

Raoul Wallenberg, hero and victim

His life and feats

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About the author

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The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation (IRWF) is a global-reach NGO based in New York, with offices also in Berlin, Buenos Aires and Jerusalem.

The IRWF's main mission is to preserve and divulge the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and his likes, the courageous women and men who reached-out to the victims of the Holocaust.

The IRWF focuses on research and education, striving to instil the spirit of solidarity of the Rescuers in the hearts and minds of the young generations.

At the same time, the IRWF organizes campaigns for Raoul Wallenberg, the victim, trying to shed light on his whereabouts. Amongst its most notable campaign, a petition to President Putin, signed by more than 20,000 people and the institution of a 500,000 Euro reward for reliable information about the fate of Raoul Wallenberg and his chauffeur, Vilmos Langfelder, both of them abducted by the Soviets on January 17th, 1945.

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The Lull before the Storm: Jewish Life in Hungary before 1944

“The hand of fate shall also seize Hungarian Jewry. And the later this occurs, and the stronger this Jewry becomes, the more cruel and hard shall be the blow, which shall be delivered with greater savagery. There shall be no escape¹” Theodore Herzl, March 10, 1903

On January 20 1942 a conference was held in Wannsee, just outside of Berlin. Chaired by SS General Reinhardt Heydrich, it included a number of high ranking Nazi officials, including Heydrich’s assistant Lieutenant-Colonel Adolf Eichmann. The purpose of this conference was recorded in the minutes:

“In place of emigration, a further possible solution is the evacuation of Jews to the east, after appropriate prior discussion with the Fuhrer....The number of Jews to be considered with regard to the final solution is around eleven million”².

No-one present at the conference was in any doubt as to the meaning of “final solution”; it referred euphemistically to the destruction of the Jews in Europe. The veiled language continued – the eleven million....would be used as labour in the east..... (where) doubtless a large proportion will drop out through natural wastage (die from natural causes). The residue that will inevitably be left at the end will certainly be those with the most stamina and representing a natural selection, they would, if released form the nucleus of regeneration. So they must be treated accordingly”³. “Treated accordingly” was another code for mass murder. The large-scale killings had been conducted for some time, but this conference marked the onset of the deliberate policy of the genocide of the Jewish people.

Although Hungary was the last country to institute persecution of the Jews it has been suggested that it was the most enthusiastic partner in this crime initiated by the Nazis. In 1941 approximately 825, 000 Jews lived in Hungary; by 1945, this figure had shrunk to just 140,000. Eighty percent of Hungary’s Jewish children had perished.⁴

Handler believes the roots of the growth in anti-Semitism lies in the anger felt towards the brief Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 and in particular the Jewish origins of more than half its People’s Commissars. Right wing factions in the country saw this period as a betrayal of their national sovereignty because it tied Hungary too closely to Soviet Russia. Anti-Semitism was not overtly practised by the ruling classes but was rife among the peasantry and the lower/middle classes in urban areas. As Handler writes “thus the same Jews that had been accused of being callous practitioners of capitalist exploitation, financial profiteering, and social elitism were now accused of promoting the tenets of a diametrically

¹ (Braham in Cesarani, ed. 1997, p. 39)

² (Knopp, 2003, p. 162)

³ (Knopp, 2003, p. 165)

⁴ (Handler, 1996, p. 1)

opposed revolutionary and egalitarian movement government. The conflict of interests implied here was lost on the majority of people. The communist-led government ruled for only a few months but during this time there were acts of violence and intimidation. This was relatively new to Hungary. However, when Bela Kun and many of his supporters fled, the violence accelerated into what is known as the White Terror of 1919-1920 when nationalists sought to destroy every trace of the hapless communist government.

In 1920, the Regent, Admiral Horthy, took power with the backing of the conservative nobility and the nationalist officers in the army. Under the guidance of the premier, Count Istvan Bethlen (1921-1932), the right wing was largely stifled and Jews enjoyed legal protection and economic prosperity⁵, contributing much in return to the national economy. This is not to say there were no restrictions against Jews. In 1920 a new law entitled “Numerous Clausus” limited the number of Jews allowed to enter higher education, stating that “the proportion of members of the various ethnic and national groups in the total number of students should amount to the proportion of such ethnic and national groups in the population”⁶. Further anti-Jewish legislation followed in 1938 with the so-called First Jewish Law, which restricted the numbers of Jews allowed to enter certain professions and redefined the term “Jew”. A Second Jewish Law followed in 1939, declaring that Jewish converts to Christianity were also to be defined as “Jews” and the restrictions on their employment were severely curtailed. A quarter of a million Jews lost their jobs⁷.

Also a number of anti-Jewish organisations were established, most notably the fascist organisation, Nyilas, (known as the Arrow Cross owing to the sign of crossed arrows on their shirts). This group were to become willing and savage partners with the SS in the implementation of the destruction of Hungarian Jewry.

Nonetheless, compared to the Jewish populations of other countries, the Hungarian Jews still had a reasonable existence. Thousands, fleeing persecution in the Nazi occupied countries of Europe, entered Hungary. These refugees were assisted by the indigenous Jews who nevertheless were concerned by the swelling numbers and sought to scatter the influx throughout the country to avoid high concentrations in certain areas. This would have aggravated the local population.⁸ On top of this, a further one hundred and seventy-five thousand Jews were added to the Hungarian population after the territories in which they lived were ceded to Hungarian rule. As Rosenfeld explains, this swelled the Jewish population in Hungary to some seven hundred thousand. These first two Jewish laws had been Hungarian initiatives and were directed against Jews who kept to their own religion. Jews who had converted to Christianity were not affected. The laws were enacted at a time when the links between Hungary and her right-wing allies, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were increasing. Humiliated by the post- World War I terms of the Treaty of Trianon (1920), which saw three quarters of its territory split between Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and

⁵ (Handler, 1996, p. 4)

⁶ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 5)

⁷ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 6)

⁸ (Documents from the War Refugee Board , 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, New York, p142)

Romania, Hungary needed economic assistance from its more powerful allies,⁹ and eventually joining the Axis countries in November 1940.

In 1941, the country introduced a Third Jewish law which was influenced by Nazi Germany and consequently was much harsher than the previous two laws and, arguably, even tougher than the German Nuremberg racial laws¹⁰. This law again redefined Jewishness but this time on racial grounds and banned marriages between Jews and non-Jews, affecting even the Christian Jews. However, anti-Semitic sentiments did not necessarily mean that Horthy and other officials would be willing to comply with mass deportations, and subsequent extermination, which would have a serious economic effect on Hungary. Horthy declared pragmatically

“It is therefore impossible to eliminate the Jews in one or two years, as they hold everything in their hand. I was perhaps the first openly to express my anti-Semitism but I cannot look on with indifference as the Jews are treated inhumanely and exposed to meaningless insults when we still need them¹¹”.

This implies a fully practical rather than sentimental reason for protecting the Jews in Hungary. But Horthy, ever the passionate patriot, also remarked that the Jews are linked to us “by their own interests and are more loyal to their new homeland than the Arrow Cross people, who with their disordered brains will cast us into the arms of the Germans”. Thus the Hungarian government resisted German pressure and, despite the aforementioned legal discrimination, the Jews of Hungary felt safer than anywhere else in mainland Europe at that time. It is easy to see why. After all, Prime Minister Miklos Kallay himself publically stated that “the government will stand up not only against the destruction of the Jews but against those who see the Jewish question as the only problem in this country”¹². Their government did not even require them to wear the yellow star. Furthermore, it was looking more and more likely that Germany would lose the war so it was just a matter of time before the nightmare of persecution was over. Even so the pressure on the Hungarians to deport the Jews and to close its borders to non-Hungarian Jews fleeing from elsewhere was increasing.

The Nazis Enter Hungary

In March 1944, the situation changed dramatically. Hitler learned that Horthy was also intending to negotiate with the Allies and cut his ties with Nazi Germany. He needed Hungarian forces on the Eastern Front and could not allow Horthy to change sides. Furthermore, he was also frustrated at the continued delay in “dealing” with the Jews. On March 19 1944 German forces occupied Hungary, deposed Kallay and imposed the trusted General Dome Sztojay, and the enforcement of the “solution to the Jewish problem” took on

⁹ (Handler, 1996, p. 11)

¹⁰ (Vagi, 2013, p. 12)

¹¹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 129)

¹² (ibid)

a new urgency. From this time onwards the Nazis dictated that all matters Jewish would be administered by German officials. SS General Edmund Veessenmayer, himself a veteran of Jewish “action” in Croatia became a Minister in Hungary.¹³ The day to day practical work was conducted by Adolf Eichmann, now head of the Gestapo’s Jewish Unit, who had proved ruthlessly efficient in this task elsewhere. Alongside him were his aides, Herman Krumei, Theodor Danneker, Anton Brunner, Otto Hunsche and Dieter Wisliceny, all experienced in this task.¹⁴ On 23 March, Sweden’s Minister at the Legation in Budapest, Ivan Danielsson wrote to the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Christian Gunther that “Budapest is swarming with SS units and Gestapo agents and a ruthless pursuit of Jews in leading positions has got underway”¹⁵.

By the end of May 200,000 Jews had been deported from northern, eastern and north eastern Hungary. The speed and means of their transportations were savage. Herded into temporary holding areas, there was insufficient food, water and sanitary facilities. Those who survived the wait for the deportation trains were crammed into cattle trucks, usually 80 to a carriage. Even Auschwitz found it hard to cope with the number. Its commandant, Rudolf Hoess, complained that Eichmann was sending more Jews to him per day than he could murder in his death camp. Eichmann’s response was that he had to work fast because the Russians were advancing from the East¹⁶. The deportations continued and, by the beginning of July, Veessenmayer was able to report that 437,402 Jews had been transported out of Hungary via 148 trains during the period 14 May-8 July 1944. Several thousand Jewish men were serving in labour brigades, leaving just the Jews of Budapest in line for the next level of “resettlement”¹⁷.

Eichmann’s next plan was for a 24 hour blitz of Budapest after which the city would be *judenrein* (Jew-free). However before he could put his plan into action Admiral Horthy, under pressure from the Allies and veering towards making overtures of peace with the Allies, called a halt to the deportations. Eichmann was furious but was unable to oppose. Horthy had ordered his gendarmes back to the countryside and the Austrian SS Colonel simply did not have the manpower to round up the Jewish population without them¹⁸. On the 14th July, Eichmann sent an SS unit to the internment camp at Kistarcsa where they quickly overcame the Hungarian guard and the detainees were deported. When Horthy heard about the deportation from the Jewish Council he ordered the train to be returned. Five days later, on 19th July the Jewish Council were summoned to Eichmann’s office at 8am where they were kept waiting until 7.30pm. The only contact they had had during their wait was from SS Captain Otto Hunsche who visited them after a few hours and began asking inane questions. It began to dawn on the Council that something was wrong. In fact, as they were sitting in Eichmann’s office, the deportation of 1220 prisoners had taken place from

¹³ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 157)

¹⁴ (Bierman, 1982, p. 40)

¹⁵ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 130)

¹⁶ (Gersten, 2001, p. 42)

¹⁷ (Bierman, 1982, p. 39)

¹⁸ (Bierman, 1982, p. 40)

Kistarsca. Despite protests to the Hungarian government who assured them the Council would not happen again, another deportation of 1500 prisoners took place on 24 July.

The conflict between the Hungarians and the Germans over this issue is documented in the testimony of Istvan Vasdenyei describing the events of 19th July

“Dr. Pal Ubriszi (a police officer), appears in the door, behind him my officer-in-chief, and Ubriszi steps up to me, pulls out a sheet, and tells me: here is my authorization from State Secretary Baky for the transportation of all the camp’s inmates. I refused (telling him that) State Secretary Baky has no authority, since the Regent of Hungary already forbade the deportations, and I was informed so by one of the councillors of the (regent’s) office, Radnotfay. I will not hand over the prisoners, and I also object against Ubriszi’s person, since I do not negotiate with a low-ranking officer, and (I am telling him that) he cannot be a representative of the Ministry of the Interior, since the Minister does not pick his representative from Rokk Szilard Street. At this point an old internee, Mr Mandula, runs in (...) and shouts that the German SS are setting up a machine gun. The drama unfolded in a second: three platoons of the Sonderkommando attack with two machine guns, each man carrying a submachine gun. They break down the big gate facing toward the capital and (they storm) the corridors of the commander’s office and the courtyard. Resistance is out of the question. I had seven men, the guns were at the outer building, and my officer-in-chief confirmed that we are outnumbered, plus there is a Wehrmacht guard in the camp as well. I told Novak and Ubrizsi that the Regent’s order forbade the deportation, and they are responsible for acting against the Regent’s will. Novak (SS Captain) told he me he was aware of that, but he would still carry out the deportation upon Eichmann’s order. They stormed one of the buildings; they pulled up into the camp with trucks and started to indiscriminately throw people onto the truck (...). You can’t describe the bestial brutality with which they treated eighty-year-old people, people on crutches, and hospital patients who had been operated (on) on a few days prior¹⁹.”

¹⁹ (Vagi, 2013, pp. 140-141)

The Allies wake up

Meanwhile the Allies and the neutral countries were waking up to the fate awaiting the Jews of Hungary. In Sweden, the Stockholm daily newspaper “Dagens Nyheter” wrote on April 1st:

“The Nazi regime’s treatment of the Jews has a single goal: to exterminate them as far as is possible. This treatment cannot in any way be rationally justified. The large-scale massacre serves no political ends, its staging demands a massive amount of time, money and labour force, it in no way strengthens the war effort, it goes against all the sensible aspirations that German foreign policy could ever be thought to have had. But then the massacre is not politics. It is a blood ritual... In the face of decisions of this sort the world outside the beleaguered fortress stands powerless. It is not unfeasible that there will be time for the decision to be implemented before deliverance arrives. An army of executioners has been carefully put together for the purpose, a powerful perfect apparatus of execution, in which the constituent parts were once thought to be material for human beings²⁰.”

Concern too was growing in the United States. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was coming under ever-increasing pressure from organisations, the media and the public in the United States to act. In January 1944 he established the War Refugee Board under Decree 9417 which declared that “It is the policy of this government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war²¹”. President Roosevelt also delivered a radio broadcast to Hungary declaring that anyone assisting efforts to round up, deport or kill Jews would be subject to post war retribution. But the Germans were already in Hungary and the Americans seemed far in the distance. Some form of humanitarian mission had to be launched locally in Budapest.

Norbert Masur, businessman and representative of the World Jewish Congress, wrote to Professor Marcus Ehrenpreis, the chief rabbi of Stockholm on 18th April 1944 making a vital suggestion:

“We ought to find a personality, clever, with a good reputation, a non-Jew who is willing to travel to Romania/Hungary to lead a rescue mission there for the Jews. The person in question must

²⁰ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 130)

²¹ (jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

enjoy the trust of the foreign ministry and be equipped with a diplomatic passport, and the foreign ministry must ask the legations in Bucharest and Budapest to assist him as best they can. We just place a large sum of money at his disposal, for example 500,000 kronor (approximately \$1,500,000 today).

His task is to help the Jews to leave Romania/Hungary. In Romania many could be helped to flee (also by boat) to Turkey by bribes.....I believe that several hundred people can be saved by means of this plan. The prerequisites are: the right man, support from the foreign ministry, money. The latter is perhaps the least of our worries for we could certainly obtain the greater part from the USA. The support of the foreign ministry also ought to be possible to obtain in view of the willingness to help that now characterises our authorities²²”.

The task now was to find someone who had all those qualities; someone suitable for this huge, difficult life-saving task.



The Regent of Hungary, Admiral Miklos Horthy, 1869-1957

²² (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 131)

Raoul Wallenberg: The Development of a Hero

“May all that come true which is always on my mind, that you shall become an able man and bring honour to our family”,²³ Gustav Wallenberg to his grandson Raoul, August 4 1935.

“An eternal glory surrounds his name and his memory. The refugee organization of the United States has also expressed its admiration for his achievement which is called one of this war’s greatest individual performances”²⁴. On Raoul Wallenberg, extract from an editorial in Svenska Dagbladet, April 22 1945

Childhood

Raoul Gustav Wallenberg was born to Maj Wising Wallenberg on 4 August 1912. His father Raoul Oscar Wallenberg, a naval officer, had been an heir to one of Sweden’s most prominent business and diplomatic families. Tragically, he had lost his battle with a rare form of cancer just three months before his young son was born and Maj had to endure late pregnancy and birth without the support of her husband. In his short life, Raoul Oscar would display similar qualities as those later displayed by his son. When an epidemic broke out aboard his ship just off the coast of France, Raoul Oscar risked his own health by refusing to leave the vessel. Instead, he remained behind to keep vigil by the bedsides of his men and to help the doctors with interpreting.

