

NEW YORK NEWS

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Wallenberg Commission Marks 67th Arrest Anniversary

NEW YORK - On January 17, 1945 — 67 years ago today — Raoul Wallenberg was detained and subsequently imprisoned by the Soviets as they took over Hungary toward the end of the Second World War. The details of his fate remain unknown.

Raoul Wallenberg is best remembered as the Holocaust hero who, though not Jewish himself, sacrificed his life for the remaining Jews in Hungary. Working on behalf of the U.S. War Refugee Board, Wallenberg created "protective passports" (the Schutz-Pass) and safe houses to protect Jews in danger of being deported to Auschwitz. Working tirelessly, he is credited with saving an estimated 100,000 Jewish lives.

When Wallenberg reached the Swedish legation in Budapest in July 1944, deportations of Hungarian Jewry had already been underway for several months. Between May and July 1944, Eichmann, and his henchmen had successfully deported over 400,000 Jews by freight train. By the time of Wallenberg's arrival only 150,000 Jews remained in Hungary. The passports he issued identified the bearers as Swedish subjects awaiting repatriation, thereby preventing deportation.

Although not legal, these documents looked official and were generally accepted by German and Hungarian authorities, who sometimes were also bribed.

With the money raised by the War Refugee Board, Wallenberg rented 32 buildings in Budapest and declared them extraterritorial, that is, protected by diplo-

matic immunity. He hung over-size Swedish flags on the front of the buildings to bolster the deception. The buildings eventually housed almost 10,000 people.

The Gold Medal effort was launched by the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission (RWCCC) whose mission it is to honor Wallenberg across the United States in commemoration of his upcoming centennial in August 2012. The effort is being led by Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group. About two months ago, a bipartisan coalition consisting of members of Congress announced legislation to award Raoul Wallenberg the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian award Congress can bestow.

The Bill was introduced by Senators Gillibrand, Kirk and Levin in the Senate, and has already attracted co-sponsorships from Senators Barrasso, Brown, Casey, Feinstein, Johanns, Kirk, Levin, Lieberman, Moran and Nelson. In the House, the Bill was introduced by New York Reps. Meeks and Hayworth.

The Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal Act, has been steadily gaining support in the House, with 45 co-sponsors to date, including House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, House International Relations Chair Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Republican Policy Committee Chairman Rep. Tom Price, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chair

Steve Israel and Congressman Jerrold Nadler.

"But the work is far from over — now's the time to gather momentum to honor a most deserving hero," said Friedlander, spokesman for the Wallenberg Commission. "The Centennial Celebration of Raoul Wallenberg's life provides great opportunities for all of us to remember the selfless efforts of this great hero of humanity," said Kenneth Abramowitz, Board Member of the RWCCC. "Raoul Wallenberg represents a great example to all of us of how we must step forward as individuals to confront injustice wherever we see it, in whatever capacity we have to oppose it" said Erol User of Istanbul, Turkey, a prominent investment banker and Chair of the Wallenberg International Board of Governors. The International Board includes the Andras Bacsi-Nagy — Deputy Chief of Mission, Republic of Hungary and His Excellency Dr. György Szapáry, Hungarian Ambassador to the United States.

"We must remember that Raoul Wallenberg did not have get involved. As a Swedish diplomat, he represented a neutral country," said Mrs. Ruth Lichtenstein, the director of Project Witness, a Holocaust Educational Resource Center.

She pointed out that "there is no grave, no memorial marking Wallenberg's gravesite."

That is why she urged the United States to "memorialize and honor this unique humanitarian by bestowing on him a congressional medal which will



Ezra Friedlander, CEO, The Friedlander Group, and Swedish ambassador Hafstrom speaking at the Raoul Wallenberg Congressional Gold Medal commencement Luncheon in Washington.

remind future generations of his heroism. This medal can serve as a representation of a grave that we cannot visit, and of courage we can only aspire to emulate."

