

**WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 13,1999**  
**AFTERNOON SESSION A 14:00-15:30**

## **Raoul Wallenberg-A Curriculum for K-12 Educators**

*by*  
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The materials for the second module in the curriculum unit on Raoul Wallenberg for K-12 educators are presented below. The objective of the entire seven-module program is to assist prospective and in-service teachers to develop literature-based lessons on the Holocaust in Hungary. Module 2 explores the topic “Raoul Wallenberg: the Man and His Action” in four sections: (1) in background readings prepared by the instructor; (2) through the “Study of Heroes” K-9 curriculum program developed by the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States; (3) by reference to letters and dispatches authored by Raoul Wallenberg himself; and (4) honors and commemorations that remember the work of Raoul Wallenberg.

Simon Wiesenthal, the renown Nazi –hunter, who became interested in the fate of Raoul Wallenberg in 1967 through a request from Wallenberg’s mother, Maj Von Dardel. Wiesenthal, and was responsible for locating Eichmann in South American long after the end of the war said “I consider it even more important to find out what has happened to Raoul Wallenberg, who is the antithesis of the mass killers.” As we shall see

Wallenberg walked into the slaughterhouse that was Budapest in 1944 and saved thousands of people of all ages, ordinary citizens and children who had been pulled out of their homes to be degraded, tortured, and murdered .

Wiesenthal’s article about Wallenberg appeared in the *New York Times* in November 1977. It caught the attention of Annette Lantos, who had been rescued by Wallenberg in 1944 and who thought that Wallenberg had died when the Soviets occupied Budapest in 1945. Many others had not heard much news about Wallenberg following the war’s end, possibly because of the then ongoing Cold War and the *Iron Curtain* separating the Eastern Bloc nations under the Soviet sphere of influence from the western countries.

Elenore Lester, author of *Wallenberg, The Man in the Iron Web*, first learned about the Wallenberg story when she was in Stockholm on assignment covering the Nobel Prize presentation in literature to Isaac Bashevis Singer in December 1978. At a party honoring Singer, Lester spoke with a woman had had been saved by Wallenberg in 1944. As she told the story of how he rescued thousands of Jews through his courageous interventions. Lester also heard that Wallenberg might still be alive in a Russian Gulag, a prisoner somewhere. She thought, “If such a story were true, why didn’t the whole world know it?”

Lester’s article on Wallenberg appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* of Sunday March 30, 1980 and was responsible for the increase in international media interest in his

life and deeds. In the intervening years, Lester traveled extensively to Sweden, Hungary, and the Kremlin to take personal testimonies about the mysterious disappearance of Wallenberg. In the meantime reports surfaced that he had been sighted in various prisons within the Soviet Union.

With interest growing about Wallenberg an international seminar was held in 1981 in Stockholm. Wiesenthal was joined by Gideon Hausner (chief prosecutor in the Eichmann trial), Elie Wiesel (Chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Commission), and representatives from the Raoul Wallenberg Committees of Great Britain and France. Also in attendance were Annette and Congressman Tom Lantos, both of whom were saved by Wallenberg. Per Anger and Lars Berg of Sweden, former colleagues of Wallenberg, attended the hearings and provided testimony about the final days prior to his disappearance into the Soviet Union.

Despite the immense material relating to World War II and the Holocaust, we are still piecing together the puzzle of his ultimate fate. In 1996 Boris Pankin, the last foreign minister to the Soviet Union, published his memoirs. Pankin had been ambassador to Sweden during the decade of the 1980's and had often been involved in discussions of Wallenberg's fate. In his book *The Last Hundred Days of the Soviet Union*, Pankin revealed: "The correspondence I handed the Swedish side was embarrassing Crime upon crime, lie, upon lie, generations of Soviet Ambassadors reciting the same story to the Swedish Foreign Ministry. under Stalin, under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Gorbachev..."

Wallenberg's mission began at a time when WWII had been raging for almost five years. Five million Jews had already been brutalized and murdered before he volunteered to leave a safe, neutral Sweden to help the Jews trapped in Hungary under Nazi occupation on March 19, 1944. Now Budapest was under the grip of Adolf Eichmann, the mass murderer responsible for the death of a million souls. Earlier on, talented young Hungarian Jews such as Edward Teller, Leo Szilard, John Von Neumann, and Eugene Ormandy had already emigrated to the west, soon to become well known names in America.

