

Raoul Wallenberg in Israel recovered memory and mediocre commemoration

Nadav Kaplan & Barry Schwartz

To cite this article: Nadav Kaplan & Barry Schwartz (2022): Raoul Wallenberg in Israel recovered memory and mediocre commemoration, Holocaust Studies, DOI: [10.1080/17504902.2022.2028433](https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2028433)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2022.2028433>



Published online: 22 Jan 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Raoul Wallenberg in Israel recovered memory and mediocre commemoration

Nadav Kaplan^a and Barry Schwartz^b

^aUniversity of Haifa, Haifa, Israel; ^bUniversity of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, USA

ABSTRACT

Many Historical events and persons have been forgotten for decades, centuries, even millennia before recovery. Until the 1980s, Raoul Wallenberg's efforts to rescue the Jews of Budapest from Nazi atrocities were rarely commemorated, even obscured, and largely forgotten, whether in Hungary, his home country of Sweden, or in Israel, where many of the people he rescued lived. This essay explores how political and social shifts enabled belated recognition of Wallenberg's deeds in Israel, primarily through the efforts of local agents working from below, with implications for understanding how historical memory is belatedly recovered more generally.

KEYWORDS

Raoul Wallenberg; Holocaust in Hungary; commemoration

Introduction

Throughout World War II, Sweden cooperated with the American Office of Special Services (OSS) and the newly formed War Refugee Board (WRB) to rescue the victims of Nazi oppression. Yet both the Swedish government and many of its private concerns conducted business with the Nazi regime, among them Sweden's wealthiest industrialist family the Wallenbergs. Ironically, that same family produced the most famous Swede to defy the Nazi death machine.

In the beginning of 1944, the American government conceived and financed a rescue mission (called War Refugee Board – WRB) to save as many Jewish lives as possible, an operation sponsored by the neutral Swedish government as well. Herschel Johnson, the American Ambassador to Sweden, and OSS agent Iver Olsen (who served also as the WRB's representative in Sweden), asked Raoul Wallenberg to assume the guise of a diplomat in Nazi occupied Budapest to direct the operation.¹ Wallenberg saved the lives of thousands by distributing *Schutzpassen*, documents that identified Hungarian Jewish carriers as Swedish citizens, shielding them from arrest, deportation, murder. While diplomats from other neutral countries also engaged in rescue efforts from the safety of their offices, Wallenberg took his mission to the streets, confronting the Hungarian Gendarmerie and Arrow Cross fascists, and the SS, face-to-face, jeopardizing his life daily. Survivors describe Wallenberg preventing shootings and train deportations, death marches towards the Austrian border, and harboring Jews in buildings. Many testify to

Wallenberg standing alone against armed troops, screaming at Nazis and Hungarian Gendarmerie, issuing documents on the spot, and demanding they free all ‘Swedish citizens.’

In January 1945, Wallenberg set out to meet commanders of the Red Army laying siege to Budapest. He and his driver, Vilmos Langfelder, were arrested and imprisoned in Russia. Their ultimate fate remains unknown. Following Swedish inquiries, the Soviet government finally announced in 1957 that Wallenberg had died of a heart attack in prison ten years earlier, at age 35. Since then, witnesses have provided conflicting accounts of his fate, but none of these accounts is verified.² Yet the near certainty of Wallenberg’s death in Soviet captivity amplified his deeds in the Western imagination.

One would expect Wallenberg to be acknowledged as a national hero in Sweden and recognized in Hungary. In a previous study (2017), I the first author demonstrated that both states refused to commemorate Wallenberg for almost five decades. Only from the 1990s forward have they done so. One would also expect his commemoration in Israel, a Jewish state and home to several hundred thousand Holocaust survivors, including many whom Wallenberg rescued and their descendants. Yet, as with Wallenberg’s native country and the one in which he demonstrated such heroism, his legacy has been far from straightforward. This essay analyzes the reasons that more than three decades passed before Wallenberg’s exploits were absorbed into Israeli national memory.

Problem

Our objective is to understand how memories of events and persons are recovered after long periods of obscurity. To this end, we describe the history, commemoration, and memory of Wallenberg in Israel from 1945 to 2019. We ask four questions: first, what are the distinctive features of Wallenberg’s recovered memory? The second question involves the political and social conditions underlying his years of public obscurity, surge of renown, then decline. Thirdly, we try to determine why *state* and *local* agents commemorated Wallenberg in different ways. Namely, with different volumes of *permanent* objects and *temporary* observances. Fourthly, and finally, we show what the Wallenberg case adds to our general knowledge of recovered memory and its commemoration. The four questions above will emphasize that the key argument of this paper is to address the question of Wallenberg’s commemoration in Israel.

No figure provides more initial insight into the question of why Wallenberg was initially ignored, only to be commemorated decades later, than Bernard Lewis. His notion of recovered *history* concerns collectively ‘forgotten’ for millennia, then recovered in response to a social predicament of some kind. In Lewis’ words:

Recovered history is the history of events and movements, of persons and ideas, that have been forgotten, that is to say, at some stage or for some reason rejected by the communal memory, and then, after a longer or shorter interval, recovered by academic scholarship—by the study of records, the excavation of buried cities, the decipherment of forgotten scripts and languages, and the consequent reconstruction of a forgotten past.³

Lewis’ definition implies a distinction between *discovered history*, the disclosing of events, usually through archeological research, never before known to exist, and *recovered history*, disseminated by commemorative agents whose numbers are few and labor unknown until they prove relevant to efforts to solve some immediate problem or concern.

In *History Discovered, Invented, and Recovered* (1987), Lewis discusses the recovery of two ancient events. In 1971, Shah Pahlavi marked the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of Persia and the monarchy of Cyrus the Great. He used the occasion to assert shared lineage between Cyrus and himself and to position Cyrus's monarchy as the model for his own.⁴ Lewis' second case, the defense and fall of Masada, occurred during the Jewish revolt against Rome in 73 CE. After 2,000 years of oblivion, this event came to light in the form of a poem written by Yitzhak Lamdan between 1923 and 1926. Lamdan saw in Masada a metaphor for the contemporary economic downturn, despair, and depopulation of Jewish Palestine.⁵ His readers, however, had to take his word for the motives and moods of Masada's defenders.⁶

Lewis' achievement was to problematize recovered history. He was unconcerned with the details of how Masada and Cyrus were recovered after thousands of years and why this recovery occurred when it did. He never demonstrated the distinctive features of Masada and Cyrus as historical realities and never qualified his assertions about academic scholarship's unique role in the recovery process or generalized his findings beyond his own field of Middle Eastern history. That some bodies of evidence are known about but never found escaped his notice, as did evidence found but barely known.⁷ Additionally, Lewis' conclusions are limited, based on two cases among many. Nevertheless, *History Recovered* is important not only for illuminating Wallenberg's unique reception in Israel, but also for its elucidation of the connections between history, commemoration, and collective memory.

To say that Wallenberg's deeds were 'recovered' in Israel many years after his arrest in 1945 means, in effect, that state, local officials, and ordinary citizens organized commemorative occasions, created commemorative, plaques, placenames etc. in his honor. As Wallenberg began to occupy a place in Israeli minds and emotions, his memory became an object of identification and inspiration, a model to admire and emulate, for many Israelis. The problem, however, is why a Jewish nation took so long to remember him, why that memory was recovered during one particular decade of the late twentieth century, how this recovery happened, and why it failed to be sustained as well as it had been elsewhere.

History commemorated and remembered

History, commemoration, and collective memory are conceptual tools that enable us to track and understand Wallenberg's changing place in Israeli culture and to relate it to other cases of recovered memory. However, there tensions obtain between them. History, according to French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1980), is an antonym of memory. Memory is a reconstruction of the past to which social experiences of the present contribute. By contrast, history seeks an objective standpoint to assess the causes and consequences of events. It is 'situated external to and above groups' and describes the past independently of contemporary opinions and conditions. According to Halbwachs, once established, historical knowledge remains stable, its stream of facts and demarcations 'fixed once and for all.'

Halbwachs overestimated the accuracy of history, but he correctly observed that a 'forgotten' historical event is not recovered when a particular individual discovers it, but when men and women who know about it are moved to produce memorial objects and rites which install it in the collective memory. French historian Pierre Nora adopts Halbwachs' belief in the fundamental opposition between history and memory,

but without saying much about memory itself conceptualizes its sites. As he defines it, a site of memory – ‘*lieu de mémoire*, is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community’ (Nora 1996: xvii). In other words, *lieux de mémoire* refers to the practices and sites of commemoration.

History and commemoration are the two most immediate sources of collective memory. Historians document the details of historical events and their participants; commemorative agents mobilize symbols to awaken and preserve beliefs and feelings about them. Commemoration, as its etymology testifies, is the act of remembering together. It occurs in every sphere of social life, but its dynamics are most visible in the broadest and most inclusive social realm. Commemoration is society’s moral memory, distinguishing events and persons believed to be deserving of remembrance from those deserving of mere documentation (Schwartz 2015).

