

“A Memorial more durable than Marble”

For 65 years, Guy von Dardel fought to know what happened to his brother, the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg

Last year, the world commemorated the 100th anniversary of the birth of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews from certain death at the hands of the Nazi regime in World War II. In January 1945, Wallenberg himself became a victim when he was arrested in Budapest by advancing Soviet troops. He later disappeared without a trace in a Moscow prison and the full circumstances of his fate have never been revealed

On December 10, the Mauermuseum of Berlin will honor Raoul Wallenberg’s siblings Guy von Dardel and Nina Lagergren with the “Rainer Hildebrandt Medal” to honor their more than six-decade long fight for their brother.

While Nina Lagergren’s work to preserve Raoul Wallenberg’s legacy has received broad international attention, Guy von Dardel’s efforts to trace his brother’s path through Soviet captivity are not quite as well known.

Guy Fredrik von Dardel, was born in Sweden on August 26, 1919. Like his half-brother Raoul - who was seven years older - and his younger sister Nina, he was raised in the capital city of Stockholm. During the 1940's, Guy attended the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), where he also completed his doctorate in physics in 1953.

A year later, he and his young family moved to Geneva, where he became one of the pioneers in building up the world’s largest particle physics laboratory, the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).



Guy von Dardel at CERN, Switzerland

Guy worked there as a leading expert in experimental physics until his retirement. By 1965, he had been appointed professor of Elementary Particle Physics at the University of Lund in Southern Sweden.

He oversaw groundbreaking experiments in both Lund and at CERN, measuring the lifecycles and properties of elusive particles such as the pi-mesons, bosons and quarks. In 1975, he was elected a member of the Swedish Royal Academy of Science.

Guy was not only a gifted engineer who specialized in the design and application of complex instrumentation used in high energy physics, but he also possessed an unusually creative mind. He always knew how to consider a problem and pose clearly focused questions.

Not surprisingly, this is precisely how he approached the mystery of his brother's fate. When he finally had the opportunity in 1989 to enter the country in which Raoul had disappeared, Guy was ready.

He worked closely with confidential Russian contacts in Geneva and a year later he managed to put together the first 'International Committee to Determine the Fate of Raoul Wallenberg' to work directly in what was then still the Soviet Union. It must be remembered how unprecedented and unusual such an undertaking really was in 1990, even with the helpful assistance of the Swedish and Russian Foreign Ministries.

This first 'International Committee' accomplished many important breakthroughs. For instance, it received permission to examine a registry of prisoners in Vladimir prison - one of the Soviet Union's most important isolation prisons - a project that continues to provide important information for researchers to this day. Two members of the Committee, Arsenii Roginsky and Vadim Birstein found archival documents with the names of Raoul Wallenberg and his driver

Vilmos Langfelder, proving that Wallenberg and Langfelder, were, in fact, kept in Moscow Lubyanka and Lefortovo prisons from 1945 to 1947.

In October 1991, on the suggestion of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, an official Swedish-Russian Working Group was formed to address "the remaining questions" related to Wallenberg's disappearance, "in order to be able to remove the matter from the agenda of Soviet-Swedish relations".

In this new group, Guy and his team of researchers faced an uphill battle right from the start. At the first meeting on April 24, 1991, Valentin Nikiforov, Deputy Foreign Minister, one of three Soviet officials present (Valerii Lebedev, deputy KGB chairman, and Leonid Sizov, deputy MVD Minister also attended) stated that "is our considered opinion that *the fact of the death of Wallenberg in 1947 is irrefutable, and that nothing is to be gained by further investigation of his fate* [authors' emphasis]."

Therefore, the Russian side made it clear that it was determined to hold to the official Soviet version - first voiced by Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in February 1957 (the so-called "Gromyko Memorandum") - that Wallenberg died on July 17, 1947 in Lubyanka Prison and that the outcome of the new investigation should be a foregone conclusion. The only concession Russian officials did agree to in private discussions was the possibility that Raoul Wallenberg did not die of a heart attack - as had been claimed in the report by the Lubyanka Prison doctor A.L. Smoltsov in 1947, but that he was murdered.

