearing the uniform of the Hungarian Army. He was entitled to occupy a flat that was vacated by a Jewish family. He suggested that I try to obtain false identity papers so that we could live together as husband and wife, together with his mother. My former colleague and friend with whom I had worked at the electro-technical factory got me a forged birth certificate with my own name, but born and baptized as a Roman Catholic. With this document, accompanied by the Aryan wife of my fiancé's cousin, I went to the Housing Department of the Arrow Cross Party. To say that I was scared is an understatement. I was terrified, but at the same time I was ashamed. How could I possibly ask a favour from those criminals? But the instinct of survival and the

⁵⁴ Omaha Beach is the code name for one of the five sectors of the Allied invasion of Normandy, France on June 6, 1944.

⁵⁵ See the glossary for more information on the Arrow Cross Party.

⁵⁶ The testimony is possibly referring to Baron Gabor Kemeny (1910-1946), a member of the Arrow Cross Party who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1944 until the end of the war. He was tried in a Budapest court in 1946, where he was convicted of war crimes and high treason and sentenced to death.

⁵⁷ See the glossary for more information on Angelo Rotta.

persuasion of my fiancé were probably stronger. Anyway, we got the apartment. There we spent Christmas, partly in the air raid shelter, because of the constant heavy bombarding. This apartment was in a house near the Danube, and close to one of the bridges that the German blew up a few days later. We were practically living in the air raid shelter. However, we had to go up to the streets to get bread or some milk, or whatever was available. The office of the Swedish Mission where I had worked was at another part of the town and it was impossible to go there.

There were several families at the air raid shelter, and we were careful to communicate with each other that we should not to disclose our identity. Later we found out that several of the people were Jewish or half-Jewish and were hiding with false papers.

After the Russian soldiers entered the city we realized that the Germans must have left. So it was possible to go to the streets, despite the danger of the shells exploding around us. I remembered that there used to be another office of the Swedish Mission in the Harmincad utca, where the National Bank was. I also remembered hearing that even before the end of the war Wallenberg had been working on a social and economic relief plan for Hungary in general and the Jewish community in particular. This other office was not very far from where I was staying during the last days of the war, so I went there to find out what was happening and whether there was a possibility for me to do any work. There I heard that Wallenberg was planning to go to Debrecen to take up contact with the Hungarian Provisional Government. Actually, he was to leave the following day.

When I think back to the first weeks of January 1945, I see pictures of desolation, houses in ruins, the sounds of bombs falling outside the air raid shelter where we were hiding. Who were we hiding from? The Hungarian Arrow Cross thugs, from the German soldiers if there were there still any left, from the Soviet "liberating troops" who were looking for alcohol or even eau de perfume, as well as women of any age to quench their thirst? Again I was lucky. I was unharmed, at least physically. There were very few men, so women and adolescents were ordered to clear up the rubble on the roof of the houses that were partly bombarded. I was hoping there were no unexploded bombs among the ruins. My Guardian Angel - was it Michael? - was doing a full time job. Looking back, I must have felt relieved, especially after I had found my parents famished but alive.

We went back to our old apartment, or what was left of it after it had been plundered by unscrupulous elements. Life had slowly started; people were selling home-made food on the streets and Soviet soldiers were trading flour for watches. Sometimes the flour was chalk; the watches did not always work. The famous Swiss manufacturers PatekPhilippe, IWC, Doxa did not foresee the rough treatment their products were subjected to. I think human beings are more resilient than Swiss watches. We went on living, getting used to seeing Soviet soldiers on the street without being afraid of what they might do to us. Not all of them were aggressive, and they were definitely not looking to kill Jews. That was a great improvement from the Germans and the Hungarian Arrow Cross troops.

Epilogue

Anybody who reads this account of my souvenirs may wonder why I have decided to write this after so many years. I am aware that there have been a large number of articles, reports, and documents written by people who have survived persecution and concentration camps; suffered humiliation and loss of family and fortune. This is not quite my case. Thanks to God and my Guardian Angel in whom I believe, I have survived the Nazi and Soviet occupation, the status of "alien" in England, a mistrusted spouse of Jewish origin to a high ranking Swiss officer and civil servant, a serious car accident and three pancreatitis. I am a survivor. I don't know for how long.

The fact, however, that I survived the German occupation in Budapest and the Hungarian Arrow Cross fascist regime is undoubtedly thanks to Raoul Wallenberg, the righteous gentile commemorated in Israel and an honorary citizen in Canada, but not sufficiently honored in his own country, Sweden. It is not for me to judge why the Swedish government hasn't made more effort to find and liberate Wallenberg from the Soviet prisons. Was it because of his origin from the rich and famous Wallenberg family?

