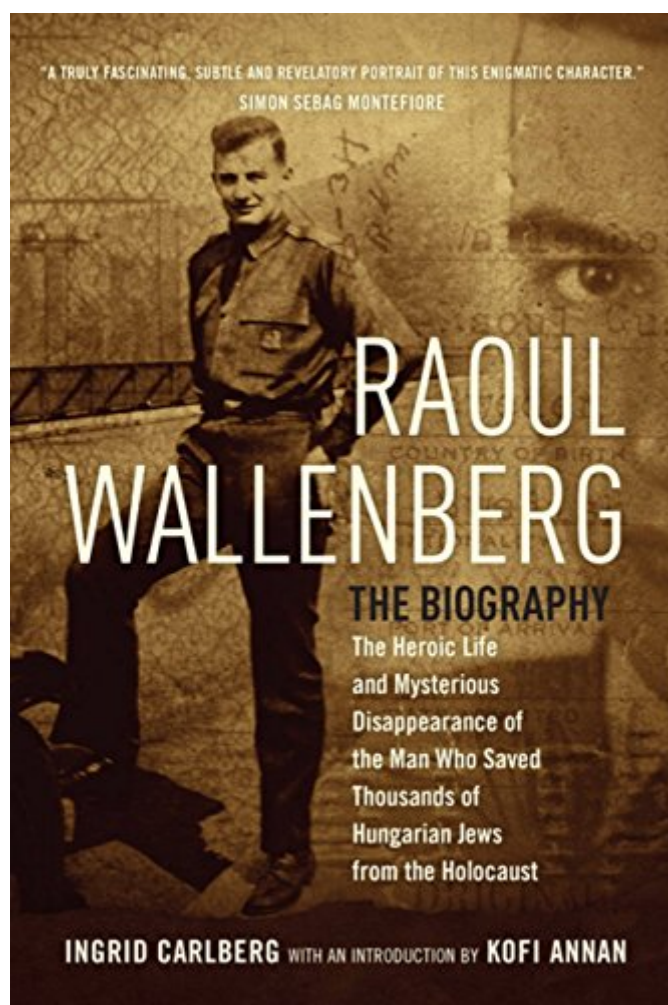


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Raoul Wallenberg: The Heroic Life And Mysterious Disappearance Of The Man Who Saved Thousands Of Hungarian Jews From The Holocaust



Synopsis

An Honorary Citizen of the United States and Canada, and designated as one of the Righteous among the Nations by Israel, Raoul Wallenberg was a modest envoy to Hungary whose heroism in Budapest at the height of the Holocaust saved countless Jewish lives, and ultimately cost him his own. A series of unlikely coincidences led to the appointment of Wallenberg, by trade a poultry importer, as Sweden's Special Envoy to Budapest in 1944. With remarkable bravery, Wallenberg created a system of protective passports, and sheltered thousands of desperate Jews in a special "international ghetto" created in collaboration with other neutral countries. As the war drew to a close, his invaluable work almost complete, Wallenberg voluntarily went to meet with the Soviet troops who were relieving the city. Arrested as a spy, Wallenberg disappeared into the depths of the Soviet system, never to be seen again. In this definitive biography, noted journalist Ingrid Carlberg has carried out unprecedented research into all elements of Wallenberg's life, narrating with vigor and insight the story of a heroic life, and navigating with wisdom and sensitivity the truth about his disappearance and death.

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Customer Reviews

Raoul Wallenberg. A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. Born to an prominent Stockholm business family in 1912, he never quite made it in the Swedish business world and had several failed ventures on his resumé when he was dispatched to Budapest on a humanitarian mission in July 1944. In Budapest, he found his vocation. He was tireless in his efforts to save Hungarian Jews from the Nazi death camps, alternately defying the Nazis and negotiating with them. In January 1945, as the Soviets surrounded Budapest, he crossed the lines and demanded to see General Malinovsky, in a last-ditch attempt to save the remaining Jews in the ghetto. A few days later, the Soviets issued a warrant for his arrest, and he was transferred to Moscow. The Swedish authorities believed that he was under Soviet "protection." It took weeks for them to conclude that he was missing. Seventy years later, the trust placed in Soviet good intentions by both Wallenberg and his government seems amazing. But, back then, Stalin was still good old Uncle Joe, a Western ally, and little was known about his conspiratorial mindset, ruthless regime, and unshakeable conviction that 'whoever is not with us, is against us.' Seen through Soviet eyes, neutral Sweden was the marketplace where diplomats and secret policemen and journalists and spies lived side by side and traded whatever they could. In Stockholm, Raoul Wallenberg was on social terms with British and American diplomats, even though his export firm worked with the German zone only. His family sold ball bearings to the Nazis, and on occasion conveyed German peace feelers to the West.

Like many people, it seems, I was only vaguely aware of the courageous activities of Raoul Wallenberg during World War II. As a teenager, I remember watching Richard Chamberlain play the role in a TV mini-series: there's a moment when Chamberlain, as the newly appointed diplomatic envoy Wallenberg, is on a sleeping car pulling into a train yard in Hungary; as he looks out the window, an outbound train filled to overflowing with Jews being sent to their deaths passes, shocking him into slack-jawed disbelief at the sight of so many desperate prisoners grasping through the barred windows. That scene had more than a little of the horror movie to it, and the image has always stuck with me. So when I heard about this award-winning biography by Swedish journalist Ingrid Carlberg (Wallenberg is a Swede), I had to take a look. I saw Ms. Carlberg at an event in New York City, at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, and was fascinated to hear that the lingering ignorance of Wallenberg, who may have saved the lives of as many as 100,000 Hungarian Jews, is in part due to the Swedish government's tense and fearful relationship with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Interestingly, it was the intelligence operations of the US government during the late 1970s that reopened the investigation into Wallenberg's postwar disappearance into

the bowels of the Soviet prison system. Regardless of that, of course, and despite the brief period of glasnost, the details of Wallenberg's fate is still something of a mystery.

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