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Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg was arrested by Soviet forces in Hungary 67 years ago, on January 17, 1945. Wallenberg, who had been instrumental in protecting thousands of Jews in Budapest, subsequently disappeared in the Soviet Union and the full circumstances of his fate remain yet to be determined.

The KGB Acted To Stop the Investigation Into Raoul Wallenberg's Fate in 1991

Censorship Of Key Records Continued After the End Of The Soviet Union And Continues Today

When Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev invited Wallenberg's family to Moscow in October 1989, hopes were high that this gesture would signal a new openness in the case. There seemed reason for optimism: In 1990/91, "The International Commission to Establish Raoul Wallenberg's Fate", headed by Wallenberg's brother, Dr. Guy von Dardel, was allowed unprecedented access to foreign prisoner files and Soviet era prison records. Russian officials also began to release previously unknown documents from a variety of archives.

However, a newly released memorandum from the Swedish Foreign Ministry Archive confirms long standing claims that KGB officials acted as early as the Spring of 1991 to stop a review by investigators working for the first International Wallenberg Commission. According to the records, Russian archivist Anatoly Prokopenko informed the Swedish Embassy, Moscow in September 1991 that KGB officials earlier that year had placed a phone call instructing him to stop two independent researchers of the human rights organization "Memorial" from studying documentation directly related to the Raoul Wallenberg case. The researchers in question were Arseny Roginsky, co-founder and current President of Russia's "Memorial" Society, and Dr. Vadim Birstein, a historian and molecular geneticist. At that time Mr. Prokopenko headed the so-called "Special Archive" (now the Russian State Military Archive) in which important document collections related to prisoners of war, including foreign diplomats, are kept.

According to notations on the 1991 memo, Guy von Dardel was immediately notified about Prokopenko's statements. (The document could not be located in the collection of his personal papers, however).

Mr. Prokopenko reported that KGB representatives had asked him to provide copies of every piece of paper Birstein and Roginsky had reviewed, especially after they had discovered previously unknown documents about Raoul Wallenberg. This discovery had received wide publicity in the Russian media and Prokopenko explicitly stated his respect for the research that had produced the new findings. It was Prokopenko's impression that the KGB had not inspected the materials held at the Special Archive prior to Birstein and Roginsky's research and that the agency worried more sensitive information would surface.

Mr. Prokopenko further pointed out to Swedish officials that the major archival collection Birstein and Roginsky had been studying, the so-called "Fond No. 451 of the Political Department of the NKVD/MVD Main Directorate for POWs and Interned Persons (GUPVI)" contained important files regarding the Wallenberg case. Most importantly, it held -- and still holds -- operative correspondence files between the Soviet MVD prison authorities, the Soviet security services and the Soviet leadership.

Mr. Prokopenko first publicly revealed the fact that he had been pressured by KGB officials to end Birstein and Roginsky's work in Fond 451 in the Russian newspaper *Trud* in 1997.

In 1991, shortly before the end of the Soviet Union in December of that year, preparations began for a joint Swedish-Russian Working Group to continue the investigation begun by the International Commission on Raoul Wallenberg's Fate. Hopes were especially high during the short tenure of former Soviet Minister of the Interior, Vadim Bakatin, as Chief of the KGB from August-December 1991. Both the research work and release of documentation intensified, but the wave of openness soon receded. Swedish officials agreed to the appointment of Vladimir Galitsky, a professional military archivist, to review Fond 451, part time, during a one year period. Researchers working with the Swedish side of the Working Group repeatedly raised concerns that a single person alone could not possibly conduct an effective search of the vast holdings of this archival collection.

In 1997, the then U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in a "Note Verbale" petitioned Russian officials to allow full and unhindered access to Fond 451 for foreign researchers. Russian officials declined, stating that the review conducted by Mr. Galitsky had been sufficient. The Working Group was granted permission to study a series of personal files for individuals closely connected to the Wallenberg case, including many not previously available to Birstein and Roginsky. This review also included some selective access to classified documentation. However, the requests to study critically important investigation materials for these prisoners was repeatedly denied.

Nevertheless, like its predecessor, the Swedish-Russian Working Group was able to carry out some truly pioneering work such as photographing and analyzing thousands of prisoner cards at Vladimir prison, the Soviet Union's most important isolator facility. Still, researchers continued to struggle to verify results and to gain proper access to necessary collections.

In 2009, we also learned that KGB officials had withheld key information from Swedish investigators from the start. It appears that in 1991, while releasing records about interrogations in Moscow's Lubyanka Prison, the KGB archivists concealed the fact that Raoul Wallenberg had been held as "Prisoner No. 7", and that he was interrogated on July 23, 1947. This was six days after July 17, 1947, the day Russian officials have claimed for decades as Wallenberg's official death date. KGB representatives had repeatedly assured Swedish officials that Wallenberg had never been held as a numbered prisoner. Censoring these vital pieces of information essentially prevented the Swedish side from taking proper steps to pursue important leads in Russian archives at the time.

Lt. Gen. Vasily Khristoforov, the current Head of the FSB (successor to the KGB) Registration and Archival Collections Directorate, maintains that his collections contain no further information about Raoul Wallenberg's fate after July 1947. Anatoly Prokopenko, on the other hand, has repeatedly stressed his belief that Raoul Wallenberg's personal file was not fully destroyed and that a similar file or a part of it survives for Wallenberg's Hungarian driver, Vilmos Langfelder. This assertion is lent credibility by the fact that last year Mr. Khristoforov admitted that a large portion of the file of Raoul Wallenberg's long-time cellmate in Soviet captivity, Willy Roedel, remains preserved in the FSB archive.

It is clear that other important materials of great relevance to the Wallenberg case continue to exist in Russian archives, but have not been made available so far. The following actions are needed.

- Complete, uncensored access to the Lubyanka Prison interrogation registers must be granted, including the interrogation on July 23, 1947, and to related documentation.
- Investigation materials concerning prisoners closely connected to the Raoul Wallenberg case should be made available.
- Internal correspondence records of the MGB/KGB/MID for the years 1947-1965, concerning specific issues outlined in previous research reports, need to be reviewed.
- Statistical information about Swedish nationals held in Soviet captivity since the end of World War II should be provided. The statistics of Swedish citizens held in various Soviet era prisons and labor camps for specific years are essential for determining if Raoul Wallenberg was held as a secret prisoner in the Soviet Union after July 1947.
- Soviet foreign and military intelligence reports from Hungary for 1944-45 need to be made accessible. They might reveal vital information about Wallenberg's activities in Hungary and, possibly, shed some light on how Soviet officials chose to handle his case.
- It remains unknown from what archival file(s) the so-called Smoltsov report that claimed that Raoul Wallenberg had died of a heart attack in Lubyanka Prison on July 17, 1947 originated. This information is crucial for the case.
- Documentation about the background discussions by Soviet leaders of the key document in the Wallenberg case, the so-called Gromyko memorandum from 1957, need to be furnished.

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