"A truly fascinating, subtle and revelatory portrait of this enigmatic character and perhaps the closest any historian has got to the real man and the truth of his fate." **Simon Sebag Montefiore**

”There is a room waiting for you here…”

The Story of Raoul Wallenberg

By Ingrid Carlberg

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Attorney Lennart Hagströmer is three years Raoul Wallenberg's senior. He has placed his cousin's framed graduation picture on the dining room table in his apartment in Stockholm. A very serious suit-clad Raoul is standing with his arms firmly crossed. He looks like he is glaring at us, or possibly he is examining the piles of old letters and yellowed photo envelopes that Lennart Hagströmer has also brought out.

I have delayed doing this interview, paralyzed with respect for Lennart Hagströmer's advanced age. A few months ago Raoul Wallenberg's cousin turned one hundred years old. Would I call a one-hundred-year old directly? Would he even see to read a letter? Eventually, I got a hold of his nephew Sven Hagströmer and could ask his advice.

- Lennart, Sven said. Just call him. No problem.

I did as he told me. Lennart looked in his calendar and suggested a day.

- It'll have to be in the morning, he said. In the afternoon I have a meeting downtown.

Lennart Hagströmer lives three stories up in a tall functionalistic style building next to Gärdet in Stockholm. It was built in 1939 as a particularly practical collective living arrangement for working women and men. Some people make pilgrimages here to see one of the most distinct expressions of the idea of functionalism.

Lennart is the middle boy of the three cousins Hagströmer with whom Raoul Wallenberg spent so much time. The older brother Gösta and the younger brother Anders

are both dead. Lennart wears a white shirt with a grey cardigan and moves around his apartment with ease supported only by a brown cane. His home is filled with books, on tables and on shelves. Here is the entire older Owl Edition of the famous Swedish encyclopedia Nordisk familjebok in twenty-eight volumes, but also Stieg Larsson's successful thriller about Lisbeth Salander from the first decade of the twenty-first century.

We sit down at the dining room table. Lennart begins by carefully pulling out a small photo from one of his transparent photo envelopes. It depicts four little boys in laced up boots outside the entry to Rådmansgatan 18, where the Hagströmer family lived for many years. The Hagströmer brothers are wearing sailor suits, Raoul wears a shirt and long pants.

But I learn that the deep, adult friendship between Lennart and Raoul really only began in the middle of the nineteen thirties. When Raoul Wallenberg returned from the United States twenty-two years old they got to know each other in a new way. And perhaps even more after his stays in Cape Town and Haifa.

- I remember that he was trying to get a job as an architect. It wasn't very easy because the times were tough. Then Raoul wanted to plan his future and start some business venture. My brother Anders and I both found contacts for him. After some time, I joined him in a venture with a company he started with a Jewish refugee who held patents to some interesting products, Lennart says.

Lennart Hagströmer had not only finished the Stockholm School of Economics but also graduated from law school. When Raoul returned from the United States in February, 1935, he was doing his legal internship at the Södra Roslag's District Court. In

his spare time he was an ombudsman for the life insurance company Thule (later Scandia). He remembers trying to trick Raoul into getting an endowment policy and his friend said, *"Yes, perhaps I should get one of those so I don't become a Wallenberg who dies penniless."*

- Raoul was very much a salesman. I was with him in Paris once when he was going to visit the department store Galeries Lafayette and try to sell them a cork for soda bottles, that he and his partner held the patent to. *"I'm not coming along. You handle that yourself,"* I said. But Raoul insisted. *"You are to act as my 'technical assistant'. When I need time to think during the discussion, I can just turn to you, my technician, and say some nonsense in Swedish."*

Lennart laughs at this memory.

But you were not a technician?

- No, exactly. I was a lawyer.

How would you describe Raoul Wallenberg as a person?

- Full speed. He was almost always happy. And funny. He was very good at imitating. I have never laughed as much as when he acted out and imitated Hitler, Churchill and Stalin at my cousin's house in Broby. But perhaps this was later.

