

The International Ghetto in Budapest

Professor Tim Cole, University of Bristol, UK

This paper seeks to place Raoul Wallenberg's rescue work within the broader geographies of rescue in Budapest in the second half of 1944. In particular it examines how Wallenberg and colleagues brought, in a sense, a little bit of Sweden to the streets of Pest, in the shape of the so-called International Ghetto in November 1944 that housed Jews protected by a number of different neutral powers. The paper explores the complex development of separate housing of Jews holding protective paperwork, that seems – in part at least – to have been a result of the authorities concerns about the proliferation of this paperwork. Shifting protection from paperwork alone to buildings saw a degree of extra-territoriality (in principle at least) being applied to apartment buildings in the Újlipótváros section of the city. Just why it was this neighbourhood of all those in the city that was chosen raises the question of how representative protected Jews were of the city's close to 200,000 Jews. Throughout, the paper seeks to situate Wallenberg as a man operating in a particular time (1944-45) and a particular place (Budapest) which both constrained and shaped what he, like any other historical actor, achieved.