

Wallenberg's Personal Diary

Early June 1945. Stockholm Sweden (recovered Wallenberg Diary)

I am Raoul Wallenberg, 32 years of age and I am leaving in a few days to Budapest, Hungary to save the Jews. I have accepted this rescue assignment from the US government. This diary is for my personal use and confidential. If something happens to me I ask the finder to deliver it to Lars Berg at the Swedish Embassy in Budapest or return it to my brother Guy Von Dardel in Stockholm Sweden. I know I am headed into danger and may not return.

The "offer" from the US War Refugee Board of their Treasury Department was formally presented to me last night at Bellsmanor Restaurant here in Sweden following several days of discussion. I will have unlimited funds to bribe the Horthy government officials to let the Jews remain in Budapest. My formal post: Secretary of the Legation of Sweden in Budapest, but working undercover directly for the US Government. I am to report directly to Cordell Hull Secretary of State, and to have the first \$100,000 placed on my Stockholm Enskilda Bank account prior to departure. I can request, actually demand more money as needed for the success of my "save the Jews" mission. I hammered out the terms of my agreement last night. Ambassador Pehle, head of the USA War Refugee Board has promised to arrange my rescue when I fall into enemy hands. I do not believe them. But I now have no choice. I have accepted the assignment.

I will work with leaders of the Budapest underground in devising safe house and other schemes for saving the Jews and Gypsies of the city. Those Jews in the countryside have been destroyed, or shipped off to labor camps where they are gassed and die. This is Hitler's final country to dominate. Poland, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the rest of Europe has been conquered and made "Juden frei." (Clean of Jews)

I am 32. I hate standing by and having to watch the suffering and injustice visited on innocent people. No one here in Sweden, including my own family seems to care. They just want to make money. Feed the German war machine. They want to grow the Enskilda family bank with the sale of Swedish ball bearings and steel proceeds.

At age 26 I spent a summer in Haifa working in a Bank, sent there by my grandfather Gustav for "training." That was 1936 and Palestine was becoming a haven for refugees with my lawyer friend Moshe Landau we went in the evening to watch the rusty poor excuse for boats land and off load the poor Jews, with burlap bags, stuffed with their pathetic life possessions on their backs, disembark from ships in Haifa. They were escaping death, Hitler and Europe. They were in rags and hungry. I vowed that day to do something about it. Now is my rare and welcomed chance.

Now it is June 1944 and the situation for the very survival of the Jewish people and their civilization is much worse. Millions have died in the death camps, along the country roads and in large pits in the forests and no one raises a finger or shouts, "This is wrong. Stop it?" I have met three times with Ivar Olsen, the War Refugee Board representative here in Stockholm. We have had several dinners together. He is candid and honest with me. He says that Henry Morgenthau, the Jewish Secretary of Treasury, has pressured and pushed FDR to finally do something about the plight of the Jews in Europe. It is election year in America and FDR wants the Jewish vote in New York City.

This War Refugee Board, as they call the Genocide Prevention Program, should have been formed when the first Jews were taken away in 1933. Or at the latest, in 1938 when "Kristallnacht" first hit Germany with the destruction of the windows of all the Jewish shops. What were the Americans thinking? What were they waiting for?

Two nights ago on June 2, 1944 I was officially selected for this mission. I leave on June 6 stopping in Berlin on my way to Budapest. There I will visit with my uncle, the Swedish Ambassador to Germany. He says he is neutral and above the battle. He has written to my mother Maj to caution me to stay home and not to accept the assignment. His neutrality is a joke. He is the chief merchant, handling the sale of Swedish steel---Wallenberg family steel—to the Germans to make German tanks and parts for airplanes. My highly esteemed Wallenberg family is profiteering from the War!

June 4, 1944, My departure day

My beloved mother Maj and my brother Guy take me to the train station in Stockholm for my departure. I have my old tan raincoat, a knapsack, a change of clothes, and two loaded pistols, which I am taking for my own protection. My mother pleads one last time trying to talk me out of the mission. "Raoul, you are so handsome and so young. Why are you going? Can't you find something here at home? You have so much to live for here. Play polo, go out with your girl friends Viveca and Ingrid. There will be summer parties. You have friends, parties and dances. And you have your favorite ladies. They adore you, two young and beautiful movie starlets Ingrid Bergman and Viveca Lindfors. They are clamoring for your attention. "Aren't they and me and your brother and sister enough for you? Will you leave all this just to go to Budapest and save strangers, and probably get yourself killed?" My mother was prescient and clear. She knew the risk, but she also knew that once I made up my mind I would do it. She cries on my shoulder. I hold her close and comfort her. "Mama, I will be all right. I promise that I will write to you every day. I will not take chances. I promise you I will be home soon, and no later than Christmas. The war will be over. I promise".