Was he courageous?

- Courageous, how do you mean?

Did he like taking risks?

- Oh, I don't know about that. I suppose he showed courage in Budapest. I thought he was helpful and reliable, someone who could always be counted on. When we went sailing he would always do the dishes. He explained it like this, *"I am an architect*

and always have to wait many years to see the results of what I do. When I do the dishes, the result is immediate."

Lennart takes out more photos from the envelopes. Many of them are from 1935-1939, the years before Lennart Hagströmer got married. They show the cousins on outings with Lennart's sailboat in the Stockholm archipelago. Raoul sits in a bathrobe on the cabin sole, in front of the table set with silverware and plates in the cockpit. There are cans of herring and milk bottles, and glasses in a special contraption which prevents sliding. They jump ashore in their swimsuits on beautiful islands with flat rocks. You can see that Raoul's hair frizzles like baby curls after swimming, and there are indeed many pictures of him doing dishes in the ocean water. It is Swedish summer at its very best.

Judging from the pictures, they are almost never alone.

- I guess one pretty girl or another would come along. I particularly remember one of them as I saw in the paper the other day that she died, Lennart says and takes out a photo of a young blond woman, her head thoughtfully resting in her hand. Lennart introduces her as Ann-Louise af Geijerstam.

Was she yours or Raoul's girlfriend?

- It was probably, what do you call it, "l'amour a trois," Lennart Hagströmer answers and gives me a sly wink with his warm blue-gray eyes.

Now and then we have to take a break. Lennart has some difficulties with his breathing after a recent cold. But we talk for a long time and much falls into place. I once again look at Raoul's graduation photo sitting next to us on the table, I study the nicely ironed suit pants, the well combed hair and the almost childishly puffy cheeks. His person

is starting to appear more clearly to me, as though I knew him too. “So this is what you were like, Raoul,” I ponder. “I think I would have liked to laugh with you.”

Just as I am about to pack up, Lennart stops me. There was one more thing, something he had promised himself not to forget.

- Raoul did study Russian. He used to say that he felt Russia had everything the United States had. It was a large country, rich in both minerals and oil. Therefore, Russia might just as well be the land of the future, Raoul thought. I sometimes wonder about that.

Chapter 16

When the Soviet soldiers reached central Pest in January 1945 they were surprised. On practically every building hung a Swedish or a Swiss banner. Special signs, sometimes with a suspiciously homemade appearance, claimed extraterritoriality. And people walked around in the streets with blue and yellow bands on their clothing calling themselves Swedes. Was Budapest already occupied or were the neutral countries a part of the fascist rule?

It did not take long for the Russians to realize that there was something strange about the Swedish and actually also the Swiss diplomatic representation. More than anybody Raoul Wallenberg had understood that their comprehensive rescue mission needed to be explained to the newly arrived Russians. But on January 17, 1945, when he crossed the front to the Red Army for the second time he did not understand how the Kremlin viewed his country and his rescue mission. Yet this was hardly irrelevant to his prospects of being successful.

Unfortunately, the Soviet position regarding Sweden had undergone a radical change around the turn of the year 1944-45. As the Swedes had gratefully noted the Soviet Union had not yet used their heaviest artillery against Sweden for their appeasement policy toward Germany. According to Russian historian Maxim Korobochkin this comparably mild Soviet position had been guided by a political wish to not scare Sweden into the arms of a warring Germany. But now that the war was almost over the situation had changed. It was high time for Sweden to pay for its suspicious politics of neutrality, Moscow reasoned. The Soviet Union was a winning nation and if Sweden wanted the two nations to have a relationship it naturally had to be on Soviet terms.

