Wallenberg Memorial Unveiled in Slovakia

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Bratislava - The unveiling of a memorial to the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg took place on 11 November 2004 in the Zamocka utca, at the foot of the Castle Hill, Bratislava. The sculptor Klement Trisuliak"s monument depicts a broken wall with metal work showing a burning building and its frightened inhabitants. Raoul Wallenberg, the courageous Swedish diplomat then serving in Budapest, saved tens of thousands of Jewish men and women at the time of the country"s Nazi occupation. Many of those had been transported to Budapest from Bratislava and other places in Slovakia.

The project has been an initiative of the Slovakian Council of Christians and Jews, whose Patron is Pavol Hrusovsky, President of Parliament, and its chairperson Stefania Salisová. Also present at the festive event were Slovakian EU Commissioner Ján Figel and the Mayor of Bratislava as well as diplomatic representatives from Sweden, Austria, Germany and Hungary. Markus Himmelbauer, General Secretary of the Austrian Coordinating Committee for Christian-Jewish Cooperation brought greetings from the International Council of Christians and Jews.

Raoul Wallenberg came to Budapest on 9 July 1944. Since April 1944 more than 400,000 Jews from the Hungarian Provinces had been deported to Auschwitz. Only in Budapest some 200,000 Jews were still left. The situation deteriorated dramatically after the establishment of the fascist Pfeilkreuzler government in October 1944. Through the issuing of Swedish protective passports, Wallenberg saved thousands from deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau and death marches to

Austria - and therefore from certain death. Other diplomats did likewise. When Budapest was liberated in February 1945 by the Russians, there were still more than 100,000 Jews in the city, thanks to these life saving activities.

In January 1945 Raoul Wallenberg was abducted by the Russians. His fate could never be discovered. Only in 1993 Russian authorities confirmed that he had been deported by the Soviet secret service and died in 1947.

Wallenberg was one of the first to be named by Yad Vashem as one of the Righteous among the Gentiles.

Translation: Ruth Weyl

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