After his father’s premature death, the task of guiding baby Raoul’s though life was shouldered by his paternal grandfather, Gustav Wallenberg, a diplomat and former naval officer. No longer able to project all his hopes and ambitions onto his son, Gustav transferred those energies on to his grandson. His enormous influence and the “programme” he developed to mould Raoul’s character from an early age would make the young boy eminently suitable and prepared for his future role in Budapest.

After more than five years of widowhood Raoul’s mother remarried. With her new husband Fredrik Von Dardel, Maj would have a son, Guy, and a daughter Nina. For his part Von Dardel, would view Raoul as his son and made no difference between him and his biological children. In their turn, Guy and Nina adored their older brother and would become very active on his behalf in later years.

²³ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. XI)

²⁴ (Anger, 1996, p. Foreword)

Despite this close family unit, Raoul was formally adopted by his grandfather and began a programme of development that would span until Gustav's death. The elder Wallenberg would certainly find the young boy highly receptive to his ideas and interests although Raoul did display some individual traits of his own. During his early years Maj lamented the fact that Raoul could be defiant and that he had "acquired a large portion of stubbornness to work against".²⁵ But on the whole he became interested not in "the trifles of childhood, but of weighty matters: governmental reform, international relations, import-export trade and the like"²⁶ long before his age went into double figures. Along with the intensive study of music and the Bible, Raoul developed into a voracious reader, reading the entire thirty-five Swedish lexicon "A Nordiques's Family Book" from cover to cover²⁷.

At age 9, Raoul began attending the New Elementary School in Stockholm where he demonstrated a flair for modern languages. Ironically as it would transpire, he rejected learning Latin in favour of Russian which he thought might have more relevance for the future. His general studiousness probably set him apart somewhat from his classmates as they remember him not being particularly interested in sports or in other boys' games. However, he did have a mischievous streak which manifested itself when he freed some hunting dogs belonging to a Swedish writer, Axel Klinckowstrom²⁸. Unfortunately the act of kindness backfired somewhat when the dogs killed some chickens and left an unwanted "thank you gift" on Raoul's apartment floor! But in general his interests were studious and from an early age he showed an interest in buildings and would even question Stockholm construction workers about brick-laying²⁹. At school his worst subjects were Maths and German. The family therefore decided to send him to spend a summer in Mecklenburg to improve his German. For a while he still struggled but eventually would become quite proficient in the language. Again, this would prove to be a crucial asset for him later.

When Raoul was 13, Gustav Wallenberg, by then Swedish Ambassador to Turkey, decided the boy should travel alone to Istanbul on the Orient Express in order to increase his independence. Of course, Gustav ensured that the train conductors were well paid to watch Raoul who, despite their secret supervision, managed to hop off the train in Belgrade. He spent a few hours watching demonstrations in the city and would relate excitedly the events later to his grandfather.

Raoul continued to travel quite widely during the school holiday periods from 1928-1930, mostly to improve his language skills. His trips included France and England. In 1930, after graduating from school, he was called up for national service. It was at this time that Raoul wrote to his uncle Marcus Senior, thanking him for the family's interest, saying it "was a strong incentive....to do my best on whatever path I come to tread, and I hope I am not

²⁵ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 13)

²⁶ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 18)

²⁷ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 18)

²⁸ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 17-18)

²⁹ (Marton, 1995, p. 19)

destined to be the one who besmirches the family name³⁰”. This fear of not living up to his family name was to be a recurring theme throughout Raoul’s life.

Youth

As the son and grandson of naval officers, Raoul might have expected to enter the Navy, but this was ruled out when he was found to be colour-blind, specifically red-blind³¹. He decided therefore to become an office cadet in the Life Grenadier Guards. Although he began his military service with a sense of serious duty, he soon allowed his youth and humour to gain the upper hand and he finished his initial military service with a less than impressive grade. He clearly enjoyed parodying his military life. One of his entertaining letters home showed his developing sense of humour:

“The colonel inspected our platoon, and, you know, a colonel is something that for greatness and majesty almost exceeds a soldier’s faculty of comprehension. You can appreciate, therefore, that his arrival was heralded by many mystical ceremonies, e.g. by three hours’ cleaning of boots and weapons. The colonel came, saw and grunted.

The, to me, most enthralling moment in the firing which was ordered for the colonel’s gracious inspection was when he himself, weighing 100 kilos had to get himself over a trench several metres wide which we others had to splash over as best we could.

Firing was suspended and the whole platoon held its breath when the colonel strolled over the little bridge that the lieutenant, after ten minutes’ frantic activity, managed to get erected.

The regiment goes from strength to strength. The other day we had a visit from no less a person than the divisional commander.....The difference in rank between him and the colonel was clearly shown by the fact that the visit was preceded by an even lengthier cleaning of equipment and weapons³²”

His next step in life was to attend university. His grandfather continued his tactic of increasing Raoul’s worldliness by refusing to allow him to attend a university in Sweden, where his life would be too carefree, in favour of the United States. Raoul had shown a passionate interest in art and buildings so chose to study Architecture, not a typical occupation for a Wallenberg, at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. This mid-west

³⁰ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 26)

³¹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 56)

³² (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 27-28)

university well suited Gustav's plan for Raoul as he felt the "mentality" at East Coast universities was no longer what it had been but the USA generally was where he wanted Raoul to develop. Gustav wrote that "through his education in America, whose methods of nurture I have confidence in, to make a man of him"³³.

Over the next three years Raoul excelled at most subjects in university, struggling only with sciences and mathematics as he had at school but shining in the more artistic and linguistic areas. One of his classmates, Sol King described Raoul as "a very talented yet modest person who showed great insight in finding simple solutions to complex problems. Neither his conduct nor his manner of dress gave anyone who knew him the slightest clue to his high station in life as a member of one of Sweden's most distinguished families. One of his professors remembered Raoul as "one of the brightest and best students I think I had in my thirty-year experience as a professor of drawing and painting"³⁴

During the university vacations, Raoul like to travel around the United States, visiting relatives, travelling to Mexico or hitchhiking around the United States. One episode stands out as an example of how Raoul had developed both a very cool temperament under duress and the ability to persuade people to do what he wanted. On one occasion, he was alone on a highway when he was picked up by a car containing four young men. He described what happened:

"Suddenly we heard a noise from the back of the car, and the driver stopped to see what it was. It surprised me that they all had to get out of the car for this. Suddenly another car passed us, and the four of them got back in. By now I had become very suspicious because of their questions about money, their lack of luggage and the sudden stop, I started to work my poverty into the conversation. Suddenly the car turned onto a country lane so abruptly that it almost turned over. Fearing the worst I tried to keep a cool head so as not to make things worse. After another couple of miles through a dark forest they stopped after a rather clumsy and theatrical bluff: "Get out and see what's the matter with the gas tank, Joe".

They got out one after the other and then I was asked to get out "so that they could take a look at me". One of them had a large revolver in his hand. It might not have been loaded.

They demanded my money, and I gave them what I had in my breast pocket and said I had more in my suitcase. They opened it and took out an envelope that in addition to money contained some papers and the key to my safety-deposit box. The latter items, I managed to retrieve by bluffing. "Sentimental value to me, no value to you". I didn't tell them it was the key to my bank deposit.

³³ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 32)

³⁴ (Bierman, 1982, p. 21)

Maybe it was stupid of me to volunteer where I kept my money, but I'd heard so many stories about people being searched and occasionally left without any clothes at all. I did forget to tell them that I had three dollars in another pocket however. When they thought they had all my money, I decided it was their turn to show some goodwill, so I asked them to drive me back to the highway, since it was late and my suitcases were heavy. They let me sit next to the driver and then put the luggage on top to keep me from jumping. By this time they were the ones who were frightened, maybe because I was so calm. I didn't really feel scared; I found the whole thing sort of interesting. Maybe they thought I was planning to lure them into a trap. The result was that all of a sudden they threw me into a ditch and then tossed my luggage after. I immediately flattened myself under a bush for fear that they might fire a farewell shot from the revolver³⁵."

Manhood

Raoul finally and reluctantly left the United States for Sweden on 26 February 1935. At this time Gustav wrote to him regarding his options - Raoul could either stay in Sweden and join the hundreds of others searching for work in the recession, or he could find something that would make him stand out from other job seekers in the future. Gustav was still seeking to instil in Raoul the need to attain "knowledge of the world and familiarity with other people, understand their way of thinking, their customs and their way of seeing³⁶". From Gustav's point of view university had provided the theoretical training but now Raoul needed practical training as part of the "programme". This would involve leaving Sweden where the temptations to follow a dissolute life could prove overwhelming. Therefore, Gustav arranged for Raoul to work for a friend, Erwin Freund, in his bank in Haifa, Palestine. First though Raoul needed office experience so Gustav arranged for him to travel to Cape Town, South Africa where he began work in a timber and construction equipment factory. These first few months were not at all what Raoul wanted and he soon gave up that job and began selling sports equipment for the Swedish African Company. Here he found a talent and liking for sales work. He hoped to convince Gustav to allow him to stay in South Africa where he could continue selling the sports equipment. He even managed to write his thoughts and impressions, complete with phonographs into a booklet entitled "South African Impressions" which was published in 1936³⁷. But Gustav wanted no deviation from the "programme".

Thus, the next stage his found Raoul in Haifa in March 1936. The day after his arrival he reported for duty at the Dutch Bank where he was greeted by a very surprised Erwin Freund who wasn't expecting Raoul for another year! He rented a room in a boarding house at 17

³⁵ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 59)

³⁶ (ibid, p. 75)

³⁷ (ibid, p. 90)

Arlozorov where he met several German Jews with whom he seems to have enjoyed a good relationship, describing them as “very nice and humorous”. Perhaps it was from these immigrants that he first learned about the horrors and humiliations imposed on Jews in Germany³⁸.

During the course of 1935-6 there were indications that Raoul was beginning to rebel a little against his grandfather’s fairly rigid programme. He was tired of being a volunteer and wanted to have paid work, to make a living. Apart from the money aspect, Raoul felt that references written for volunteers differed greatly from those whom the employers have had to pay and so they would count for little with prospective employers. He also began to cool towards banking which he viewed as a kind of “glorified pawnshop”³⁹. At the beginning of September Raoul returned to Stockholm and joined the SVEA Life Guards to fulfil his compulsory military refresher course.

In 1937 Gustav Wallenberg died of kidney cancer at the age of 74. During this time, there had been little contact between him and Raoul because of his grandfather’s illness. From Gustav, Raoul inherited around 70,000 krona (£200,000 today) plus furniture and an impressive wine collection. In theory, Raoul was now free to make his own decisions but he still felt keenly the responsibility of his family name which meant that he felt obliged to seek the advice of his uncles, specifically Jacob, with respect to his future career. However, the only jobs he was offered in the family businesses were in a consulting capacity. This again did not suit or challenge him. Despite several hints that there might be something available for him no position was ever found for Raoul in the family empire. He began to feel somewhat despondent.

To make things worse, war had broken out and many of the Raoul’s work projects closed down. Much of the next year was spent in national service as Sweden, alarmed by the Soviet attack on Finland, and in 1940 Raoul joined the Home Guard where he became an instructor. The head of the Home Guard said of him “One of the hardest working instructors was conscript sergeant Raoul Wallenberg, who had been seized with such an interest in the Home Guard that he voluntarily stayed on in the emergency service for long periods so as to be able to devote himself to its training”⁴⁰.

In 1941 Raoul met a Hungarian businessman named Koloman Lauer. Originally a lawyer, Lauer became a businessman when the boundaries of Hungary shrank and there were too many lawyers for the remaining territory. In July that year Lauer established the Central European Trading Company with the plan to import-export foodstuffs between Sweden and Central Europe, particularly Hungary. A month after their meeting Raoul had a job. Lauer was impressed by the young man’s business acumen, his talent for languages and his organisational skills. Raoul’s pleasant negotiating ability was also a major plus. Over the next few years Raoul would travel extensively for the Trading Company, including three visits to Hungary where he made some very valuable contacts.

³⁸ (ibid, p. 93)

³⁹ (ibid, p. 102)

⁴⁰ (ibid, p. 122)



Baby Raoul with his mother, Maj.



Gustav Wallenberg with young Raoul



Raoul hitchhiking around the USA

Recruitment:

After receiving Masur's letter stating the need for someone to be selected to lead a rescue mission, Professor Ehrenpreis relayed the contents to his acquaintance Koloman Lauer. Coincidentally, the businessman had himself been having a similar discussion with his young work colleague Raoul Wallenberg. Lauer had been receiving distressing messages from his family back in Hungary and was desperately applying for Swedish citizenship in order to give his relatives back home a link to Sweden. He recommended Raoul Wallenberg to Ehrenpreis for the rescue mission and a meeting was arranged. It did not go well. Ehrenpreis was not impressed by Wallenberg's insistence that the task would require considerable funding and he found the young man rather immature. His first choice anyway was the Swedish aristocrat Count Folk Bernadotte, a relative of the Swedish King Gustav V.

By this time the War Refugee Board (WRB) had established a branch in Stockholm run by special attaché Iver Olsen, the financial attaché at the American Legation and an operative for the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency. His office was located in the same office as the shipping magnate, Sven Salen, a business partner of Koloman Lauer. When the subject of a suitable candidate arose again, Raoul Wallenberg's name was again suggested.

A second meeting was arranged and held at the Grand Hotel, Saltsjobaden on 10th June 1944 between Raoul Wallenberg, Iver Olsen, Koloman Lauer and Herschal Johnson, the American Minister to Stockholm. It was a marathon session, lasting between 7pm in the evening and continued until 5am the following morning. In the end, a three point plan was agreed. Firstly, Raoul would travel to Budapest on a purely humanitarian mission. Secondly, the USA would support the mission and finally the mission would last two-three months only.

Three days later, on June 13, Raoul was summoned to the Foreign Ministry for talks that dragged on for no fewer than ten days. The negotiations must have been tough. Raoul, who hated bureaucracy in any case, insisted on being given a free hand without the constraints of diplomatic niceties and obstacles. The most difficult aspect of his demands for the Foreign Ministry was his insistence on having the authority to buy or pay off anyone who could enable him to achieve his goal, saving lives. The Ministry was uncomfortable with this as they did not want to compromise their relations with the Germans. Ironically, this attitude would have serious repercussions for Raoul later when the Swedes also did not want to compromise their relationship with the Russians over his arrest and imprisonment. By the end of the meeting, it was agreed that Raoul would be given absolute authority over decisions that could save lives; he would be both a secretary of the Legation and the special representative of the king, Gustav V; he would be free to come home for discussions with the authorities at any time; he would be supplied with a list of helpful officials; and he would have permission to seek an audience with Admiral Horthy⁴¹.

⁴¹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 139-140)

Raoul intended to leave for Budapest at the end of July but with 2-3 trainloads of Jewish deportations taking place daily his departure date was brought forward as a matter of urgency. Wallenberg left on 6th July with the minimum of luggage and the lists of names of Swedes with Hungarian relatives. He also had lists of names of resistance agents and pro-Allied officials in Budapest. Into his bank account was paid 110,000 Swedish kronor donated by the War Refugee Board and the American-Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

What motivated this young, relatively successful businessman with a comfortable even privileged lifestyle to travel to a war-torn country where danger was a stark everyday reality? Certainly friends and family would have said it was his compassionate and kind nature, his general decency. These were certainly important. But his upbringing surely also played its part in his decision. He had been brought up by his grandfather to look beyond his borders, to become an international citizen and to show a keen interest in politics and the world in general. But perhaps there was something more too. Raoul always felt on the periphery of the family, the less successful relation with no real role in the business empire. Gustav Wallenberg had imprinted on him again and again the importance of his family name and its honour. Perhaps by going to Budapest at the behest of the United States as a special envoy he felt this was his chance to prove himself.

The mission

Thus, with the backing of the US and Swedish governments, Raoul Wallenberg left Sweden for Budapest on 6 July 1944. His task was overwhelming. He had to “use all channels available”... to gather “precise information concerning location of Hungarian detention centres for Jews and also about Auschwitz”; to report on the persecution of the Jews and to try to save as many lives as possible. For Koloman Lauer he was instructed to find and save his relatives and friends as well as those of other Hungarian Jews living in Sweden. Although he arrived too late to help Mrs Lauer’s relatives, he did manage to get passports for Koloman Lauer’s sister and her husband and daughter. Although they were unable to leave Hungary they were hidden in a convent by nuns. Lauer also requested that he oversee Central European’s interests in Hungary including the post-war period but Raoul does not seem to have done much with respect to this and in fact withdrew from the board of the firm, as he promised to the foreign ministry.

