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File

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THE SWEDES SACRIFICED WALLEBERG FILE

Seven Volumes of Classified Documents That Were Released Yesterday Reveal Swedish Passiveness in the Raoul Wallenberg Case

By Jens Thomsen

The date was 14 June 1946. The place: The reception room for foreign diplomats in the Kremlin.

"When we entered, Stalin rose at the end of the large conference table. Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Losovski sat next to him. Stalin, dressed in marshal uniform with the star of the Victory Order on his chest, stepped toward me, stretched his hand out, and said in his low, but distinct, voice, "Stalin..."

That is how the Swedish Government's emissary to Moscow, Staffan Soderblom, described his meeting with Joseph Stalin in a secret report to the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was the first time that the Russian dictator heard about the vanished Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg - officially from Sweden.

Negligence bordering on cold indifference characterized the attitude toward the Wallenberg case of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The suspicion that Raoul Wallenberg's Swedish relatives have entertained for years that Raoul Wallenberg was sacrificed in favor of a good Swedish-Soviet relationship has been confirmed in the seven volumes of documents with a total of 1,900 pages that were released by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

Victim of Robbers...

After some pleasant phrases about his happiness over being in Moscow and greetings from the Swedish King and Prime Minister Albin Hansson, Staffan Soderblom gave his reason for being there - but not until Stalin asked him - and mentioned Raoul Wallenberg.

Stalin repeated the name, "Was Wallenberg his name?"

Soderblom, "Yes, Wallenberg."

Stalin wrote the name on a pad.

Soderblom said that Raoul Wallenberg disappeared in Budapest shortly after the Red Army's conquest of the city and was last seen in a car with Russian military personnel on his way to Debrecen, Hungary's temporary capital.

Stalin interjected, "You do know, don't you, that we ordered that the Swedes must be protected?"

Soderblom, "Yes, and I personally am convinced that Wallenberg has been a victim of an accident or robbers..."

The Soviets Wanted to Negotiate

At that time, while Staffan Soderblom was exchanging compliments with Joseph Stalin, Raoul Wallenberg was in the Lubyanka Prison in Moscow where his Russian NKVD interrogators could say fairly truthfully that the Swedish authorities did not consider his disappearance important and did nothing to save him.

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It appears from the released documents, which originally were classified secret until 1995, that the Russians were ready to negotiate about Raoul Wallenberg's release in 1946 and 1947 already. This opinion was held by Sweden's Charge d'Affaires in Moscow, Ulf Barch-Holst, among others, but does not seem to have been shared by Stockholm. Barch-Holst, who died in 1962, wrote in numerous dispatches that not one clue in the Wallenberg case should remain unexplored. But yet both the Swedish Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refrained from taking any actual steps to save Wallenberg during the first critical post-war years.

There is nothing in the documents, which comprise only 10-15% of the total material about Wallenberg, that explains Raoul Wallenberg's fate in Soviet imprisonment. The documents show that in 1945 and 1946 they mainly discussed in Stockholm how to word the letter about Wallenberg to the Russians. There is not one word in the documents of what was learned later, namely that Raoul Wallenberg was interrogated in Lyubyanka and Butyrskaya prisons in Moscow during those years and even was tormented with information to the effect that Sweden was not interested in his case. Information to the effect that the Soviet Ambassador in Stockholm, Madame Kollontay, had said in 1945 already that Wallenberg was "under Russian protection" is also missing. She mentioned this in a conversation with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Gunther and added that Wallenberg was fine. Madame Kollontay had apparently said the same to Wallenberg's mother a couple of months earlier.

It does not appear from the released documents whether the Swedes have used Madame Kollontay's information in their letters to Moscow at any time.

Only one man in the Swedish Foreign Service, Charge d'Affaires Ulf Barch-Holst, seems to have made energetic efforts on behalf of his compatriot with the Soviet authorities. In December 1946 Barch-Holst asked a Soviet government official whether an exchange of Wallenberg could be possible. Barch-Holst suggested in his report to Stockholm about this conversation that the Government should attempt to get an official Russian answer to such a suggestion. But this was not done either.

It was not until 1957 that the Soviet authorities finally admitted that Raoul Wallenberg had been arrested. But it was added that he had died from a heart attack in the prison on 17 July 1947.

As an additional illustration of the Swedish authorities' naivness and indifference in the Wallenberg case, the Swedish Wallenberg Foundation refers to a meeting with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Osten Unden. When the assumption that Wallenberg was a prisoner in the Soviet Union was mentioned to Unden, the Minister answered, "But then do you think that Vishinsky is lying?"

"Yes, we think so," Wallenberg's half-brother, Guy von Dardel, answered, after which Unden red-faced and visibly agitated exclaimed, "That is unheard of, that is unheard of," and left the meeting.

Wallenberg's Mother Bitter

Three of the released documents give the background of Wallenberg's work in Budapest, the persecution of the Jews and the Swedish rescue actions, but without any full explanation of Wallenberg's diplomatic status. There are some indications that the Russian suspicion of Wallenberg was based on a theory that Wallenberg had spied for the Americans.

An official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm describes a meeting with Raoul Wallenberg's mother, Mrs. von Dardel, in a document dated 4 March 1947. Among other things, he said,

"At a meeting that lasted for more than an hour Mrs. von Dardel complained bitterly over the coolness and lack of enthusiasm that reigned in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in connection with the search for her son. She was especially angry over "the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assuming at all times that Raoul Wallenberg was dead." Both the envoy Assarson and Staffan Soderblom had expressly said to her that she should not count on her son being alive."

The meeting with Mrs. von Dardel took place four months before the date when Wallenberg, according to Soviet information, died in the Lubyanka prison in Moscow.

Suggested Peace Prize to Wallenberg

Danish SS volunteers released from Soviet prisoner-of-war camps have also been drawn into the search during the years. But none has been able to give positive information about Wallenberg. In December 1947 the Swedish Raoul Wallenberg Action tried to persuade the Norwegian "Storting's" Nobel Committee to give Raoul Wallenberg the Peace Prize in 1948. In the appeal they quoted a statement by Professor Albert Einstein,

"I would find it natural if Raoul Wallenberg were given Nobel's Peace Prize, and I shall be happy to give you permission to mention this in an appeal for this."

But Wallenberg did not get the Peace Prize. Instead it went to the Quaker movement in Great Britain and the U.S.A., in 1949 to the British John Boyd Orr, and later to Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito.

Despite the continually growing stacks of documents in the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Wallenberg was more or less forgotten.

Svenskerneofrede Wallenberg

Hemmeligstemplede dokumenter i syv bind, der blev frigivet i går, afslører svensk passivitet i Raoul Wallenberg-sagen

AF
Jens Thomsen

Datert den 14. juni 1948.
Sted: Stockholm.
For udvalgte diplomater i Kriget.

"De vi her ind, er alle svenske og der er ingen af dem som har været med i den svenske regering eller i den svenske udenrigsministeriets tjeneste i Kriget. Men der er en svensk diplomat som har været med i den svenske udenrigsministeriets tjeneste i Kriget."

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