However, commemoration is not an irreducible concept, for it consists of different types of mediators. Objects of *permanent* commemoration include monuments, shrines, museums, memorial plaques, statues, busts, renamed streets, parks, forests, bridges, and other entities that occupy spaces visible and accessible to the public. *Temporary* commemoration represents the past through one-time or short-term exposure. It includes exhibits, special issue postage stamps, lectures, conferences, seminars, ceremonial presentation of medals and prizes, and anniversary observances. Public access to these representations is often limited, as they are often located inside buildings and therefore unknown or inaccessible to the public. While some are publicized by the media, they are subsequently replaced by the following day’s events.

Commemorative texts, a third vehicle of commemoration, usually assume the form of newspaper, magazine, and other media accounts of permanent and temporary commemorative media. More permanent is the work of men and women who distinguish historical events and persons through academic works, hagiographies, photo collections, biographies, edited volumes.

The familiar distinction between history *from above* and *from below* accounts for the variety of commemorative subjects and agents. Commemoration from above refers to a perspective that directs the observer’s attention to great men and pivotal events that shape political, economic, and cultural realms for years after these people die and events are forgotten. Elites of governmental, political, business, academic, and cultural bodies sponsor memorial objects that preserve historical turning points. These elites include men and women who occupy influential institutional positions that enable them to determine for contemporaries what is to be remembered and how. Yet these men and women may rank high or low in terms of wealth, income, influence, and status.

The same holds for commemoration from below, also known as *popular commemoration*, which selects ordinary individuals from the historical record who participate in mundane events that draw little attention when viewed separately but may exert strong influence in their assemblage over *la longue durée*. Commemoration from below refers to commemorative efforts of ordinary citizens in local communities or civil society to represent ordinary events and people like themselves. Those who participate in commemoration from below may also be people of various levels of wealth, influence, or prestige. Superintendents of commemoration from below represent their communities and separate themselves ideologically from state elites.

However qualified, the problem with this binary of *above* and *below* is that many sites of memory from below are created by business, political, and other elites. The referents of *above* and *below* are, thus, more synonymous with state and locality.

The third concept, collective memory, stands in contrast to history and commemoration. Unlike history, Halbwachs (1980) believed memory to be infinitely mutable and adaptable, the past assuming new forms as groups and generations transmitting it were replaced by their successors (80-81). Many studies that now claim collective memory as their object are concerned solely with commemoration. The difference is fundamental. Commemoration manifests itself objectively through tangible objects and practices. Collective memory is a constituent of the collective consciousness, an emergent entity derived from an aggregation of *subjective* states. The analysis of these states, usually by sample survey, starts with a distribution of what different *individuals* know, believe, and feel about past events and their men, how they judge them morally, and the extent to which they identify with them and use them as models for their own thought and conduct.⁸ Our evidence on collective memory, as will be shown, includes no such subjective data. Yet, our indirect evidence, those *changes* in commemorative activity, is an objective and plausible index of collective *changes* in subjective beliefs, sentiments, and moral judgments.

Method

The absence of an independent measure of collective memory is a serious complication, but not a fatal one. Authors, artists, and organizers of exhibitions, rituals, and ceremonial gatherings may be creative men and women, but they are not free to create whatever they please. Rather, they are motivated to produce objects that conform to their readers' and viewers' preferences. Even when they shape them, they are informed by them. Moreover, commemorators of the past and their objects are usually members of the same society. Whether the object of memory is a person deemed heroic or villainous, these writers, artists, and organizers typically wish to convince the public to conceive that person as they do (Griswold 1987; Thompson 1993).

Since the main objective of this study is to address the question of Wallenberg's commemoration in Israel, it's essential to analyze it as a tangible phenomenon. Initially, this will be done through a quantitative breakdown of all commemorative data. When one observes a significant increase or decrease in the number or type of commemorative events or objects, one can infer a corresponding change in subjective admiration, indifference, or disapproval. On the other hand, this correspondence between intent and reception is rarely perfect and gauging it is an empirical challenge. Qualitative reflections will be based on an analysis of the following crucial parameters of each commemorative item: (1) their authors, artists, agents, and, where possible, the motivations driving each; (2) the content and meaning of their products, and (3) the organizational source and geographic location of the historical and commemorative sites. Analysis requires moving back and forth between historical and commemorative statements and the political-social-historical contexts in which they appeared.

Our research on Wallenberg's commemorative network relies on several kinds of documentation. The first author assembled all permanent, temporary, and published objects referring or dedicated to Wallenberg in Israel from 1945 to 2019, to compare one decade to the next in order to establish their trend. Three of the 53 items constituting

our data, listed in [Appendix A](#), were unique, recurring, events, but we counted them only once. Permanent sites can only be installed once, but an annual academic award, a series of one-man plays, and a sequence of lectures and discussions are, in principle, limitless. By only counting the first enactment of these sequences, we understate their frequency but make each comparable with all other objects in the database.

The objects themselves are broken down accordingly: (1) permanent or temporary; (2) sponsored by state or local communities; (3) the decade in which they appeared; (4) individual artists, agents, and, where possible, the motivations driving each; (5) their organizational benefactors and supporters; (6) their content and meaning. In these connections, the first author also interviewed all available men and women who directly initiated a commemorative product or preserved such a product as managers of municipal or national archives.

Raoul Wallenberg in Israel: 1945–2019

The following traces Wallenberg's shifting renown, indexed by the volume and content of commemorative sites from 1945 to 2019.

Phase I: 1945–1949

Given Israel's War of Independence (1947–9), not to mention the simultaneous beginning of the influential global phenomenon Cold War, it is not surprising that the Israeli public gave little thought to Wallenberg's activities, arrest, and possible death. A survey of the Israeli press produced zero accounts in these difficult days, with the exception of one report about Wallenberg's disappearance published in the *Palestine Post* (1947).

Phase II: 1950–1959

When Israel's War of Independence ended, many native Israelis and European immigrants, especially Hungarians, probably recognized Wallenberg's name, but their knowledge, such as it was, rarely led to public commemoration. Distractions, such as the Suez Crisis and the Soviet-funded expansion of Egyptian military power-maintained Wallenberg's obscurity through the 1950s. From the end of World War II through the 1950s, as Levy and Sznajder (2002) and Levy (2006) observe, this largely orphaned population had no concern other than to restore itself. Hanna Yablonka (1999) and John Gillis (1994) also describe victims recovering from the traumatic War of Independence preoccupied with their private lives. The fate of Wallenberg was the very least of their concerns.

Phase III: 1960–1969

Wallenberg was rarely commemorated between 1945 and 1959, but his memory remained stable. The first Israeli book recounting his exploits was published by Emil Feuerstein in 1960, a year before Adolph Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem. Feuerstein's *Pious Gentiles* includes Wallenberg among seven non-Jewish men who defended the Jewish people in the twentieth century. But it was Eichmann's trial in April 1961 that

did most to produce a modest but definite increase in Wallenberg's celebrity. Also, Israeli, and international media repeatedly quoted Israel's prosecuting attorney, who described Wallenberg's exceptional courage as he related the particulars of his rescue operation in Hungary and emphasized how he risked his own life to save thousands of Hungarian Jews.

Given the government's determination to avoid pacifism as an ideal for a nation under military threat, few native-born Israelis felt connected to the Holocaust. After the Eichmann trial, however, the Holocaust's scope became too real to ignore. One year after that trial, Israel's Holocaust research and commemorative institution, Yad Vashem, began to honor the Righteous Among the Nations, that is, Gentiles who had protected Jews during the war. The emotional linkage between the Eichmann trial and the recognition of virtuous Gentiles was emphasized by Dr. Aryeh Kubovy, chairman of the Yad Vashem from 1959 to 1966: 'With the capture of Eichmann public pressure began for the Jewish people to show that it is not interested only in punishing the guilty, but also in expressing gratitude to its benefactors,'⁹ of whom Wallenberg was then most prominent. The growth of the Holocaust in Israeli consciousness was therefore overdetermined. Both the trial and the growing appreciation of those who aided Holocaust victims brought it to mind. The Israeli public was increasingly receptive to the media and new textbooks that revealed the extent of European Jewry's suffering.

However, at least two events diminished the relevance of Wallenberg's memory. In the first half of the 1960s, Israel suffered a severe recession; the second half was occupied with the buildup, fighting, and adjustments to the aftermath of the Six-Day War. Because this 1967 struggle was existential, it monopolized the nation's attention. No historical person or event could have occupied a dominant place in the Israeli consciousness. Total wars, however brief and intense, focus individual minds on the present and drive to the background concerns about the past. Psychologists would call such wars sources of 'memory interference' (Bjork 1992:283-288). Wallenberg's memory was retroactively weakened when newer memories, including Israel's wars, interfered with it. New experiences render difficult the recall of things previously learned. The problems and concerns accompanying Israel's 1967 and 1973 wars reflected new realities which preceded and followed them, new circumstances which erased much of the renown Wallenberg had gained in the early 1960s.