Raoul left Sweden on 6 July 1944 and flew first to Berlin where he was met by his sister, Nina, who was now married to Gunnar Lagergren, head of the Foreign Interests section of the Swedish Legation in Berlin. Nina had hoped that Raoul would stay a couple of nights but he was irritated by the thought of a delay in his mission and insisted on leaving the following day by the first train possible.

Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest on July 9th 1944 and was met at the station by a Legation clerk and taken to the Hotel Gellert, a luxurious hotel just a few moments from the Legation premises. After settling in, he met up with his old friend, Per Anger, now working as the second secretary and together they discussed the situation in Budapest. Wallenberg

must have realised that he faced an uphill struggle, the extent of which was not lost on his colleague, Lars Berg who wrote:

“Raoul Wallenberg began from such a hopeless starting-point, with such small resources and with such a lack of actual force to back him up. When he arrived to organize help for the Hungarian Jews, he was nothing but a blank page. He was not a career diplomat. His knowledge of the Hungarian language was limited. He knew no one of importance in Budapest. However, he had a job to do: to stop the already initiated deportations of the Hungarian Jews, to give them food and shelter, and, above all, to save their lives⁴²”.

Although the deportations had been halted just two days earlier but the threat to the Jews of Budapest was far from over. On 18th July Wallenberg was already able to file a detailed report regarding the horrors experienced by Hungary’s Jews:

“The parents of one of my informants were sent away in the direction of Poland on July 1. For some reason, the train was returned to the infamous camp at Bekasmegyer – as the result it was thought of Archbishop Seredi’s intervention at the time. My informant received a message smuggled from his parents, which indicated that they were lacking food and water. He then went there and managed to receive permission, through bribes, to hand over a parcel with food and water. According to his statement, his parents and the other prisoners were then half-dead. They were later taken to Poland.

Another informant visited the departure point at Kassa, on May 25th and was shown around by the person in charge, a Baron Fielder...the camp which covered an area of about 1.5 acres had originally housed 16000-17000 individuals. The camp had been filled on or around May 12. On May 15, the inmates were taken to the newly created ghetto in Kassa. After three days, they were returned to the camp, and the deportations began sometime around May 19. When my informant visited the camp, about 8,000 persons in weakened condition remained. The temperature was about 50 degrees Fahrenheit and the weather rainy and windy. The prisoners were housed beneath narrow covers held up by wooden supports. As their names were called, they were loaded aboard the trains following an extremely invasive body search by the SS, for which both men and women were forced to disrobe. One woman tried surreptitiously to hide her infant under the railroad car, whereupon the child was seized by the leg and hurled headlong into the car. The car was packed so full that the passengers were forced to stand.

⁴² (Berg L. G., 1990)

According to my informant, Baron Fielder reported that following an escape by several Jews he had ordered their relatives hung up by their feet and beaten around the crotch as a warning to those following behind⁴³.

Wallenberg continued to describe the conditions:

“A civil servant in a position to provide an overall view of the transports describes them as horrible and unspeakably brutal. Food often consists of one loaf of bread per car, sometimes of a pound of bread per car, and 8 ounces of marmalade. One bucket is allotted to each car. The journey generally takes five days. There are many deaths”⁴⁴.

Nor was he under any illusion as to the fate of the prisoners upon reaching the camp. A copy of the “The Auschwitz Protocols” had been made available to him upon his arrival and they made for grim reading. The situation he reported was indeed very bleak and seemingly insurmountable. But he also added a note of optimism, saying that somewhere in the range of 20,000-50,000 Jews were being hidden by their Christian friends.

In his two further memoranda of 29 July, Wallenberg reported that, although large-scale deportations had ceased, smaller numbers were being transported in third class carriages clandestinely, with their yellow stars removed. There was some frustration too in his feelings at the lack of opposition by the Hungarian Jews themselves, who whether through disbelief or a sense of hopelessness failed to resist their ill-treatment in any meaningful way. He wrote “The Jews of Budapest are completely apathetic and do virtually nothing to save themselves”⁴⁵. This view was probably second-hand, formed after his initial meeting with Per Anger, the Swedish trade attaché on July 11th. Anger had also shared his frustration on this issue with Iver Olsen when the young attaché visited Stockholm. Olsen further reported that “Anger lamented very much the total lack of courage among the Hungarian Jews, since they could do so much to help themselves even when they knew it was only a matter of a short time before they would be killed”⁴⁶.

The fact of the matter, however, is that the Jews of Hungary had largely been duped. Within a few days of German occupation, they had been ordered to set up Jewish councils throughout Hungary. They were assured by the Germans that the restrictions upon the Jewish population would be mild – nowhere near the persecution suffered by Jews elsewhere. They must report any ill-treatment of Jews as well as any attempt to rob them of their property. However, they would be forbidden to move home, their newspapers would be censored and they must wear the yellow star. The former restrictions would not apply to council members who would be exempt by virtue of their position. However, by the end of June, it was clear that they had been out-manoeuvred by the Nazis as only the Jews of Budapest remained.

⁴³ (Wallenberg, 1995, pp. 235-236)

⁴⁴ (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 236)

⁴⁵ Wallenberg, 1995: ed. Bent, p.238)

⁴⁶ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 161)

They were forced to relinquish their telephones, radios, and cars while the children even had to give up their bicycles. Jewish bank accounts were frozen and food rations were decreased⁴⁷.

It is difficult to imagine what they could have done. The speed with which the deportation took place after the Germany invasion in March gave little time for a concerted fight back and there had not been much international opposition, thereby heightening their sense of isolation and helplessness. Furthermore, many of the young men had been sent on labour battalions, leaving older men, women and children to face the SS and Arrow Cross. When they did receive help, as Raoul explained in his second memorandum of July 29, they began to feel more encouraged and such initiatives as a Red Cross camp might well “inspire hope in the breasts of a hundred thousand Jews and awaken their now paralyzed instincts of self-preservation”. Crucially, he recommended that Allied broadcasts focus more on the positive outcome of helping Jews rather than threats of retribution to those who take part in the persecution⁴⁸.

After assessing the situation his first task was to establish an office within the Legation. This was referred to as Section C (originally Section B). Wallenberg hired twenty staff, mostly Jewish lawyers and businessmen, who had been contacts of Per Anger. They included holders of the initial 650 provisional passports which had been issued by the Legation in the months before Wallenberg’s appointment and arrival. This arrangement had been agreed with the Hungarian Government as a means of affording protection to those Jews who had links with Sweden and who were to be “repatriated”. These were the sort of documents which would have been issued to Swedish citizens who had lost their original passports and they were, reluctantly recognised by KEOKH, the government department responsible for foreigners in Hungary. The first of these passports had been granted to Hugo Wahl, the managing director of Orion, which also had a branch in Sweden. To ensure the validity of the protective passport Hugo Wahl, displaying considerable initiative, hired a lawyer who argued that the document made him a Swedish citizen and, therefore, he was not subject to the same laws as the Hungarian Jews, i.e. the requirements to live in (yellow) star-houses and to wear the Star of David. His case was successful and he was exempted⁴⁹. This victory, of course, prompted ideas in Wallenberg’s fertile mind as he realised this may show a weakness in the bureaucratic machine – the absolute respect for officialdom and official-looking documents, regardless of their dubious validity in international law.

His first idea was to improve the quality, and quantity, of these passports. As a talented architect he had no trouble designing a more official document complete with the Swedish coat-of-arms, the Three Crowns, the Legation stamp and the signature of the Minister, Ivan Danielsson... The document along with an accompanying certificate requested that the holder be regarded as a Swedish citizen. KEOKH, in return, issued a further document exempting the holder from wearing the yellow star⁵⁰. This document, called the Schutzpass, certified that

⁴⁷ (Bierman, 1982, p. 42)

⁴⁸ (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 246)

⁴⁹ (Lester, 1982, p. 86)

⁵⁰ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 170)

the holder was expected to travel to Sweden “within the framework of the repatriation approved by the Swedish foreign ministry” and that his/her name had been entered into a collective passport. Until such time as the repatriation could take place, impossible under the political climate at that time, the holder was “under the protection of the Royal Swedish Legation in Budapest⁵¹. Judging from Wallenberg’s reports it would seem that the Schutzpasses were produced between August 6 and 15. Once issued, the holder could also retrieve any relatives being held in concentration camps or in labour brigades and return them to Budapest, claiming they were under the protection of Sweden. Not surprisingly, news of the Schutzpasses soon spread through the Jewish community and the queues outside the Legation grew by thousands

Recognition of the passes, however, did come at a price and that price was to be paid by the remaining Jews of Budapest. In return for accepting the “Swedish” and other protected Jews, the Germans demanded that those lacking the protection of any of the neutral nations would be deported for labour. As has been noted, the impending fate of the deported Jews was no secret. Certainly the deportations had stopped but the situation was so unpredictable. Wallenberg decided not to accept the condition and transport the Jews to Sweden. Once the Jews had passed out of Hungary the control over their fate would belong entirely to the Germans.

In his dispatch dated 6 August 1944, Wallenberg again referred to further deportations taking place, although small-scale rather than entire railcar loads, and also to a number of Jews being taken away to serve in labour brigades. Rumours appeared to be flying around regarding an imminent wholesale action against Jews but up to that day, Wallenberg had been unable to verify them. He described his meeting with Admiral Horthy on 1 August 1944, informing Olsen that the Regent asked for suggestions as to what action should be taken. Wallenberg requested that the Jewish holders of passports be exempted from wearing the Star of David, thus affording them greater freedom of movement.

He also referred to his meeting on 3rd August with the Hungarian minister for the Interior. Apparently, the minister informed Wallenberg that he would be pleased to increase the number of Jews bound for Sweden. Crucially, he confirmed his willingness to allow the Jews to stay in houses which would be classed as being under Swedish protection. Even so, the deportation issue had not gone away although the Hungarian authorities were attempting to gain assurances from the Germans that the Jews would not be harmed

By 6 August Raoul had doubled the size of his staff who were now working flat out, wading through the four thousand applications the Section had received. He wrote that they had had to halt the submission of further applications until the backlog was cleared. Raoul himself was working 16-17 hours a day and expected much from his staff. But they were happy to help him. One of his staff, Edith Wohl spoke of him.

⁵¹ (ibid, p. 171)

“He gave us courage. He was so courageous that he made the rest of us ashamed to be afraid. Because of him we all became more optimistic.

He also shocked us by his behaviour. Here he was, an Aryan who didn't believe that Jews were something vile and despicable. He even socialised with us as if he were normal people. This was amazing.

After a while it became impossible for us to consider him to be a normal human being. We didn't ask ourselves the normal objective questions about his background. In fact, we didn't even know that he was a member of the famous Wallenberg family. Instead we came to see him as superhuman; someone who had come to Budapest to save us, a Messiah⁵².”

However, there was some disconcertion regarding his methods and his intention to increase the number of protective passports produced. The concerns were that the Schutzpasses would be devalued if too many were printed, that the neutrality of Sweden could be questioned by the Germans. But Wallenberg's “gift of the gab” again enabled him to win over the doubters. On 10 August Iver Olsen wrote to J.W. Pehle in Washington:

“I get the impression indirectly that the Swedish Foreign Office is somewhat uneasy about Wallenberg's activities in Budapest, and perhaps feel that he has jumped in with too big a splash. They would prefer, of course, to approach the Jewish problem in the finest traditions of European diplomacy, which wouldn't help too much. On the other hand there is much to be said for moving around quietly in this type of work. In any case, I feel that Wallenberg is working like hell and doing some good, which is the measure⁵³”.

Wallenberg had reason for wanting to increase the number of passes. Time was against him. Rumours were flying around the city that the deportations were about to resume. Eichmann had set the date for August but again Horthy frustrated his ambitions by dismissing from office the Interior Minister Andor Jaross and his two secretaries of state in the gendarmerie, Lazlo Endre and Lazlo Baky. Without the gendarmerie, Eichmann did not have the manpower to round up the Jews and he could do nothing but put his plans on hold.

On 12 August Raoul had another meeting with Admiral Horthy and secured his permission to issue a further 5000 Schutzpasses. At the same time, the Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz was also issuing protective passes and had also opened an annexe to his country's Legation. Within that annexe a group of young Zionists, including a Polish Refugee Bronislaw (later Bruce)

⁵² (Werbell & Clarke, 1985,p40)

⁵³ (Documents from the War Refugee Board , 1944, FDR Library, New York)

Teicholz, was printing their own forged Swedish documents. According to Teicholz, interviewed in January 1981, Wallenberg was informed of this and approved. It is thought that Wallenberg himself issued 3-4 times the number he agreed with Horthy⁵⁴.

Wallenberg's life had become hectic and full but he seemed to revel in the challenge. On 6th August he wrote to his mother:

"I have lived here through what are probably the 3-4 most interesting weeks of my life, even though we are surrounded by a tragedy of immeasurable proportions, and even though our days and nights are so filled with work that you are only able to react every now and then.

I have set up a large office of 40 employees. We have rented two houses, on either side of the embassy and the organization is growing day by day. It is obviously extremely uncertain whether it will be possible to achieve a positive outcome, given that everything ultimately depends on the general situation.

Many have disappeared, and no-one is left in the countryside. Budapest, which used to be so gay, has changed completely....."⁵⁵.

But there was time too for the occasional personal consideration. Raoul reported to his mother that he had moved out of the Hotel Gellert into a rented house at 9/11 Ostrom Street, Budapest. He had even been surprised and touched by his staff on his 32nd birthday when they presented him with a number of gifts.

But in the main Wallenberg's work was strenuous and multi-faceted. Among his achievements was the organisation of a section within his department to deal with securing the release of detained prisoners. For this purpose he required a large number of buildings to house them; a sort of camp under the protection of the Swedish Legation. In this endeavour he received help from an unlikely source. Lieutenant Colonel Lazlo Ferenczy of the Hungarian Gendarmerie, the official go-between for the Hungarians and the Eichmann Sonderkommando, who had taken part in the rounding up and deportation of the Jews in the countryside, was being to reflect on his own position and prospects should the Germans lose the war, an ever more likely scenario. A meeting with Ferenczy, Alexander Kasser of the Swedish Red Cross and his wife Elizabeth, acting as interpreter, was arranged. When they arrived, Ferenczy kept them waiting for a considerable time in an anteroom full of armed militia. This greatly irritated Raoul. Elizabeth Kasser in 1980 remembered the scene:

"Finally Ferenczy came to us and made a long speech about how we should be ashamed of ourselves for helping Jews, and what awful people Jews are". She chose not to translate all of the obscenities that accompanied Ferenczy's tirade as Raoul was already annoyed. Ferenczy requested a list of names of the Jews to be accommodated in the "assembly camp".

⁵⁴ (Lester, 1982, p. 94)

⁵⁵ (Wallenberg, 1995, pp. 273-4)

The outcome was favourable and the three walked away from Ferenczy with his promise to allot the Legation three houses on Pozsoni Road in Pest where they would be able to house the 650 “emigrating” Jews holding the protective passes. The Red Cross was also given some houses for the same purpose. They left with a feeling of euphoria, put their arms around each other and danced with joy in the street⁵⁶. It was a major breakthrough, one upon which they would build into a complex of internationally-protected houses known as the International Ghetto.

Despite this considerable progress August 25 was the date set for the resumption of the deportations. The days prior to this date were full of activity for the neutral countries as they sought to prevent the transports. Wallenberg was particularly busy at the time, holding meetings all over the capital. However, fate took a hand, not in Hungary but in its neighbour, Romania. On the 23rd August 1944 a coup overthrew the pro-German Ion Antonescu and Romania abandoned the Germans by joining with the Allies. This cost the German army more than a third of a million men. Himmler ordered Budapest Chief, SS General Otto Winkelmann, to halt the transports and Eichmann left for a retreat on the border with Austria to lick his wounds⁵⁷. In Budapest, the Prime Minister Sztojay was replaced by General Lakatos whose task was to seek peace with the Allies.

A feeling of cautious optimism was felt in Budapest at this time. The condition under which the Jews had been held was discussed openly and the conclusion was reached that they should be allowed to work again and help with the clear up after Allied bombings. This would help them and the State at the same time. On 29 September Raoul wrote that “The Jews are very ill-equipped in all respects. Among other things the problem of finding accommodation will probably be insoluble. The authorities who are dealing with these problems seem however to be animated by a great deal of goodwill⁵⁸”. Wallenberg even set up a unit of “Swedish” Jews who reported for duty each day. They did not have to wear the yellow star.

The Legation was continuing to swell as the workload increased. Sweden was now the protecting power for seven other nations, including the USSR, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands. This representation came under the title Section B. Wallenberg’s Section was thus renamed Section C at this point. Applications for passports continued to flood it and numbered no fewer than 9000; his staff were working non-stop, often for 24 hours at a time to cope with the requests. Given that the political atmosphere was improving slightly for the Jews, the emphasis now turned away from the passports and more towards the provision of food, medicines and other humanitarian aid. Wallenberg wrote to Olsen on 12 September informing him that they had taken on new premises at 8A Tigris Street where they had a further ten rooms but that the Jewish Section would be scaled down from 17 September onwards. He continued by saying that they would still issue protective passports in case of isolated pogroms, but the overall tone of his report is that his tenure is coming to an end.

