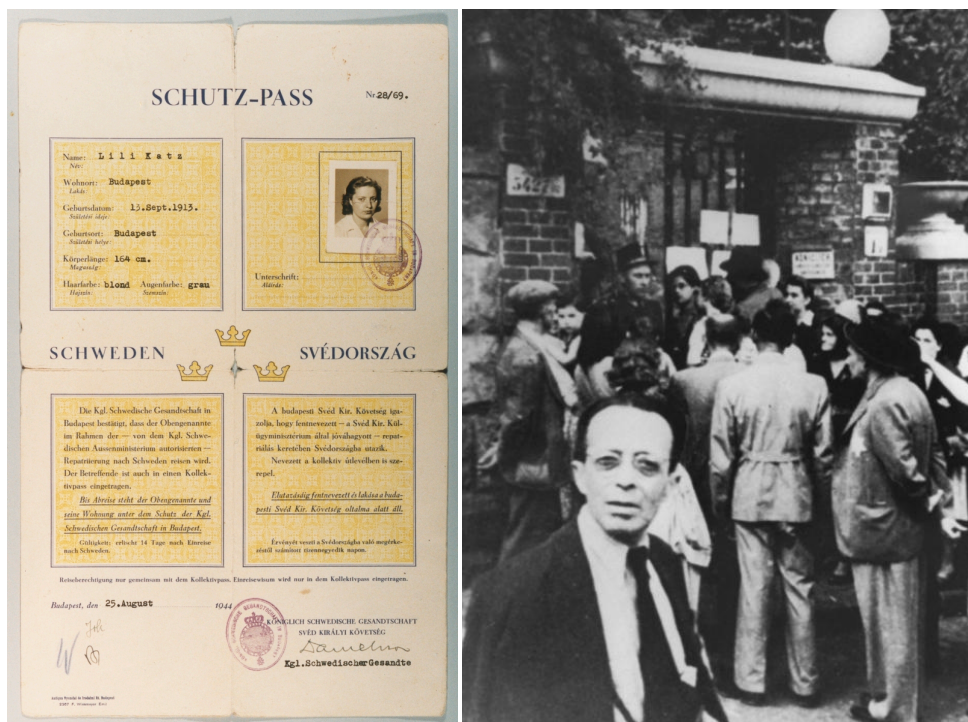


Raoul Wallenberg and the Rescue of Jews in Budapest (1944)

Abstract

Raoul Wallenberg (1912–1947, exact date of death unknown) was a Swedish diplomat. After 1943, it became clear with each successive defeat and setback on the Eastern Front that Germany was not going to win the Second World War. Hungary, a willing ally, grew tired of the unequal partnership that had developed with Hitler’s regime over the course of the war. When the Nazi regime sensed Hungary’s wavering support, a coup was staged in March 1944, a more supportive government was established, and Hungary’s fascist party, the Arrow Cross, was legalized. Over the summer at least 440,000 Hungarian Jews were deported and murdered, most at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Adolf Eichmann played a leading role coordinating the round-up and expulsions, though Hungarian officials carried out the deportations. Sweden, a declared neutral state, saw an opportunity to intervene on behalf of Budapest’s Jews and sent Wallenberg to the Hungarian capital. In partnership with the War Refugee Board and the Red Cross, Wallenberg arrived in July 1944 and arranged for the creation and distribution of “protective passports” [Schutzpässe] to a number of Budapest’s Jews. These passports, such as the one here belonging to Lili Katz, placed their holders under the protection of the Swedish state. The Swiss and Papal envoys issued similar documents. In general, Nazi and Hungarian authorities respected these passports even when they were convinced of the holder’s status as a Hungarian Jew. Thousands of Jews lined up, as shown in the second image, to receive this documentation. With these passports, a Jew and his or her family could find safe haven from Hungarian fascists and Nazi authorities in one of the thirty safe houses established by the Swedish envoy. Over twenty thousand of Budapest’s Jews were saved in this manner.

Source



Source: A letter of protection (Schutzpass), issued by the Swedish legation in Budapest, to the

Hungarian Jew Lili Katz. The document bears the initial W for Wallenberg in the bottom left corner. August 25, 1944. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Lena Kurtz Deutsch.

Recommended Citation: Raoul Wallenberg and the Rescue of Jews in Budapest (1944), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:image-5216>> [May 17, 2024].