Wallenberg had traveled widely during the decade of the 1930's, attending college in the United States, working in Haifa, Palestine, and visiting Mexico, South Africa, France, Turkey, and other countries. As the war escalated in the earlier 1940's he increasingly became aware of the destruction and the dislocation of the European populace. In the winter of 1942, Raoul Wallenberg and his sister Nina attended a private showing of the film *Pimpernel Smith* at the British Embassy in Stockholm. The film was based on the novel by Hungarian-born Baroness Eموke Orczy, in which the book's fictitious hero saved aristocrats from the guillotine during the French Revolution. The film he saw that evening featured the noted British actor Leslie Howard, who also directed it. *Pimpernel Smith* was the story of an absent-minded professor who secretly managed to save the Jews from the Nazis. The irony was that the real Leslie Howard was born Laszlo Stainer, a Hungarian Jew. Raoul Wallenberg himself became the Swedish Scarlet Pimpernel of World War II, saving tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Nazi stranglehold in Budapest in 1944. He is credited with rescuing as estimated 100,000 Jewish people,

making him the individual who saved the most Jewish lives during WWII. Per Anger, the Swedish diplomat who served with Wallenberg in Budapest, has said “Never in modern times has a man succeeded in saving such a large number of people in such a small period of time.”

During February 1942 and the fall of 1943 Wallenberg was in Hungary on business for Kalamán Lauer, head of the Central European Trading Company. Dr. Lauer, a Jew living in Sweden, had relatives in Hungary who were being subjected to discrimination. Wallenberg was distressed by these reports. His business trips had permitted him to become acquainted with the social, economic and cultural conditions of Hungary. The Central European Trading Company dealt with foodstuffs and Wallenberg had obtained supplies for the Red Cross in several European countries. This knowledge and experience was to prove invaluable when Wallenberg volunteered and was accepted for the United States War Refugee Board mission to Hungary in July 1944.

As the war continued on several fronts, the Nazis invaded and occupied Hungary late in the war. With German defenses experiencing difficulties, they moved to occupy Hungary, itself an Axis power. With the Nazi invasion on March 19, 1944, came ghettoization, appropriation of property, and reduction of basic rights. The terror of the times was recorded in the diary of thirteen-year-old Eva Heyman, a Hungarian living in Transylvania, who began writing on March 31<sup>st</sup>. Eva was taken to Auschwitz on June 2, where she was executed on October 17<sup>th</sup>. [Materials from Eva Heyman’s diary will be examined in Module 4. Also within that module will be the diary of the Transylvanian teenager, Ana Novac which was written in a concentration camp. Ana survived and lives today in France.]

At this time most of the Jews of Europe were already dead. When Wallenberg arrived in Budapest, more than 400,000 Jewish men, women, and children already had been deported from the Hungarian provinces. Germany was now losing the war. Only one large Jewish community on the continent now remained intact—in Hungary and in the capital, Budapest. Eichmann prepared for the deportation and annihilation of Hungarian Jewry before the Soviet armies could arrive to the capital to liberate it from the Nazis. Jews in the Hungarian provinces were gathered into ghettos in preparation for the journey of death, which began May 14, 1944. With a degree of efficiency that surpassed the precision of the other Nazi death operations in other nations, the Nazis worked out a systematic arrangement for the deportations, beginning in the outlying regions of the country and proceeding toward the capital. [Refer to map on classroom poster.]

Eichmann divided Hungary into six zones :

1. Carpatho-Ruthenia
2. Transylvania
3. Northern Hungary
4. Southern Hungary East of the Danube
5. Transdanubia, including the suburbs of Budapest
6. Budapest proper

By June 7, 1944 nearly 330,000 Jews had been deported from Carpatho-Ruthenia and Transylvania. One of these was Elie Wiesel of Sighet (Transylvania), who was deported to Auschwitz, survived, and became a Nobel laureate. By June 30th additional deportees numbering more than 90,000 were removed from northern Hungary and the southern region east of the Danube. Another 55,000 Jews were deported from Transdanubia and the suburbs of Budapest. In less than two months more than 437,000 Jews had been sent to the death camps. Eichmann next turned his attention to the more than 200,000 Jews who resided in Budapest. Ultimately 75% of Hungarian Jewry would perish. [Resources in Module 4 will detail additional statistics regarding the Holocaust in Hungary.]