⁵⁶ (Lester, 1982, p. 92)

⁵⁷ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 176)

⁵⁸ (ibid, p. 183)



Per Anger in Stockholm



Carl Lutz, the Swiss diplomat who also saved Jewish lives

The Terror:

On 15 October Admiral Horthy announced on the radio that Hungary was to lay down its arms and cease fighting. This news understandably brought instant joy to the Jewish population of Budapest who began ripping off their yellow stars in the belief that they had been saved. Laszlo Szamosi, a young Jewish activist, wrote about the moments after the broadcast.

“This was the moment that we Jews had been awaiting so eagerly during the terrible months when we expected to be deported at any time. At first it seemed incredible that this meant our deliverance, our freedom. Hardly could we comprehend that we could now go out into the street and cast off our yellow stars, that we could go and look for our relatives. The ecstasy of the people living in our star-marked house was beyond description⁵⁹”.

But the celebrations were premature. Later that day a German coup ousted Horthy and handed power over to the Arrow Cross Chief, Ferenc Szalasi. Horthy’s son was kidnapped en route to a bogus meeting with Tito’s Yugoslavian partisans and sent to Mauthausen where he remained for seven months. Horthy himself was placed under “German protection” and taken to Germany. At this time Per Anger wrote:

“During the days that followed, things looked blacker than ever for the legation’s continued assistance effort for the Jews. The city’s streets were blocked, all traffic was forbidden, and everyone waited anxiously for what was coming.

Eichmann and his henchmen returned and for Wallenberg a hectic and dangerous period now began. But he never gave up, no matter how hopeless it looked⁶⁰”.

Budapest Jews could no longer rely on their protective documents or on help from the neutrals. This was made brutally plain by the Minister for the Interior, Gabor Vajna, in his statement:

“I will not acknowledge the validity of any safe-conducts or foreign passports issued by whomsoever to a Hungarian Jew. At present all Jews living in Hungary are subject to the control and direction of the Hungarian State. And we will tolerate interference from nobody, whether in Hungary or abroad⁶¹”.

The first night of the coup saw horrific violence on the streets of Budapest. People were dragged from their safe houses to the River Danube and shot. Wallenberg himself estimated

⁵⁹ (Bierman, 1982, pp. 73-74)

⁶⁰ (Anger, 1996, p. 57)

⁶¹ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 49)

that some 100-200 people were killed that first night⁶². Jews were forbidden to leave their houses and no-one, not even doctors or food supplies, were allowed into the safe houses. Many Jews fell victim to mass executions on the banks of the Danube. It has been estimated that the Arrow Cross murdered 50-60 Jews a day in the days following the coup⁶³. To save bullets it was a tactic of the Arrow Cross to tie Jews together in groups of three, shoot just one of them, and then toss them into the river. The deceased person would pull the others down with his/her weight and the other two would drown. Sometimes Wallenberg would go down to the bank and pull back Jews about to be shot saying they were under Swedish protection. On one occasion he recruited some three strong swimmers, took them down to the Danube where ropes were tied around their waists. As shots were fired the men would jump into the water and save as many people as they could. The witness, Agnes Mandl, a colleague of Wallenberg's, declared that around 50 people were rescued that night⁶⁴.

In an attempt to ensure that the Jews under Swedish protection were kept safe, Wallenberg decided to work through the new Foreign Minister, Baron Gabor Kemeny. There is some evidence that Wallenberg had met the Baron during earlier trips to Hungary and this might have made his task a little easier and quicker. His tactics were to play on the Szalasi regime's desire for international recognition and the rivalry between Kemeny and Vajna. There was also a third, potent, ploy and that was the Baroness Kemeny. Born Erzebet von Fuchs, the Baroness was herself of Jewish descent and appears to have had considerable admiration for Wallenberg. In the apartment of a mutual friend, he met with Baroness Kemeny where he explained his deep concern at the situation of those with protective passes. He warned her that the regime would never get international recognition while these passes were not recognised; that the leaders of the Arrow Cross would be executed at the end of the war, which could not be far away now that the Russians were knocking at the door of Budapest. She was at this time at an advanced stage of pregnancy, a fact which Wallenberg brought into the argument as he warned that she might have to bring up her child without a father if Kemeny were to be indicted for war crimes. The first thing she had to get her husband to do was to overturn the Vajna's ruling regarding the non-recognition of the neutral countries protective passes. Wallenberg's reasoning was that this should be a matter for the Foreign Ministry anyway because the holders of these passes were foreigners – stretching the truth a little.

When Kemeny did raise the issue Szalasi was reluctant to agree. He had seen how irritated the Germans had been with Horthy on this issue and was eager for them not to think he was backpedalling. But Kemeny persisted, arguing that if they were to recognise the protective passes again, they would be able to insist that the neutral countries repatriate their citizens, thereby solving the problem of the Jewish presence in Hungary. Also, they would be getting the much-desired recognition of their regime from the neutrals. Szalasi saw the logic in this.

Wallenberg insisted on a public radio announcement, just as Vajna had made. It had to include an assurance that the safe houses would be respected and that there would be no

⁶² (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 262)

⁶³ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 240)

⁶⁴ (ibid, p. 241)

attacks on the residents. A radio broadcast ensured that the order reached the widest possible audience. Again, the baroness was instrumental in persuading her husband to make the public statement.

On November 1st, Kemeny summoned Raoul and the Swiss diplomat, Carl Lutz to the Foreign Ministry. He instructed them to remove their “citizens” by the end of November at which time they would have the same status as non-protected Jews. This presented a dilemma for both rescuers. If they proceeded to evacuate the protected Jews then once that had been achieved, they would no longer be able to issue protective passports to other Jews. Their roles would be defunct. Furthermore, the fear was that once the protected Jews had left the jurisdiction of Hungary, there would be no guarantee that they would not be prevented from continuing their journey and sent to death camps anyway. Wallenberg and Lutz decided to play for time and hope that the Russians would occupy Budapest before the deadline.

There is some evidence too that the deportations resumed although on a much smaller scale. It was during these deportations that Raoul performed some of his most audacious acts. On 28th October a number of people were assembled at Hegyeshalom ready to be transported by train for labour. Dr. Stephen Lazarovitz described the day he was saved by Wallenberg.

“I was an intern, just before my final exams. When the Arrow Cross came to power I was not allowed to continue my studies and was drafted to a forced labour camp in Budapest. On October 28 we were yanked to the freight railway station of Jozefvaros, where we boarded the freight wagons. The doors of the wagons were locked from the outside. Suddenly two cars drove up between the railway tracks. Wallenberg jumped out from the first car, accompanied by his Hungarian aides. He went to the commanding police officer in charge, talked to him and presented official papers. Soon the officer made an announcement. He said that those who had authentic Swedish protective passports should step down from the wagon and stand in line to show their papers. Should anybody step down from the cattle cars who had no Swedish protective passport, he would be executed on the spot. The authenticity of the passports would be checked by him and by Wallenberg from the books of the Swedish embassy, which Mr. Wallenberg had brought with him.

In the meantime Mr. Wallenberg’s aides pulled out a folding table from the car, opened it, placed it between the rail tracks and put the big embassy books on top of it.I did not know what to do because my protective passport was not authentic but forged. Suddenly I saw from the window that one of the aides was Leslie Geiger, a member of the Hungarian national hockey team, a patient of my father and a personal friend. I decided to step down from the cattle car. It was one of the most difficult decisions of my life.

I stood in line for about an hour because I was at the end of the line. When I was close to the table, I stepped forward, went to Leslie Geiger and whispered in his ear that my passport was forged. I asked him if he could help me. He said that he would try. When it was my turn, Leslie Geiger whispered a few words in Wallenberg's ear. Raoul Wallenberg looked at me, holding my forged passport in his hand, and said, "I remember this doctor. I gave him his passport personally. Let's not waste our time because it's late. We need him now at the Emergency Hospital of the Swedish embassy. The Nazi commanding officer then said "let's not waste our time! Next".

My feeling was then and still is that what happened was a miracle. Had the commanding officer insisted to check the books, I probably would not be alive. Raoul Wallenberg was certainly a courageous person who fought for the life of each person⁶⁵.

Some doubts have been voiced as to whether Wallenberg actually did snatch people from trains, claiming that the deportations had halted before Wallenberg arrived in Budapest. However, Wallenberg himself refers in his dispatches that sneaky deportations had taken place. Two transports secretly smuggled out of the country by Eichmann from Kistarcsa and Sárvár internment camps with a total of 2720 persons arrived on July 22 and July 26. Of the 445 thousand Hungarian Jews deported between the end of April and the end of July, 10-15 thousand ended up in Strasshof, Austria. The rest were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In addition, smaller Hungarian groups continued to arrive until October 1944, so the number of Hungarian Jews deported to the Auschwitz complex exceeded 430 thousand persons in total⁶⁶.

Moreover, Per Anger himself states he "witnessed his (Wallenberg's) stopping the deportation of a total of several thousand Jews at train stations, from the Swedish houses, and during the death march to the Austrian border⁶⁷. Jangfeldt believes that it is unlikely that Raoul would have jumped up onto trains himself as he was a diplomat and that the person seen jumping from car to car was probably one of his aides. Yet Raoul was neither a normal nor a career diplomat. Sandor Ardai, a driver attached to the Legation, knew Wallenberg well and describes his actions⁶⁸:

Then he climbed to the roof of the train and began handing in protective passes through the doors which were not yet sealed. He ignored orders from the Germans for him to get down, then the Arrow Cross men began shooting and shouting at him to go away. He ignored them and calmly continued handing out passports to the

⁶⁵ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 50)

⁶⁶ (Social Conflict Research Centre:

http://konfliktuskutato.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=288:hungarian-jews-in-auschwitz-birkenau&catid=36:english)

⁶⁷ (Anger, 1996, p83)

⁶⁸ (Bierman, 1982, p. 91)

hands that were reaching out for them. I believe the Arrow Cross men deliberately aimed over his head, as not one shot him, which would have been impossible otherwise. I think this is what they did because they were so impressed by his courage”.

After Wallenberg had handed over the last of the passports he ordered all those who had one to leave the train and walk to a caravan of cars parked nearby, all marked in Swedish colours. I don't remember exactly how many, but he saved dozens off that train, and the Germans and Arrow Cross were so dumbfounded they let him get away with it”⁶⁹

Death Marches

Following his return on 16th October, Eichmann decided to resume the deportations but had some problems acquiring the necessary railway stock. Years later he shamelessly boasted that “...a lesser man would have called off the deportations”⁷⁰. On 20th October 1944 Eichmann began rounding up male Jews aged 16-60 for work in the Hungarian Army labour service. The 50,000 men were given just one hour to prepare before being marched off to assembly points where they were formed into brigades and sent to dig trenches to slow down the Russian advance. The conditions were horrible and hundreds died.

On 8th November, having sent away the men, Eichmann turned his attention to the women. Thus began the infamous death marches where thousands of women were forced to walk more than one hundred miles to the Austrian border at Hegyeshalom. Again the conditions were savage. One survivor, Miriam Herzog graphically describes the scene.

“The conditions were frightful. We walked thirty to forty kilometres a day in freezing rain, driven on all the time by the Hungarian gendarmes. We were all women and girls. I was seventeen at the time. The gendarmes were brutal, beating those who could not keep up, leaving others to die in the ditches. It was terrible for the older women. Sometimes at night we didn't have any shelter, let alone anything to eat or drink. One night we stopped in a square in the middle of a village. We just lay down on the ground to rest. There was a frost in the night and in the morning many of the older women were dead. It was so cold, it was as though we were frozen into the ground. The thirst was even worse than the hunger; I recall that somewhere along the road a villager came out with water for us. The gendarmes tried to stop him, but he just fixed them with a stare.

⁶⁹ (Bierman, 1982, p. 91)

⁷⁰ (ibid, p. 86)

“I’d like to see you try to make me”, he said – and went on giving us water. The gendarmes were so amazed, they did nothing about it.

There were some good people in Hungary but the gendarmes were absolute animals. I hate them even worse than the Germans. At one point along the road we met a convoy of German soldiers going the other way, towards the front. Ordinary Wehrmacht men, not SS. When they saw how the Hungarian gendarmes were treating us, they appeared horrified. “You’ll be all right when you get to Germany”, they told us. We don’t treat women like this, there”. I suppose they didn’t know about the extermination camps⁷¹”.

Miriam managed to sneak away from the others when they reached the frontier where trains were waiting. She hid in a barn where women with Swedish protection were being housed.

“I didn’t have a Swedish passport, but I thought it was worth a try and I had this tremendous will to survive, even though I was so weak from dysentery and wretched from the dirt and the lice that infested me, that I all I could do was to find a space on the floor and lie down. I don’t know how much later it was – maybe days – but suddenly I heard a great commotion among the women. “It’s Wallenberg,” they said. I didn’t know this name, but somebody told me he was a Swedish diplomat who had saved many Jews already. I didn’t think he could really help me, and anyway I was now too weak to move, so I lay there on the floor as dozens of women clustered around him crying “Save us, save us”. I remember being struck by how handsome he looked – and how clean – in his leather coat and fur hat, just like a being from another world, and I thought, Why does he bother with such wretched creatures as we? As the women clustered around him he said to them: “Please, you must forgive me, but I cannot help all of you. I can only provide certificates for a hundred of you. Then he said something which really surprised me. He said “I feel I have a mission to save the Jewish nation and so I must rescue the young ones first”. I had never heard of the idea of a Jewish nation before. Jewish people, of course, but not a Jewish nation. Later I was to think about this quite a lot. Anyway, he looked around the room and began putting names on a list, and when he saw me lying on the floor he came over to me. He asked my name and added it to the list. After a day or two, the hundred of us whose names had been taken were moved out and put into a cattle truck on a train bound for Budapest. We were warned to keep quiet en route because if we were discovered we might all be sent back to Auschwitz. I don’t know how Wallenberg managed it; I

⁷¹ (ibid, p. 81)

suppose he must have bribed the railway officials and guards. Because the railway lines had been bombed the journey back to Budapest took three days, instead of three or four hours, and we were in a terrible state when we arrived. There were a lot more dangers and hardships ahead of us, but we were alive – and it was thanks entirely to Wallenberg⁷².

Such rescues were a frequent event during that month for Wallenberg and his colleagues. They travelled up and down the road to Hegyeshalom carrying medicines, food and warm clothing. Wallenberg also took along his book which listed all the names of protected Jews.

Another account was relayed by Zvi Eres who was a fourteen year old boy when he was rescued by Wallenberg.

As we approached Hegyeshalom at the end of the march, we saw two men standing by the side of the road. One of them, wearing a long leather coat and a fur hat, told us he was from the Swedish legation and asked if we had Swedish passports. If we hadn't, he said, perhaps they have been taken away from us or torn up by the Arrow Cross men. We were on our last legs, but alert enough to take the hint and we said, yes, that was exactly what had happened, though in fact none of us had ever had a Swedish Schutzpass. He put our names down on a list and we walked on. At the station later we again saw Wallenberg and some of his assistants, among them – as I learned only later – some members of the Zionist youth movement, posing as Red Cross officials, and representatives of the papal nuncio. A group of Hungarian officers and Germans in SS uniforms were there, too. Wallenberg was brandishing his list, obviously demanding that everybody on it should be allowed to go. Voices were raised and they were shouting at each other in German. It was too far away for me to hear exactly what was being said, but clearly there was a tremendous argument going on. In the end, to our amazement, Wallenberg won his point and between 280 and 300 of us were allowed to go back to Budapest⁷³

On 16 November Wallenberg formally complained to the government about the death marches. However, Szalasi was in no mood either to listen or compromise.

Eventually the women on the death marches were joined by the younger men who had been digging trenches. They had been brought from various places along different routes and they were in poor condition, having been beaten and starved along the way. The Swiss and the International Red Cross talk of the hopelessness and despair of the marchers, many of whom committed suicide rather than suffer any further.

⁷² (ibid, pp. 80-82)

⁷³ (ibid, pp. 83-84)

Wallenberg himself wrote about the increasingly desperate situation in his memorandum of December 12 1944.

“Since the last report the situation of the Hungarian Jews has further deteriorated.