Phase IV: 1970–1979

Wallenberg's status in Israel during the first eight years of the 1970s remained essentially what it was at the end of the 1960s. In Sweden, Wallenberg biographer Ingrid Carlberg wrote that the 1970s 'would be called the quiet years of the Wallenberg case' (2015, 544). The Yom Kippur War and its consequences, including the 1977 election of Menachem Begin, Israel's first conservative Prime Minister, left insufficient space in Israeli consciousness for Wallenberg, let alone a prolonged contemplation of the Holocaust years, on which his renown depended.

Yet Wallenberg was not totally ignored. Yad Vashem planted a tree and displayed a memorial plaque in his honor. It organized a historical conference where three Holocaust scholars analyzed 'Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust' (1974), which included Wallenberg's mission. Israel's single television station broadcast two Holocaust

documentaries, which included Wallenberg's accomplishments. During the last years of the 1970s, Wallenberg's stature came into sharper focus when Annette Lantos, the wife of a United States Congressman, both of whom were Holocaust survivors from Budapest, succeeded in persuading President Carter's advisor, Stuart Eizenstat, to prioritize Wallenberg's name on the State Department list of political prisoners in the USSR and raise his name in negotiations with the Kremlin, which Sweden hesitated to do. Furthermore, a major rumor emerged and spread in 1978. Abraham Kalinski, an Israeli refugee from Russia, claimed that he had seen Wallenberg many times while a Soviet prisoner between 1952 and 1957 (Anon 1975). Kalinski was interviewed by the international media several times and his testimony caused a stir in Israeli and American intelligence services. In the end, his testimony turned out to be false, but it enhanced Wallenberg's visibility, although not enough to cause a sustained increase in his notoriety.

Phase V: 1980–1989

Wallenberg's commemoration surged during the 1980s. During the 35 years beginning in 1945, as Figure 1 shows, 3 *permanent* sites, less than 1 every 10 years, were created. During the 1980s, 14 such sites appeared. After the 1980s, the number of permanent sites ranged from 3 to 4 per decade, a modest number but consistently higher than the pre-1980 decades.

Figure 2 shows the trend for *temporary* sites, of which only one was conceived between 1945 and 1979. Eight temporary sites appeared in the 1980s. The conspicuous feature of Figure 2 is the relatively strong rebound from the 1990s decline. The total volumes for the 1980s and the last ten-year period (2010–2019) are identical.

Data from the Israeli press (Figure 3) reveals a trend like that displayed in Figure 1.¹⁰ From 1945 to 1979, a total of 39 articles reported on Wallenberg and his commemoration. More than three times that number, 141 articles, appeared in the 1980s. This number declined to 65 in the 1990s, then to 31 and 34 in the next two decades. *Yediot*

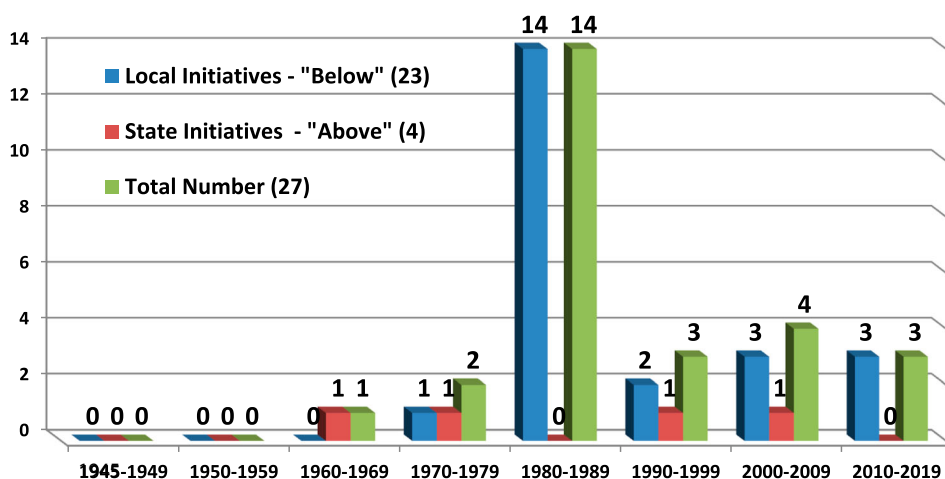


Figure 1. Permanent commemorations of Raoul Wallenberg in Israel by decade and source of initiative: 1945–2019

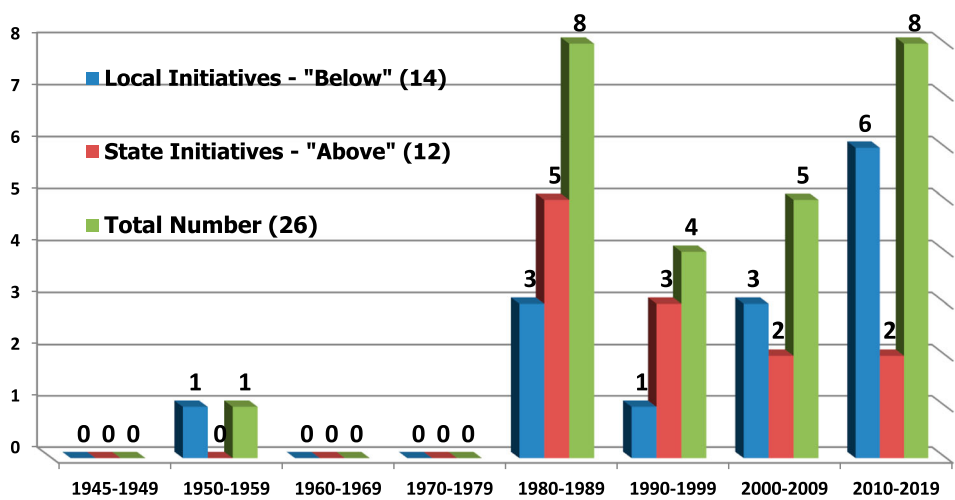


Figure 2. Temporary commemorations of Raoul Wallenberg in Israel by decade and source of initiative: 1945–2019.

Aharonot and *Ma'ariv*, the two newspapers publishing the fewest articles on Wallenberg, reached their high points in the 1980s, but *Haaretz* published more articles during this decade than the other two papers combined.¹¹

Haaretz, the most liberal of the three newspapers, covers current news, but also articles on culture, history, the arts, and other topics that attract the interest of the nation's more educated readers. By contrast, *Ma'ariv* and *Yediot Aharonot* target a higher percentage of readers who attend more to human interest and popular topics, and current events rather than historical ones. Thus in 2018, *Haaretz* accounted for 64 percent of all Wallenberg articles but only 4 percent of Israeli newspaper readership.

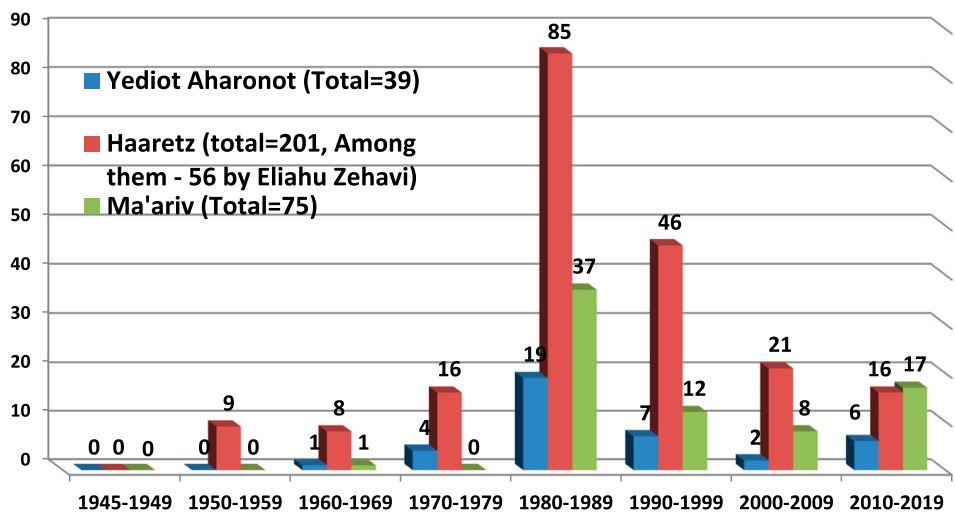


Figure 3. Newspaper articles concerning Raoul Wallenberg in Israel by decade and newspaper: 1945–2019.

Ma'ariv printed 24 percent Wallenberg articles and constituted 4 percent of newspaper readers. *Yediot Aharonot* captured 35 percent of Israeli readers but contributed 12 percent of articles on Wallenberg.¹² *Yediot Aharonot*, the most popular of the three newspapers, is the only one in which Wallenberg is disproportionately under-represented.

The distribution of newspaper articles from 1945 to 2019 is a perfect criterion for the concurrent validity distribution of commemorative sites. This is simply because the changing volume of these sites and enactments is reflected in the changing volume of the newspaper articles which describe them.

Before and after the peak

Figures 1 and 2 present a picture of the vicissitudes in Wallenberg commemorations. The peaks and valleys of the trend are reminiscent of Emile Durkheim's observation: '[I]deals could not survive if they were not periodically revived' by new symbols designed to represent them (1974:98). But the 'periodic revival' of the 1980s, when compared to previous decades, appears as much a *creator* of new Wallenberg perceptions as a *revival* of old ones.