It was certainly a privilege to have worked in his mission, to learn about his compassion for the persecuted people, to see him work at his desk, sometimes late at night. Again, we had to finish filling out the *Schutzpass* for him to sign, ready to take them with him when he went to the Austro-Hungarian border the following day. He never worried about his own safety, whether facing Eichmann or the Arrow Cross criminals.

The other reason for my writing this report is being encouraged by Fr. Dr. Christian Rutishauser, a charismatic Jesuit priest, a scholar of the Bible and of Jewish studies and a friend of the Jewish people. Before I first attended a workshop at the Lassalle House in Bad Schönbrunn I didn't know very much about the Jesuit Order. I was interested to find out how and why they promote and encourage Christian-Jewish dialogue, just as I was trying to accomplish that myself. After attending several workshops and having met Fr. Rutishauser, I was overwhelmed by his genuine interest and compassion for the quest of the Jewish people.

From my early childhood I have been attracted to the Roman Catholic Faith, and particularly to the figure of the Virgin Mary. In my room I have several pictures representing her, and I also have a small icon in my car. When I had my first interview with Fr. Rutishauser I explained to him my problem of dealing with my double identity, that of a Hungarian Jew and a Swiss Christian. I was trying and hoping to become a real Christian, but I realized I had to learn more about the origin of the Christian faith by first studying the Jewish tradition and the Old Testament that I had never really done before, and then continue to understand the teachings of Jesus Christ by becoming more and more familiar with the New Testament.

Among other encouraging and compassionate words he said to me: "The Virgin Mary was a Jewish mother". What a consolation! This helped me to accept and cope with my double identity. And so I continue to pray to the Virgin Mary for the safety and happiness of my children.

This report is dedicated to Fr. Dr. Christian Rutishauser with respect and thanks for his guidance.

Glossary of Terms

Allied Powers - An alliance made up of the countries that opposed the aggression of Nazi Germany. Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union were the most prominent members, although many other countries also joined.

Anschluss - Adolf Hitler's doctrine of German political union with Austria, which effectively enabled Germany to annex that nation in March 1938.

Appeasement - The British and French policy of conceding to Adolf Hitler's territorial demands prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Arrow Cross Party (Hungarian: *Nyilas*) - A national socialist party led by Ferenc Szalasi, the party led the Hungarian government known as The Government of National Unity from October 15, 1944 until March 28, 1945. The party was founded by Szalasi in 1935, and it came into power when the Nazis occupied Hungary. Its political platform included national socialist ideology and militant anti-Semitism. During its reign, thousands of Jews were murdered and deported to death camps. After the war, many Arrow Cross leaders were tried as war criminals in Soviet courts.

Axis Powers - The collective term for Germany, Italy, and Japan's military alliance in opposition to the Allied Powers. Several smaller countries in Eastern Europe also became members of the Axis Powers temporarily.

Bergen-Belsen - A camp established in 1940 by the German military authority. Located 11 miles north of Celle, Germany, the camp functioned as a prisoner-of-war prison until 1943, when it was taken over by the SS and transformed into a concentration camp. Five sub-camps were set up at Bergen-Belsen, one of which was known as the "Hungarian camp." It housed 1,684 Jews from Hungary who had been allowed to leave their country on the "Kasztner train," and would eventually reach safety in Switzerland.

Blitzkrieg - Literally "lightning war." The term for Hitler's invasion strategy of attacking a nation suddenly and with overwhelming force.

Brick Factory - An open-air facility outside of Budapest that became a holding place for those about to be marched to concentration camps.

Budapest - The capital of Hungary and the largest city in East-Central Europe, Budapest is an ancient city that first became home to Hungarians in the 9th century. The city is split by the River Danube, dividing the city into two regions. The hilly western bank was called Buda in ancient times, while the flat eastern bank was called Pest. These two districts were unified on November 17, 1873, creating the modern city of Budapest.

Eichmann Death March - Eichmann began his infamous death march on November 9, 1944. Lacking the trains needed to deport the Jews, Eichmann decided to simply march the deportees 120 miles from Budapest to the Austrian-Hungarian border where he could obtain trains to finish the deportation to the death camps. Hundreds of Jews did not survive the journey. After an investigation by Heinrich Himmler, Eichmann was ordered to stop the death marches at the end of November.