Probably in the vicinity of 40,000 Jews, of whom 15,000 men from the Labour Service and 25,000 of both sexes seized in their homes or in the street, have been forced to march on foot to Germany. It is a distance of 240 kilometres. The weather has been cold and rainy ever since these death marches began. They have had to sleep under rain shelters and drink three or four times. Many have died. I learned in Mosonmagyaróvár that 7 persons had died that day and 7 persons the day before. The Portuguese secretary to the legation had observed 42 dead persons along the route and, Deputy Prime Minister Szalasi admitted to me that he had seen 2 dead. Those who were too tired to walk were shot. On the border, they were received with kicks and blows by the Eichmann Special SS Command and were taken away to hard labour on the border fortifications⁷⁴”.

The situation was so bad that it reached the ears of Himmler who sent SS General Hans Juettner to investigate. Upon his arrival he failed to find Eichmann so berated Theo Danneker instead. At Hegyeshalom Juettner quizzed Dieter Wisliceny who claimed that Eichmann refused to allow any exemptions to deportation based on age, illness or protective passes. However, Himmler by this time was making overtures to the Allies. Eichmann was summoned to Berlin where he was ordered, amid protests, to begin fostering Jews rather than exterminating them. But it was too late; the situation in Budapest was descending into chaos.

At the beginning of November the Russians were closing in on Budapest. The Arrow Cross rounded up Jews for digging trenches to halt the Russian advance. Any Jew who failed to keep up was shot. This was just one instance of barbarity as Budapest descended into chaos. The Arrow Cross broke into the Swedish Red Cross and arrested the staff. The Swedish Legation immediately threatened to cut off diplomatic relations and to withdraw their diplomats but Per Anger explained that this was just a bluff. The neutral diplomats would not have left the safe houses at the mercy of the Arrow Cross⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ (Wallenberg, 1995, p. 265)

⁷⁵ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 52)

Sweden itself was not really aiding the situation at this time because it persistently refused to acknowledge the Szalasi government. Despite this, Wallenberg kept informing the Arrow Cross that recognition was imminent. He was of course playing for time.

The Ghettos

A significant number of Jews, possibly more than 100,000, still remained in Budapest. These could be divided into two categories – the protected and the unprotected Jews, the latter consisting mainly of the very young, the old and the sick. On 18 November the Jewish Council were informed that all Jews, not under the protection of any of the neutral nations, would be forced into a ghetto in the VII district of Pest measuring approximately one tenth of a square mile. The Christians currently living in that area would be evacuated and moved into the yellow star houses presently occupied by the evicted Jews. This exchange of accommodation took place between the end of November and the beginning of December. The Jews were not allowed to take any furniture, and only those belongings they could carry.

The move was completed by 7 December and the ghetto, with its 243 liveable houses accommodated approximately 70,000 people. Thus 288 people, or 14 per room, were packed tightly together. The Ghetto was then encircled by a high wooden fence with four gates, each at the point of a compass and each guarded by the Arrow Cross. Jews could enter but not exit the ghetto. On 10 December, it was sealed entirely. This suited Eichmann. The Jews were in one concentrated area from which he could move them quickly or, should the Russians take Budapest, he could order an aerial bombardment of the ghetto. At the same time, Gabor Vajna visited Berlin where he was instructed to remove all the Jews by whatever means.

That left only the 15,000 or so protected Jews. On the orders of Szalasi they were ordered to move into the Yellow Star buildings, recently vacated by unprotected Jews, in and around Pozsonyi Street, Pannonia, and Tatra Street in St Istvan district. There they were segregated according to which country was protecting them. This was now the so-called “International Ghetto” which officially comprised of 4,500 “Swedish” Jews; 7,800 “Swiss” 700 “Portuguese”, 100 “Spanish” and 250 under the protection of the Vatican. However because of the overproduction of the protective passes the actual number living in the International Ghetto was nearer to 35,000⁷⁶.

The insanitary conditions in the ghetto prompted the need for more specialised medical help. Wallenberg established two hospitals in the area of the safe houses – at 14/16 Tatra Street and later an epidemic hospital at 29 Wahrmann Street. The Tatra street hospital was put together in just five days, opening on 2 December 1944. Six apartments comprising eleven rooms on the second floor were prepared for the purpose and at least ten doctors were on duty at any given time. The Wahrmann St hospital dealt with epidemics such as dysentery. All protected

⁷⁶ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p. 110)

Jews and staff were inoculated against typhoid, paratyphoid and cholera. Wallenberg wanted to increase the number of beds from 150 to 200. He also set up soup kitchens and crèches.

A further 6,000 children were living in Red Cross shelters where their conditions were pitiful. One Red Cross worker described their plight:

“Children of two to fourteen years, famished, ragged, emaciated to mere skeletons, frightened to death by the droning and the detonation of bombs had crept into corners; their bodies were eaten by filth and scabies, their rags were infested with lice. Huddled up in fear and infinite misery, they made inarticulate sounds. They had not eaten for days, and for many days there had been nobody to look after them. Nobody knows where their nurses had gone and that when it was they ran away⁷⁷.”

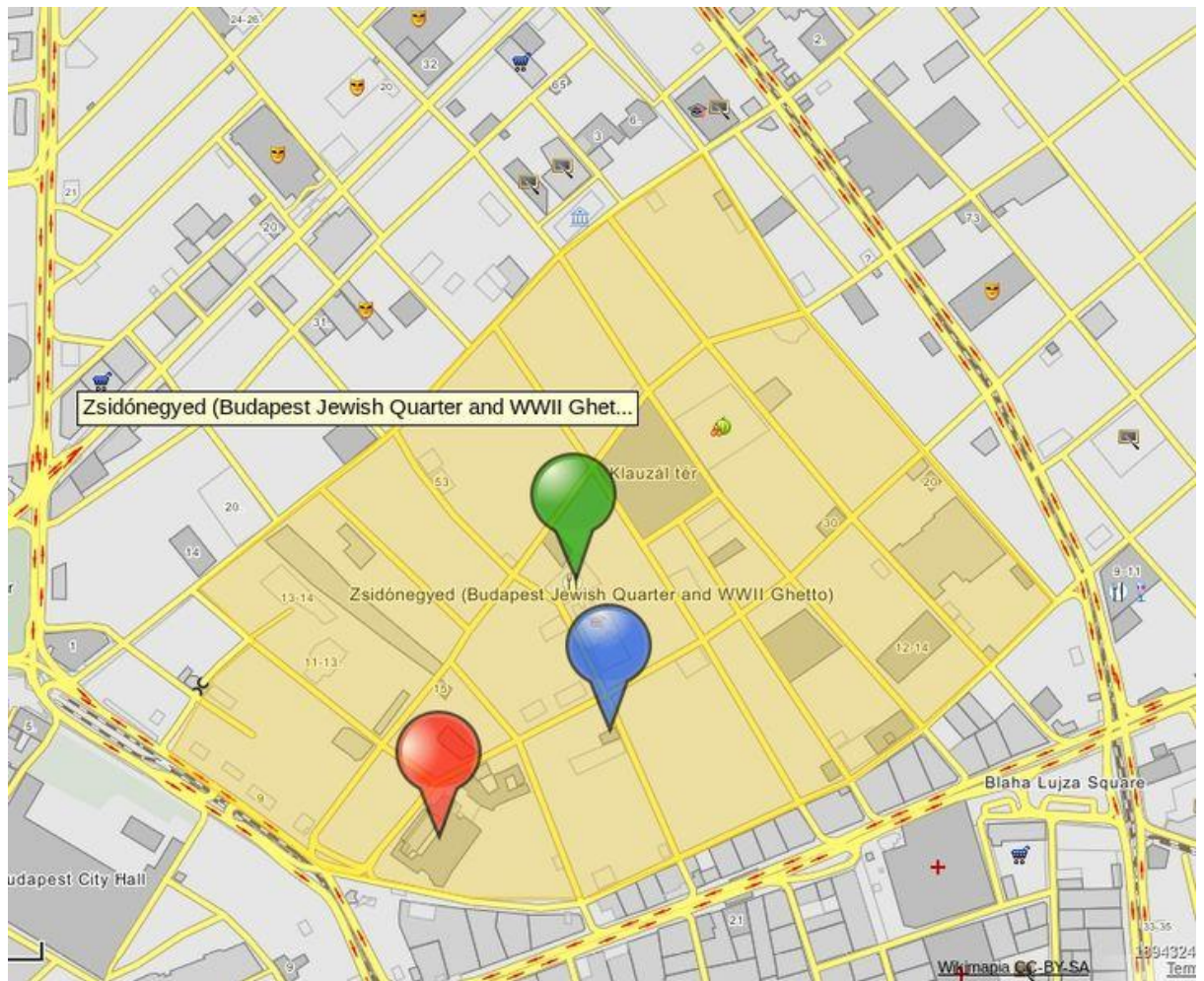
Towards the end of 1944 the food situation in Budapest was becoming critical for everyone. However, for the Jews it was even worse as they were not allowed to leave the house to search for food. Wallenberg had foreseen the problem and had set up six stockpiles, three in Buda and three in Pest. The largest hoard was located in a chocolate company at 8 Szentikirali Street where there was a cold storage room available for Legation use. One of Wallenberg’s messenger boys recalled the food supply:

“As they started to install the ghetto...the officer, the logistical specialist became noticeable in him. And he started from the beginning to deliver food into the ghetto...We had in our departments those canned peas, dried mushroom, fish and bacon. He bought everything he could.

They bought in huge quantities; more than 300 metric tonnes of fat and bacon; 3 wagons of canned meat 15 wagons of tomato paste salted beans; crackers; milk powder; jam; sugar; salt, rum and other spirits; dried and tinned vegetable powders They stored candles, kerosene, etc. According to their calculations they stored enough food so that 6-700 people could be fed for 3 months....They also stored a large quantity of flour also distributed⁷⁸.”

⁷⁷ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, pp109-110)

⁷⁸ (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 231-232)



The Jewish Ghetto in Budapest, 1944

The Growth of Section C.

Protective passes were still being issued at 1A Minerva Street but the operational issues were moved to 4 Ulloi Road in Pest which was where the Hungarian-Dutch Insurance Company had its offices. It was a large building with around 700-800 square metres of space divided into 30 rooms. It had two large kitchens and several toilets and was ready for use on 4 November 1944. It housed 100 employees and their families but when the number of employees rose to 340 plus families, the building was home and work to 700 people, making do with the floor for sleeping.

Ration cards were issued and staff accommodation allocated from the office at 16 Arany Janos Street.

No. 1 Jokai Street housed the “Client Reception” area; the legal section; the food distribution, dispatch, technical (repairs) and heating Sections; the book-keeping and central pay offices.

No. 6 Tatra Street held the administrative division and consisted of four distribution bureaux with the following responsibilities

- a. Food deliveries to its own kitchen and those in the safe houses
- b. The finance bureau dealt with the running of the storehouses, the collection of ration cards, control of food deliveries and other errands.
- c. The social bureau covered the hospitals, children’s homes, old people’s homes, workshops, etc.
- d. Housing issues. These included dealing with the house commandants and controllers and contained a sub-section entitled the Schützling Protocol.

The Schützling Protocol

In October 1944 the Section set up the “Schützling” (Protection) Protocol to deal with matters concerning all those people who came under the protection of Sweden. The task was to document and report any assaults of protected people and any other breaches of agreements between the Swedish Legation and the Hungarian government. Some of the really courageous acts carried out by those working in this department included dressing up in disguises, SS or Arrow Cross, and would often go to the Gestapo or the Arrow Cross to free any Jews who had been arrested. This would invariably involve bribes⁷⁹.

Attacks on Jewish houses were increasing as law and order broke down in Budapest. Several young women were abducted for Pozsonyi Street and raped. The Arrow Cross also stormed the Isteni Szeretet-Leanyai monastery and took off a further 27 who were executed at the River Danube. Red Cross buildings were also targeted. One was a children’s home from which 39 youngsters disappeared without further trace⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 238)

⁸⁰ (ibid, p. 266)

Wallenberg's Section

Swedish Legation Department C

Raoul Wallenberg

4 Ulloi Street

Central Administration and other Offices

Expositur

16 Arany Janos St

- A) Redemption of Ration Cards
- B) Staff Residence Affairs
- C) Staff Requirements

Expositur

1 Jokai St

- A) Client Reception
- B) Legal Division
- C) KEOKH Affairs
- D) Management of Ration Cards
- E) Rations Distribution
- F) Delivery
- G) Technical Division
- H) Heating
- I) Bookkeeping and Head Cashier
- J) Evaluation

14-16 Tatra St
Hospital

29 Wahrmann St
Epidemic Hospital

Expositur

6 Tatra St

Distribution Offices

Board

Management/Housekeeping

Social Division

Lodging Office

- A) Social Kitchen
- B) House Kitchen
- C) Common Kitchen
- D) Food Supply
- E) Transport
Distribution
Control

- A) Supply Management
- B) Collection of Ration Cards
- C) Assurance of Food
- D) Cashier
- E) Personal
- F) Delivery

- A) Drs Commission
- B) Social Workers
- C) Children's Home
- D) Sickroom
- E) Orphanage
- F) Workshops
- G) Industrial Occupations
- H) Old People's Home
- I) Mat. Aid
- J) Information

- A) Housing Affairs
- B) House Cmmndts
- C) House Sprvisors
- D) Courier Svcs
- E) Information
- F) Protégé Records



Deportations of Hungarian Jews, 1944



Bundesarchiv - Bild 101-550-5255A-26
Foto: Faupel / Oktober 1944

Jews being rounded up in Budapest, October 1944



Jews under arrest by Hungarian Gendarmerie, 1944. .



Jews being rounded up by the Arrow Cross, 1944

Dinner with Eichmann

Various reports refer to meetings Wallenberg held with Adolf Eichmann. No written records of any meetings exist so there is no proof they ever took place. There is, however, anecdotal evidence from credible witnesses and this would suggest at least two occasions of direct communication between the two men. The first is said to have taken place probably in August 1944 at the Arizona nightclub in Nagymezo Street, Budapest. It was here that Raoul apparently offered Eichmann \$200,000 for forty houses in the city. Eichmann apparently scoffed at the offer, claiming that the Americans had offered him £2 million for the Jews of Slovakia. The story goes that \$800,000 was agreed upon and it may have referred to those already under Swedish protection but it is not clear⁸¹.

A second meeting appears to have taken place sometime in December 1944. Although not listed in his diary, and this may be why Raoul forgot the appointment, he arrived home at his villa one night just as Eichmann and his deputy Hermann Krumei were pulling up for their dinner date with him. Forgetting the arrangement was embarrassing enough but to make matters worse Wallenberg had given his cook the night off. Unperturbed, the Swede invited his guests in for drinks and hastily rang Lars Berg and asked him to hold an impromptu dinner party in his house on Hunfalvy Street, just a few moments' walk away. During the course of the evening the subject turned to Nazism. Lars Berg described the evening's events:

“Raoul was very relaxed that evening, since there were no emergencies or interventions which required his attention at the moment. Our little salon became a battlefield for one of Eichmann's many defeats against Raoul Wallenberg.....With clarity and logical precision, Wallenberg fearlessly tore Nazi doctrines into shreds and predicted that Nazism and its leaders would meet a speedy and complete destruction. I must say that these were rather unusual, caustic words from a Swede who was far away from his country and totally at the mercy of the powerful German antagonist Eichmann and his henchmen.In his prediction of the imminent doom of Nazism there was also a sincere exhortation to Eichmann to bring to an end the senseless deportations and the unnecessary killing of Hungarian Jews⁸²”. Not many had addressed Eichmann in such a way for many years so it must have rather disconcerted him for, according to Berg, he opened up quite frankly to Wallenberg:

“I admit you are right, Mr. Wallenberg. I actually never believed in Nazism as such, but it has given me power and wealth. I know that this pleasant life will soon be over. My planes will no longer bring me women and wines from Paris nor any other delicacies from the Orient. My horses, my dogs, my palace, here in Budapest will soon be taken over by the Russians, and I myself, an SS officer will be shot on the spot. But for me there is no rescue any more. If I obey

⁸¹ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 263)

⁸² (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 190-191)

my orders from Berlin and exercise my power ruthlessly enough here in Budapest, I shall be able to prolong my days of grace⁸³”.

Listening to these words, Wallenberg could have been in no doubt as to the moral bankruptcy of his adversary. The evening drew to a close with politeness and the veiled threat from Eichmann that he would do everything he could to stop Wallenberg. A few days later, when Wallenberg’s car was rammed by a German truck, the Swede realised the extent to which Eichmann was prepared to go to stop his work. Fortunately, Wallenberg had not been in his car at the time. Within a week, Eichmann had fled as the Russian closed in on the Hungarian capital.