For temporary commemoration (Figure 2), the variation is less acute: the peak in the 1980s dropped in the years afterward, which was less for the first 35 years. Thus, two trends are evident. First, permanent, and temporary tributes to Wallenberg both decrease after 1989 but decline of the former is deeper than that of the latter. Second, because the 1980s surge increased recognition of Wallenberg and conveyed new knowledge about him, the years which followed that decade produced higher levels of commemoration, permanent *and* temporary, than the years that preceded it.

Why is the volume of temporary remembrance sites so much higher than permanent ones in the post-peak era? The significant change from permanent to temporary commemoration is, in effect, equivalent to a change from symbols to observances. Symbols, like park or street names, represent past events and persons passively. Practices refer to the active transmission of historical and biographical narratives, such as instruction, study, discussion, readings, performances, and lectures. The unique aspect of permanent sites is therefore to maintain *recognition* of events and persons; in contrast, temporary practices are more likely to distinguish themselves by creating, expanding, and maintaining *knowledge*.

After the prolific decade of the '80s, many people had heard of Wallenberg, but far fewer knew anything about him. The acceleration of temporary commemoration helped to narrow this gap. We also want to know the differences between the attitude of state and local site creation. Based on Figures 1-2, we can see that 37 (70 percent) of the 53 Wallenberg sites (27 permanents + 26 temporaries) arose in local places. Political events discussed below drove Wallenberg's commemoration to its 1980s pinnacle.

The state has no interest in impermanence itself; what matters are the events and persons most readily represented by impermanent practices. In Israel, temporary commemorations mark the past and the Holocaust at certain locations (mainly Yad Vashem and the Knesset) and largely through state-sponsored vehicles of memory: ceremonies, lectures, policy statements, portrayals of historical persons and events. These intrinsically temporary practices are disproportionately embodied in objects reflecting the dignity of the state.

The creation and placement of commemorative sites require time and money. The patterns just described, however, seem independent of the cost of creating them. The

Israeli state produced only 4 of the 27 permanent Wallenberg sites (as seen in Figure 1) but 14 of the 26 temporary ones (in Figure 2). This once again highlights the difference in affinity between state and temporary commemorations.¹³ Yet this pattern might result from a possible relation between state budgets and the lower cost of temporary sites. No cost data are available to us, but this hypothesis is inconsistent with the fact that supposedly more costly permanent sites outnumbered temporary ones before 1989.

Municipal bureaucracies are the most common local sites of permanent commemoration (12 of 27 sites – in Figure 1). This is because the municipality itself might assign a committee to devise a fitting *lieu de mémoire* in Wallenberg's honor; private petitioners wishing publicly to honor Wallenberg must first obtain permission from the municipal authority.

It is one thing to assess Wallenberg's place in Israeli memory by counting and classifying his commemorative sites, but yet another to identify the people and organizations that create them. Ascertaining their motivation for doing so is a problem the first author addressed through his 24 interviews. His subjects were men and women who participated directly in efforts to honor Wallenberg.¹⁴ These 24 respondents, each identified with his or her place of employment, told 24 different stories, but we confine ourselves to two themes. The first insight provided by our respondents is an appreciation of the drive required to break through a bureaucratic crust as thick as Israel's. Everyone with whom the interviewer spoke complained bitterly about the problem of navigating one's project through the maze of state and local officialdom.

Many investigators attribute the motive to honor a historical person to ethnocentrism or self-interest, which implies that commemorative agents profit from their work, one form of which is the power to define the past. The Israelis interviewed for this study, however, demonstrated no such capacity or inclination. They worked too obsessively and spoke too often of Wallenberg's embodying ideals with which they identified but of which they felt themselves falling short. They were Wallenberg's 'reputational entrepreneurs' (Fine 1996) or memory 'agents' (Lang and Lang 1990).

Qualitative reflections

The quantitative evidence above displays the attenuation of Wallenberg's commemoration after the 1980s, but it remains to be seen whether there are differences in the tone and moods induced by his *lieux de mémoire*. In other words, the diminishing frequency of commemoration might be partially offset by an increase in the intensity of the ideas and emotions it evokes. We will consider this matter in the context of the last three decades, which are comparable to one another in terms of population and economic growth, expanding military power, and an increasing sense of security attending the fall of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the years 1945–1979 were marked by progress towards recovery from full-scale wars.

Phase VI: 1990–1999

The 1990s maintain something of the previous decade's dynamic: increased television coverage of Wallenberg from 2 and 8 programs in the 1970s and 1980s, to 11 in the 1990s. Multiplying this small increase in the number of programs by a growing population leads to a considerable rise in the number of viewers. Overall, however, the

decade's volume of memory sites dropped precipitously. The Knesset's three special sessions devoted to Wallenberg concluded that the government had failed adequately to acknowledge his deeds, let alone express gratitude for them. The government had also been insufficiently proactive in international efforts to discover his fate. These significant admissions were conveyed to the public by the mass media. The next two decades will tell whether or how the government redeemed itself.

Phase VII: 2000–2009

The first decade of the new millennium witnessed a continued decline of Wallenberg's status. The Knesset conducted only one plenary session in Wallenberg's honor. The late Marina Solodkin, a five-term member of the Knesset, submitted two bills to establish an annual day to honor Wallenberg and all the Righteous Among the Nations. The Knesset rejected Solodkin's proposals in 2007, then again in 2009. The Knesset votes, however warranted, reflected an important fact: Wallenberg and the Righteous Among the Nations were implicitly marked by *Yom Ha Shoah* (Holocaust Memorial Day).

In contrast to the mixed sentiments of agents from above, commemorative agents from below, through creation of both permanent and temporary *lieux de mémoire*, expressed singular gratitude to Wallenberg. In 2001, Knesset member Tommy Lapid contacted Ron Lauder, cosmetics magnate, fervent Israel supporter, and son of a Jewish mother, Estee Lauder, whose parents were originally from Hungary. He asked Lauder for a donation to erect at a major Tel Aviv intersection a duplicate of Imre Varga's 1987 statue of Wallenberg in Budapest. Lauder agreed, and in 2002 Israel's only full-standing statue of Wallenberg was dedicated.

Phase VIII: 2010–2019

In 2012, the Swedish and Hungarian governments appointed committees to plan, finance, and celebrate the centennial of Wallenberg's birth. Never before was Wallenberg so frequently and elaborately honored. The Swedish government recognized him in Stockholm with 50 events, including a two-day conference consisting of a concert, dinner, and more than 20 speakers, including representatives from the United States, Belgium, Russia, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Hungary. The Israeli government virtually ignored the event, and its display of indifference could not have been more dramatic. Israel's ambassador to Sweden showed up briefly on the first day for dinner, then he left and never returned. Aside from the first author, no other Israelis attended the conference. In addition to Stockholm, the city of Gothenburg produced 11 events in Wallenberg's honor and 28 events were held in Sweden's other cities and towns.

Sweden also paid respect to Wallenberg in Israel. In August 2012, the Swedish Ambassador, Elinor Hammar skjöld, organized an exhibition of photographs depicting Wallenberg's life and anti-fascist activities in Budapest. The Swedish Embassy held the affair at Tel Aviv's Bialik House. Sweden's Labor Minister opened the event. No Israeli representative attended. For three weeks the exhibit was open to the Israeli public and, according to the press, drew many visitors, including 2000 school pupils.

Israel's own Wallenberg Centennial commemoration in the Knesset chamber was shockingly underattended. Future President Reuven Rivlin, then Speaker of the



Figure 4. Ma'ariv newspaper headline concerning Raoul Wallenberg Centennial observance, Knesset, Jerusalem, Israel: July 2012.

Knesset, along with other planners, had expected significant turnout. Figure 4, below, shows a newspaper photograph of Mr. Rivlin speaking. From right to left sit Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, Chairman of Yad Vashem, Per-Erik Gunnar Westerberg, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, and János Áder, President of Hungary. Note the portrait of Wallenberg on an easel at the right. The newspaper headline reads: 'Knesset members ignored a memorial ceremony dedicated to a Righteous Among the Nations.' Only five Knesset members out of the 54 in the building attended. Those 54 persons moreover represented less than half the total Knesset body of 120. Speaker Rivlin expressed his shame:

Wallenberg was not only a holy figure for the Jewish people but a person who stood alone in front of the entire world and forces of evil. Unfortunately, there is a time when it is more important for members of the Knesset to meet with other lightweight political activists instead of honoring this great rescuer of Jews.¹⁵

In April 2014, three months before Mr. Rivlin was elected President of Israel, the first author met with him at his office. Rivlin explained that it was the inadequate television coverage during Wallenberg's Centennial that led to an almost empty Knesset chamber. The Members of Knesset wanted their own faces, not Wallenberg's, televised.

