

Declassified CIA Documents Show Wallenberg Was U.S. Spy

*Jewish
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5/4/11*

By DANIEL KURTZMAN

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Newly declassified CIA documents support long-standing claims that Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Hungarian Jews from the Nazis, served as a spy for the United States and survived well beyond his disappearance in 1947. A new study conducted by the weekly newsmagazine U.S. News and World Report "shows conclusively that Wallenberg was a valued U.S. intelligence asset" for the Office of Strategic Service, the precursor of the CIA.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who, as a 16-year-old living in Hungary in 1944 escaped to a Wallenberg safe house in Budapest, welcomed the new revelations. "If he provided information that got back to U.S. intelligence officials which was helpful in the Allied effort to defeat the Nazis, that is wonderful," said Lantos, whose wife, Annette, was also saved through efforts inspired by Wallenberg.

Lantos stressed, however, that Wallenberg went to Budapest to save lives. "His was a

humanitarian mission, but he may have provided some intelligence information. Clearly he was not a spy who just happened to save lives."

Arriving in Budapest in July 1944, Wallenberg established buildings of refuge under the protection of the Swedish flag where he distributed food, medical supplies and Swedish passports. His efforts saved the lives of at least 20,000 Hungarian Jews facing deportation and extermination in Nazi death camps.

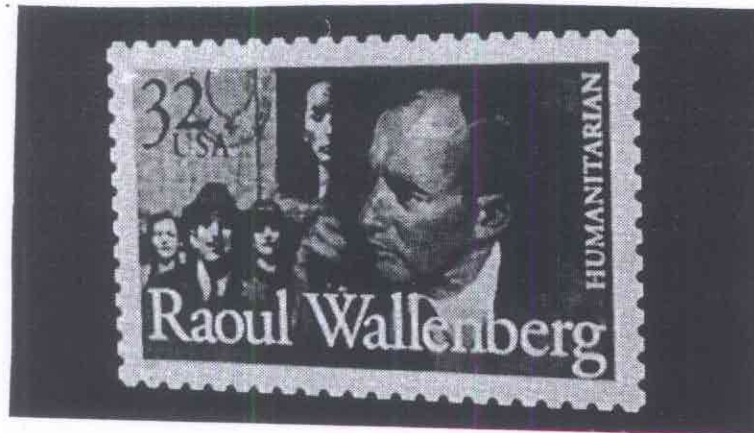
Wallenberg's service to the OSS was approved by President Roosevelt, although he was not formally on the OSS payroll, according to U.S. News. "His mission was not only to save Jews," the article states, "but to provide U.S. spymasters with access to anti-Nazi resistance forces trying to break up Budapest's alliance with Berlin." The article also asserted that Wallenberg browbeat and bribed Nazis to free Jews using funds from the U.S. War Refugee Board, which the declassified files showed had links to U.S. spy operations.

Soviet authorities, aware of Wallenberg's ties to U.S. intelligence, "spirited him out of Budapest in January, 1945," U.S. News reported. The Soviet claim that Wallenberg died in 1947 has long been disputed, and U.S. News offered eyewitness and secondhand reports that placed Wallenberg in the Soviet Union decades after that date.

One of Wallenberg's closest colleagues, retired Swedish Ambassador Per Anger, believes he was alive as late as 1989 and may be alive today. Anger told U.S. News he urged German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to help probe Wallenberg's fate in 1989.

"Holding an extension phone," the article states, "Anger listened as Kohl called Mikhail Gorbachev and pleaded 'let that old man go.' The Russian had no answer, says Anger, who then went to Moscow to appeal personally to the Soviet leader. 'He showed no interest' and 'implied that he had no control over the KGB.'"

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The new revelations about Wallenberg come as the U.S. Postal Service unveiled a postage stamp this week paying tribute to the Swedish humanitarian.

It is only one of a succession of honors to be bestowed upon him. In 1981, Wallenberg was named an honorary U.S. citizen; in 1986, a Washington, D.C., street, where the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum now stands, was renamed "Raoul Wallenberg Place"; and late last year, he was honored with a bronze bust in the U.S. Capitol.

The United States Postal Service is honoring Raoul Wallenberg on a postage stamp. The stamp will be available in 1997. (In 1981, President Ronald Reagan approved a special Act of Congress, making Wallenberg an honorary American citizen, a distinction only Sir Winston Churchill shares.)

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