In Jerusalem there is a memorial, Yad Vashem, dedicated to the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis during World War II. A street named ‘Avenue of the Righteous’ runs through the area, bordered by 600 trees planted to honour the memory of non-Jewish individuals who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazi executioners. One of these trees bears the name of Raoul Wallenberg.

One of few US honorary citizens
Few Swedes have received as much international acclaim and attention as Raoul Wallenberg. In 1981, he became the second of a total of just seven people to be named honorary citizens of the United States. The others include Winston Churchill and Mother Teresa. In 1985, he was made an honorary citizen of Canada, and in 1986 an honorary citizen of Israel.

Would have turned 100 in 2012
Around the world there are monuments, statues, and other works of art that honour Wallenberg. His memory is preserved through books, music and films, and many buildings, squares, streets, schools and other institutions bear his name.

2012 was the centenary of Wallenberg’s birth. Yet his humanitarian achievements live on, a continuing reminder that every individual has a responsibility in the fight against racism. They show the importance of personal courage and of taking a stand – because one individual can make a difference.

Provided shelter in ‘Swedish houses’
A diplomat and businessman, Wallenberg was appointed legation secretary of the Swedish diplomatic mission in Budapest in June 1944. His job was to launch a rescue operation for Jews, and he became head of a special department. By issuing protective Swedish passports and renting buildings – ‘Swedish houses’ where Jews could seek shelter – he saved tens of thousands of lives.

In January 1945, Wallenberg was imprisoned by Soviet forces. His fate remains unknown. Russia claims he died in a Soviet prison on 17 July 1947. However, many witness reports suggest he may have been alive much later.

Charlotte Gyllenhammar’s creation in Gothenburg is one of many Raoul Wallenberg monuments around the world.

RAOUL WALLENBERG:
ONE MAN CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Armed only with his bravery and moral courage, Raoul Wallenberg saved tens of thousands of Jews from the Holocaust. It’s a story that has inspired the world. Wallenberg’s achievements are a reminder of the continuing need to fight racism.
Raoul Wallenberg (right) surrounded by colleagues in Budapest, 1944.

**PROTECTIVE PASSPORTS SAVED JEWS**

By issuing protective passports and creating safe houses, Wallenberg saved tens of thousands of Jews in Budapest.

In 1944, the United States established the War Refugee Board (WRB), an organisation whose task was to save Jews from Nazi persecution. Once the WRB understood that Sweden was making serious attempts to save Jews in Hungary, it set out to find someone who could launch a major rescue operation in Budapest.

Wallenberg was offered the job and accepted.

Prior to Wallenberg’s arrival in Budapest, Valdemar Langlet, a delegate of the Swedish Red Cross, was assisting the Swedish Legation. Langlet rented buildings on behalf of the Red Cross and put up signs such as ‘Swedish library’ and ‘Swedish Research Institute’ on their doors. These buildings then served as hiding places for Jews.

**Printed thousands of passports**

The first thing Wallenberg did was to design a protective Swedish passport. German and Hungarian bureaucrats had a weakness for symbolism, so he had the passports printed in blue and yellow with the Swedish coat of arms in the centre. He furnished the passports with appropriate stamps and signatures. Wallenberg managed to convince the Hungarian Foreign Ministry to approve 4,500 protective passports. In reality, he issued three times as many. Towards the end of the war, when conditions were desperate, Wallenberg issued a simplified version of his protective passport that bore only his signature. In the prevailing chaos, even this worked.

To achieve his objectives, Wallenberg used anything from bribery to threats of blackmail. The other diplomats of the Swedish Legation were initially sceptical of his unconventional methods. But when Wallenberg’s efforts yielded results, he quickly received backing. His department expanded, and there were several hundred people working there at its peak.

On 20 November 1944, Adolf Eichmann instigated a series of death marches, in which thousands of Jews were forced to leave Hungary on foot under extremely harsh conditions. Wallenberg helped them by distributing passports, food and medicine. In January 1945, the Russians arrived in Budapest. On 17 January, Wallenberg was arrested by Soviet forces.

The search for Raoul Wallenberg Wallenberg’s fate remains an intriguing mystery. There is still no clear picture of what happened to him after his arrest. In April 1945, it became clear that Wallen-
The Wallenberg Medal is a US prize for humanitarian efforts. It has been awarded since 1990 by the Wallenberg Endowment of the University of Michigan, for exceptional humanitarian efforts. On the front of the medal is an image of Raoul Wallenberg, and the motto ‘One Person Can Make a Difference’.

In 2010, the prize went to Denis Mukwege, a Congolese gynaecologist and hospital director who has brought attention to the cause of women victims of sexual violence in war zones.