In contrast to the members of Israel's Knesset, Sweden's Ambassador Carl Magnus Nesser went out of his way to pay tribute to Wallenberg's memory. In 2014, he opened his own home to the public for a unique exhibition. Nesser declared in an interview that he had been deeply moved by the fate of European Jewry and determined to establish a workshop to celebrate Wallenberg's memory. Nesser invited every student attending the elite Bezalel Academy of Art in Jerusalem to depict Wallenberg's life story with archive materials, images, texts, and more. Students were also instructed to create a painting expressing their perception of Wallenberg's personality. Twenty-



Figure 5. Two paintings from Raoul Wallenberg exhibit, 2014. Photo by Nadav Kaplan, with permission of Ambassador from Sweden Carl Magnus Nesser.

seven paintings were exhibited at the Ambassador's residence, two of which appear in [Figure 5](#). Each depicts him as a representative example of the common man, one who could be mistaken for most Israelis.

The exhibition remained open for two weeks and received multiple reviews in the Israeli press. Several hundred Israelis attended the event, including a few Hungarians whom Wallenberg had rescued. Many visitors purchased Wallenberg portraits for their homes.

Israel's local communities also joined Wallenberg's admirers. Consider Barak Etkin and Eli Yosef, working independently since 2012, Wallenberg's centennial, dedicated dramatic performances to him. Their audiences consisted mainly of students from Israel's high schools, colleges, and universities. Barak Etkin currently lectures on education at Achva College in Israel. Based on his experience, including student trips to Poland, he composed a one-hour play about Wallenberg, performing all five roles himself. The play depicts Wallenberg imprisoned in Russia, recalling his experiences in Hungary. At the end of the play, Etkin opens the floor for discussion of Wallenberg's values and deeds. According to the first author's interview with Etkin, he has performed his play forty-four times for approximately 4,000 people from 2012 to 2019.

Eli Yosef represents Wallenberg as a man who profoundly enriched many lives. His performances emphasize moral obligation, human rights, and the sanctity of life. Yosef's files indicate that he has lectured more than one hundred and thirty-five times in many places, from religious communities to military academies, to more than

19,500 young men and women. Based on personal observations, those attending Etkin's, and Yosef's performances gained a deeply personal experience of Wallenberg's life and legacy.

The examples cited in this section demonstrate the texture of events dedicated to Wallenberg's memory. It would take a separate essay to convey the admixture of indifference and admiration that greeted these defining events that established Wallenberg's place in Israeli memory. Yet a brief impression is appropriate here. The question posed at the beginning of this section was whether qualitative observations would in some way modify the conclusions suggested by our quantitative data. The answer to that question is negative. No one can conclude from our data that Wallenberg occupies a *prominent* place in Israeli minds. Indeed, he seems to excite contemporary Swedish minds more than those of Israelis. Not only is Wallenberg commemorated more widely in Sweden than in Israel, but Swedish representatives in Israel also celebrate his memory more enthusiastically. Yet, the full range of our data suggests that his memory remains secure, if not pervasive and deep, in Israel's collective consciousness. We must accept this inconsistency. Many Israelis have a fragmentary knowledge of Wallenberg's exploits, every aspect of which is superficially internalized. Yet these Israelis select similar fragments, all consisting of courage and selflessness, on which to base their beliefs. Those beliefs, although accompanied by lukewarm feelings and attenuated reactions are positive. The typical Wallenberg commemorative site may be bland, even banal (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2016), but most Israelis know it as something distinctive, if not enthralling.

Wallenberg's commemoration: context and timing

Commemoration occurs in its most intensive form when a historical person's name and accomplishments thicken the social world with texts, images, symbols, observances, and celebrations. The conditions that support such intensity include limits on how much opprobrium even the sincerest admirer can express, for no such practice can divert attention from private worries and daily obligations for very long. Exuberant commemoration cannot be *routinized* in everyday life. Rather, the stories about Wallenberg, the sites that elevate him, cannot sustain his memory unless they are taken-for-granted. Wallenberg's place in the collective consciousness is thus diminished and preserved. Or, rather, preserved because it is diminished.

However, the *level* of Wallenberg's renown must be properly gauged. It was the Eichmann Trial that initially invigorated Holocaust awareness in Israel, but the wars of 1967 and 1973 impeded this new current of memory. Wallenberg's fame surged in the 1980s amid a combination of social and political events unlikely to recur. These included (1) the renewed elevation of Holocaust consciousness in Israel and its rise throughout the West in the late 1970s; (2) continuation of asymmetrical warfare in the absence of existential threats, and, most critically, (3) the CIA's propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union, whose impending collapse heralded the ending of the Cold War. The indispensability of President Ronald Reagan's dedication to solving the Wallenberg mystery and preserving his renown should be emphasized.

President Reagan's deployment of the CIA to execute President Jimmy Carter's plan for a propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union increased Wallenberg's renown to an unprecedented level. In the words of his biographer, Ingrid Carlberg (2015):

The CIA had long shown an interest in the Raoul Wallenberg case, largely within the purview of its more psychological and propaganda-oriented operations. This had manifested itself mainly in planting news about Raoul Wallenberg by way of decoys in the mass media, in order to affront the Soviet Union and strengthen disdain of communism. (556)

These decoys (false witnesses to Wallenberg's situation) internationalized recognition of Russian brutality. 'The Raoul Wallenberg case,' in Carlberg's words, 'continues to be useful in order to highlight Soviet crimes against humanity' (577). Interviews of Wallenberg's commemorative planners in Israel show them to have been fully aware of the CIA's exploitation of Wallenberg's fate throughout the 1980s.¹⁶

Russian behavior connected these Israeli and American trends. The Soviet Union exerted significant influence in the Middle East beginning 1953–1954 and was a constant threat to Israel's survival. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, it supplied advisers and massive military materiel to the Egyptian-Syrian coalition in its two major wars against Israel. Meanwhile, Russia's transparently ruthless oppression of its own 4–5 million Jews continued.¹⁷ The CIA (1988) knew about Israel's sympathy for the captive Russian Jews, motivated in part by its concern to enlarge the size of its existing Russian community. These aspects of the Cold War guided US involvement in the Wallenberg affair.

Responding to US congressman Tom Lantos's appeal, President Ronald Reagan named Wallenberg the seventh of America's Honorary Citizens. Reagan signed the requisite document in the presence of Wallenberg's half-siblings, Guy von Dardel and Nina Lagergren, in 1981 at the White House. Several years after the signing ceremony, Mr. Dardel and Mrs. Lagergren met with KGB officials serving Michael Gorbachev. Their 1989 meeting produced nothing new about Wallenberg himself, but they returned home with something tangible: Wallenberg's belongings, including his diplomatic passport, an address book, currency, diary, calendar, driver's license, cigarette case, *relics* that bear the mark of the man who had touched, held, and used them (*Los Angeles Times*, 2000; Carlberg 2015: 584). They made present the reality of the man and the suffering of his final years.

If the CIA had played no major role in the American government's elevation of Wallenberg, then persons who worked at the same time as he and accomplished as much or more should be equally renowned. We can see the case of Carl Lutz, the Swiss Vice Consul in Budapest, who acted against his own government's neutrality policy to save thousands of Jewish lives. Lutz was almost forgotten. The *presence* of the CIA's influence in Wallenberg's case and its *absence* in Lutz's account explains a significant amount of the difference in their reputations.

The CIA's role in Wallenberg's celebrity in Israel cannot be grasped independently of Israel's population and government. Wallenberg would have been less visible if Israel's 1980s population consisted mainly of Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews from North Africa and the Middle East. He was less relevant to them than to the Ashkenazi (Central and Eastern European) Jews who suffered rejection by the Western World and genocide under Adolph Hitler's regime. In 1983, 40 percent of Israel's population was born in Europe; but Ashkenazis comprised almost 70 percent of the Knesset between 1981–1988. Among these 84 Knesset members were 8 Holocaust survivors.¹⁸ Moreover, Ashkenazi Jews may be said without too much distortion to possess their own newspaper, *Haaretz*, the nation's most prolific source of news and commentary on cultural,

historical, and contemporary matters important to Israeli elites. It has also been the most influential bearer of Wallenberg's memory (Figure 3). Yet, even if Wallenberg, whatever the level of his renown, was an Ashkenazi hero, the sudden rise of his celebrity during the 1980s cannot be explained solely by Israel's demographic makeup.

Ashkenazi influence in Israeli life has always exceeded its numbers, but it did not differ enough in the decades immediately before, during, and after the 1980s to account for disparate levels of Wallenberg commemoration.¹⁹ In other words, CIA influence and Ashkenazi presence were both *necessary* conditions of Wallenberg's positive reception in Israel, but neither was a *sufficient* condition. Only their *co-presence* in the 1980s and lack of it in prior decades explains the sudden rise of his celebrity. But even their co-presence cannot explain why the Ashkenazis were so receptive to the CIA's efforts.