The chilly reception that Sweden's Moscow Minister Staffan Söderblom had encountered at the Ministry of External Relations in December can be seen as a manifestation of this change. But it was not the only negative indication. On Wednesday, January 17, 1945, an even worse setback transpired when the Soviet government very surprisingly rejected Sweden's proposal for a new trade- and credit-agreement between the two countries. It was a painful announcement which the Soviet Union's minister in Stockholm, the high profiled Alexandra Kollontaj, was forced to deliver to the Minister for Finance, Ernst Wigforss. For Kollontaj this was

also a devastating personal setback. She had put her prestige on the line to get this proposal accepted.

In the proposal Sweden offered the Soviet Union a trade credit of one billion Swedish kronor to be used toward the purchase of Swedish goods. Looking at it from a Swedish point of view this generous loan was seen as a kind gesture toward a war torn Soviet Union assumed to be more eager for a new trading partner than Sweden was. In Moscow the analysis of this power balance was the opposite: The Swedes had been forced to stop trading with Germany and now in pure desperation they came crawling to the victors in the east. Well, they would have to make a greater effort than that, the Russians felt. The Soviet Union had many interested lenders to choose from.

But the trade agreement was not the end of it. Wednesday, January 17, 1945, also happened to be the day of the first Soviet advance in an infected extradition case, where the Soviet legation in Stockholm went to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and asked for the address of a young refugee from one of the Baltic States, fifteen-year-old Lidija Makarova. In the coming days the Soviet Union would repeatedly and with increasing animosity demand a “return” of young Lidija Makarova and her father to the Soviet Union.

And as by chance, January 17, 1945, was also the day the warrant for Raoul Wallenberg’s arrest was issued. He was, as he for the second time crossed the front to the Soviet troops, blissfully ignorant of this fact. By this time the Russians knew what he wanted. Raoul Wallenberg has already explained his mission to the Red Army. He now returned with the hopes of repeating his important proposal with the highest authority, Army General Rodion Malinovsky in Debrecen.

Raoul Wallenberg was going to use the authority he had earned during his fall rescue mission work to convince the Russians to give him the go-ahead for the “Wallenberg Institution,” his great proposal for rebuilding Hungary after the war. He probably saw it as a trump card that this initiative, like the previous one, would be financed with American money from the War Refugee Board. The United States was after all a Soviet Union ally.

Such initiatives unfortunately did not sound as good to the Soviets during this time. It was no secret to the Russians that the Americans a year earlier had started the refugee aid organization War Refugee Board as some kind of last ditch effort to help the European Jews. The American government had carefully informed

its ally in the east and invited the Soviet Union to participate. But at the Kremlin anything that smelled like the west negotiating with the Nazis was suspiciously like treason. The proposal to buy out large groups of threatened Jews with money or goods (for example 10,000 trucks) made the Russians snarl and begin to conspire against the hidden western ally agenda. Did the United States and the Great Britain want to help Germany on its feet again? The American initiative the War Refugee Board was in Soviet eyes just as insulting.

As Swedish historian Bernt Schiller showed in his book, "Varför Ryssarna tog Raoul Wallenberg" (Why the Russians Took Raoul Wallenberg), the Soviet suspicion against the War Refugee Board's rescue missions actually increased toward the end of 1944. It had to do with the large stream of refugees from the Baltic States to Sweden. Just the fact that so many, around 30,000 Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, had fled in what looked like panic when faced with the great Soviet "liberation", could be regarded as politically suspicious from a Soviet point of view. And this suspicion did not exactly diminish when the Swedish communist newspaper Ny Dag (New Day) in October, 1944, revealed that there were many "fascist elements" among the refuges and that the American legation in Stockholm was involved. Ny Dag could prove that the Stockholm representative for the War Refugee Board, Iver Olsen, had contributed 900,000 Swedish kronor to help organize the sudden flight of the many Balts. In Soviet newspapers one could read that the American legation had invested these 900,000 kronor in an "anti-Russian Baltic organization in Sweden."