It was during his travels around the city that Wallenberg learned that before leaving Budapest Eichmann gave the order for the total annihilation of the Central ghetto and its 69,000 inhabitants. This would be achieved via aerial bombardment with Hungarian policemen and German soldiers surrounding all exits to shoot any escapees. Wallenberg rushed to the offices of Dr. Gabor Vajna, the Minister of the Interior, who was aware of the order but refused to rescind it, despite Wallenberg’s threats that he would be arrested as a war criminal. Having failed with Vajna, Wallenberg then sent a message to the SS German General August Schmidhuber. He was unable to go to the General in person as the SS were still hunting for him. In his message he repeated the threat that Schmidhuber would hang for war crimes if he allowed this order to be carried out. This time the threat hit home and Schmidhuber called a subordinate and the order to liquidate the ghetto was cancelled⁸⁴.

⁸³ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 90-91)

⁸⁴ (Gersten, 2001, pp. 72-3)



Left: SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann, executed in Jerusalem in 1961

Right: Dr. Gabor Vajna: Executed in Hungary, March 1946



SS General August Schmidhuber:

Executed in Belgrade, Feb 1947

Arrow Cross Leader Lázló Ferenczy:

Executed in Hungary, March 1946

Arrest and imprisonment

By the end of 1944 Wallenberg had been considering a post war recovery strategy for Hungary for some weeks. The inspiration for this plan probably came from the example set by Norwegian explorer, Fridtjof Nansen who was responsible for the refugee issues in the League of Nations following the First World War⁸⁵. Raoul envisaged the establishment of a “Wallenberg Institute for Aid and Reconstruction” to help returning Jews to find jobs, housing etc. In this connection Wallenberg had set up a separate section within his department led by a young economist Reszo Muller who produced a lengthy report on the feasibility of such an organization⁸⁶.

It is not known for certain if Wallenberg made contact with the Russians specifically to discuss this issue or whether there was another reason. It may be that he wanted assurances that the Swedish Legation, the safe houses and the Ghetto would be protected from bombardment. If, however, he wanted to discuss his plan for reconstruction it now, with the benefit of hindsight, seems naive to assume the Russians would be enthusiastic about his ideas. What is known is that Wallenberg and his driver, the engineer Wilmos Langfelder, drove out of Budapest on 17th January 1944 on their way to Debrecen, about 140 miles away, to meet with Field Marshal Rodion Malinovsky. He told colleagues that he expected to be back in around a week- ten days. But, according to reports, Wallenberg and Langfelder did not reach Debrecen, but were arrested by SMERSH (Soviet Counter Espionage) officials just outside of Budapest. From information provided by later cellmates, Wallenberg was questioned over a period of three days, during which time he was allowed to visit his offices and friends around the city accompanied by a Russian protective guard. Further evidence indicates that both men were initially held in a former police station in the VII district of Budapest. Wallenberg is said to have told one friend that he was not sure if he was being treated as a guest or as a prisoner but this was most probably said in jest. He probably felt that his diplomatic status was the reason for his being able to travel, albeit with an escort, but it is also likely that the Russians were awaiting further instructions from Moscow. The arrest warrant was signed by Nikolai Bulganin, the Deputy Defence Commissar and sent to Marshal Malinovsky and the head of SMERSH, Viktor Abakumov and was probably formalised on 19th January 1944.

On 20th January according to an eye-witness, Wallenberg was taken to the town of Godollo, some 20 miles from Budapest before being transported to Moscow, probably by truck and train. Upon reaching Moscow the story goes that they were shown the Moscow Metro, famous for its interior design, before finally being imprisoned in the Lubyanka holding prison in Moscow on 6th February 1945⁸⁷. Here the two men were separated and probably never saw one another again.

Inside the Lubyanka, Wallenberg was initially placed in cell 121 with former SS Captain Gustav Richter, who organized the deportation of Jews in Romania and who had been handed

⁸⁵ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 239)

⁸⁶ (Bierman, 1982, p. 117)

⁸⁷ (Jangfeldt, 2013, pp. 303-7)

over to the Russians when Romania changed sides, and Otto Scheur, a radio operator, who had served on the Eastern Front. On 8 February between the hours of 1.15 and 3.45am, Wallenberg was questioned by interrogator Yakov Sverchuk who he described as “an awful man”. Sverchuk told him “We know all about you. You belong to that great capitalist family⁸⁸”. That was another black mark against Wallenberg in Soviet minds.

Thrown together, the prisoners - and former enemies - in cell 121 now had to cope with a very much different type of foe. Based on the theory that my enemy’s enemy is my friend”, they forged a relationship for the length of their shared confinement. This cooperation included helping Wallenberg compose a letter on 25th February 1945 to the Russian authorities, demanding the right to contact the Swedish Embassy in Moscow. Marton here states that Wallenberg would have dealt with the Russians in the same way as he would the Nazis – “as a civilised, law-abiding, rational authority”. While this may have worked with the Nazis, it was a different case with the Russians who Marton describes as suffering from “institutionalized apathy”⁸⁹. They were not interested; they did not care. They were just doing a job.

According to Richter in testimony provided after his release in 1955, Raoul was at this time still in good spirits, probably believing that his arrest had been a mistake that would be quickly rectified. He exercised in the cell, sang songs and was generally very humorous. The men kept themselves occupied by lecturing to each other; Raoul on Sweden and Swedish history while Richter spoke about Romania. During this time, however, Wallenberg still worried about what effect his imprisonment would have on his reputation within the family.

Langfelder in the meantime had been placed in cell no. 123 with Jan Loyda, a Czech born German national, and Willy Roedel who had worked for the German Legation in Bucharest. Like Wallenberg, Langfelder felt that their arrest had been a mistake and that it was only a matter of time before this was corrected. It is known that he was interrogated on February 9th by Alexander Kuzmishin. After spending six weeks with Loyda and Roedel, Langfelder was transferred to the old Lefortovo prison, located in the Baumansky region of Moscow.

On May 24th Wallenberg was also moved to Lefortovo and was incarcerated in Langfelder’s old cell no. 203 with Roedel and Loyda. Conditions at Lefortovo are described as worse than at the Lubyanka. The diet there consisting almost totally of bread, boiled cabbage and Russian kasha (a type of porridge). Exercise consisted of 20 minutes per day if they were lucky; baths, clean underwear and sheets were rationed to every 10 days. But, unlike in Lubyanka, communication with other prisoners was possible as the Lefortovo pipes facilitated “tapping” with either a toothbrush or dried soap. Such communication was forbidden so a prisoner had to be confident that his cellmates were not informers or that he was not caught by the guards.

The “tapping” systems were simple, time-consuming, but effective; the first and most tedious method was just tapping letters according to their order in the alphabet. One tap = A, two

⁸⁸ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p 319)

⁸⁹ (Marton, 1995, p. 170)

taps = B, and so on. A more sophisticated technique known as the 5-by-5 system was developed. The alphabet was divided into five rows with five letters in each row (the letter W was omitted). The first tap indicates the line, then after a pause, the letter in the row is indicated. The row A-E is in row 1, so requires one tap, and the columns down indicate the letter according to its position. For instance, the letter M would be represented first by three knocks for column 3, pause, then a further 3 for the third row.

	1	2	3	4	5
1	A	B	C	D	E
2	F	G	H	I	J
3	K	L	M	N	O
4	P	Q	R	S	T
5	U	V	X	Y	Z

Using this method, Wallenberg was able to communicate with other prisoners, notably Major Heinz-Helmut Von Hinckeldey of the German General staff. Wallenberg tried to give him the address of his cousins' bank in Stockholm and said he had repeatedly asked to see the Swedish Consulate. He also told the German that he had refused to answer questions, claiming diplomatic immunity⁹⁰. Willi Bergemann from cell 202 communicated often with Raoul: He testified that the Swede was a "very keen knocker, using perfect German. If he wanted to speak to us he would knock five times in succession before commencing⁹¹".

In 1946 Wallenberg wrote to Stalin to request an interview. Unsure of how to word this letter he sought advice from some of his "tapping friends". The letter was composed in French and was handed to the guards for forwarding on to Stalin. He received no direct reply but during a subsequent interrogation he was told "that his case was quite clear, that his was a "political case". If he considered himself innocent, it was his responsibility to prove it. The best proof of his guilt was the fact that the Swedish Embassy in Moscow had done nothing to help his case. "Nobody cares about you. If the Swedish government or its embassy had any interest in you, they would long ago have contacted you⁹²". It is to be hoped that Raoul was sceptical about this statement for if he believed it to be true it surely must have filled him with despair.

The fact is that people most certainly were searching for him, not least his mother, Maj von Dardel. She petitioned the then Soviet Ambassador to Sweden, Alexandra Kollontai, a former revolutionary who assured Mrs Von Dardel that Raoul was safe in Soviet hands and would be returned to Sweden before long but she warned that the Swedish government should not make a fuss about it. The Swedish government were also making enquiries via its Ambassador to the USSR, Staffan Söderblom. Sadly, Söderblom was not up to the task. One

⁹⁰ (Bierman, 1982, p. 145)

⁹¹ (ibid, p. 146)

⁹² (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 120)

example of his ineptitude on this issue occurred during a rare meeting with Stalin on July 15 1945. Söderblom admitted later that he felt overwhelmed by Stalin's presence and blustered his way through an enquiry about Raoul Wallenberg. Tragically for Raoul and for completely inexplicable reasons, Söderblom offered his own personal opinion that Raoul had been the victim of bandits in Hungary. This was despite the fact that the Russians had notified Söderblom earlier in the year that Wallenberg was in Soviet hands, and that Ambassador Kollontai had also stated that he was in protective custody. Ambassador Söderblom compounded the issue later in 1945 when the US displayed "great concern and sore distress" at the disappearance of Raoul Wallenberg and offered to help the Swedes. He curtly told the Americans that it was a Swedish problem and that Sweden would deal with it. Apparently he retorted that "the Russians are doing everything they can already"⁹³. As he spoke, Wallenberg was languishing in a prison cell just a few miles away.

However, his Ministry was not so dismissive and ordered Söderblom to raise the issue with Soviet Foreign Minister Dekanosov, but the Ambassador held back from doing so amongst rumours that Raoul was living incognito and in disguise in Budapest. Apparently, he did not want to be embarrassed by broaching the subject with the Russians if the rumours were found to be true. His decision seems to have been governed by political expediency and may well have cost Raoul his freedom. For more than ten years, the Russians would continue to deny that Wallenberg had ever been in the USSR. Later Söderblom admitted to being haunted by the Wallenberg affair⁹⁴, as well he might.

Over the decades the Swedish and American governments requested information but did not force the issue and many opportunities to secure the release, or discover the fate, of Raoul Wallenberg were lost. The failures would fill a book in themselves. It is difficult not to be judgemental about them. Old fashioned diplomacy and statesmanlike behaviours were no longer the way to deal effectively with brutal dictators like Hitler and Stalin, as Britain's Neville Chamberlain found to his cost when he tried to negotiate peace with Hitler in 1938.

⁹³ (Korey, 2000, p. 13)

⁹⁴ (Bierman, 1982, p. 130)



The Lubyanka Prison, Moscow



Lefortovo Prison, Moscow



Vladimir Prison where Wallenberg is said to have spent several years in Korpus II



Nikolai Bulganin. He signed the warrant for Wallenberg's arrest almost certainly following an order from Stalin.



Victor Semyonovich Abakumov: Executed in Moscow in 1954

A turn in the fate of Raoul Wallenberg took place on the 22nd and 23rd July 1947. Any prisoner who had ever shared a cell with either Wallenberg or Langfelder was interrogated vigorously before being placed in isolation. They were told never to discuss the two men with anyone. It must have been a harrowing ordeal because one of the prisoners, a Finn by the name of Pelkonen, attempted suicide and refused to discuss Wallenberg even after his release from custody.

The decision had clearly been taken to deny all knowledge of Raoul Wallenberg. On August 18th 1947, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Vishinsky, who as State Prosecutor during the great Show Trials of the 1930s would famously shout “shoot the rabid dogs”, wrote to Staffan Söderblom with the words “As a result of careful investigation it has been established that Wallenberg is not in the Soviet Union and that he is unknown to us”⁹⁵.

In years to come the Russians would apologise for this blatant lie.

⁹⁵ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p. 199)

Why was Wallenberg arrested?

"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interest." Winston Churchill, October 1939

To this day it is unclear why Wallenberg and Langfelder were arrested. Certainly Wallenberg's altruistic motives would be regarded as highly suspicious by the Russians, who would not conceive of any valid reason as to why a wealthy young Swede would want to go to a foreign country to save Jewish lives. They would almost certainly have seen this action as a cover for his "real purpose" - espionage. From the evidence that does exist, it would appear that the Russians became more suspicious of Wallenberg as his questioning went on. His very good German language skills and his notebook with the names and telephone numbers of high-ranking Nazi officers, including three different phone numbers for Eichmann, would have added credence to their suspicions. He appeared able to get the Germans to bend to his will. Furthermore, he seemed to have unlimited resources provided by the US government. In December 1944 a worker for the International Red Cross, Dr Francis Zold was advised to have nothing to do with Wallenberg. A colleague warned him "Take my advice, avoid Wallenberg. He's under cover for the Anglo-American secret services⁹⁶". This was a popular rumour in Budapest and would surely have reached the ears of the NKVD (the forerunner of the KGB) via some of those they would have interrogated. It has also been suggested that this information had been provided by an informer within Wallenberg's inner circle⁹⁷.

When he was captured, Wallenberg is thought to have been in the possession of a large amount of jewellery and money with which he had been entrusted for safe-keeping by some of his protégés. This was never recovered and it is not known what happened to it if indeed it existed which seems likely.

Another possible reason for his arrest and incarceration, and one well worth considering, is that given the wealth and prestige of his family, Stalin may have considered him a possible pawn for future use either for exchanges with genuine spies or some other reason.

Present day Russia insists that Wallenberg and Langfelder were casualties of a brutal regime. Of course they are right. But this explanation would be more convincing if the authorities were to yield up all documents and not continue to withdraw papers from files.

⁹⁶ (Marton, 1995, p. 157)

⁹⁷ (Jangfeldt, 2013, p. 304)

On 17 July 1957, all denials that Wallenberg and Langfelder had been held in the USSR ended when Deputy Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, sent what has become known as the Gromyko Memorandum to the Swedish Ambassador, Rolf Sohlman. In this letter, Gromyko acknowledged that Wallenberg had been incarcerated in the USSR but that he had died. Apparently a thorough investigation into the matter brought to light a handwritten note dated 17 July 1947 signed by Colonel A.L. Smoltsov, chief of the Lubyanka medical department and addressed to Viktor Abakumov. It read:

“It report that the prisoner Walenberg (sic), who is known to you, died suddenly in his cell last night probably as the result of a myocardial infarction. In connection with your instructions that I maintain personal supervision of Walenberg, I request instructions as to who shall make the post-mortem examination to establish the cause of death.”

Scribbled on the note were instructions for the corpse to be cremated without post mortem. According to the Soviet government in 1957 the blame for Wallenberg's arrest and imprisonment lay with Abakumov, who by this time had been shot. However, it is unthinkable that the arrest of such a high profile diplomat from a neutral nation would have taken place without the direct order from Stalin himself.

Langfelder apparently also died of a heart attack on March 2 1948. He completely vanishes without further trace.

Alleged Sightings post 1947

What happened to Wallenberg and Langfelder from this time onwards is unknown for sure. As stated, Langfelder is lost to history. As to Wallenberg, the only information comes from the testimony of those who are said to have communicated with them or known about him over the decades. Many are simply rumours of his presence in this or that prison but a considerable number claim to have had direct contact with Wallenberg after his “death” in July 1947. They cannot be dismissed so lightly.

Following Khrushchev’s speech to the Communist Party Congress in 1956 in which he denounced the Stalin era, many people were “rehabilitated” and released from the prison camps including a number of foreigners who returned to their native countries. Some reported meeting or tapping with Raoul well into the 1950s. From the information they provided it seems that Wallenberg was interred in Korpus II, the hospital wing of Vladimir Prison, for quite some considerable time. One Swiss citizen named Brugger claimed that he tapped with Wallenberg during the summer of 1954 and was urged to go to the Swedish Embassy and inform them he was not allowed to receive or send mail. An anonymous Austrian prisoner stated that he met Wallenberg who again urged him to go to the Swedish Embassy. Should the Austrian forget his name, he should just say that he met a Swede from Budapest was the instruction he was given⁹⁸.

There have been many other sightings worthy of mention:

The Italian cultural attaché Dr. Claudio de Mohr who had worked in Bulgaria informed a Polish woman that he had tapped with Wallenberg in Lefortovo from April 1945 to early 1948.

French student Andre Shimkevich met Wallenberg in the winter of 1947 when he was placed in the Swede’s Lubyanka cell in error. It was two days before the guards realised their mistake and removed him. No foreigners were allowed to share a cell with Wallenberg.