Israeli interest in the Soviet Union's restriction on Jewish immigration during the 1980s is understandable. Russian limits on emigration were most evident in the 1970s, when approximately 150,000 Jews emigrated from Russia to Israel, and the 1980s, when this number fell to 28,763. In fact, during four years of the 1980s, Soviet authorities permitted fewer than 400 Jews to leave. This was the decade in which Wallenberg's prestige reached its apex in Israel. It was as if his imprisonment symbolized Russia's captivity of its 4 million Jews, as if the Soviet government, in this last decade of its existence, needed the Jews to torment for one last spasm of pleasure (Anderson: 1984). As Russian communism crumbled during the 1990s, 824,000 Russian emigres – an average of 85% of the total – arrived in Israel.²⁰ During this same decade, the CIA propaganda war ceased to be necessary. As it ended, Wallenberg's distinction diminished.

One last point. Israelis who commemorated Wallenberg during the 1980s did not necessarily connect him *in their minds* to the CIA, their country's Ashkenazi population, or Russia's policies on Jewish emigration. These last three interlocking concerns took the form of *social* currents and comprised an impersonal, *sui generis*, context for Wallenberg's place in the Israeli mind. This same context probably established a floor below which his renown could not fall.

Summary and conclusions

Bernard Lewis argued that cases like Masada and Cyrus reveal the power of academic scholarship, under which he included the study of records, excavations of buried sites, and deciphering of scripts. The present essay is not the only one to show a far wider range of commemorative agents, including businessmen, diplomats, and ordinary citizens bringing latent memories into view.

Besides other examples, the better-known cases of recovered memory include Oscar Schindler, a former Nazi who protected his factory's Jewish workers, Georg Elser, a German carpenter who tried but failed to assassinate Adolph Hitler (1939), and Alan Turing, a British computer scientist who distinguished himself during World War II by breaking Germany's military code. These men remained unknown to the public in their native lands for many years, until their memories were recovered in the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century by authors, filmmakers, and their publics.

Each case mentioned above, including Wallenberg's, existed for a long time as a latent memory, known across the years by a small number of people. Each case became

manifest when its substance resonated with the affairs of at least one segment of the general population. When that resonance faded, collective knowledge of the case decreased, even became latent, left to arise again in the future or fade into oblivion.²¹

Against this background, and with a view to understanding its connection with Wallenberg's status in Israel, we posed a sequence of questions. The answers can now be summarized. The first research question concerned the distinctive features of Wallenberg's commemorative media. His name was marked by an equal number of permanent sites accessible to the public, and temporary sites, most of which were found indoors and drew fewer visitors. These *lieux de mémoire* reached their highest number during the 1980s, followed by a decline in permanent sites and an initial decline then upturn of temporary sites from 1990-2019. In Sweden and Hungary, however, Wallenberg's commemoration erupted during the 1990s and has remained at a considerably higher level than in Israel to the present day (Kaplan 2021).

In Sweden, it was mainly the fear of Soviet Russia that prevented public discussion of Wallenberg's disappearance. Between the end of World War II and the collapse of USSR, Swedish fear of their Soviet neighbors led governments to take an extremely passive stance regarding the Wallenberg case, which included downplaying preservation of his memory. The Swedes systematically avoided any kind of confrontation with the Russians. In Hungary, a brutal Soviet occupation prevented Wallenberg's commemoration for more than 40 years. Not until the Russians left Hungary did his Budapest days become public knowledge and acclaimed (Kaplan 2021).

The second question is why a largely Jewish population showed strong interest in Wallenberg during the single decade of the 1980s and relatively little interest before and after. The obscurity of Wallenberg's memory during the first thirty-five years of Israeli statehood was almost inevitable, given the great problem of caring for a massive influx of refugees, plus incessant military conflict. This is not only a matter of one memory or set of memories interfering with others, but of subordinating what is already vaguely known and remembered to urgent matters of survival.

The rise, ebb, and dynamics of Holocaust consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s, reinforced by Wallenberg's role in the CIA's propaganda campaign against his Soviet captors, the brutishness of Soviet anti-Semitism and refusal to release its massive Jewish population, plus the presence of a significant minority of Ashkenazis in Israel overdetermined the country's receptiveness to Wallenberg's memory. The conditions leading to the peak of his recovery in the 1980s, however, ceased to exist after that decade ended. As the Soviet Union fell in the 1990s, the fear of war waned, the need for anti-Soviet symbols weakened, the CIA's anti-Soviet campaign stopped and Jewish immigration from Russia in the 1990s increased, as did the Sephardic/Mizrahi share of the population. Each of these factors contributed to a declining interest in Wallenberg. Yet, the post-1980s decline never fell to its pre-1980s level.

Our third question concerns the primary sources, means, and extent of Wallenberg's recovery and the agents who designed them. As seen in [Figures 1-2](#), the volume of commemoration from local communities (37 sites), we found, far exceeded the commemorative actions of the state (16 sites). Wallenberg's renown originated from bottom up rather than top-down. The *absolute* level of Wallenberg's prominence in Israeli memory, however, is difficult to assess. Is prominence not a 'construction' expressing the concerns of

‘reputational entrepreneurs’ and their communities? If historical prominence can only symbolize the concerns of the present, as is widely believed, can it be anything but a construction?

In fact, reality limits the extent to which history and the reputation of its participants can be manipulated. The worth of any individual can only be estimated by one’s relation to an ideal that exists outside oneself. Our interviewees were not interested in fabricating a fictitious Wallenberg; they were concerned solely with the ideal he represented, for their feelings about him possessed an intensity exceeding the imperatives of personal interest or the problems and concerns of the day. These interviewees were mindful of Soviet perversity, which they challenged by giving one of its victims a form and voice. The makers of Israel’s *lieux de mémoire* found their reward in catharsis, not in the keying of present concerns to the past, let alone in reconstructing the past.

The intensity of this catharsis, however, is problematically related to social prominence. Prominence is an aspect of perception, but how is perception to be measured? If the metric of prominence were the volume of Wallenberg’s *lieux de mémoire*, we would get one answer; if that metric included the number of Israelis who recognize his name, understand the meaning of his deeds, or revere him, we would get another. The difficulty of reconciling these two appraisals stems from our failure to obtain an independent measure of collective memory, that is, how typical Israelis think and feel about Wallenberg. We conducted no sample survey or sample interviews of the Israeli population. However, the absence of subjective measures hardly implies the absence in society of an authentically collective memory. If all traces of Wallenberg’s memory were lost to us, no state or local agent could take him as a subject to commemorate.

Wallenberg’s life was courageous, beneficent, and short. Israelis thought about that life with some ambivalence, for it reminded them of the uncertainty of their own existence, a precarious life under constant siege. Israeli Jews are ambivalent about their many other protectors. Israel survived under Cyrus, Alexander the Great, the many pre-Enlightenment monarchies that shielded their Jews. Napoleon, the American founders, including Washington and later Lincoln, kept their promise of the protections of citizenship. Christians throughout Europe sheltered Jews from Nazi executioners at the risk of their own families’ lives. To these protectors the Jewish people owe much, perhaps more gratitude than they owe Wallenberg. But it was Wallenberg, more than any of the other 27,712 Righteous Gentiles (for detail, see Yad Vashem 2020),²² who became the single most impressive symbol of Jewish dependency, the most vivid reminder of Jews’ historical weakness and need for defenders. However, a Jewish *state* that can no longer depend on protectors requires different exemplars: zealous leaders and warriors, not well-intentioned friends who add to its existential debt. Therefore, Wallenberg’s memory is sustained without the powerful ideological motives that make some of Israel’s national commemorations, notably Independence Day and Memorial Day, so exhilarating. On the contrary, one cannot invoke those occasions without appealing to a diasporic past filled with discredited images current leaders seek to transcend. Israelis consider Wallenberg’s deeds heroic and relate to him with gratitude. His commemoration is itself a kind of gratitude, but something short of reverence.

We asked a final question. What does the Israeli case add to our general knowledge of recovered memory? One point is by now obvious. In Israel, as elsewhere, historical events

and persons that seem to have been forgotten were remembered, but at a latent level and by a small but dedicated number of memory carriers induced to begin commemorative work by new currents of public interest. Sometimes these carriers lose part of their passion; sometimes the conditions that would have piqued it diminish or fail to mature. However, a certain fraction of memory remained, passed across generations, and eventually commemorated.

Latent memories manifest themselves only when a significant change occurs in social and political conditions. Economic depression, disillusionment, and Jewish emigration from Palestine inspired Yitzhak Lamdan to write his Masada poem. Shah Pahlavi's legitimacy crisis induced him to choreograph Persia's 2,500th anniversary celebration. Gregor Mendel's discovery of dominant and recessive 'factors' in the reproduction of pea colors was ignored for more than 30 years before advances in biology made understanding his work possible (Henig 2017).

In Israel, Raoul Wallenberg's memory was recovered and weaponized by the CIA during the Cold War, preserved by an influential Ashkenazi population, and vivified by Holocaust memory and the Soviet Union's literal captivity of its Jewish population. In a vague but permanent way, his exploits indebt the Israeli people to him. Nevertheless, fewer Israelis revere Wallenberg than participate in the celebration of his memory. Such is the essence of 'mediocre commemoration.'