The Raoul Wallenberg Association was formed in 1979, with the aim of finding out the truth about Wallenberg’s fate, securing his release, and disseminating information about his humanitarian deeds. The Raoul Wallenberg Association became the Raoul Wallenberg Committees in 2000. The aims remain the same, with the added ambition of inspiring younger generations to embrace Wallenberg as a role model – showing that one man can make a difference.

There are many schools around the world named after Raoul Wallenberg, and whose teaching is inspired by his achievements. In Sweden, there is the independent Raoul Wallenberg School. The spirit of Wallenberg, embodying honesty, sympathy, courage, and the ability to take action, is integral to its activities. The school’s teaching philosophy is that ‘no one should be held back and no one should be left behind.’ Examples of schools outside Sweden are Raoul Wallenberg High School in Brooklyn, New York; Raoul Wallenberg Human Szakkkozeipsikola in Budapest, Hungary; and Raoul-Wallenberg-Oberschule in Berlin, Germany.
Raoul Wallenberg was not the heroic type in the conventional sense, but he was fearless and a skilled negotiator and organiser. That was how the Swedish diplomat Per Anger (1913–2002) described him. Anger was stationed in Budapest during the war as a secretary at the Swedish Legation. Furthermore, Wallenberg’s background and upbringing furnished him with unique skills.

Studied architecture abroad
The Wallenberg family is one of Sweden’s most prominent, with generations of leading bankers, diplomats and statesmen. Raoul’s father was a cousin of Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg, two of Sweden’s best-known financiers and industrialists of the 20th century. The plan was for Raoul to go into banking, but he was more interested in architecture and trade. In 1931, he went to study architecture at the University of Michigan in the United States. There, he also studied English, German and French.

On returning to Sweden in 1935, he found that his US degree did not qualify him to work as an architect. Between 1935 and 1936, Wallenberg was employed at a branch office of the Holland Bank in Haifa, present-day Israel. During this time, he first came into contact with Jews who had fled Hitler’s Germany. Their stories moved him deeply.

Worked his way to the top
Back in Stockholm, he obtained a job at the Central European Trading Company, an import-export company with operations in Stockholm and central Europe, owned by Koloman Lauer, a Hungarian Jew. Wallenberg’s linguistic skills, and the fact that he could travel freely around Europe, made him the perfect business partner for Lauer. It was not long before he was a major shareholder and the international manager of the firm. His travels to Nazi-occupied France and to Germany soon taught him how German bureaucracy worked – knowledge that would prove highly valuable.

Protected by his diplomatic status
Wallenberg was also a talented actor, which was a big help in his clashes with the Nazis. He could be calm, humorous and warm, or aggressive and intimidating. He could flatter and bribe one occasion, and shout and threaten on another. The Nazis were impressed by him and usually gave in to his demands. Another important factor was his Swedish diplomatic status, which the Germans did not dare to violate.

The last time Per Anger saw Wallenberg, on 10 January 1945, he urged him to seek safety. Wallenberg replied, ‘To me there’s no other choice. I’ve accepted this assignment and I could never return to Stockholm without the knowledge that I’d done everything in human power to save as many Jews as possible.’

BIOGRAPHY IN BRIEF

Born: 4 August 1912
Place of birth: Lidingö, Stockholm
Education: Architecture degree from the University of Michigan, 1935
Arrival in Budapest: July 1944
Imprisonment: January 1945
Date of death claimed by Russia: 17 July 1947
FILMS ABOUT RAOUL WALLENBERG (A SELECTION)

2006
Raoul Wallenberg, L’Ange de Budapest, director Marcel Collet. Documentary.

2005
Der Fall Raoul Wallenberg, director Klaus Dexel. Documentary.

2004

2001

1994
Wallenberg, Autopsie d’une disparition, director Jean-Charles Deniau. Documentary.

1990
God afton, Herr Wallenberg (Good Evening, Mr. Wallenberg), director Kjell Grede. Biopic.

1985
Wallenberg: A Hero’s Story, director Lamont Johnson, Biopic.

raoul-wallenberg.eu/references/films

TRACES OF WALLENBERG AROUND THE WORLD
Memorials and monuments to Raoul Wallenberg have been erected in many countries. Here are a few of them.

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES
Wallenberg affected countless lives during his time in Budapest. Here are two of many testimonies:

JONI MOSER
‘I was Wallenberg’s errand boy. Since I spoke German as well as Hungarian, I could pass through barriers and was therefore well equipped to be a messenger.’

Moser tells of the day that Wallenberg learned about 800 Jewish labourers being marched to Mauthausen. He drove with Wallenberg to the march. Wallenberg asked that those with Swedish passports raise their hands.

