

KISSINGER STOPPED US ACTION FOR RAOUL WALLENBERG

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Sven Strömberg, translated by G von Dardel)

An official American action in Moscow to disperse the mystery around Raoul Wallenberg was stopped as late as six years ago. Henry Kissinger, foreign minister at the time in November 1973 suddenly said no to new investigations and diplomatic pressure on the Soviet Union. The reason was that he was irritated by the Swedish criticism of Vietnam. The action which was thoroughly prepared could have given the definite answer to the mystery around the lost Swedish diplomat. This is shown by secret documents in Washington which have been studied by SVEN STRÖMBERG.

Raoul Wallenberg was at the end of 1973 the object of a treatment at the highest political level in Washington. Detailed instructions were written on a telex strip which had only to be fed into a teleprinter. It contained the order for the American Embassy in Moscow to intervene directly in the case Raoul Wallenberg.

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

The letter contained farreaching promises of help in her earnest attempts to ascertain the fate of her son. But the letter was never signed and it was neither sent to Sweden. Instead it was together with the background of the Wallenberg case and the also unsigned order for Moscow relegated to the archives of the American State Department. On top of the document there are two short lines: Rejected by Kissinger 10/15 1973.

It was thus Kissinger himself, once a Jew persecuted by the Nazis, who rapidly decided the matter and went against his own experts on Soviet affairs and on Sweden in the European department of the State Department.

Kissingers decision is an example of the irony of history. Because just the work of Wallenberg to save Jewish refugees goes as a red thread through all American correspondence about the missing Swede. And his action for the Jews was the main motivation for the plan which was rejected by Kissinger.

WAS FINANCED FROM THE USA

The American connections of Wallenbergs action in Hungary during the war were very strong and have been shown many times - not the least by the direct payments which were made of American money to finance the work of Wallenberg.

But in 1973 when the plans for American investigations were made within the State Department in Washington it was not a good year for Sweden in the US. Particularly not when Foreign Minister Henry Kissinger or president Richard Nixon were concerned.

The extremely irritated connections were a consequence of the more and more acute Swedish criticism of the American policy in Vietnam. It has afterwards emerged that most of the wrath against Sweden originated just from Henry Kissinger, who was particularly insulted by the reference to Nazi-like crimes against Vietnam.

It is noteworthy that the case of Raoul Wallenberg at such a late period got such a thorough treatment at all in Washington. It indicates a lasting interest within the State Department and that much is still to be said on the matter.

Against the background of all this and the large amount of material which exists in American archives on Raoul Wallenberg and his connections with WRB (War Refugee Board, the large relief program of president Roosevelt for the Jewish refugees in Europe) it is event more regrettable that greater Swedish official efforts were not made to get the help of USA.

Thorough studies in different archives (National Archives, Washington, State department Archives, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N Y, etc) show that the action of Wallenberg and his disappearance and the attempts of the Swedish authorities to ascertain his situation were followed attentively in the US.

WEAK SWEDISH EFFORTS

Shortly after Raoul Wallenberg disappeared USA offered to help in the investigations by putting pressure in Moscow but this was declined by Sweden. Interest in Wallenberg was then at its peak and the matter was attentively followed by several ministers in the cabinet of Roosevelt.

It is therefore completely conceivable that a joint Swedish-American diplomatic project could have been elaborated in order to ascertain once and for all the fate of Raoul Wallenberg.

The interest in the American State Department existed and could certainly have been revived after Henry Kissinger left and the Swedish American relations were restored.

It now seems as if the case - in spite of the newly awakened interest - by testimonies that Wallenberg was still alive in 1975 - will be put aside as history by virtue of the decision of the government to release the Wallenberg files.

It is true that the Swedish Foreign Office claims that the efforts to clarify completely his fate will be continued, but every new request at the Soviet authorities gets the same answer and follows the same futile pattern.

It ought not to be thus. With greater efforts the entire American Wallenberg background could have been considered and used to initiate a collaboration with the Americans.

The rules for declassification, the "Freedom of Information Act", is an excellent instrument for research in American files. On written request to study secret documents otherwise strictly confidential material can become accessible. Anybody is free to make such research in American archives, and it is also this method which has led to the facts which are now published.

THE MOTHER FOUGHT ALONE

In the same way it can now be shown how Mrs Maj von Dardel fought alone her fight in the US by requests and letters. It was she who was behind the final persuasion of the US government to intervene - which it would have done but for Henry Kissinger.

In a letter where she criticizes the Swedish government for inaction she turned in May 1973 to the American State Department with a request for help. One was there touched by her long lasting lack of information and underlined particularly the image of the aged mother, who can not get peace until she knows the fate of her son. In the letter which is addressed directly to Henry Kissinger, but which, routinely, was handled by the European office, Mrs von Dardel wrote, in short:

Djursholm, May 4th 1973.

Mr Henry Kissinger,

I have with the greatest admiration followed your patient and successful struggle for peace in the Far East. I turn now to you concerning my son, Raoul Wallenberg, born in 1912. His father was the

cousin of Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg, of whom you probably know.

In 1944, on the request of the American ambassador in Sweden at the time, Hershel Johnson, my son accepted to conduct a salvage operation for the Hungarian Jews which were persecuted by the Nazis, as secretary at the Swedish legation in Budapest. By his efforts several thousand Jews were saved from annihilation.