“Final Solution” - The Nazi’s euphemistic term for their plan to exterminate the Jews of Germany and other German-controlled territories during World War II. The term was used at the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, in which Nazi leaders planned the Holocaust but made no specific mention of the extermination camps that ultimately killed millions.

Gestapo - The brutal Nazi secret police force, headed by Hermann Göring. The Gestapo was responsible for the relocation of many European Jews to Nazi concentration camps during the war.

Gendarmerie - A body of the military or a group organized along military lines charged with police duties among civilian populations on a national level. Individual members are known as Gendarmes.

Ghetto - During World War II, the Nazi occupying forces typically organized a city’s Jews by forcing them to live in an area enclosed by a wall. Characterized by severely cramped living quarters and scarce food sources, the ghettos were rife with disease and malnutrition. The Budapest ghetto was established in November of 1944, soon after the Nazis had taken command of the city. It only lasted for three months, as Budapest was liberated by the Soviets in January 1945. However, the ghetto was threatened by an extermination plan conceived by Adolf Eichmann, and the 70,000 Jews that remained there were saved solely due to the intervention of Raoul Wallenberg and his cohorts.

Glass House - Formerly a glass factory, the Glass House was the headquarters of the Jewish youth underground in Budapest, Hungary, during the Holocaust. The building was also used by Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz to shelter persecuted Jews.

Gulag - An acronym for Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies, it is a government agency that administered the main Soviet penal labor camp systems, which housed a wide range of convicts—from petty criminals to political prisoners. The Gulag is recognized as a major instrument of political repression in the Soviet Union.

Hungarian Anti-Jewish Laws - Starting in 1938, the Regent of Hungary, Miklós Horthy, passed a series of anti-Jewish measures in emulation of Germany’s Nuremberg Laws. The first anti-Jewish law—issued on May 29, 1938—restricted the number of Jews in each commercial enterprise in the press, among physicians, engineers, and lawyers to 20%. The second law—issued on May 5, 1939—defined people with two, three, or four Jewish-born grandparents as Jewish. Their employment in government at any level was forbidden, they could not be editors at newspapers, and their numbers were restricted to 6% among theater and movie actors, physicians, lawyers, and engineers. Private companies were forbidden to employ more than 12% Jews. The third law—issued on August 8, 1941—prohibited intermarriage and penalized sexual intercourse between Jews and non-Jews.

Judenrate - The name of the administrative body that governed the Jewish ghettos during World War II. Established by the Nazis, the Jewish leaders of this council were appointed by the Germans and ultimately answered to them. They had relatively little power, but they were able to organize the ghetto and establish limited aid services for the residents of the ghetto.

Lebensraum - Literally “living space,” Adolf Hitler’s justification for Germany’s aggressive territorial conquests in the late 1930s. Based on the work of a previous German ethnographer, Hitler used the idea

of *lebensraum* to claim that the German people's "natural" territory extended beyond the current borders of Germany and that Germany therefore needed to acquire additional territory in Europe.

Luftwaffe - The German air force

Munkaszolgalat - A labor service required of all Jewish men during World War II. Restricted from serving in the regular armed forces due to anti-Jewish legislation, these units served as a way for the Hungarian government to involve the Jews in the war effort.

Red Army - A term that refers to the Soviet Army during World War II. After the war, the Soviets changed its name to the Soviet Army.

Safe House (German *Schutz-Haus*) - Also commonly referred to as Swedish or protected houses, these were buildings acquired by Raoul Wallenberg to shelter Jews who were under the protection of Sweden, thanks to the possession of a *Schutz-Pass*.

Schutzpass - A special Swedish passport invented by Raoul Wallenberg and the Swedish Legation in Hungary. This document was issued to Jews so that they could become official Swedish citizens and therefore be protected from Nazi persecution. It is estimated that the *Schutzpass* alone saved 20,000 Jewish lives.

S.S. - In German, *Schutzstaffel* "protection detachment", the elite German paramilitary unit. Originally formed as a unit to serve as Hitler's personal bodyguards, the S.S. grew and took on the duties of an elite military formation. During World War II, the Nazi regime used the S.S. to handle the extermination of Jews and other racial minorities, among others.

V-E Day - May 8, 1945 - The day on which the Allied forces declared victory in Europe.

Wannsee Conference - A January 1942 conference during which Nazi officials decided to implement the "final solution" to the "Jewish question"—a euphemism for the extermination of European Jews and other minorities at concentration camps in eastern Europe.