Notes

1. Pehle, Randolph, and DuBois, *Report to Secretary*, 1-17; Mashberg, "Documents Concerning", 163-182. The U.S. Treasury Department's lawyers initiated the plan to rescue what was left of European Jewry. They submitted to Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau a report on the State Department's successful efforts to block refugee status to Jews. When Morgenthau brought these materials to President Roosevelt's attention and warned him that State Department obstructionism would devastate his legacy as war president, Roosevelt ordered the creation of a War Refugee Board (WRB). Among the Board's initial actions was the enlistment of Raoul Wallenberg to set up an office and rent properties in Budapest to rescue that city's remaining Jewish population. By July 1944, the time he arrived, at least 85 percent of Jews throughout Europe had already perished. Wallenberg's primary duty was to protect the Jews of Budapest. OSS' agent Iver Olsen joined American Ambassador to Sweden Herschel Johnson in the plan to recruit Wallenberg. From April 1944, Olsen served as the WRB's representative in Sweden on top of his regular role in the US Embassy as the financial attaché.
2. In 2000, for instance, a Russian commission declared that Wallenberg's records, with the exception of some personal items, had disappeared, but a KGB official claimed he had been shot soon after arrest. Not only Wallenberg's fate but also Russian motives for arresting him are uncertain. Innumerable stories abound. It is likely (but never admitted) that Soviet authorities considered him an American spy. This is a reasonable conjecture, but it is unclear why they thought his target was the Soviet Union rather than Germany and its Hungarian allies. Indeed, in 2000, the Russian government conceded his arrest to have been a mistake made in the fog of war. In an interview with Echo of Moscow radio, Alexander Yakovlev, head of the government's Committee on Rehabilitation, said the evidence strongly suggests that Wallenberg was shot by the KGB. In the 1980s, when Yakovlev was a member of the Politburo, then-KGB chief Vladimir A. Kryuchkov, "in a fit of candor," told him that Wallenberg was liquidated. Reynolds, "Russia Admits Wrongdoing".
3. Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987). Given his historical perspective, Lewis vastly underemphasizes the role of archeology

in recovered history and memory. Dramatic discoveries from 800 and 1200 BCE were found in the late nineteenth century. They all make reference to a nation of Israel and are consistent with biblical accounts of the periods.

4. The Shah's extravagant "Party of the Century" was reserved for heads and high officials of state, wealthy businessmen, and global celebrities. Its effect was not to stabilize the Shah's regime but to promote unrest, consolidate opposition and, soon after, trigger revolution.
5. Ludkin, *Isaac Lamdan*, 199-234; See Schwartz et al. (1986).
6. More recently, Ben-Yehuda (1995) assessed the Masada story's authenticity and traced its influence in Israeli life during the last two-thirds of the twentieth century.
7. Two notable examples of barely known individuals include Sholem Schwarzbard, a Russian-born French citizen who had lost his family in one of the 1919 Ukrainian pogroms. At that time, Symon Petliura was pogrom commander and head of the Ukrainian National Republic's Directorate. In 1926, Schwarzbard met him on a Paris Street and shot him. Schwarzbard waited for the police to arrive and declared "I have killed a great assassin." In November 1938, Herschel Greenspan, a 17-year-old Pole living in Paris purchased a pistol, entered the German Embassy, assassinated diplomat George von Rath, then turned himself over to the Paris police. What these men have in common is the readiness with which they embraced responsibility for their offenses. Their morally driven retaliations, however, are totally unknown to the overwhelming majority of today's American Jews. This is so despite their being the first to stand up individually to their people's tormentors, not to mention the publicity they received at the time of their actions.
8. Collective memory refers to the *distribution* throughout society of what individuals *know*, *believe*, and *feel* about past events and persons, how they *morally judge* them, how closely they *identify* with them, and how much they are *inspired* or *repelled* by them as models for their conduct and identity. As a distributive entity whose defining property is *variation*, collective memory cannot be synonymous with fully shared conceptions of the past. That every distribution also has a central tendency makes total dissensus equally impossible. Appearing as it does among people widely dispersed and *unknown* to one another, collective memory, a first cousin of *public opinion*, is an emergent entity that transcends the individuals who constitute it. *Similar differences* across time also appear in such distributions. For example, Abraham Lincoln's renown in the memory of American whites has exceeded that of African Americans every year throughout the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century. But through these years, white and African American reverence for Lincoln, although differing in magnitude, has fallen *at the same rate*. Uniformly changing rates of renown can only result from changing cultural currents similarly influencing unrelated individuals located in various parts of society. Furthermore, collective memory cannot be conceived as a social construction, for it typically links changes across time in historical consciousness to the unchanging realities of the past. For detail, see Schwartz (2016).
9. Mr. Kubovy said it in the preliminary meeting of the Righteous Among the Nation Commemoration Committee in February 1963 and quoted in Gur-Aryeh, (2007).
10. The three sampled newspapers are: *Haaretz* (founded in 1919); *Yediot Aharonot* (founded in 1939), and *Ma'ariv* (founded in 1948). All articles pertaining to Wallenberg from 1945 to 2019 are included. These publications represent Israel's ideological and political spectrum.
11. Contributing to *Haaretz's* remarkable Wallenberg coverage is the work of Eliyahu Zehavi, Scandinavian correspondent for *Haaretz*, who wrote one-quarter of its articles on Wallenberg. Even when Zehavi's writings are deleted, however, Wallenberg appears in this newspaper twice as often as in *Ma'ariv* and *Yediot Aharonot* combined.
12. TGI, Consumer Data Survey, July-December 2018. The figures quoted above are taken from the weekday readership survey. From one survey to the next there is variation in readership numbers; however, the large gap separating *Haaretz* and *Maariv* from *Yediot Aharonot* is constant.

13. Temporary Wallenberg sites may exceed permanent ones not because they embody some transcendent authority but simply because they cost less. This is a plausible claim; but it only raises the question of why the former outnumbered the latter prior to 1990.
14. The respondents who initiated and led commemorative projects, their agencies, and the places in which their undertakings were completed are identified as follows: (1) Mr. Hanoch Rosen, City of Ramat-Gan; (2) Dr. Fishman, City of Beer-Sheba; (3) Prof. Irwin Cotler, Canada and Bar-Ilan University; (4) Mr. Yossi Raid, City of Ramana; (5) Daniel Rainer, Raoul Wallenberg Association; (6) Roth Arnan, B'nai Brith, Nahariya; (7) Mr. Gabbi Kadosh, former Mayor of the city of Eilat; (8) Mr. Nathan Sharansky, former Minister of Jerusalem Affairs; (9) Hananiah Weinberg, member of the Municipality, city of Rehovot; (10) Mr. Adir Binyamini, Head of Municipal Committee on Names, city of Netanya; (11) Mr. Rafael Blumenthal, City of Rishon LeZion; (12) Son of the late Israeli sculptor Miri Margolin, Hungarian Jewry Museum, Sefad; (13) Mr. Max Grunberg, Honorary citizenship; (14) Manager of Israel Postal Services; (15) Professor Dina Porat, Organizer of Tel-Aviv University Wallenberg Annual Scholarship; (16) Manager of Israel Coins & Medal Corporation; (17) Dr. Marina Solodkin, Member of Knesset; (18) Mr. Itzhak Hertzog, Member of Knesset; (19) Mr. Reuven Rivlin, former Speaker of the Knesset (now President of Israel); (20) Ms. Elinor Hammarskjöld, former Swedish Ambassador to Israel; (21) Mr. Carl Magnus Nesser, former Swedish Ambassador to Israel; (22) Mr. Yair Lapid, son of Tommy Lapid; (23) Mr. Eli Yosef, and (24) Mr. Barak Etkin. The first author also gathered information from archives located at (1) Yad Vashem; (2) City of Bat-Yam; (3) City of Haifa; (4) City of Holon; (5) City of Herzliya; (6) Shaarei Tzedek Hospital, Jerusalem; (7) Tel Aviv; (8) Israeli Knesset; (9) Weizmann Institute of Science, city of Rehovot; (10) Soroka Hospital in Beer-Sheba; (11) Israeli TV Archive; (12) *Haaretz*; (13) *Yediot Aharonot*, and (14) *Ma'ariv*.
15. The picture and article, including Rivlin's remarks, are taken from Arik Bender, "Knesset members ignored a memorial ceremony dedicated to a Righteous Among the Nations." *Ma'ariv*, July 18, 2012, 20.
16. See endnote 14.
17. Central Intelligence Agency research paper, *Soviet-Israeli Relations*.
18. The raw data were drawn from the archive of the Israeli Knesset and analyzed by the first author.
19. State of Israel, "Jews by Continent of Origin"
20. Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, "Total Immigration to Israel from the Former Soviet Union".
21. It is worth noting that one recovered history tends to trigger memories of another. Chiune Sugihara, "The First Japanese Schindler," was designated as Righteous Among the Nations in 1984. This Japanese diplomat was unknown in his home country and the West until his death in 1986 drew to Japan Jewish representatives from nations around the world. Sugihara reentered a state of obscurity until 2020, when new evidence emerged of another Japanese diplomat who came to the assistance of Jews during World War II. With the recovery of Saburo Nei, "The Second Japanese Schindler." Sugihara's celebrity reemerged. The authors are unaware of other Asians who played a role in saving Jewish lives during the Holocaust, but they assume that many have been overlooked. Levine, *In Search of Sugihara*, 17.
22. "The Righteous Among the Nations Database", Yad Vashem.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Dr. Nadav Kaplan is an Israeli researcher of Memory Studies. Research Fellow, Herzl Institute for the study of Zionism, University of Haifa. His area of focus includes: The phenomenon of belated

commemorations of historical events and individuals; The Holocaust in Hungary and its place in the contemporary Israeli narratives; The commemoration of Raoul Wallenberg.