"The power of Wallenberg's legacy is not simply what he did at that time and place — it is how those acts transcend that dark moment in history and teach all of us the great value of saving one single life," said Herbert Block, Assistant Vice President of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, or "The Joint"). The JDC is the global humanitarian organization that played a pivotal role in funding the War Refugee Board and was responsible for caring for hundreds of thousands of Jews during and after the Second World War.

The Gold Medal is just one of many ways of raising the profile

Raoul Wallenberg closer to his centennial. In the New York City Council, legislation has been introduced by Council Members Greenfield, Lander and González to rename Thirteenth Avenue "Wallenberg Way" in honor of the vibrant Jewish community that currently resides there today. "As a child of Holocaust survivors, it is our responsibility to recognize individuals who risked their lives, went the extra step, and saved so many people" said Leon Goldenberg, another board member. "Had there been more Wallenbergs, perhaps my brother, four sisters, and many more family members would be alive today."

Those who wish to be involved in the Commission should email RWCCC@TheFriedlanderGroup.com.

Document Backs Claims KGB Stopped Wallenberg Probe

STOCKHOLM (AP) — A newly-found Swedish document shows how the KGB intervened in the early 1990s to stop an investigation into World War II hero Raoul Wallenberg's fate, two U.S.-based researchers said yesterday.

The Swedish diplomat is credited with rescuing tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Nazis. He disappeared after being arrested in Hungary by the Soviet Red Army in 1945.

The Russians have said he was executed on July 17, 1947, but unverified witness accounts and newly-uncovered evidence suggest he may have lived beyond that date.

Wallenberg researchers were hoping that key pieces of the puzzle would emerge when an international commission was granted access to Soviet

prison records as the Communist rule was heading toward its end.

But a document from the Swedish Foreign Ministry supports claims that the KGB, the former Soviet secret police and intelligence agency, acted to obstruct that effort, said German researcher Susanne Berger who consulted a Swedish-Russian working group that conducted a 10-year investigation until 2001.

The Sept. 16, 1991 memorandum from the Swedish Embassy in Moscow cites the former head of the Soviet "Special Archive," Anatoly Prokopenko, as telling Swedish diplomats that the KGB instructed him to stop a search for documents by researchers working for the first International Wallenberg Commission.

Prokopenko also said the KGB wanted copies of all documents that the researchers had already viewed, according to the memo, which was made available to The Associated Press by Berger. Its authenticity was confirmed by the Foreign Ministry.

Berger said the document was significant because it illustrates how since the end of the Cold War researchers have struggled to get access to crucial documents from Soviet archives.

"The action in 1991 has, unfortunately, proved symptomatic, rather than an exception to the rule," Berger told the AP. "Twenty years later, we are still facing this fundamental problem."

In an interview with the AP yesterday, Prokopenko said researchers had been euphoric

when they found an archive document on Wallenberg's transfer from one Soviet prison to another.

That was a mistake, the archivist implied, saying the KGB officers on the panel reacted quickly, warning authorities, and Prokopenko was immediately ordered to bar the researchers' access to the files.

Prokopenko said he complied because he was working to open the archives to the public, taking advantage of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's liberal reforms, and realized that open disobedience would lead to his immediate ouster. "I had to make a sacrifice for the sake of uncovering numerous other secrets of the archive," Prokopenko said.

Police Car Stolen From Scene of Botched Burglary

EDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — Authorities have found a police cruiser stolen from the scene of a botched jewelry store burglary in northern New Jersey.

Investigators tell *The Record* newspaper that the Edgewater police car was found around 9:30 a.m. yesterday in Teaneck, several hours after it had been taken. The car wasn't damaged, and it appears nothing was taken from the vehicle.

The cruiser was stolen after police arrived at the store around 1:10 a.m. Monday. Officers spotted one suspect as they arrived, and two others soon fled the store. Two of the three were soon captured.

Authorities say the three suspects broke into a vacant building next to the jewelry store, then tried to enter it through an adjoining wall. But they instead set off the jewelry store's alarm.