Immediate action was needed to save the remnants of Hungarian Jewry from the gas chambers. Who could be called upon to lead a rescue operation to counter the heinous deeds of Eichmann? Iver Olsen, a representative of the United States War Refugee Board established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in early January 1944, interviewed Raoul Wallenberg on June 9, 1944. A few days later (on June 13<sup>th</sup>) it was decided that Wallenberg would serve as secretary of the Swedish legation in Hungary and the personal representative of King Gustav V. Wallenberg had been selected for the mission to Hungary based on his qualifications and because the United States was anxious to involve neutral Sweden, a nation already representing American interests at that time in Budapest. At the time of his appointment Wallenberg demanded diplomatic status and the rights to issue Swedish passports to Jews. On July 6, 1944 Wallenberg left Stockholm for Budapest, via Berlin, where his half-sister Nina lived with her Swedish diplomat husband. They were expecting a child in October, a child Raoul would never get to see. All arrangements for his humanitarian mission were completed with the United States State Department by June 21.

Raoul Wallenberg, a 32 year-old relatively unknown Swede from a wealthy and prominent banking family, had studied architecture at the University of Michigan and had received the Silver Medal of the American Institute of Architects as the graduate with the highest scholastic standing. His classmates recalled him as an “outstanding, resourceful individual with a potential for great accomplishments and with the personal qualities and character requisite for bravery.” He spoke German, Russian, and French, in addition to Swedish and English. His great-great-great grandfather Michael Benedicks was a German Jew who immigrated to Stockholm in 1780, seeking a haven from German anti-Semitism. Benedicks married a Lutheran and converted. Thus, Wallenberg was 1/16<sup>th</sup> Jewish, but this factor did not influence nor affect his later mission to Budapest.

Upon his arrival in Budapest, Raoul Wallenberg immediately set up a rescue division at the Swedish legation. He hired a staff of mostly Jews, persuading the authorities that those working for him should not need to wear the conspicuous yellow Star of David. Each day he delivered food to the ghetto. Sleeping only about four hours a night, he inspired all those around him. His first order of business was to create the *Schutz-pass*, a protective pass that resembled a passport. Although the Hungarian government gave him

permission to issue 1,500 of these, he eventually increased the number to 5,000. When it was impossible to issue *passports* at railway deportation stations, Wallenberg accepted various dubious receipts as proof that the individuals had been registered. Some of the receipts that the terrified Jews produced were from cobblers or represented utility payments – they nevertheless worked. Some commentators have stated that Wallenberg's greatest achievement in Hungary was getting the international community to follow his lead in producing passports and organizing food sources. Additionally, the Hungarian Jewish youth movement was able to produce thousands of bogus documents to enable Jews to escape or avoid detection.

Wallenberg demonstrated incredible courage and often placed his own life in danger. On one occasion Wallenberg encountered a train about to depart for Auschwitz. Climbing upon the roof of the train, he began passing out *schutz-passes* to those inside, simultaneously requesting that they join the waiting caravan of automobiles bearing the Swedish flag. Actions such as this were often accomplished in minutes, leaving the Nazi functionaries bewildered, yet respectful of the official documents and bureaucratic procedures.

In the meanwhile, the United States, Britain, Sweden, the Pope, and the International Red Cross demanded that the Hungarian leader Admiral Horthy end the deportations, which he did. Miklos Horthy was searching for a way to extricate Hungary from its alliance with Germany. On the very day he planned to announce Hungary's surrender to the Allied (October 15, 1944), the Hungarian Nazi Party, the dreaded Arrow Cross, seized power. More violence was perpetrated against the Jews, and Wallenberg now doubted he would get home soon. In a December 8<sup>th</sup> letter to his mother, Wallenberg lamented that he realized that it would be impossible for him to get home for Christmas. His official memorandum dated October 22 reports that the situation regarding the Hungarian Jews "deteriorated considerably" since his last memorandum just ten days earlier on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

On November 8, 1944 Eichmann instituted the forced death marches that took the Jews from the capital city to Hungary's western border at Hegyeshalom, where they would be taken by train to Auschwitz. In sleet, snow, and slush, the marchers were pressed onward. Many died or committed suicide en route. Seventeen-year old Miriam Herzog remembered Wallenberg at that border. When he entered a hut there he announced "I want to save you all." At other times he announced he wished to save the young, as he wished to save a nation. [Literature and vignettes concerning those who were saved by Wallenberg appear in Module 4.]

