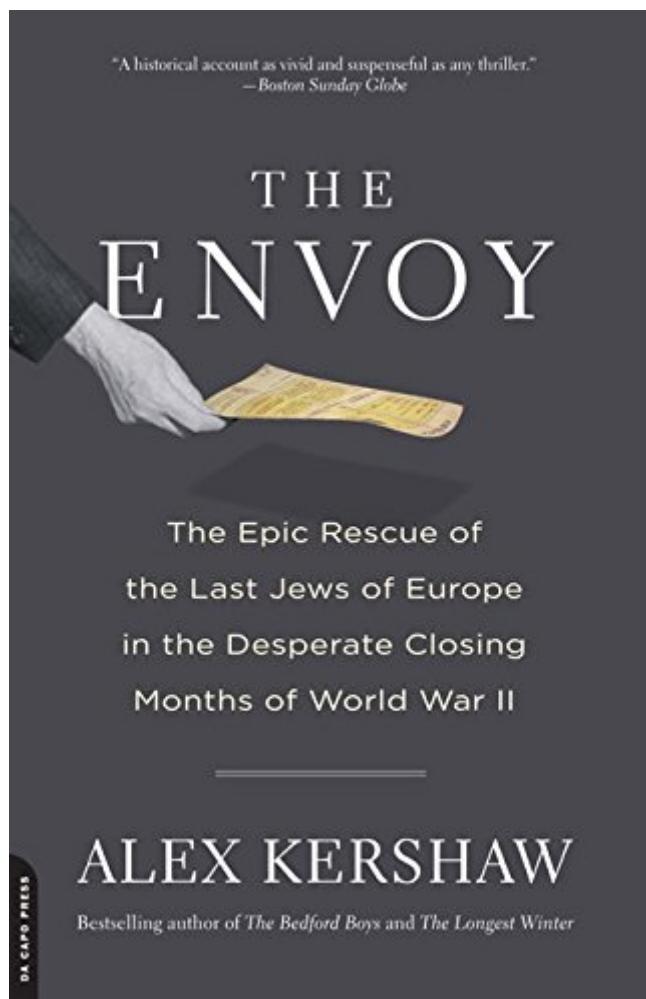


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The Envoy: The Epic Rescue Of The Last Jews Of Europe In The Desperate Closing Months Of World War II



Synopsis

December 1944. Soviet and German troops fight from house to house in the shattered, corpse-strewn suburbs of Budapest. Crazed Hungarian fascists join with die-hard Nazis to slaughter Jews day and night, turning the Danube blood-red. In less than six months, thirty-eight-year-old SS Colonel Adolf Eichmann has sent over half a million Hungarians to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Now all that prevents him from liquidating Europe's last Jewish ghetto is an unarmed Swedish diplomatic envoy named Raoul Wallenberg. The Envoy is the stirring tale of how one man made the greatest difference in the face of untold evil. The legendary Oscar Schindler saved hundreds, but Raoul Wallenberg did what no other individual or nation managed to do: He saved more than 100,000 Jewish men, women, and children from extermination. Written with Alex Kershaw's customary narrative verve, The Envoy is a fast-paced, nonfiction thriller that brings to life one of the darkest and yet most inspiring chapters of twentieth century history. It is an epic for the ages.

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Customer Reviews

Alex Kershaw's "The Envoy" is a well-researched account of the fate of Hungary's Jewish population during the final years of World War II. It is also a tribute to Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who risked his life repeatedly to save as many Jews as possible. In January,

1942, fifteen Nazi party officials attended a conference at Wannsee, on the outskirts of Berlin. One of the attendees was Adolf Eichmann, "the head of the Gestapo's Section IVB for Jewish Affairs." After a discussion that lasted an hour and a half, the group decided that Eichmann "would be the chief administrator of 'the greatest genocide in history.'" Before Hungary's Jews became a target for annihilation, many terrified refugees fled there from occupied countries such as Czechoslovakia. At one time, Hungary was "a promised land for Jews on the run; the only place where you could be a Jew and stay alive." Three hundred thousand Jewish refugees from Nazi-controlled Europe sought sanctuary in Hungary, but they would eventually realize, to their horror, that they had unwittingly jumped from the frying pan into the fire. In 1944, with the cooperation of the Hungarian government, the Germans decided to launch an initiative to remove "the country's million-odd Jews, the last significant population in Europe." "It will be a deportation surpassing every preceding operation in magnitude," Eichmann crowed. The author focuses on several families and individuals who struggled to stay alive. He follows their efforts to escape deportation as the noose gradually tightens. Some fled to forests. In other cases, righteous gentiles protected their Jewish neighbors by hiding them in attics, cellars, and crawl spaces.

The Envoy is Alex Kershaw's testimonial to Raul Wallenberg and his campaign to save the Jews of Hungary from extermination by Nazi Germany in 1944. Best-selling author Kershaw dramatically pulls the reader into the diabolical campaign of Adolf Eichmann to send more than 250,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. With the nail-biting suspense of a winning novelist, Kershaw uses solid research and anecdotal data to show how it felt to be just one step ahead of the SS and their cruel Hungarian proxies, the Arrow Cross. Based upon the latest information from survivors, international archives, personal interviews and multiple records, The Envoy is a brilliant examination of the rescue of Hungarian Jews near the end of the Holocaust, led by the brave Swiss diplomat, Raul Wallenberg. Kershaw gives the reader a fiery collection of facts as explained in detail by survivors and records, woven into a thrilling and detailed account of Wallenberg's courageous efforts to save thousands Jewish families from certain death. Kershaw's meticulous research opens a comprehensive analysis of Adolph Eichmann and his desperate need to fulfill Hitler's command to make Europe Judenrein. We learn that the chain-smoking Nazi leader was compelled to do anything that would endear himself to The Fuehrer. In this case, it was the destruction of the Jews of Hungary. Kershaw describes how Eichmann poured himself into the task with gusto. By 1944, most of the Jews of Europe had already been shot and buried or gassed to death in a Nazi death camp. Only the Jewish families of Hungary remained alive. Eichmann's job was to send them as

quickly as possible to Auschwitz, for Special Treatment.

As the Third Reich trembled and collapsed, Adolf Eichmann vowed to finish carrying out the Nazi's horrific Final Solution-to cleanse Hungary of her remaining Jewish population. Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat posted to Budapest, would become famous for his exhaustive efforts to save these, the last Jews, not only of Hungary, but of Europe. In this work of non-fiction, Alex Kershaw recounts the story of several people who worked to subvert Eichmann's plans, but his focus is principally on Wallenberg, the man who acted more selflessly and saved more lives than any other. Because I have long been passionate about the story of Raoul Wallenberg, I think that I might have expected more than this book could realistically deliver. Kershaw's research can certainly not be faulted. The reader is given plenty of details to become a fervent admirer of Mr. Wallenberg, and like every good historian, Kershaw employs a vast cast of first person accounts and other primary source materials. But for me the deluge of facts washes away the humanity of the story. Adolf Eichmann told Raoul Wallenberg that one hundred deaths are a catastrophe, but one thousand deaths are a statistic. So many events are skated over so quickly that its effect becomes desensitizing; I needed Kershaw to go deeper, to draw me into the grievous depths of a few stories. This story cries out for narrative non-fiction full of soul-felt catastrophe but delivers statistics. This book was not on my reading list; I picked up the audio version because one of my favorite narrators, George Guidall, did the reading. While not my favorite of Guidall's works, I think his gentle, fluid delivery did much to salvage the bald prose.

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