When the Soviet troops arrived in Budapest in January 1945 my son was taken prisoner by them, as, paradoxically, they believed him to be a spy. He was brought to Moscow to prison.

In spite of repeated request by the Swedish authorities concerning information on the fate of my son these were left unanswered until August 18 1947, when the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vysjinski, declared that Raoul Wallenberg was not in the Soviet Union and must be considered as having been killed during the fights in Budapest or been taken prisoner by the Nazis.

Later a number of repatriated prisoners ascertained that they had been in contact with my son in various prisons in Moscow during the years 1945 to 1947. These testimonies were communicated to the Soviet Foreign minister.

In a memorandum dated the 6th of February 1957 Foreign minister Gromyko informed the Swedish authorities that they had found no trace of Raoul Wallenberg, but that on the other hand had a document among the files in the Ljubjanka prison in Moscow, which referred to him.

The document, a handwritten report of July 17 1947, signed by the chief of the prison hospital, colonel Smoltsov, and addressed to the then minister for Internal Security of the Soviet Union, Abakumov, stated that the prisoner Wallenberg, who was known to Abakumov had died during the night, probably from an infarctus of the heart. Following the memorandum of Gromyko it must therefore be assumed that Wallenberg died in July 1947. Referring to this document both Chrustjov and Kosyging answered later Swedish requests for information concerning my son by saying that he was dead.

Several prisoners who have returned assure however that Raoul Wallenberg was alive in Soviet prisons after 1947. A Soviet scientist said 1961 that Raoul Wallenberg was in a Soviet Mental hospital at that time. The Swedish government is, in spite of all this, at present unwilling to make further requests for information from the Soviet authorities concerning the fate of my son.

I now ask you, who by virtue of your extraordinary efforts have liberated thousands of prisoners, against the background of my tragic ignorance of what really happened to my son after he was arrested, to inform me if you have the possibility to undertake something which can throw new light on my son's fate, and if he is still alive to return him to liberty.

Very sincerely yours

Maj von Dardel-Wallenberg

FIVE EXPERTS

On August 21 1973 - almost four months later - the letter reached Henry Kissinger. It was then accompanied by a confidential memorandum with comments on the viewpoints of Mrs von Dardel, and also with a detailed summary of the whole Wallenberg case.

In this file there is further an unsigned letter to Maj von Dardel and a telegram ready for transmission to the embassy of the United States in Moscow with an order to start new investigations.

This confidential file contains a recommendation to Kissinger to approve the project and is signed by five different diplomatic and political experts at different levels inside the State Depart-

ment. It reads as follows:

CONFIDENTIAL. Memorandum to Henry A Kissinger, the White House.

Subject: Letter to Mr Kissinger concerning Raoul Wallenberg.

The attached letter and memorandum from Mrs Fredrik von Dardel concerning her son, Raoul Wallenberg was sent to our embassy in Stockholm with request that it should be transmitted to you. In her letter Mrs von Dardel asks you to make requests for information (presumably from the Soviet leaders) concerning the fate of her son.

He was Swedish diplomat in Hungary and was arrested in 1945 by the Soviet authorities in Budapest. In spite of the fact that the Swedish government in the course of the years has made repeated efforts to clarify Wallenberg's fate, the Soviet government has maintained that Wallenberg died in a prison in Moscow in July 1947.

Since 1965 the Swedish government has been unwilling to make further inquiries after Wallenberg, in spite of the unsatisfactory answers from the Soviet Union. As Mrs von Dardel underlines in her letter, her son went to Budapest in 1944 on the request of the then US ambassador in Sweden to conduct a salvage operation for the Hungarian Jews and his efforts saved thousands of Jews from death.

As Mrs von Dardel now is 80 years old and of bad health, she probably wants to make a last attempt to ascertain the fate of her son before she dies. Against the background of the compassion one must feel in this case and the fact that the American government was the driving force behind Wallenberg's mission in Hungary, we consider 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 thereby giving her false hopes that these attempts will be successful.

Recommendation: that you approve the enclosed draft for a letter to Mrs von Dardel and that it is signed by a State Department official at a suitable level.

Thomas R Pickering
Executive Secretary

Among the persons who had elaborated this material was J P Owens at the Section for Northern Europe and Walter Stoessel at the European Office.

The letter to Mrs von Dardel, which was enclosed, ready to be signed, reads as follows:

Dear Mrs von Dardel,

Dr Henry Kissinger has asked me to answer your letter and memorandum of May 4th 1973, where you describe your efforts to clarify what has happened to your son Raoul Wallenberg, who is missing since 1945. Let me first state that I wholeheartedly support your desire to know definitely what happened to your son. It is extremely tragic that your son's fate should still be unclear so many years after the end of the last war.

Against the background of the humanitarian nature of the case and your son's efforts for the Hungarian Jews during the last war the United States government is prepared to ask the Soviet government, via the American embassy in Moscow, what has happened to your son. When an answer is obtained we will transmit it to you immediately. But considering the long period which has passed since your son disappeared and the previous unsuccessful attempts to get further information about his fate, I must ask you not to be too optimistic about the possibilities to obtain more exact information in his case.

With the greatest compassion for your sufferings during all these years.

Very sincerely yours

26.7.1973