‘On his order, I ran between the ranks and told the men to raise their hands, whether they had a passport or not. He then claimed custody of all who had raised their hands, and such was his bearing that none of the Hungarian guards opposed him. The extraordinary thing was the absolutely convincing power of his behaviour.’

TIBOR AND AGNES VANDOR
Tibor and his wife Agnes were employees of Wallenberg. Agnes was about to have a baby. All hospitals were barred to Jews and houses were overcrowded. Wallenberg found a doctor and took the Vandors to his flat on Ostrom Street. There, he gave young Agnes his bed and went into the hallway to sleep. In the early morning, the doctor announced the arrival of Yvonne Maria Eva. The Vandors asked Wallenberg to be her godfather, and he graciously accepted.

Read more testimonies about Raoul Wallenberg:
raoulwallenberg.org
COURAGEOUS PEOPLE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Many other heroes have fought in the same way as Raoul Wallenberg, on the side of the weak, against oppression, violence and persecution. Four of them are Anton Abele, Stig Wallin, Stieg Larsson and Ingrid Segerstedt-Wiberg.

Campaigning against street violence

Anton Abele, born in 1992, got involved in a campaign against street violence after Swedish teenager Riccardo Campogiani was beaten to death in Stockholm on 6 October 2007. Abele created a Facebook group called Bevara oss från gatuvåldet (‘Save us from street violence’), which soon had over 100,000 members. On 12 October 2007, Abele arranged a demonstration in which over 10,000 people took part. The same year, he founded the organisation Stoppa gatuvåldet (‘Stop street violence’).

In October 2010, Abele became Sweden’s second-youngest-ever Member of Parliament when he took his seat for the Moderate Party.

The 5-Minutes-to-12 Movement

The 5-Minutes-to-12 Movement works to shape public opinion against xenophobia and racism. The movement was formed in Härnösand, Sweden, in 1988, by young people reacting to violence and the harassment of refugees. The name is derived from the time they held their demonstrations, five minutes to 12 on Sundays.

The leader of the movement was Stig Wallin (1943–2009). His daughter Sara, who was also involved in the movement, was murdered together with a friend in 1989. The murderer was a young refugee. Wallin’s mission in life became to carry on his daughter’s commitment. From this tragedy, he found his driving force, taking a stand for reconciliation instead of hatred and revenge.

Gave a voice to anti-fascism

The journalist and author Stieg Larsson (1954–2004) is best known for his Millennium trilogy. He is also known for his strong commitment to democracy and anti-fascism.

In the mid-1980s, Larsson was involved in setting up the Stop Racism project. In 1988, he and Anna-Lena Lodeniuss, a fellow journalist and author, started one of Sweden’s largest ever mappings of organised racism. The result was the book Extremhöger (‘The far right’), published in 1991.

Larsson was also one of the founders of the Expo Foundation and Expo magazine. The foundation maps, monitors and provides information about extreme right-wing and racist tendencies in society. The magazine’s objective is to defend democracy and the freedom of expression and fight racist, anti-Semitic and totalitarian tendencies in society. In 1999, Larsson became editor in chief, a position he held until his death. He died of a heart attack on 9 November 2004.

Pioneer for human rights

The journalist, author and politician Ingrid Segerstedt-Wiberg (1911–2010) devoted her life to fighting for human rights, freedom, peace and democracy. As the daughter of newspaper editor and Nazi opponent Torgny Segerstedt, she was involved early on in refugee work and in opposing Nazism. Her engagement in international issues resulted in assignments with the UN, the Nordic Council and Unicef.

USEFUL LINKS

expo.se Expo magazine and the Expo Foundation
levandehistoria.se Forum for Living History
raoulwallenberg.org The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States
skma.se The Swedish Committee Against Antisemitism
umr.nu Ungdom Mot Rasism (Youth against Racism), Sweden’s largest anti-racism youth organisation
wallenbergdatabase.ud.se Searchable database of testimonies and documents concerning Raoul Wallenberg
wallenbergfoundationofnj.org The Wallenberg Foundation of New Jersey

Copyright: Published by the Swedish Institute. December 2011 FS 25.

All content is protected by Swedish copyright law. The text may be reproduced, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast in any media with reference to sweden.se. However, no photographs or illustrations may be used.

The Swedish Institute (SI) is a public agency that promotes interest and confidence in Sweden around the world. SI seeks to establish co-operation and lasting relations with other countries through strategic communication and exchange in the fields of culture, education, science and business.

Further information about Sweden: sweden.se, the Swedish embassy or consulate in your country, or the Swedish Institute, Box 7434, SE-103 91 Stockholm, Sweden. Phone: +46 8 453 78 00; e-mail: si@si.se

www.si.se www.swedenbookshop.com www.swedenabroad.com