General Willi Moser, General in the Wehrmacht, said that he was held in the same section of the Lubyanka as Wallenberg from Christmas 1947 – summer 1948.

Theodore von Dufving, a German officer who claimed to have met Wallenberg in February 1949 at a transit camp in Kirov when the former was on his way to a camp in Vorkuta. He said that Wallenberg told him that he had been arrested in error and that he had worked in Eastern Europe.

Two unnamed German prisoners of war learned of Wallenberg’s presence in the prison at Vladimir. In fact many people, who left Vladimir prison during the 1950s all independently of each other, stated that Wallenberg was confined there in a hospital isolation ward.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ (Bierman, 1982, p. 155)

⁹⁹ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 122-124)

One of the most credible and puzzling accounts of Raoul Wallenberg's disappearance was that told by Professor Nana Schwarz, a doctor at the Stockholm Karolinska hospital and a friend of the Von Dardels. In January 1961 Dr. Schwarz travelled to Moscow to attend a medical conference. She had been many times before. At the conference she met a colleague, Dr. Alexander Myasnikov, with whom she had held many discussions previously, conversing in German which both spoke at quite a technical level. In her own words she described what happened:

"I asked him to pardon me if I brought up the question which was very close to my heart and to the heart of other Swedes. I gave him an account of the Raoul Wallenberg case and asked whether he knew about it, whereupon he nodded in the affirmative.

I asked him whether he could give me some advice on how I might go about finding where Wallenberg might be. I told him that we in Sweden had information to the effect that Wallenberg was alive only two years earlier and that his next of kin had received reports that indicated he was still alive. My informant then suddenly said that he knew about the case and that the person I was asking about was in poor condition.

He asked what I wanted, and I replied that the main thing was that Wallenberg be brought home, no matter in what condition. My informant then said in a very low voice that the person inquired about was in a mental hospital".

Dr. Schwartz was advised by a Dr. Danishevsky who was invited to join the conversation to contact the Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Semyonov about the possibility of taking Wallenberg back home to Sweden. She also contacted the Prime Minister, Tage Erlander, who summoned the Soviet Ambassador and handed over to him a letter for Khrushchev. Neither the Prime Minister nor Nana Schwartz received a response. She did however receive a letter from Alexander Myasnikov who wrote the following:

I write to you in connection with new statements appearing in Stockholm concerning Mr. Wallenberg's fate. I was cited in these statements in a way such as to indicate that I had given you some sort of information about him during your visit to Moscow in 1961.

As you will surely recall, I told you then that I knew nothing about Mr. Wallenberg, had never heard his name, and had not the slightest idea whether or not he was alive.

I advised you to address yourself to our Foreign Ministry on this matter, through your ambassador or in person. Upon your request that I inquire about the fate of this person with our Chief of Government, N.S. Khrushchev, whose doctor I was according to

your account. I replied to you that N. S. Khrushchev, as everyone knew full well, was in absolutely good health and that I was not his doctor.

Owing to some misunderstanding inconceivable to me, this short talk with you (it was carried on in the German language of which I may not be fully master) has come to be erroneously interpreted in official Swedish quarters”¹⁰⁰.

Dr. Schwartz did respond to his letter, stating that they had known each other for years and had never had problems communicating before, even on highly technical issues.

The two doctors did meet once more, in 1965. Dr. Schwartz was accompanied by the Swedish Ambassador, Gunnar Jarring while Dr. Myasnikov was in the company of two officials from the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Although the meeting lasted three hours there was no progress on the case of Raoul Wallenberg. Myasnikov claimed that he had nothing to do with prisoners and therefore could not have known about Wallenberg. Four months later, in November 1965, Alexander Myasnikov died.

One of the most extraordinary sightings came from a recent immigrant to Israel, Efim Moshinsky. He not only claimed to be a former SMERSH agent but the very official who actually arrested Wallenberg in Budapest. He claimed the reason for Wallenberg’s arrest was so that the NKVD could get their hands on the jewellery and cash with which he had been entrusted. He further stated that Wallenberg had been interrogated for nine days before being flown to Moscow. Bierman rightly finds this account suspect particularly since it contravenes what was already known about the arrest and transportation of Wallenberg and Moshinsky did not mention Langfelder at any time. He did make an interesting claim however – that Wallenberg, probably after the trouble with Myasnikov in 1961, was transported to a prison on Wrangel Island in the Arctic Circle. Moshinsky was also imprisoned on Wrangel Island where he was given the task of distributing food and he was able to learn the names of several of the inmates. Of the Italian names he remembered, two were later discovered as being those of two Italian officers who had been declared missing. Among other foreign prisoners were two German Generals, Spanish officers, and Alexander Trushnovich, leader of the Russian anti-Communist group NTS. Apparently he and Wallenberg shared a two-roomed wooden hut¹⁰¹.

Although he was never able to speak to Wallenberg who was there until the following year, he claims to have been able to get notes to Wallenberg via books and that Raoul had written letters to his mother and passed them on to him. The letters begin “Dear Mother Von Dardel”, which is not a form of address Raoul ever used to his mother and the entire story does sound fanciful. This is not to say that Raoul was not on Wrangel Island. It was indeed a place where foreigners were sent from time to time. Moshinsky claim that but it seems

¹⁰⁰ (Bierman, 1982, pp. 163-164)

¹⁰¹ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, p.227)

unlikely that he had the contact with Wallenberg he claims. The matter of Wrangel Island is further substantiated by Hungarian who met Wallenberg in a foreigners' prison in Irkutsk. Wallenberg informed the Hungarian that he had been transferred there from Wrangel Island¹⁰²

One alleged sighting also came from the British Spy, Greville Wynne. While imprisoned in the Lubyanka in 1963, he was taken as normal for his exercise routine on the roof of the building where there were small pens for prisoners to walk around. He recalled:

“One day in early 1963, I was up on the roof when I heard a cage coming into the next pen. As the gate opened I heard a voice call out “Taxi”. Given the filthy condition of the lifts, this struck me as a piece of defiant humour, which I greatly appreciated. About five days after that, the same thing happened – the cage came up and the same voice called out “Taxi” and this time I heard some conversation between the prisoner and his guard. I could tell from the accent that this was another foreigner, so I called out, “Are you American?”

The voice answered, “No, I’m Swedish”.

That was all I could learn, because at that moment my guard put his hand over my mouth and shoved me against the corner of the pen. Prisoners were not allowed to communicate with each other¹⁰³.”

If this voice was indeed Raoul Wallenberg then, 18 years on, he had still not lost his sense of humour.

Another intriguing instance arose in 1977 when a Russian Jewish émigré in Tel Aviv, Israel, received a telephone call from her father, Jan Kaplan, who was still in the Soviet Union but trying to emigrate also. He had been imprisoned for “economic crimes” or “currency charges” which were linked with his attempts to emigrate but was released early owing to a heart condition. During their conversation about the prison he told her “It wasn’t so bad. When I was in the prison infirmary at the Butyrka in 1975 I met a Swede who’d been in different prisons for thirty years and he was in pretty good condition”. For some time Kaplan carried with him a letter about Wallenberg which he tried to smuggle out with a foreigner. Sadly the letter was intercepted and Kaplan was again arrested on February 3 1979. His wife Yevgenia wrote to their daughter again and this time the letter arrived via a new immigrant to Israel. Mrs Kaplan wrote:

“I write this letter but I am not sure it will reach you and that the same thing will not happen because of the letter about this Swiss or Swede Wallberg (sic) whom he met in the prison infirmary....

¹⁰² (Marton, 1995, p. 202)

¹⁰³ (Bierman, 1982, p. 174)

Father wrote a long letter about this Wallberg and for a long time he carried it around with him looking for a chance to send it to you through a foreign tourist. Every Saturday he went to the synagogue where many tourists visit, but for a long time he had no success.....

One Saturday, father came back in a very good mood and told me that at long last he had succeeded in giving the letter to a young foreign tourist who promised to send the letter from Vienna or Germany, I don't remember which.....

Why did your father have to interfere in this business? He never had anything to do with politics and wouldn't even listen to political jokes. Because of that letter about a poor prisoner they arrest a man and kept him for a year and a half so what good can you expect here?"¹⁰⁴

In August 1979 the National Review reported that Kaplan had been sent to Komi camp in the northern Urals.

A further incident described by Rosenfeld involves General Gennady Kupriyanov who had served time in prison in connection with what was known as the Leningrad Affair, when several high-ranking officials were arrested for a series of fabricated crimes, committed allegedly to boost the power of Leningrad over Moscow. Kupriyanov served seven years in prison camps until his release in 1956. On January 1st, 1979, an article appeared in The New Russian Word, an American-Russian immigrant paper about Kupriyanov and his co-prisoner Raoul Wallenberg with whom he claimed to have spent time in 1953 when they spent three weeks together travelling between the prisons of Verchneursk and Alexandrovsky Central, nr Irkutsk in Siberia. In 1955 they met again during another transfer between Verchneursk and Vladimir prisons which took several weeks and finally they met in the dental clinic in 1956 presumably in Vladimir still but they were not allowed to communicate.

After the article appeared in the National Review, Kupriyanov was taken in for questioning by the KGB. When asked why he has spoken about Wallenberg when he had been expressly forbidden to do so upon his release, He replied that Wallenberg had been sentenced in 1945 or 1946 to 25 years which should have been over by 1971 and he genuinely believed that Wallenberg had been released. He failed to understand why the USSR could admit the crimes of Beria but not the one committed against Wallenberg. After his third interrogation, Kupriyanov fell ill and his wife was told to attend the hospital. By the time she arrived her husband had died of "infarctus of the heart". She was not permitted to see him but, during the visit, her flat was searched¹⁰⁵.

A final intriguing witness is the Polish prisoner, Abraham Kalinsky, who is described in detail by Bierman¹⁰⁶. A former Polish Army officer, Kalinsky claimed that he was sentenced

¹⁰⁴ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. 177-178)

¹⁰⁵ (Ibid, pp. 179-180)

¹⁰⁶ (Bierman, 1982, pp. 176-181)

by the USSR for sending a letter to the USA exposing the truth about Soviet involvement in the massacre of the Katyn forest when 20,000 Polish officers were massacred. Until 1992 the Soviet Union always maintained it was a German atrocity. Kalinsky claimed that when he was serving time in the prison at Verkhne Uralsk, a fellow prisoner by the name of David Vendrovsky told him he had been sharing a cell with Raoul Wallenberg and Wilhelm Munters, who had served as a Latvian cabinet minister. Vendrovsky had described Raoul as “a very interesting and exceedingly sympathetic man”. Kalinsky claimed that from his cell window he frequently saw Wallenberg in the exercise yard. He stated that the prison was later cleared to make room for the new enemies of the people following the death of Stalin, and he was transferred to Alexandrov Central prison. He did not see Wallenberg at this prison. However, in 1955 when travelling to Vladimir prison they were taken en route to the transit prison in Gorky. As they were being assembled in a hall, he saw Wallenberg again. He was still in the company of Munters.

In Vladimir prison, after a period in isolation, Kalinsky shared a cell with a Georgian prisoner by the name of Simon Gogoberidze, a former political refugee who had been kidnapped by the KGB in Paris. Gogoberidze had just been transferred from Korpus III where he claimed to have shared a cell with Wallenberg and disgraced KGB General Mamulov. Later Wallenberg shared cell no. 23 with a Georgian Central Committee Member by the name of Shariyev. Kalinsky claimed that Wallenberg “was always made to share a cell with Soviet citizens serving long sentences, never with foreigners. This was done to reduce the evidence of him getting out. If he were to have shared a cell with a foreigner who was later released the Russians would find it impossible to keep it quiet.

Bierman describes some interesting supporting evidence for Kalinsky’s claims. While he was in prison, he sent numerous postcards to his sister in Haifa, northern Israel; postcards which she kept. One of these cards, dated March 1959, informs her that all the Germans have been released and that the only foreigners remaining are an Italian and a Swede “who saved many Jews in Romania (sic) during the war”¹⁰⁷.

Missed Opportunities

In 1946 six Soviet sailors over a period of two months defected to Sweden. The Russians wanted these men returned. The Swiss had the same situation and agreed to send back those who had requested asylum to Russia in return for Swiss citizens held by the Russians. The Swedes, however, did not make the connection with Wallenberg and failed to offer a similar exchange.

In 1945 the young daughter of a Soviet officer Lydia Makarova defected to Sweden along with a group of refugees. She had thought her parents were dead but her father emerged and demanded her return. When the Wallenberg case was raised with the Russians, the latter asked about the girl. No exchange took place.

A similar chance occurred with the defection to Sweden of NKVD agent Anatoly Granovsky. Granovsky had been working behind enemy lines in Germany but had been appalled by the behaviour of Russian forces in Berlin. He was placed in a Swedish prison whilst awaiting a decision on his plea for asylum, which was eventually granted by the Swedish king. Again he could have been exchanged for Wallenberg but it did not happen.

There were other Soviet nationals from the Baltic countries in Sweden at this time. They had fought with the Germans against Russia during the war. Most had been repatriated to Russia but the Swedes had allowed some 146 seriously ill individuals to remain behind. The Russians wanted the return of these people but again this failed to materialise. As Werbell and Clarke poignantly remark –“Lydia Makarova, Anatoly Granovsky and the Balts remained in Sweden; Wallenberg remained in Russia¹⁰⁸”.

In 1964 Stig Wennerstrom, a colonel in the Swedish Air Force, was convicted of spying for the USSR and sentenced to life imprisonment. In this connection, as recorded by Carl Perssons, former director of the Swedish Security Police in 1991, three KGB officials attached to the Soviet Embassy in Berlin approached Carl Swingel, who was involved with the Swedish Lutheran Church in West Berlin and who had worked with an East German lawyer engaged in East-West prisoner exchanges. They apparently proposed an exchange – Wallenberg for Wennerstrom. Astonished, Swingel asked if Wallenberg was still alive. One of the KGB officials replied that they didn’t normally deal in dead bodies. The Swedish government failed to take up the offer and Wallenberg continued to languish¹⁰⁹.

Thus were opportunities missed to rescue Wallenberg from his Soviet capture although it is important to remember that it would have taken place at the expense of others being returned to Russia.

¹⁰⁸ (Werbell & Clarke, 1985, pps 196-197)

¹⁰⁹ (Korey, 2000, p. 25)

The Wallenberg Family sues the USSR

In 1984 the Wallenberg family took the decision to sue USSR for \$39 million, one for each year of Raoul's captivity. The lawsuit was issued under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of 1977, which makes foreign governments liable in US courts for "wrongful" acts, and served on Andrei Gromyko, the Foreign Secretary and the man whose announcement in 1957 has remained the Soviet position on the Wallenberg affair. It was presented to the US District Court in Washington D.C. on February 2, 1984.

If alive, the compensation would go to Raoul if not to his family. Guy von Dardel claimed that he had evidence that Raoul was still alive in 1975 so something had to be done to hasten his release. Senator Tom Lantos, whose life and that of his wife was saved by Wallenberg, felt it was necessary to force the issue because relations between the USA and the USSR were not good at this time¹¹⁰.

Not surprisingly the USSR failed to attend the hearing but sent a note asserting their absolute sovereign immunity. The judge issued a default judgement which could have led to Soviet assets in the USA being seized. In April 1986, the Wallenberg family sought to hold the USSR in civil contempt.

But when Mikhail Gorbachev was elected as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party a new dawn entered relations between the two countries. This brought new hope to the world and to the Wallenberg case. When asked to provide a Statement of Interest, the USA stated that it had no jurisdiction and that there would be problems enforcing any contempt order.

But in 1989 Gorbachev invited Wallenberg's family to Moscow. They were naturally full of expectation. Was the mystery of Raoul Wallenberg's fate about to be resolved? Their optimism grew when the Soviet Ambassador to Belgium attended the Wallenberg commemoration of his arrest in Brussels. When they arrived in Moscow the family were presented with some personal belongings of Raoul's; his passport, notebooks, registration card and some cash. By happy coincidence these belongings fell off a shelf in the Lubyanka prison just prior to the visit. William Korey describes the event:

"The way the Wallenberg materials were allegedly discovered is hardly credible. Presumably the various articles were contained in a parcel located on a top shelf. When the shelves were being cleaned in order to transfer the KGB records from wooden files to metal files, the parcel accidentally fell to the floor. Could this be the way that material belonging to one of the gulag's prized prisoners was stored? How could official archivists not know anything about this parcel? Indeed as Canadian researcher David Matas learned, the reported form of storage was contrary to rules and regulations of the Soviet system. Even more revealing was the fact that the various

¹¹⁰ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. xviii-xix)

items in the parcel were not likely to have come from one file but rather from four separate files¹¹¹”.