Wehrmacht - The term used for regular German army

Yellow Star - A cloth badge in the form of a yellow Star of David that Jews were ordered to sew on their outer garments in order to identify their religion in public. The use of the Yellow Star was first discussed among the Nazi leaders in 1938, after *Kristallnacht*, but was not implemented until after World War II began in September 1939. It is sometimes referred to as Jewish Star or Jewish badge.

People:

Per Anger (1913-2002) was the second secretary of the Swedish legation in Hungary beginning in 1942. He conceived of the initiative to issue protective Swedish passports in an effort to save Hungarian Jews. When Wallenberg arrived in 1944, the two worked together to make improvements to the documents and create safe houses for the remaining Jews. Anger was taken into custody by the Soviets after the war, but, unlike Wallenberg, he was released three months after his incarceration. He was recognized by Yad Vashem in 1982 as a Righteous Among the Nations.

László Baký (1898-1946) was a gendarme-officer and a politician. He retired from his office in 1938 in order to become a politician, and in 1939 he became a member of the Hungarian Parliament. He founded the Hungarian National Socialist Party together with Fidél Pálffy and Jenő Ruskay in 1941. During the Sztójay Cabinet in 1944 he was Undersecretary of State for Internal Affairs, and as such he was in charge of the police and the gendarmerie. He was directly responsible for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews. After the Arrow Cross coup d'état, he was the director of the National Security Office (an office without any political power). He was charged with crimes against humanity and executed in 1946.

László Bárdossy (1890-1946) was the Minister for Foreign Affairs between February 14, 1941, and March 7, 1942 and Prime Minister between April 3, 1941, and March 7, 1942. Hungary entered the war against Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union under his ministry. In autumn 1944 he became one of the leaders of the extreme right League of Members of Parliament. After WWII he was found guilty of war crimes and executed.

Géza Bornemissza (1895-1983) was a mechanical engineer and a politician. He was minister several times between 1935 and 1944.

Sándor Csia (1894-1946) was a politician. He was associated with Ferenc Szálasi. Beginning in 1939, he was the representative of the Arrow Cross Party in the Hungarian Parliament. After the war he was sentenced to death.

Carl Ivan Danielsson (1880–1963) was the Swedish Ambassador to Hungary from 1944–1945. Danielsson refused to leave his post when Miklós Horthy was overruled. Instead, he supported and participated in the rescue operation lead by Raoul Wallenberg. He signed *Schutz-Passes*, personally raising their protection value, and looked the other way when the permitted quota was exceeded or his signature was forged. He was responsible for the rescue and protection of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews.

Kálmán Darányi (1886-1939) was the Minister for Agriculture from 1935 to 1936, and Prime Minister between October 10, 1936, and May 14, 1938. The first anti-Jewish law in Hungary was introduced by his government.

Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) was a German Lieutenant Colonel for the SS and a major organizer of the Holocaust. Eichmann was in charge of logistics of the mass deportation of Jews to the death camps throughout Europe. He was especially involved in the Hungarian deportations that he began in 1944. After the war, Eichmann escaped to Argentina, where he was eventually apprehended by Israeli undercover agents and taken to Israel to stand trial. He was convicted of crimes against humanity and war crimes and executed in 1962.

László Endre (1895-1946) was a politician known for anti-Semitism and supporter of the extreme right. He was the deputy-lieutenant of Pest County from 1938 to 1944. From April 1944 he was an Undersecretary of State for Internal Affairs, and was largely responsible for the deportation of the Hungarian Jews. He was sentenced to death and executed after the war.

Gyula Gömbös (1886-1936) was an officer in the Hungarian army and a Prime Minister from 1932 to 1936. He re-organized the governing party and tried to introduce a fascist regime in Hungary.

Tivadar Homonnay (1888–1964) was the mayor of Budapest during World War II. He resigned following the German occupation in March 1944, and offered refuge in his house to persecuted Jews.

Miklós Horthy (1868-1957) was the Regent of Hungary from March 1, 1920 to October 15, 1944. His government was anti-Semitic and abided by the Numerus Clausus Act, a system that restricted the number of Jews that could attend university. Horthy led Hungary into an alliance with Nazi Germany— Hungary would join the Axis in exchange for the restoration of some of the Hungarian territories lost by the Treaty of Trianon. Horthy's anti-Jewish legislations worsened, but he refused some of Hitler's demands. Believing that the Axis powers would lose the war, Horthy negotiated a separate peace treaty with the Allies. However, when the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944, Horthy installed a collaborating pro-German government, only to change his mind again and stop deportations to extermination camps. Instead, he offered Hitler to send the Jews to Palestine. As a result, Germans kidnapped the Regent's son, forcing Horthy's resignation, and appointed Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi in his place. At the end of the war, Horthy was captured by the United States Army in Bavaria and was held in protective custody until the end of 1945, when he was released. After appearing as a witness at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials in 1948, Horthy spent the rest of his life in Portugal.

