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Article by Sven Strömberg:

Kissinger stopped U.S. action for Raoul Wallenberg

An official American action in Moscow to throw some light upon the Wallenberg affair was stopped as late as six years ago. The then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger suddenly in November 1973 said "no" to new actions and diplomatic pressures on the Soviet Union. The reason was that he was irritated about the Swedish criticism against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The action, that had been well prepared, could have given the definite answer to the unanswered questions around the disappeared Swedish diplomat. This is all clear from classified documents in Washington that Sven Strömberg has studied.

Raoul Wallenberg was in the late 1973 being discussed a top political level in Washington. Detailed instructions were written down on a telex tape, and it only had to be fed into a teleprinter. The American Ambassador to Moscow was to be given a direct order to intervene in the Raoul Wallenberg affair.

A letter to the now deceased Mrs. Maj von Dardel, Raoul Wallenberg's mother, was written at the same time. It was dated July 26, 1973.

The letter contained far-going promises for help in her ardent attempts to determine her son's fate. But the letter was never signed, and it was never sent to Sweden. It was placed among other background material about Wallenberg together with the unsigned order to the Moscow Embassy in State Department archives. On top of the document it says: "Disapproved by Kissinger - 10/15/73.

So it was thus Kissinger himself - once persecuted himself as a Jew by the Nazis - who decided this matter and went against his own experts on the Soviet Union and Sweden in the EUR division of the Department of State.

Kissinger's decision is one example of the irony of this entire affair. Because it is as a matter of fact Wallenberg's work with helping Jewish refugees is the main thread in all American communications about the missing Swede. And his work for the Jews was the main point in the plan which Kissinger rejected.

The American ties to Wallenberg's work in Hungary during the war were also strong and have been proven many times - not least through direct payments of American money to pay for Wallenberg's work.

But 1973, when the plans for American direct efforts were outlined in the Department of State in Washington, was not a good year for Sweden in the U.S. This was particularly true when it came to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon.

The extremely frustrated relations was a result of Sweden's increasingly critical stand against U.S. Vietnam policies. It has become known afterwards that most of the anger came from Henry Kissinger in person, who was especially insulted because of the allusions to Nazi-like crimes against Vietnam.

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It is remarkable that the Raoul Wallenberg affair at all was given such a detailed attention in Washington at this late date. This indicates a permanent interest within the Department of State and that a great deal remains to be said about this matter.

Against the background of this and the amount of material there is in U.S. archives about Raoul Wallenberg and his connections with WRB (War Refugee Board - President Roosevelt's large aid program for Jewish refugees in Europe) makes it even more regrettable that the official Sweden did not try harder to get help from the U.S.

Thorough studies in various archives (National Archives, Washington State Department Archives, ditto. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, and others) show that Wallenberg's work and disappearance as well as the efforts from Swedish authorities to determine his situation was carefully followed up in the U.S.

In the beginning of Raoul Wallenberg's absence, the U.S. offered to help in the search for him by using pressure in Moscow, but Sweden did not wish to take the U.S. up on the offer. The interest in Wallenberg was then at its peak and the case was carefully followed up by several secretaries in Roosevelt's cabinet.

It is thus completely conceivable that a joint Swedish-American diplomatic project could have been worked out to once and for all determine what had happened to Raoul Wallenberg.

The Department of State certainly had the interest and this interest might have been revived after Kissinger's resignation and the restored Swedish American relations.

Now it seems as if the case - in spite of a reawakened interest because of witnesses testifying that Wallenberg still was alive in 1975 - will be placed in the historic files through the Government's decision to release the Swedish Wallenberg archives.

The MFA says that the efforts to create full knowledge about Wallenberg's fate are to be continued, but every new request to the Soviet authorities get the same answer and follow the same vain pattern.

It should not be this way. With more of an effort the collective American Wallenberg picture should have been used to initiate a cooperation with the Americans.

The Freedom of Information Act is an excellent instrument for research in the U.S. By requesting in writing to study classified documents, otherwise highly confidential material can become available. It is up to each and everyone to make such research in American archives, and it is also this ~~EMM~~ method that was applied to obtain the information in this article.

In the same way it can now also be shown how Mrs. Maj von Dardel carried on her fight all alone in the U.S. with letters and calls. She was the person behind the final persuasion of the U.S. to intervene - which they would have done had it not been for Mr. Kissinger.

In a letter, where she also criticized the Swedish Government for its passivity, she turned in May 1973 to the Department of State and requested help. They were moved there by her long uncertainty and emphasized in particular the picture of the aging mother, more than 80 years old, who could not find peace until she knew what had happened to her son. In the letter, which was sent directly to Kissinger, but out of routine was handled by EUR, May von Dardal wrote the following among other things:

" Djursholm, May 4, 1973

Mr. Henry Kissinger:

I have with the greatest admiration followed your unflinching and successful fight for peace in the Far East. I now turn to you about my son Raoul Wallenberg, born in 1912. His father was a cousin of Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg, whom I suppose you know well.

In 1944, at the request of the then U.S. Ambassador to Sweden, Marshal Johnson, my son accepted EM as a Secretary at the Swedish Legation in Budapest to lead a rescue operation for Hungarian Jews, persecuted by the Nazis. Thanks to his successful efforts several thousand Jews were saved.

When the Soviet troops arrived in Budapest in January 1945, my son was taken prisoner by them, since they paradoxically enough believed he was a spy. He was brought to Moscow and imprisoned.

Repeated requests from Swedish authorities regarding my son's fate remained unanswered until August 18, 1947, when the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vysjinskij, in a memorandum explained that Raoul Wallenberg was not in the Soviet Union and must be considered killed during the fighting in Budapest or imprisoned by the Nazis.