Still, thanks to the opening provided by the appointment of the then Interior Minister Vadim Bakatin, who had supported the work of the first Wallenberg Committee, as chairman of the KGB and the fall of the Soviet Union in December 1991, important progress was made with the release of previously unknown, but, unfortunately, censored records about Raoul Wallenberg's incarceration in Moscow. At the same time, the last Soviet Foreign Minister Boris Pankin provided access to important collection of documents kept at the Soviet Foreign Ministry (MID) Archive.

However, the activities of the Working Group quickly turned into a slow moving and inefficient question-and-answer process with the Russian side. Swedish officials embraced this format and as a result, researchers had almost no direct access to the original documentation.

There were some noteworthy exceptions, such as the project to scan and analyze the entire prisoner card registry of Vladimir Prison (led by independent consultants to the Working Group, Dr. Marvin Makinen and Ari Kaplan), as well as a limited prisoner file review (conducted by another consultant, Susan Mesinai). Nevertheless, the truly relevant collections, for instance, in the Russian intelligence archive, remained inaccessible or heavily censored. The investigation consequently rarely met the standards of an independent or transparent scholarly review.

In 2001 the Swedish-Russian Working Group ceased its work with a number of important findings but without any conclusive result.

Over the next ten years, we continued an extensive correspondence with the central archive of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB). Unfortunately, this discussion too was marred by the FSB's failure to allow an uncensored review of key documentation.

In an interview in May 2012, Lt. General Khristoforov, a professional intelligence officer and currently head of the FSB Directorate of Registration and Archival Collections, who controls the release of information from the FSB archives, rejected allegations that the FSB might be hiding documents related to Wallenberg's fate. He declared that the FSB "has no reason to withhold any information about the Swedish diplomat from the public eye."

But here is little doubt that highly relevant documents are still available, in the archives of FSB and other Russian archives.

In 2009, in response to one of our inquiries, FSB archivists announced that an unidentified "Prisoner No.7" who had been interrogated for sixteen and a half hours on July 23, 1947 -- six days after Wallenberg's alleged death - was "with great likelihood" Raoul Wallenberg. They did not, however, allow, and still have not permitted to inspect the record itself, nor did they provide a full, uncensored copy of the page that would allow researchers to verify the information.

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				час.	мин.	час.	мин.	
68								
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70								
71	Валленберг	Корняцкий	3/682	2	15	18	50	Странен
72	Катона	Корняцкий	3/682	2	15	18	30	Странен
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Heavily censored page from the Lubyanka prison interrogation register, July 23, 1947. It shows the interrogations for Raoul Wallenberg's driver, Vilmos Langfelder and Langfelder's cellmate, Alexander Katona, lasting sixteen and a half hours. An as yet unidentified "Prisoner no. 7" was allegedly interrogated at the same time, but researchers have not been allowed to verify the entry. None of the men personally signed the interrogation register, as was customary.

The FSB also recently disclosed that, contrary to the previous official Russian claims, large parts of the investigative documentation for Wallenberg's longtime cellmate, the German diplomat Willy Rödel, has been preserved. This is an indication that similar documentation was not only created for Raoul Wallenberg but may well survive (at least partly) to this day.

By the way, FSB officials have never supplied satisfactory answers concerning the system of numbering secret prisoners, especially in the Vladimir Prison, nor have they provided full information about all Swedish prisoners who were incarcerated there in the period from 1947 – 1972.

In the spring of 2012, the Russian MID finally released a number of previously classified ciphered cables to and from the Soviet Embassy in Stockholm from 1945-47 which had been withheld from the Swedish-Russian Working Group. They confirmed researchers' long held view that additional sets of highly secret materials continue to remain classified in the Russian archives, in particular, in particular in the Russian Foreign Intelligence (SVR) Archive.