Béla Imrédy (1891-1946) was an economist and the Minister of Finance under the Gömbös Cabinet (1932-36), and the President of the Hungarian National Bank. Under Prime Minister Darányi he was Minister of Economics. From May 14, 1938, to February 14, 1939, he was Prime Minister. He founded the Party of Hungarian Renewal in 1940. He was minister without portfolio from March 23 to August 7, 1944. The second anti-Jewish law was introduced by his government. He resigned after claims arose he had Jewish ancestors. He was found guilty of war crimes and executed.

Sandor Alexander Kasza-Kasser - The Secretary General of the Swedish Red Cross in Budapest from 1944–1945. Together with Professor Valdemar Langlet, he designed the Swedish Red Cross protective papers, provided Jewish refugees with jobs and safe houses, and worked extensively with Raoul Wallenberg on numerous rescue missions to save Jews from Arrow Cross roundups and death marches. His wife, Elisabeth Kasser, worked as an interpreter with Raoul Wallenberg.

Emil Kovarcz (1899-1946) was an Army major, and an arrow cross politician. He was a Member of the Parliament in 1939-40. As the leader of the arrow cross armed forces in 1944, he led the Arrow Cross Party takeover. He was a minister without a portfolio in charge of the total mobilization under the Szálasi government. He was found guilty of war crimes and executed.

Carl Lutz (1895-1975) was the Swiss vice-consul in Budapest from 1942 until the end of the war. He helped save thousands of Jews from Nazi deportation, and he has been credited with saving around 62,000 Jews. He was awarded the title of Righteous Among the Gentiles by Yad Vashem in 1964.

Radion Malinovsky (1898-1967) was a Soviet military commander in World War II who contributed to the Soviet victory in the Battle of Budapest. He later became the Defense Minister of the Soviet Union. After the liberation of Budapest, Raoul Wallenberg left to meet with Marshal Malinovsky, reportedly to discuss his plans for rebuilding post-war Budapest. Wallenberg was never seen again.

George Mandel-Mantello (1901-1992) was a Jewish diplomat working for the Salvadorian Consulate during World War II. Working in conjunction with Jose Castellanos Contreras, he saved thousands of Jews from Nazi persecution by issuing them fictive Salvadorian citizen papers, and he spearheaded a publicity campaign that eventually led to the end of deportations from Hungary.

Giorgio Perlasca (1910-1992) was an Italian who posed as a Spanish consul-general in order to save himself from Nazi persecution. While working at the Spanish Embassy in Budapest, Perlasca issued protective visas to Jews in an effort to save them from Nazi persecution. He is credited with saving over 5000 Jews, and he was recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1989.

Angelo Rotta (1872-1965) was the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest during the end of the war. He was a major contributor to the efforts attempting to save Jews from Nazi deportations in Hungary. He issued thousands of protective papers for Jews, and he was recognized by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous Among the Nations in 1997.

August Schmidhuber (1901-1947) was a German General and the commander of the German troops in Hungary. He was instructed by Adolf Eichmann to carry out the liquidation of the Budapest ghetto in early 1945. Threatened by Wallenberg and others, General Schmidhuber called off the massacre, thereby saving around 70,000 Jewish lives.

Ferenc Szalasi (1897-1946) was the leader of the National Socialist Arrow Cross Party. He led the Hungarian Government from October 15 1944 until the March 28, 1945. After the war, he was tried in a Soviet court and convicted of crimes against the state. He was hung on March 12, 1946.

Jenő Ruzskay (1887-1946) was an Army General. He was a prominent member of the Arrow Cross Party and later the Hungarian National Socialist Party, and an informer of the SD. In 1945 he was appointed Obergruppenführer and General of the Waffen-SS. He was convicted guilty of war crimes and executed.

Gennaro Verolino (1906–2005) was the Deputy to Monsignor Angelo Rotta at the office of the Papal Nuncio in Budapest. Father Verolino went on numerous rescue missions in support of Monsignor Rotta. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Vatican-protected houses in Budapest and supervised the many Vatican volunteers active in rescue operations.

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