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Polish Officer Says:

WALLENBERG IS ALIVE

"I saw Raoul Wallenberg many times in prisons in the Soviet Union between 1952 and 1959. It was a cell mate, an author who told about him for the first time - a naive and noble Swede, as he said - who could not understand why he had been sentenced for espionage."

This is what Abraham Kalinski, an Israeli citizen, says in a telephone interview with DN from New York. Kalinski spent 15 years in Soviet prisons until he was released in 1959, and during all of the fifties, he and Wallenberg followed each other in different prisons for political prisoners.

The Soviet authorities, however, say that Wallenberg died in the Lyubyanka prison in Moscow in 1947.

The first time Abraham Kalinski heard about Wallenberg was in 1951 or 1952 in the prison in Verchney Uralsk, which he himself describes as "a luxury prison for political prisoners." It was here he got a new cell mate who told about the "naive Swede."

Kalinski himself got to see Wallenberg when the political prisoners in Verchney Uralsk were transferred to a prison in Siberia - the Alexandrovskiy Center in the Irkutsk region. This was in 1953 after Stalin's death, and the prison in Verchney Uralsk had to be emptied to make room for the assistants of the overthrown Security Chief Beria.

Kalinski, who was an important political prisoner, was transported with special escorts, while the other prisoners traveled in freight cars. Kalinski says that he saw Wallenberg through a window, dressed in a brown quilted jacket.

Wallenberg allegedly was in Alexandrovskiy Center until 1955, when he was transferred to the prison in Vladimir. Kalinski heard from another fellow prisoner that Wallenberg had been transported there.

Kalinski himself was in Vladimir where he sat in cell No. 21 in block No. 2. And he soon heard from a Georgian, Simon Gogobridze, that Wallenberg was in the same block in cell No. 23. Kalinski says that he has seen Wallenberg through a window when he promenaded in the yard.

"He walked together with Mamulov, who was one of Beria's assistants, and with Shariya who had been secretary of the Central Committee in Georgia," Kalinski says. They were the ones whom I actually was looking at, but in that way I got to see Wallenberg too."

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Kalinski had heard Wallenberg's story from his cell mate, the author, in the prison in Verchney Uralsk already.

The last trace that Kalinski has of Wallenberg in the Soviet Union is from 1967. In 1968 he met his former cell mate from Vladimir - Simon Gogoberidze - who was released in 1967. Kalinski looked Gogoberidze up in Tiflis in Georgia; they talked about old fellow prisoners, and Gogoberidze said that Wallenberg was still there when he left the prison.

Kalinski himself did not realize that Wallenberg was a big political case until 1976 when he emigrated to Israel. It was some months ago when the well-known Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal explained that they ought to stop the Moscow Olympic Games if the Soviet Union did not release Raoul Wallenberg.

"I read about Wallenberg and that he had been in Budapest, and I had the name somewhere in my head. So I contacted the authorities who sent me to the Swedish Embassy in Tel Aviv, and there I explained about my encounters with Wallenberg. This was in November last year.

That conversation in the Swedish Embassy was evaluated as so interesting by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they contacted Kalinski who had by then been able to go to the U.S.A. Kalinski met Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Leif Leifland and Head of Department Sven Hirdman in New York on 20 December last year.

The information that Kalinski gave about the Vladimir prison was in accordance with other information that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had collected about Wallenberg. In 1959 the Swedish Government sent a memorandum to the Soviet authorities and asked them to investigate the case on basis of the new information provided by witnesses. Because at that time they had a number of prisoners in Vladimir who had said that they had had knocking contact (sic) with Wallenberg.

And on 3 January this year the Swedish Government sent a report to the Soviet authorities, requesting renewed investigation of Wallenberg's fate.

In this there also was the information that Wallenberg allegedly was alive as late as in 1975. He had been seen by a prisoner in the Butyrki prison's sick ward.

That piece of information also came from Kalinski, but just indirectly. Because he had heard from a Russian emigrant, now living in Israel, who had had contact with his father by phone. The father, who was still in the Soviet Union, had just been released from the prison and had said that he had met a Swede who had been imprisoned for thirty years there, in the sick ward.

Why does Kalinski think that it may have been Wallenberg?

"Why shouldn't it have been? There are no other Swedes in Soviet prisons - except for Erik Andersson, and he is crazy (sic); I have met him (Andersson is a person who is mentioned in Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago). I can tell you that those who survive prisons live for a long time - just remember Vera Figner and others. And Wallenberg has never been in any camp. He did not place foreign prisoners in camps.

"In prisons there isn't as hard work, there is less hunger, there it is easier to survive. From what I heard, the person who was seen in Butyrki was in good health. The sick ward is for light sicknesses, but prisoners from different places come there.

"And Wallenberg isn't old - he would have been 63 years old then."

Abraham Kalinski himself is a Pole and was envoy in the Soviet Ministry of Defense as a representative of the Polish Army in Moscow during the war. It was as such that he was arrested in 1944. Later he became a Soviet citizen and still lived in the city of Vladimir after he was released in 1959.

"But ever since that day I tried to get out of the Soviet Union. And in 1976 I succeeded in emigrating legally. Now I live in Haifa."

Disa Hastad

Raoul Wallenberg was born in 1912, so he would have been 67 years old today. Raoul Wallenberg was sent by the Swedish Government to Budapest in 1944 to save the Hungarian Jews from annihilation. During his stay at the Swedish Legation he saved approximately 100,000 Jews by giving them Swedish aliens passports or placing them under the protection of the Embassy.

He was arrested in January 1945 by the Soviet authorities in Budapest.

The Soviet authorities at first explained in January and February

DN BACKGROUND

1945 that Wallenberg had been put under Russian protection - but later they became silent, and the Soviet authorities denied that they had any knowledge of Wallenberg.

It lasted until 1957 before the Soviet authorities admitted officially that Wallenberg had been in Soviet prisons - but that he had died in the Moscow prison Lyubvanka in 1947 from a heart attack.

The Swedish Government considered this information unsatisfactory, however, and explained that they reserved the right to make new inquiries if new information should come out. And such information has come all the time; in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs they have received and processed numerous tips, but most of them have turned out to be false.

One piece of information that they do believe, however, was the one that Professor Nanna Svartz got on a visit to Moscow in 1961 - that Wallenberg was in a mental hospital in the Soviet Union.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been reproached for having reacted too late on the fall of Wallenberg. If they had started in 1945 already, they might perhaps have gotten a result. The official petitions were made in 1957, 1959, and 1965.