There were rescuers who sheltered a Jew for a night, or hid several persons for many months. Some hidden children were relocated to areas considered safer. Many of those rescued by Wallenberg continue to tell their stories over and over again. In a world needing role models for humanitarian action, his exemplary efforts provide a positive learning basis for educational programs in schools and colleges. In the book published in conjunction with the release of the film "The Last Days", Congressman Tom Lantos

offers the following thought: “There is no doubt in my mind that Wallenberg was the ultimate humanitarian hero of the Second World War. In the same paragraph Lantos adds: “There is nothing that any university could teach our children that is as important as Raoul Wallenberg’s lesson, that we are all our brothers’ keepers.” (Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, pp 176-177.)

Many of those who were children or teenagers in 1944 owe their lives to Wallenberg. In Module 4 the accounts of several who came to the United States will be provided. Other Hungarian Holocaust survivors are remembered in books and articles that will be made available for perusal throughout that module. [Included in section 4 of Module 2 are testimonies that were presented to the Congress of the United States on the occasion of Wallenberg’s elevation to “Honorary Citizen” status in 1981.

By the end of December, the Soviets were about to reach the city limits of Budapest. (Areas in Hungary to the east had been liberated earlier.) Wallenberg was now a wanted man. Sleeping in different places every night and changing cars and license plates, he continued to save lives. Per Anger, Wallenberg’s Swedish diplomat colleague in Budapest, has written concerning the terror of the time, the exploding bombs, the dead in the street, and the falling debris—all these dangers that did not stop Wallenberg. Wallenberg told Per Anger “I have taken upon myself this mission and I would never be able to return to Stockholm without knowing that I have done everything that stands in a man’s power to rescue as many Jews as possible.” (Nicholson and Winner, p, 49.)

In January 1945 the Soviets arrived in Budapest, liberating sections of the city at various times. Anxious to tell the Soviets of his plans to help the Jews after the war and to explain his ideas to assist in the reconstruction of Hungary, Wallenberg was taken to see Marshall Malinovsky in Debrecen, not knowing if he were going as a guest or a prisoner. Wallenberg and his driver Vilmos Langerfelder climbed into a waiting car, with a briefcase presumably filled with money and documents. He bid farewell to a friend and was never again seen in the West – - his ultimate fate shrouded in mystery to this day. The Soviets maintain he died in prison in 1947, despite numerous contradictory reports from individuals who say they were with Wallenberg in prison at a later date.

Within less than a year of occupation by the Germans in 1944, over 70% of the Jews of Greater Hungary had been deported, were murdered, or died. In the six months he was on his humanitarian mission in Budapest on behalf of the United States War Refugee Board, he saved tens of thousands of Jews.

Raoul Wallenberg had packed a lifetime’s experience into his six months in Hungary and like a modern-day Daniel, he had reached into the lion’s den to rescue the lost. For a time, it seemed as though he could walk on water protected by some unseen guardian angel.... Although he didn’t realize it, time had run out for Raoul Wallenberg.” (Smith, p. 122.)

What is certain is that the courage and compassion Wallenberg demonstrated in his rescue mission remain “one of the most extraordinary acts of the twentieth century”. (Nicholson and Winner, p 58.)

Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel was moved to say, “Wallenberg will never be forgotten in the annuals of Israel.... We shall hand this memory down to our descendents to the generations yet to come, to be cherished always.” Simon Wiesenthal has reminded us that in our efforts to create a better world, that he does not “know anybody better than Raoul Wallenberg to be presented as a model for young people.”

