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Lord Victor Rothschild Dies at 79

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LONDON (AP) — Lord Victor Rothschild, millionaire banker and former British intelligence agent, has died in London, his wife said today. He was 79.

Lady Rothschild said in a statement that her husband died Tuesday. She did not disclose the cause of death or other details. His secretary refused to say whether Rothschild had been ill or if he had died at home.

Rothschild was born on Oct. 31, 1910, into the 200-year-old family descended from Jewish-German coin collectors who founded a banking dynasty.

He succeeded his uncle as the 4th Baron Rothschild in 1937. He took his seat in the House of Lords, the unelected upper chamber of Parliament, as a member of the Labor Party.

In 1986, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cleared Rothschild of accusations he was a Soviet spy. Mrs. Thatcher said there was no evidence he was the so-called Fifth Man in the infamous spy ring of Guy Burgess, Kim Philby, Donald Maclean and Anthony Blunt.

Rothschild had been a senior officer in MI5, Britain's domestic intelligence agency. He was friends in his university days at Cambridge with some students who later betrayed Britain, including Blunt.

An orthodox Jew, he was awarded an honorary degree from Tel Aviv University for "the advancement of science, education and the economy of Israel" in 1971. It was followed in 1975 by an honorary degree from Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

Rothschild was regarded as an intellectual and, although he shunned publicity, he was an avid party-goer.

Britain awarded him the George Medal for bravery in World War II for defusing German bombs. He also received the American Legion of Merit for his wartime efforts.

Lady Rothschild's statement said a private funeral will be held but did not disclose details. She said there would be a memorial service later.

Besides his wife, the former Tessa Mayor, Rothschild is survived by their son James and their two daughters, Emma and Victoria.

He also is survived by three children from his first marriage, a son Jacob and two daughters, Sarah and Miranda.

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