Dr. Barry Schwartz was an internationally celebrated sociology scholar who was considered an expert in collective memory. A prolific writer, Dr. Schwartz wrote innumerable books, chapters, article, essays and reviews for which he received many awards and accolades throughout his 50 + year career. To honor his distinguished work, the university of Georgia, from which he retired, named him Professor Emeritus of Sociology. Dr. Schwartz had a brilliant and creative mind, a sharp wit, good humor, a kind and generous heart, and lit up the room wherever he went. Tragically, and unexpectedly, he passed away on January 2021. His Sudden death shocked the sociology community, and the outpouring, of love from his countless colleagues revealed not only how revered he was, but also how loved. This article had just been completed at the time of Dr. Schwartz's death, and is his final publication.

Bibliography

- Aalders, Gerard, and Cees Wiebe. *The Art of Cloaking Ownership: The Case of Sweden*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996.
- Anderson, Jack. "Soviet Jews: 'emigration is Over,'" *Washington Post*. November 4 (1984). www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/print/1897231 (Accessed 4/15/20).
- Anon. "Wallenberg is Alive." *Dagens Nyheter* (Daily News), January 22, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs>. (Accessed 12/2/2019.), 1975.
- Ben-Yehuda, Nachman. *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
- Bjork, Robert A. "Interference and Memory." In *Encyclopedia of Learning and Memory*, edited by L. R. Squire. New York: Macmillan, 1992.
- Carlberg, Ingrid. *Raoul Wallenberg – The Biography*. New York: MacLehose Press, 2015.
- Central Intelligence Agency. "Soviet-Israeli Relation: Trends and Prospects." *Research Paper*. February 7, 1988. <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP89S01450R000100050001-1.pdf>.
- Crawford, John. "The Raoul Wallenberg Mystery." *Palestine Post*, April 18. <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/pls/1947/04?e=---en-20-1-img-txIN%7ctxTI-----1> (Page 5 – Accessed 11/6/2021), 1947.
- Daniel, Levy, and Nathan Sznajder. "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002): 87–106.
- Durkheim, Emile. "Value Judgements and Judgements of Reality." In *Sociology and Philosophy*, edited by J. G. Peristiany. New York: The Free Press, 1974.
- Feuerstein, Emil. *Pious Gentiles*. Tel Aviv: A. Zelikovitz, 1960.
- Fine, Gary A. "Reputational Entrepreneurs and the Memory of Incompetence: Melting Supporters, Partisan Warriors, and Images of President Harding." *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (1996): 1159–1193.
- Gillis, John R. "Memory and History: The History of a Relationship." In *Commemorations*, edited by John R. Gillis, 3–24. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Griswold, Wendy. "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture." *Sociological Methodology* 17 (1987): 1–35.
- Gur-Arieh, Hemda. *Recognition of Those Who Perished*. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 2007.
- Gutman, Israel, and Efraim Zuroff. "Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust." Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1976.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.
- Henig, Robin Marantz. *The Monk in the Garden: The Lost and Found Genius of Gregor Mendel, The Father of Genetics*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.
- Israel, State of. "Central Bureau of Statistics." *Jews by Continent of Origin, Continent of Birth and Period of Immigration* (2018).

- Kaplan, Nadav. A Hero Forgotten and Recovered: The Belated Commemoration of Raoul Wallenberg in Sweden and Hungary. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, 2017.
- Kaplan, Nadav. "Raoul Wallenberg's Commemoration in Sweden, Hungary, and Israel." In *Between Commemoration and Amnesia*, edited by Maoz Azaryahu, Ulrike Gehring, Fabienne Meyer, Jacques Picard, and Christina Späti, 217–226. Köln: Böhlau Verlag GmbH & Cie, 2021.
- Lamdan, Yitzhak. In *Isaac Lamdan: A Study in Twentieth-Century Hebrew Poetry*, edited by Leon I. Ludkin. London: East and West Library, 1971.
- Lang, Gladys E. and Kurt Lang. *Etched in Memory: The Building and Survival of Artistic Reputation*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Levine, Hillel. *In Search of Sugihara: The Elusive Japanese Diplomat Who Risked His Life to Rescue 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- Levy, Daniel. *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.
- Lewis, Bernard. *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Mashberg, Michael. "Documents Concerning the American State Department and the Stateless European Jews, 1942–1944." *Jewish Social Studies* 39 (1977): 163–182.
- Nora, Pierre. "From Lieux de Memoire to Realms of Memory." In *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, edited by Lawrence D. Kritzman, xv–xxiv. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Pehle, John, Paul Randolph, and Josiah DuBois. *Report to Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government to the Murder of the Jews*. January 13, 1944.
- Reynolds, Maura. "Russia Admits Wrongdoing in Death of Wallenberg." *Los Angeles Times*, December 23. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-dec-23-mn-3977-story.html>, 2000.
- Schwartz, Barry. "Commemoration." In *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Science*, edited by James D. Wright, 235–242. Oxford: Elsevier, 2015.
- Schwartz, Barry. "Collective Memory." In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, edited by George Ritzer. New York: Blackwell, 2016.
- Schwartz, Barry. "Reconceptualizing Collective Memory." In *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, edited by Anna Lisa Tota, and Trevor Hagen, 9–21. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Schwartz, Barry, Yael Zerubavel, and Bernice M. Barnett. "The Recovery of Masada: A Study in Collective Memory." *The Sociological Quarterly* 27 (1986): 147–164.
- Thompson, Martyn P. "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Historical Meaning." *History and Theory* 32 (1993): 248–272.
- Vinitzky-Seroussi, Vered. "Banal Commemoration." In *Routledge Handbook of Memory Studies*, edited by Anna Lisa Tota, and Trevor Hagen, 84–92. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Yablonka, Hanna. *Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel After the War*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999.
- Yad Vashem. "The Righteous Among the Nations Database." The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. <https://www.yadvashem.org/he/righteous/statistics.html>, 2020.

Appendix A Wallenberg's commemoratives in israel 1945–2019

Including: Permanent & Temporary commemorations, Excluding Published and Media.

Year	Type of commemoration	Location (cities, institutes)
1957	Speech in the Knesset	Knesset.
1963	Recognition as Righteous among the Nations.	Received nation-wide public attention.
1973	A memorial plaque	Beer-Sheba
1979	A memorial tree	Yad Vashem Campus
1980	Forest	Western Galilee
1980	Raoul Wallenberg Scholarship	Weizmann Institute of Science,
1983	A special memorial – a plenary session	Knesset
1983	Postal stamp	
1983	Park – Playground	Bat-Yam
1983	Memorial Plaque	Haifa
1983	Park – playground	Petah Tikva
1984	Mobile Exhibition pictures	Was presented in 15 cities in Israel
1984	Memorial Plaque	Haifa.
1984	Square in a forest	Yad Vashem
1985	A special plenary session about honorary citizenship	Knesset
1985	A special statement	Knesset
1985	Park	Ramat Gan
1985	Street	Holon
1986	Honorary citizenship of Israel	Israeli President's Residence.
1986	Park	Beer-Sheba
1987	Wallenberg's annual scholarship	Tel Aviv University
1987	Park, playground	Herzliya
1987	Street	Haifa
1988	Academic Cathedra	Bar Ilan University
1988	Memorial Plaque	Jerusalem
1989	Street	Ra'anana
1990	Street	Tel Aviv
1991	Small bust	Yad Vashem
1991	Exhibition of paintings	Tel- Aviv
1991	A memorial session	Knesset.
1994	Forrest	Western Galilee
1995	A memorial session	Knesset.
1996	A special session	Knesset.
2002	Bust	Eilat
2002	Monument	Tel Aviv
2003	Medal	Circulated in public
2005	Special memorial session	Knesset
2005	Street	Jerusalem
2005	Street	Rehovot
2007	Special session	Knesset,
2008	Exhibition of photos pictures.	Beer-Sheba
2009	Memorial session	Knesset
2012	International Symposium	Yad Vashem
2012	National memorial ceremony	Knesset,
2012	Exhibition of photos	Tel Aviv
2014	Painting competition and exhibition	Herzliya
2015	Memorial ceremony and exhibition	Ben Gurion University
2015	Memorial ceremony and film of Wallenberg Opera	Tel Aviv
2015	Street	Netanya
2015	Street	Rishon Lezion
2016	Bust	Safad
2011–18	Lectures: "Wallenberg"	
2012–18	A play: <i>Wallenberg</i>	