As we search for educational materials appropriate for K-12 classrooms that can encourage students to explore the difference between the celebrity and the hero, the curriculum developed by the Raoul Wallenberg Association of the United States can be used to recognize compassionate and non-violent heroes such as Wallenberg, whose story will continue to inspire us. These materials can help insure that Wallenberg’s “heroic humanitarianism will remain and inspiration for generations to come.”

## **Part 2 *Study of Heroes* Curriculum – Raoul Wallenberg: A Hero Making a Difference**

Students in the course #646 Multicultural and International Literature for Children and Young Adults examine the entire curriculum kit *A Study of Heroes* housed in the Duquesne University Library prior to the class meeting. In class students examine in detail copies of the 66 page unit entitled *A Hero Making a Difference: Raoul Wallenberg* that is part of a larger curriculum featuring twenty-one other commendable heroes such as Mother Theresa, Pope John XXII, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

The program on Wallenberg contains instructional materials designated for three separate groups Level I, ages 5-9; Level II, ages 9-11; and Level III, ages 11 and older. Following careful examination of each of these levels, students view seven-minute video that shows how the units on heroes have been used in selected schools in the United States.

Other materials relating to the Raoul Wallenberg Association are presented in this segment of Module 2. Some of these are:

- The Mission Statement of the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States
- The Accomplishments of the Committee
- The Rationale for the *Study of Heroes* curriculum
- Raoul Wallenberg Award Designees

## Raoul Wallenberg Associations around the world

Class members discuss the ways in which they might present information on Raoul Wallenberg to students at various grade levels. In groups of three, university students offer ten comments at the conclusion of Part 2 that will reveal to other class members what their thinking about planning interdisciplinary lessons on the Holocaust in Hungary is.

### **Part 3 Letters and Reports Written by Wallenberg**

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The third portion of Module 2 includes a sample materials taken from the volume entitled *Letters and Dispatches, 1924-1944/ Raoul Wallenberg* published in 1995. Selections include letters to his grandfather from the University of Michigan, dispatches from Budapest from July-December 1944, and letters to his mother and sister. A photocopy of the Afterward of the book written by Rachel Oestreicher Haspel, President of the Raoul Wallenberg Association of the United States, is provided in this segment.

Background information on the compilation of Wallenberg's papers is provided in the Introduction, written by his cousins. Other interesting details of Wallenberg's work in Budapest are contained in Per Anger's introductory remarks to the dispatches. The instructor briefly summarizes this material and invites questions on any aspects.

### **Part 4 Remembering and Commemorating Wallenberg**

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The legacy of Wallenberg is recorded in the final portion of Module 2. Realia and other resources are displayed on posters. Among the various items in this section are the following:

- Photographs of Commemorative Statues
- Stamps from Israel, Sweden, Hungary and the United States (the 1999 Argentina issue is lacking)
- Listing of Raoul Wallenberg Days
- Educational Facilities Bearing Wallenberg's name
- Honors Bestowed on Raoul Wallenberg
- Selections from Internet Sites Relating to Wallenberg
- University of Uppsala / The Raoul Wallenberg Project Interviews
- Other Materials

In 1999 we reflect on the fifty- four years that have passed since Raoul Wallenberg, a visionary for peace and justice, disappeared. His mother, who died in 1979, never gave

up hope that he would be found alive. A decade later, in 1989, as the Soviet world crumbled, Wallenberg's passport and personal effects were returned to his sister Nina and his brother Guy. In October 1944 he had written these words to his mother:

I really thought I would be with you for Christmas. Now I must send you my best wishes for Christmas by this means, along with my wishes for the New Year. I hope the peace so longed for is no longer so far away....

In a handwritten note in Swedish at the end he penned "Lots of kisses to Nina and her little girl."

Today Nina's little girl whom he never saw is the wife of Koffi Annan, the Secretary – General of the United Nations. Nane and her husband are frequently photographed as they attend functions honoring Nane's uncle. The search of peace and justice Raoul Wallenberg began more than half a century ago continues today as we enter a new millenium. Wallenberg, the great Swedish humanitarian, my be gone but the good work that he did in the world will continue to shine with brilliance and be a beacon of hope and focus for moral courage and leadership in the future.

At the conclusion of the four sections of Module 2, the student teachers are asked to identify resources that will be most helpful to them in the development of a lesson on the Holocaust in Hungary and to indicate categories and themes they would like to research

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