

## The Wallenbergs: Beacons in the Dark

Larry Pfeffer, Jerusalem Working Group  
lpfeffer@actcom.co.il

... בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך ...

... with your whole heart, your whole soul and your whole being ...  
(From Shema Israel, one of Judaism's central prayers)

Raoul Wallenberg was abducted by the Russians on January 17, 1945 and disappeared to join the many millions who were swallowed by the International Gulag. It is tragic and thought provoking that Wallenberg, who rescued so many from the Nazi, Fascist and other anti-semitic murderers, could not be rescued from the rulers of the Gulag.

Remembrances are held around the world on January 17 to remember Raoul Wallenberg and since 2005 "International Rescuer Day" events take place on this day in Jerusalem, North America, Europe and the Far-East and hopefully other countries/cities will join. On this day we remember and are inspired by Raoul Wallenberg and the other "Wallenbergs" who were daring, creative and deeply humane individualists. They gave their whole heart and whole soul and whole being to one overriding cause: to save as many Jews from the murderers as possible. Their activism resulted in rescue of large number of Jews – especially in Hungary.

The Wallenbergs are no longer alive. We can sustain their spirit by remembering that during Europe's twentieth century extremely brutal and inhumane Dark Age there were a few brilliant lights who were able to pierce the darkness and snatched large number of Jews from the hands of the murderers. We can also keep the Wallenbergs' spirit alive by challenging ourselves, especially youth, to internalize the values of these exemplary individuals and should the need arise be inspired by them to act in a similar manner if needed - not only in large scale catastrophes like the Holocaust or the International Gulag, but also in current social crisis near us and around the world.

Among the Wallenbergs we especially remember Raoul Wallenberg, Carl Lutz, Aristides de Sousa Mendes and others like them, including great Jewish rescuers such as

- Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl, Gisi Fleischmann and others in the *Bratislava Working Group*
- Hillel Kook and his *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe* in the USA
- George Mantello (Mandel Gyorgy) in Switzerland
- Recha Sternbuch in Switzerland, and
- Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld in England

It is important to clearly state that it is unlikely that the Wallenberg and other important rescue initiatives, especially in Hungary, would have taken place without the activism of Hillel Kook's group, the Bratislava Working Group, George Mantello and the massive mid-1944 Swiss people's grass roots protests.

"International Rescuer Day" events are inclusive; they include all the major Holocaust era rescuers, Jews and non-Jews alike.

We are inspired by the Wallenbergs and say *Yechi Zichram Baruch* - Let Their Memory Be Blessed.