

## The Unveiling of the Raoul Wallenberg Gold Medal Design

**Washington, D.C.** - On Thursday, May 9, The United States Mint unveiled the design of the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal in the presence of their Majesties King Carl XVI and Queen Silvia of Sweden. This event was hosted by The Honorable Jacob L. Lew, Secretary of the United States Treasury. The Congressional Gold Medal recognizes the achievements and heroic actions of Raoul Wallenberg during the waning days of the Holocaust.

Congressman Gregory Meeks of New York, the original sponsor of the Wallenberg Gold Medal Legislation, in his opening remarks, attributed the efforts of Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group, who spearheaded the effort to recognize the heroism of Wallenberg through the creation of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Commission, established in honor of the centennial of Wallenberg's birth, to the driving force behind awarding Raoul Wallenberg with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Born in Sweden, Raoul Wallenberg graduated from the University of Michigan and returned to Sweden where he became a businessman and then, to provide cover for his rescue efforts, became a Swedish



L-R, front row: Stanley Treitel; Robert Rechnitz; Ezzy Rappaport; Rabbi Ellie Abadie; William Nussen; Ezra Friedlander; Leon Goldenberg; Congressman Gregory Meeks; Allen Gross; Joseph Stamm, and Meir Laufer.  
L-R, back row: Michael Treitel; Eliot Klein; Steve Grauer; Peter Rebenwurzel, Chairman.

Inset: Unveiling of the design of the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal (L-R): Jacob J. Lew, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, with His Majesty King Carl XVI of Sweden.

diplomat. Wallenberg is credited with saving 100,000 lives primarily through the issuance of the schutz-pass. This document, which was respected by the Nazis, conferred official Swedish protection on the bearer and was handed out to desperate Hungarian Jews. Wallenberg also prevented the liquidation of the Budapest ghetto by threatening the German general that

he would be brought up on war crimes if he allowed the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz, a ploy that was successful.

At the unveiling ceremony, Secretary Lew stated, "The War Refugee Board was commissioned two floors above where we stand today, here in the Cash room." The War Refugee Board was critical to the success of saving over 100,000 Jews from per-

secution, especially in Hungary. It was this board that gave Wallenberg authority to commit to a plan of action that would save the lives of many people.

The United States Mint worked closely with the Wallenberg Commission, which was dedicated as the liaison to the Mint on the design of the medal.

As prepared by the U.S.

Treasury the medal features a portrait of Wallenberg, depicting him as he is last remembered, with the inscriptions: **RAOUL WALLENBERG, ACT OF CONGRESS 2012** and **HERO OF HEROES**. The "tails" side features Wallenberg presenting the schutz-passes and a view of those bound for a concentration camp. The inscriptions, reading **HE LIVES ON FOREVER THROUGH THOSE HE SAVED** around the upper border and **ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE**, were inspired by Peter Rebenwurzel, Chairman of the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission, who is a Hungarian-born child of Holocaust survivors. His father, z"l, worked with Wallenberg to provide food and provisions to residents of the Budapest ghetto, and his father in-law was saved by Wallenberg.

Many of the people Wallenberg saved have been influential citizens contributing to American institutions and culture, including Congressman Tom Lantos (February 1, 1928–February 11, 2008) and the Liska Rebbe, Rabbi Yoizef (Joseph) Friedlander, who transported the Liska Chassidic dynasty from Hungary to the United States after being saved by Raoul Wallenberg.

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