June 4, 1944. On the train to Berlin.

I am on my way to Budapest. The train takes me first to Berlin. I have second thoughts about my mission now that I am away from my home and family in neutral Sweden. Soon I will journey into enemy territory in northern Germany. Soldiers will soon take over this train and occupy the cars, drinking and shouting to one another in the rough manner. Some of them will stare at my outfit, the slouch brown hat and the raincoat and ask if I am a war correspondent. But that is later. First stop Berlin where I will be reunited with my sister Nina. I miss her gentle soul. She is like my mother, loyal, kind and caring.

June 5, 1944 Arrival in Berlin.

I am met at the train station by my sister Nina and her husband Nils Lagergren, who is assigned to work at the Swedish Embassy with my Uncle. Nils Lagergren is a lawyer, a stuff shirt who would never risk his life or choose what I am doing. He is stiff, rude and curt, and tries to tell me to have lunch with them and then get back on the train and go home. We have lunch on the Kurfurstendam and then I say goodbye and I walk to the Swedish Embassy, near to the ruins of the Reichstag. I am to be "briefed" by my uncle. I hate him. I hate what he is

doing. He is helping the German war effort, up to his greedy armpits in war profits. That's why the Nazis tolerate him here.

I want to meet with him anyway. I can glean from him real news on how the war is going. I know the Germans are now suffering terrible losses in Russia and in France, and now are losing. I still want details on their operations in Budapest, and whether the Germans might be pulling out soon or entrenching. My uncle is on the inside, a favorite of the Germans. He has no scruples. Money, profit and parties are everything for him. He also hates the Jews.

June 5, 1945. Afternoon, With my Uncle in Berlin

I enter the ivory white high ceiling ornate Swedish Embassy office at 3PM. He leaves me waiting, cooling my heels for a full half hour for no reason. He wants to show his colleagues who is boss, and that I am just a nephew; a person of little importance. He is fully aware that I want to take the night train to Budapest to start my work. I finally am ushered into his office at 3:45. He makes all kinds of excuses for the delay, asking, "how is your Mom? And your brother and sister." Immediately he barrages me with questions; "Why are you going, what do you hope to accomplish? Are you to be the savior of the Jews?" He sneers at me, "Why don't you turn around and go home. This is not a game. It is being played on the bigger stage of life or death!"

I tell him that I am fully aware of the danger, and that "I plan to return home by Christmas with the War over. It matters. I have something I must do. These are innocent people who have done no harm. They deserve their life," We argue back and forth, trading invectives. After fifteen minutes of locking horns I storm out. I do not have time to waste debating the issues. I am leaving tonight for Budapest. He is part of the enemy.

June 7, 1944, Budapest Station

The train rattles on through the night. I see the lights of little towns, sleepy villages, huge fields of wheat, passing thru one sign says "City of Debrecen, 70 miles to Budapest." I open the paper map. I am sitting in the aisle outside the passenger cabin. I have taken an earlier train. No reservation. No seats left. I put my finger on Debrecen and trace my finger down the paper southeast to Budapest, the city on two sides of the Danube. I check my knapsack. Two pistols and a raincoat.

We arrive in the early morning before dawn, at the station at 6AM. There are large yellow boxcars on the next track. I can distinctly hear the moaning and crying of people locked inside. Little children are screaming. Hands and fingers are thrust thru the slats of the boxcars, dropping paper notes down thru the slats to the ground. I get off and run over towards the departing train gather the scraps. "Remember me," one says. I am Lena Goldsmith. I live with my children and husband at Number 10 Alloi St. My children are with me. I do not know where is my husband. If you find him send him here. I need him."

These pathetic brief, hurriedly written scraps of paper, hand written victim notes make me sick in my stomach. Innocent families being pulled apart. One day living as a family, children coming home from school and playing in the back yard, living on a quiet street. Daddy going to work and coming home to read an evening paper. Mother cleaning the kitchen and preparing dinner. The next day the family pulled apart, some going to Oswiecism (Auschwitz) others to Dachau for "medical experiments". No explanation.

I have no time to waste. I must get to the Embassy and start my work. I hail a cab and am taken across the bridge over the Danube and from Buda up to Pest where I meet my new diplomatic team. Lars Berg is there along with several others. I have known Lars from before, at school. He will be my guide in these first few days.