They were also shown the Lubyanka Prison Doctor’s notification of Raoul’s cremation after his death in 1947. The family dismissed this as nothing new and certainly not evidence. In return, they presented the Russian authorities with a list of witnesses who had seen Raoul later than his alleged date of death in 1947. The Russians equally dismissed this as unreliable evidence.

The family were also given access to Vladimir prison where Raoul was rumoured to have been incarcerated for several years in the 1950s. There they were shown cards pertaining to “important prisoners”. However, some were missing and there was no card for Raoul.

There were encouraging signs, however. Soviet forensic scientists examining the KGB reports made the interesting comment that their investigations were “discreet but rewarding” without elaboration. Also, a public appeal led to numerous calls to the Wallenberg Society in Stockholm from people who had been imprisoned during the 40s and 50s.

One of these contacts is fascinating. A 72 year old woman, Vavara Larina, who worked as an orderly at Vladimir prison remembers a foreign occupant of an isolation cell on the third floor of the hospital wing Korpus II. She remembered him because he was constantly complaining about his food being cold and she was told by the prison authorities to feed him first in future. She remembers his presence there when a prisoner named Kirill Osmak died in the cell opposite. Evidence showed that happened in May 1960. Several photographs of men, including an unpublished picture of Wallenberg, were shown to her. She picked out the picture of Raoul Wallenberg¹¹².

In the summer of 1990 the USSR offered to open up its archives and prisons to the Soviet-International Commission which consisted of 10 members: Professor Guy von Dardel, Swedish, organizer and maternal brother of Raoul Wallenberg; Dr. Vadim Birstein, Russian, member of Memorial Society; Dr. Rolf Bjornerstedt, Swedish, former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations; Dr. Mikhail Chlenov, Russian, director of VAAD, an organization of Soviet Jews; Professor Irving Cotler, Canadian, Professor of International Law at McGill University; Alexei Kartsev, Russian, journalist and reporter for *Komsomolskaya Pravda*; author of first newspaper article about Raoul Wallenberg in the Soviet press in 1988; Dr. Kronid Lyubarski, Russian, former Political Prisoner in Soviet labour camps and in Vladimir, and editor living in Munich, Germany; Professor Marvin W. Makinen American, former prisoner in Vladimir and Soviet labour camps, November, 1961, - October, 1963; Professor and Chairman of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at University of Chicago; Alexander Rodnyansky, Russian, Film director and producer,(he directed the first Soviet documentary film about Raoul Wallenberg, released in late 1990); Arsenii

¹¹¹ (Korey, 2000, p. 33)

¹¹² (Makinen M. W. & Kaplan, 2000, pp. 7-8)

Roginski, Russian, Senior Researcher, Memorial Society, and former political prisoner in Soviet labour camps.

Their conclusion was that at no time had the USSR investigated the possibility that Wallenberg had been imprisoned in Vladimir. Their report read:

“The Commission has learned that foreigners imprisoned at Vladimir – particularly those in the status of diplomats – were usually registered not under their own name but under a number of false identity (sic).

The Commission examined some 104,000 prisoner registration cards and selected 1328 for further computer analysis and videotaping. Of these some 30 cards were in the “numbered” category.....if Raoul Wallenberg’s prison registration card is a numbered one or registered under a false identity, it makes its discovery well nigh impossible.

The Commission has learned that the personal prison dossiers of foreigners imprisoned at Vladimir have been preserved, but that they have been transferred from Vladimir to KGB Files in Moscow¹¹³.

Furthermore, Professor Makinen noted that “the investigative commission is often thwarted in following previous leads because not all documents it requests are made available. Some KGB files remain totally inaccessible to the commission. In fact, the KGB does not acknowledge that these archives exist¹¹⁴.

The Commission further discovered that there had been a Soviet “Emergency Committee” looking into the case in 1988 but that for some reason it had closed quickly. The Committee itself included no fewer than 8 of the hardliners who were to stage an attempted coup against Gorbachev in 1991.

The Commission again felt a sense of optimism as the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the independence of each of the member nations. Boris Yeltsin became President of the Russian Federation and promised to support the search for Wallenberg. Despite this, the hardliners were still prominent in Russia and the line taken remained that Wallenberg died on July 17, 1947.

In 2004 the Swedish-Russian Commission produced two reports, one from each “side”. The Russian Project Director, Vyacheslav Tuchnin stated that he was 99% sure that Wallenberg was killed on July 12th 1947, 5 days earlier than his reported death in the Gromyko Memorandum of 1957. The Swedes, led by Hans Magnusson, however published a 362 page document which concluded that no definitive documentation of Raoul Wallenberg’s death

¹¹³ (Rosenfeld, 2005, pp. xxx-xxxi)

¹¹⁴ (Korey, 2000, p. 35)

has been found. The conclusion of the Russians was depressingly unchanged. Wallenberg died in 1947.

Who was Prisoner No. 7?

Yet the debate continues! Susan Mesinai, the director of ARK, which searches for lost American prisoners of war in the former Soviet Union, argues that, even if there had been no instances of direct contact with Wallenberg:

“There are a number of problems with the Smoltsov document. The description used for Raoul’s heart attack (myocardial infarction) was a term first used in the ‘50s. Secondly, the time of Raoul’s supposed death was a time of much quiet, judging by the Lubyanka registry. And yet, this handwritten, unofficial document stands as the one single piece of so-called evidence against decades of verifiable sightings and the Soviets’ own declassified material”¹¹⁵

That Raoul does not appear in any prison records after 1947 is not proof of death either. Citing her own discovery of American defector Victor Hamilton who spent 20 years in the Troitskoye Psychiatric hospital near Moscow where he was known only as “K”, she continued:

“If Hamilton is a “K” in a Russian psychiatric hospital, there may be others throughout the Gulag, including Wallenberg....Since my personal commitment is to the Wallenberg case, I was painfully conscious throughout my meetings with Victor Hamilton that Raoul Wallenberg – who has been repeatedly sighted in psychiatric prison hospitals – may be one of those forbidden to disclose his true identity and known only as a letter or a number. While I have high hopes that Raoul has been well treated, I also have to face the reality of inevitable attrition that comes from decades of isolation”¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁵ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. xxxix)

¹¹⁶ (ibid)

Furthermore, an examination of the files of Wallenberg's cellmates Gustav Richter and Grosheim-Krysko asks more questions:

“I, deputy head of a section of the Investigation Department of the 2nd Main Directorate of the MGB of the USSR, Major SOLOVOV, having considered the materials of the Investigation Case NO. 5062 on the accusations against Richter, Gustav, HAVE DETERMINED (that)

The investigation of the case has established that RICHTER while being a member of the criminal Fascist Party, SS-units and holding leading positions within the SD organs, headed punitive measures against anti-Fascists, as well as actively worked in intelligence...

Taking the aforesaid into consideration and the fact that RICHTER was connected to an **especially important prisoner.**

I HAVE DECIDED (THAT)

RICHTER Gustav, as an especially dangerous German war criminal, after conviction should be sent to an MGB Special Prison to serve his punishment where he should be kept in strict isolation from the other prisoners.....¹¹⁷ (Taken from Richter's KGB file)

Also

“During the investigation GROSHEIM-KRYSKO testified that, while having been a German businessman in Hungary in 1941-1944, he was a middle-man who supplied the German Army with food and participated in mobilization of the Hungarian economical resources for the war, and in this way he assisted the realization of the military political plans of Germany against the Soviet Union. Taking the aforesaid into consideration and the fact that GROSHEIM-KRYSKO was connected to **an especially important prisoner....**

GROSHEIM-KRYSKO German Genrikh as an especially dangerous German war criminal, after conviction should be sent to an MGB Special Prison”.

Who was the especially important prisoner? At the time of the Swedish-Russian Committee the author of the recommendations, Major Solovov, was still alive and he testified before the Russian side of the Committee in 1992:

¹¹⁷ (Birstein, April 25 1991)

“He (Solovov) first heard about Raoul Wallenberg some time in 1947....This was when Kuleshov, head of (a) section under Kartashov, drew up a list and diagram indicating the prisoners who had been Raoul Wallenberg’s cellmates. Every detail of their cell numbers, etc. was noted on the diagram.

At that time the case was creating quite a stir. Kuleshov gave the above-mentioned informant (Solovov) a parcel and told him to take it personally to Gertsovsky, the head of MGB archives. A handwritten note on the parcel said, “Contains material relating to detainee No. 7. Not to be opened without permission from the head of the MGB”. The parcel contained some papers and personal documents (but not the personal file) relating to Raoul Wallenberg. The informant (Solovov) knew that “detainee No. 7” referred to Raoul Wallenberg¹¹⁸”.

Then, in 2010 an unexpected revelation!! Archivists at the FSB (formerly the KGB) wrote to Wallenberg researchers Susanne Berger and Vadim Birstein stating that the Prisoner No. 7 interrogated for 16 hours on 23rd July 1947 was “in all likelihood” Raoul Wallenberg. This is an astonishing admission, given that for more than 50 years the Soviet Union and Russia has not budged from the stance that Raoul Wallenberg died on 17th July 1947. Once the death date has been discredited, it opens up a whole new area of possibilities. If Wallenberg was still alive 6 days after his “death”, there is no reason why he could not have still been alive 6 years later? Or 16 years later? Or 36 years later? If the “proof of death” i.e. the Smolstov note, has been discredited, where then is the true death certificate?

¹¹⁸ (Swedish-Russian Working Group, 2000)

Conclusion

Thus we are no nearer to learning the fate of this remarkable young man. The official Russian stance seems unlikely. It is stretching credibility to suggest that two strong and healthy young men in their mid-thirties, who had received relatively gentle treatment from their captors, would have succumbed to heart attacks within a few months of each other. It is unlikely they died of natural causes. Execution is another matter. Either way, it could certainly explain why they were not rehabilitated along with others after the Stalin era. But, with respect to Wallenberg, the Russians had a high profile Western diplomat in their hands; a prisoner who could prove to be a significant bargaining chip in the years ahead. Russians are master chess players: why sacrifice a pawn for no gain? Executing him would serve no obvious purpose. It has been argued that they did not know what to do with him. That may well be true but what benefit would result from executing him? Keeping him in reserve might. When tens of thousands of people are in prison, what would be the problem about keeping just one more? As has been seen, overtures were made to make a swap of people between Sweden and the USSR on a couple of occasions during the 1960s. Why offer Wallenberg for Wennerstrom if the former had already died? It does not make sense.

If, therefore, it can be assumed that he was alive in the 1950s, it begs the question why would they not release him after the 1956 Secret Speech and subsequent rehabilitation? Of course, it is all guess work but one possibility is that at the time of the Gromyko Memorandum, the Hungarian Uprising was still a raw issue. Would the Russians have wanted to release such a person as Wallenberg back to where he could be the focal point of further unrest? Was this a sticking point? Furthermore, Gromyko continued in high position in the USSR until the year before his death in 1989. Would the authorities have embarrassed Gromyko, who so publically announced Wallenberg's death, by declaring he was alive all that time? Probably not. By the time of Gromyko's death Wallenberg would have been imprisoned for 44 years and would be almost 77 years of age. Surely even his indomitable spirit would have relinquished hope after so many years. If Wallenberg had already died by then, there was little point in changing the decades-old story of the 1947 death.

Expectations that after the fall of the Soviet Union and the dawn of Glasnost, the truth about the fate of Wallenberg and his loyal driver Wilmos Langfelder could have been released proved optimistic. Approaches to Gorbachev and his subsequent reaction suggest that he too was not necessarily in control of answers regarding Wallenberg.

One thing is for certain: Given that he was never released it would have been a mercy if Raoul had died in 1947. The thought that this gentle, kind man had to suffer decades of incarceration is too much to bear, especially for his family who valiantly fought for him, and do still.

Tributes

Raoul Wallenberg is remembered the world over for his courage and compassion at a time of unprecedented barbarity and inhumanity. He was probably never told of the awards given to him; the streets and buildings called after him; and the scholarships awarded in his name. He did not hear the songs dedicated to him; nor did he read the many books written about him. He would never have heard of the foundations and committee formed in his name. He was probably never told that he was far from forgotten and abandoned. Even today, decades after his triumph and tragedy, the anniversary of his birthday and the day of his arrest are commemorated annually in many places throughout the world.

The International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation was founded some twenty years ago by the late Tom Lantos, who as mentioned was saved by Wallenberg, and Baruch Tenenbaum, a teacher and businessman, who has worked tirelessly over decades to perpetuate the ideals and legacy of Raoul Wallenberg and other saviours from the time of the Holocaust. The aims of the Foundation are to raise public awareness and produce educational programmes devoted to such acts of civic courage as Wallenberg displayed. Of Raoul, Dr. Yoav Tenenbaum, son of the founder, wrote:

“Challenging the entire machinery of Germany and its Hungarian allies, employing his imagination as an offensive weapon, Wallenberg resolved to do the impossible. With the help of people, some of them diplomats, of good will, Wallenberg demonstrated that human courage has no limits. Through a process of persuasion, threats and an unmatched dose of diplomatic creativity, this young 32 year old Swede managed to save the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews. His heroism was crowned by tragedy. Although the Germans and their Hungarian allies endeavored to cause an accidental death to Wallenberg, he survived this ordeal in order to be subsequently arrested by the Soviet troops, who had just liberated Budapest, never to be seen alive again. Wallenberg is, then, a hero without a grave”

In the Holocaust Research Centre of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Israel, a tree was planted on the Avenue of the Righteous, an award to all those Gentiles who helped Jews during the Holocaust. Near Haifa a forest of 10,000 trees carries his name.

Raoul Wallenberg has also been made an honorary citizen of the USA (1981), Israel (1984), Canada, (1985), Budapest (2003) and became Australia’s first honorary citizen (2013).

In the summer of 1945 the writer Rudolph Phillip, a passionate devotee, wrote:

“The aura which surrounded him fascinated and enchanted his collaborators. In the middle of the hopeless dirt of a night hostel or in a moist dark cave he inspired thought towards the west, towards Sweden, where man was still considered a man. His protégés felt this magic, these refugees who in desperation gathered around this Swede

on their flight from the police; these unhappy souls whose sufferings sometimes broke the last limits of civilisation, people who lived in utter anguish. By his presence they were calmed, not by calculation or in respect for Raoul's person – because he never tried to inspire respect – but only because they felt in his presence an inflexible personality, without fright, who did not recoil even from death.....He demanded of himself and of his collaborators complete self-sacrifice....Hero worship was completely foreign to him....The waves of the war lifted him high, but at last these waves engulfed him, only a step from the victory. Wallenberg disappeared before the eyes of the people he had saved, like a hero in the legend. An unjust but a heroic end¹¹⁹„

In the middle of what was the International Ghetto an area is named after him plaque there today reads “Raoul Wallenberg, Secretary of the Swedish Legation with courage and determination helped the escape of thousands during the reign of the Arrow Cross”

In Pest, in 1945, the Israelite Congregation of Pest declared:

“The time of horror is still fresh in our memory when the Jews of this country were hunted animals, when thousands of Jewish prisoners were in the temple preparing for death. We recall all the atrocities of the concentration camps, the departure of the people who were to die, the sufferings in the ghettos and the attacks against the houses which had been placed under international protection. But we also remember one of the greatest heroes of those terrible times, the Secretary of the Royal Swedish Legation, who defied the intruding government and its armed executioners. We witnessed the redemption of prisoners and the relief of those who suffered when Mr. Wallenberg came among the persecuted to help. In a superhuman effort, not yielding to fatigue and exposing himself to all sorts of dangers, he brought home children who had been dragged away and he liberated aged parents. We saw him give food to the starving and medicine to the ailing.

We shall never forget him and shall be forever grateful to him and to the end the Swedish nation because it was the Swedish flag which warranted undisturbed slumber of thousands of Jews in protected houses.

¹¹⁹ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 108)

He was a righteous man. God bless him¹²⁰”.

This heartfelt tribute shows the debt which many felt they owed to Raoul Wallenberg. Although it is written in the name of the Jewish people, it could be attributed to any minority group in any country at any time in history.

But the final word belongs perhaps to the Russian version of such heroes from one of their own, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who, in 2009, wrote the following:

“There is a law in the Archipelago that those who have been treated the most harshly and who have withstood the most bravely, who are the most honest, the most courageous, the most unbending, never again come out into the world. They are never again shown to the world because they will tell tales that the human mind can barely accept.....These are your best people. These are your foremost heroes who, in solitary combat, have stood the test. And today unfortunately, they cannot take courage from our applause. They cannot hear it from their solitary cells where they may either die or remain for thirty years, like Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who was seized in 1945 in the Soviet Union. He has been imprisoned for thirty years and they will not yield him up¹²¹”.

And they still have not.

¹²⁰ (Rosenfeld, 2005, p. 109)

¹²¹ (Solzhenitsyn, 2009, p. 46)

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