In 1939, the Nazis started expanding into the greater part of Europe. The Allies began to unite, and Sweden pronounced itself as a neutral nation. The signs of war were beginning to rage through Europe, and the situation for the Jews was becoming desperate. In 1944, Raoul Wallenberg began to get involved. He knew how unjust the inhumanity of the Nazis was, and remembered the stories of the Jews from Haifa. In Hungary, he began to issue his Schutz Passes, fake identification papers that stated that the person possessing them was under the protection of the Swedish government and could not be harmed. In this way, Wallenberg used the Nazis’ love of paperwork and order as a manner of saving more Jews. By the end of the war he had issued about 15,000 passes and saved 15,000 lives with the Schutz Passes alone.

In July 1944, Wallenberg began to acknowledge that Schutz Passes could not save all the Jews in Hungary. So he created Swedish Safe Havens. These were special havens that offered shelter for Hungarian Jews and were protected by the Swedish flag.

In December of 1944, Wallenberg learned that 70,000 Jews in the Budapest Central Ghetto were going to be slaughtered. He sent a message to General August Schmidhuber (the only person who could stop the massacre) stating that if the carnage happened he would make sure that Schmidhuber was tried for war crimes at the end of the war. This frightened the general, so the mass execution was cancelled and 70,000 Jews were saved within a few weeks.

The Hungarian Arrow Cross (the Hungarian Nazi organization) was formed in 1944. They caused as much terror as German Nazis and deported over 400,000 Jews to concentration camps. Wallenberg could not stand by and watch this happen. Using bribery and threats, he saved over 100,000 people from the terror of the Hungarian Arrow Cross.

On January 17, 1945, Wallenberg disappeared. He had been going to visit the Soviet Military Headquarters, but he and his driver, Vilmos Langfelder, never returned. The Soviets claim that Wallenberg died of a heart attack in 1947, even though prison sightings provide evidence to the contrary.

In 1959, the Nazis started expanding into the greater part of Europe. The Allies began to unite, and Sweden pronounced itself as a neutral nation. The signs of war were beginning to rage through Europe, and the situation for the Jews was becoming desperate. In 1944, Raoul Wallenberg began to get involved. He knew how unjust the inhumanity of the Nazis was, and remembered the stories of the Jews from Haifa. In Hungary, he began to issue his Schutz Passes, fake identification papers that stated that the person possessing them was under the protection of the Swedish government and could not be harmed. In this way, Wallenberg used the Nazis’ love of paperwork and order as a manner of saving more Jews. By the end of the war he had issued about 15,000 passes and saved 15,000 lives with the Schutz Passes alone.

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From the 1940s until as late as 1972, there were many prison sightings of Wallenberg, but it could never be proved that it had been Wallenberg who had actually been sighted.

In 1966, Raoul Wallenberg was honored with the title “Righteous Among the Nations.” This honor is reserved for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Today, Yad Vashem in Israel recognizes more than 20,000 people as “Righteous.”

In 1981, Wallenberg became the third individual to become an Honorary U.S. Citizen, along with Marquis de Lafayette and Winston Churchill.

And that is the end of Raoul Wallenberg’s story. But we are all left to wonder; is he dead or alive? Were the Soviets telling the truth, or lying? The questions go on and on. We will never know the answers to most of them. But whatever the answers of the questions may be, Wallenberg is still on our minds.

1. This entry for “Studying the Holocaust: Resistance, Rescue and Survivors” was written by students such as you. Choose an issue/event being covered in the news and over the next few weeks, search for articles about your selected issue. Try to get as much information as you can about the people, country, culture, etc. Then, using today’s entry as a guide, write your own article that would help other students understand the issue/event.

2. As a class, discuss what kind of character traits Raoul Wallenberg must have possessed in order to do what he did for the Jewish population. Look for articles in today’s Seattle Times that highlight people who demonstrate similar traits. Which ones do you possess? Which ones would you like to possess and why?