This archive, apparently, also contains never released Soviet intelligence reports from Sweden and Hungary concerning Raoul Wallenberg's contacts and activities in Budapest. These materials could provide important insights into the reasons why Stalin chose to arrest Wallenberg and possibly also into his decision not to release him.

Many other important unanswered questions remain. For example, back in 1989, Soviet officials had handed over a collection of Raoul Wallenberg's personal effects to Guy von Dardel and his sister Nina Lagergre, including Wallenberg's diplomatic passport, his prisoner card from Lubyanka Prison (filled in upon Wallenberg and Langfelder's arrival in 1945), his address book, banknotes in various denomination and other items.

The Soviet representatives claimed at the time that these belongings had been found just a few weeks earlier in a "plastic bag" in the KGB archive auxiliary building which housed some old file boxes and office supplies.



Raoul Wallenberg's siblings Guy von Dardel and Nina Lagergren, 1989

The alleged discovery is extremely hard to believe. According to the existing rules of the late 1940s, the released documents should have been kept in separate files in the MGB (later KGB) archives and should not have been stored together with the banknotes and valuables.

It seems instead that the explanation that the personal items were found in a bag may have been given to avoid questions about the collections in which they had been kept.

Russian archivists also showed Wallenberg's relatives the original 'Smoltsov Report'. Neither the KGB, nor its successor, the FSB, has ever explained in what archival file this report was

supposedly discovered [apparently in 1956, during the preparation of the Gromyko memorandum] nor has anyone ever provided a full account of the origin of this crucial document.

Until independent historians with professional knowledge of the history of the Soviet secret services receive unhindered access to the original, uncensored files kept in the secret FSB and Presidential Archives, there is little hope that full information about Raoul Wallenberg will emerge.

As for Guy von Dardel, neither Swedish nor Russian officials could ever quite figure out what to do with a man whose quiet insistence disguised a will of granite. Guy had no ulterior motives, no hidden agenda, no angles and no fear. Where his detractors saw only a nuisance and a stubborn old man, those of us who had the privilege of working with him recognized a person driven by more than a deep affection for his missing sibling.

Guy considered the search for Raoul a sacred duty, both to his brother as well as to his parents who had led the campaign until their deaths in the late 1970's.



Guy von Dardel with his father Fredrik von Dardel, on an excursion at Carcasson

In this commitment Guy was as uncompromising as his brother was in saving the Jews of Budapest.

From the moment of Raul's disappearance in 1945, he never let up. He forged friends and alliances from all walks of life and scientific disciplines to help advance his brother's cause.

In 1984, in a daring, precedent setting case, he sued the Soviet Union in a U.S. court, alleging that Soviet confinement of Raoul Wallenberg had violated international law.

He won in the first round, with the judge ordering the Soviets to produce the full facts about Wallenberg's fate within sixty day and to pay \$39 million in restitution. But the verdict was later set aside, due to American fears that forcing the Soviet Union to comply with the ruling would have done irreparable harm to the U.S.-Soviet relations.

Guy also did not hesitate to request more in-depth answers from Sweden. In the mid-1990's, he was one of the first researchers to apply for access to the newly opened records of the Swedish Secret Police (SÄPO) and the Wallenberg family archives. Ironically, only SÄPO permitted him a review.

The decades of fight, however, took a heavy toll. With characteristic stoicism, Guy endured but the stress showed itself in subtle ways. Once, in a moment of a real despair, he abruptly stood up from his lunch and said flatly: "They are too strong for me." Just as quickly, he would recover and fight on all the harder.

True to form, he always insisted that all of us who worked with him made sure to appreciate Russia's rich cultural gifts, no matter how packed a schedule we faced; a testament to his spirit that enthusiastically and unreservedly embraced the Russian people.

With his defiance, in his quiet way and in the face of overwhelming odds, Guy cleared his own heroic path. He did not live to see what he fought for, but one day in the hopefully not too distant future, the full truth about Raoul Wallenberg will emerge and it will be, as Guy put it in a speech many years ago, "a monument more durable than marble".

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