Later on a number of repatriated prisoners assured us that they had been in contact with my son in various prisons in Moscow during the years 1945-1947. Their testimonies were transmitted to the Soviet Foreign Minister.

In a memorandum dated February 6, 1957 Foreign Minister Gromyko informed the Swedish authorities that they had found no trace of Raoul Wallenberg, but on the other hand they had found a document among the Lubjanka Prison files which referred to him.

The document, a hand-written report from July 17, 1947 and signed by the head of the prison hospital, Colonel Smoltsov, and transmitted to the then Minister for Domestic Soviet Security, Abakumov, declared that the prisoner Wallenberg had died during the night, probably from a heart attack. According to Gromyko's memorandum it must therefore be assumed that Wallenberg died in July 1947. With reference to this document both Chrustjev and Kosygin later on answered Swedish requests regarding my son that he was dead.

Several returning prisoners, however, assured that Raoul Wallenberg still was alive in Soviet prisons after 1947. A Soviet scientist said in 1961 that Raoul Wallenberg was at a Soviet mental hospital at the time. In spite of this the Swedish Government is presently unwilling to make additional requests at the Soviet authorities regarding my son.

I now ask you, who through your outstanding efforts have freed thousands of prisoners, to against the background of my tragic uncertainty about what really happened to my son after he was imprisoned, to inform me if you have a possibility to do something which could shed new light on my son's fate, and if he still is alive to bring him back to freedom.

With outmost respect,

Maj von Dardel Wallenberg."

On August 21, 1973 - nearly four months later - the letter reached Henry Kissinger. Attached was a classified memorandum where Mrs. von Dardel's viewpoints were commented and also including a detailed description of the entire Wallenberg case.

In this file there is also an unsigned letter to Maj von Dardel and a cable all ready to be teleaxed to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow ordering them to begin new investigations.

The classified documents also include a recommendation to Kissinger to approve the project and it was signed by five different political and diplomatic experts at various levels within the Department of State. It reads:

Confidential Memorandum to Henry A. Kissinger, The White House.

Subject: Letter to Mr. Kissinger re Raoul Wallenberg.

The attached letter and memorandum from Mrs. Fredrik von Dardel regarding her son, Raoul Wallenberg was sent to our Embassy in Stockholm with a request that it transmitted to letter to you. In her letter, Mrs. von Dardel asks you to make requests (presumably among the Soviet leaders) re her son.

He was a Swedish diplomat in Hungary and was captured in 1945 by Soviet authorities in Budapest. Despite the fact that the Swedish Government has made repeated efforts to determine Wallenberg's fate, the Soviet Government has maintained that Wallenberg died in a prison in Moscow on July 1947.

The Swedish Government has been unwilling to make additional requests about Wallenberg since 1965, in spite of the unsatisfactory answers from Soviet. As Mrs. von Dardel points out, her son went to Budapest in 1944 at the request of the then U.S. Ambassador to Sweden to lead a rescue operation for Hungarian Jews and his efforts saved thousands of Jews from death.

Since Mrs. von Dardel now is 80 years old and at poor health, she probably wishes to make one last attempt to determine her son's fate before she passes away. Considering the compassion one must feel in this case and the fact that the U.S. Government was behind Wallenberg's mission in Hungary, we are of the opinion that we ought to take a positive stand to Mrs. von Dardel's request and offer to make new inquiries at the Soviet Foreign Office without therefore giving her false hopes that this would lead anywhere.

Recommendation: that you approve the attached draft letter to Mrs. von Dardel and that it is signed by an officier at an appropriate level in State Department.

Thomas R. Pickering
Executive Secretary "

Among those who worked out this material was J. P. Owens at EUR/NE and Walter Stoessel at EUR.

The letter to Mrs. von Dardel which was enclosed was thus ready for signature and reads:

Dear Mrs. von Dardel

Dr. Henry Kissinger has asked me to reply to your letter and memorandum of May 4, 1973, in which you discuss your efforts to determine the fate of your son, Raoul Wallenberg, who has been missing since 1945.

First let me say that I sympathize deeply with your wish to find out definitely what has happened to your son. It is indeed tragic that so many years after the end of World War II your son's fate remains undetermined.

In view of the humanitarian nature of the case and your son's efforts on behalf of the Hungarian Jews during World War II, the United States Government is prepared to make inquiries regarding you son's fate of the Soviet Government through the American Embassy in Moscow. At such time as an answer is received, we will communicate it to you promptly. However, in view of the many years that have gone by since your son disappeared and earlier failures to provide further information about his fate, I must ask you not to be too optimistic regarding our possibilities of obtaining ~~HEH~~ more exact information about his case.

With my deepest sympathy for your suffering during all these years.

Respectfully,

..... July 26, 1973

So far the letter which never reached Mrs. von Dardel.

The cable from the Department of State in Washington to the Embassy in Moscow consisted of three parts, of which the first two explained the nature of the matter and the background to what has been described in the Department's memorandum to Kissinger. The last paragraph orders the U.S. Ambassador to contact the Foreign Office (in Moscow) and request available information about Wallenberg.

The cable had been prepared and was already typed on a telex tape to be fed to the telex system which connects the headquarters in Washington with the Embassy in Moscow.

Everything was thus ready to go. All it took was a formal OK by Kissinger for the Wallenberg case to have entered a new and possibly concluding phase. But Kissinger said "no".

And the question remains with just as many question marks as before: Why is the Raoul Wallenberg such a difficult mystery to solve???

This affair was mentioned on the TV news on Sunday as well as in Aftonbladet and Expressen.