This same Iver Olsen also supplied Raoul Wallenberg with large sums of money. He funded almost the entire operation of the Swedish Budapest mission which had primarily been started as an American initiative within the framework of the War Refugee Board. Bernt Schiller concludes with the understatement that the revelations in Ny Dag were not "good" for Raoul Wallenberg who was trying to pitch another rescue mission to the Soviet Army leadership. "Ny Dags revelations and the reporting of these in Moscow were a very clear message to Sweden and the United States: Don't try to build political resistance against us, disguised as humanitarian missions! The War Refugee Board and its representative Iver Olsen were in regards to this mission marked," Bernt Schiller writes in his analysis.

It was in this political climate that Swedish minister Staffan Söderblom in the middle of December was called to the Ministry of External Relations in

Moscow. After months of warm receptions Söderblom now stepped right into a political refrigerator. The meeting concerned the many Baltic refugees in Sweden. The writing in Ny Dag probably explained more than anything the suddenly frosty and contemptuous attitude of Soviet Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Dekanozov.

Irritation prevailed. On January 16 the Russians protested at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm against the Baltic refugees' supposed anti-Soviet propaganda in Sweden.

Two days seems to have gone by before the Soviet counterintelligence agency SMERSH acted on the warrant issued by the Kremlin, and arrested the Swedish diplomat, businessman and architect Raoul Wallenberg and his driver, Vilmos Langfelder. They now had to leave their rather comfortable Red Army accommodations where they had even been given their own kitchen staff, to get locked up in a temporary NKVD prison. Even if the officers assured them that they were not to see themselves as prisoners, that they were only being moved into "protective custody", they must have been concerned by the worsening of their situation.

Either their seclusion was not total in the beginning, or perhaps Raoul Wallenberg was starting to get a hunch because around January 20th he is said to have managed to send a distress call to his ally, Arrow Crosser Police Chief Pál Szalai. In an interview with Hungarian journalist Mária Ember many years later Szalai said that he sometime around that weekend was reached by a message notifying him that Raoul Wallenberg had problems. "But who among us could do anything then, in that chaos?" Szalai apologetically said in the interview.

At the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm the message from Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov was reassuring. At least Raoul Wallenberg was now in safe hands. "Measures to protect Mr. R. Wallenberg and his belongings have been taken by Soviet military authority," Dekonaozov had written. That's good, the reasoning seems to have been, then nothing further had to be done for Raoul. Sweden's representative in Moscow, Staffan Söderblom, received no instructions from the Swedish foreign ministry to pursue this issue or to try to connect with Wallenberg. The truth is that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm did not even reply to Söderblom's telegram regarding Dekanozov's note.

Forwarding the news about Raoul Wallenberg to the Americans seems, on the other hand, to have been a greater priority, as if this concerned them more than it did the Swedes. On January 20, Herschel Johnson the U.S. envoy in Stockholm, could telegraph the good news to his new Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius. He wrote that "Wallenberg is safe and sound in the Russian occupied parts of Budapest." Because of this the Swedes recommended that in the future the Americans send their instructions for Wallenberg's rescue mission via the American legation in Moscow.

In light of the negative signals between the Soviet Union and its western allies and of what was known about the far reaching scope of Soviet counterintelligence, this demonstration in open communication between the Swedes and the Americans must be seen as a bit naïve.

At the Swedish legation in Moscow the atmosphere had not exactly improved after the new trade agreement setback. Envoy Staffan Söderblom had definitely not recovered from his depression. "The minister is jerkier and stranger than ever," second in command Ingemar Hägglöf noted in his journal on January 19th. Staffan Söderblom had as long as possible avoided making contact with the Ministry of External Relations from fear of causing more harsh reactions regarding the Baltic refugees. But he eventually had to request a meeting with Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov. Travel plans for the May visit of Folke Bernadotte, the director of the Red Cross, had to be finalized.

On January 26, a nervous Staffan Söderblom finally left his sheltered everyday life in the "Mindovsky Mansion" (Особняк И.А.Миндовского), the beautiful turn-of-the-century villa in central Moscow which since the 1920s, housed the Swedish legation. On slightly shaky legs he took off for the Ministry of External Relations which at that time went under the Soviet abbreviation NKID and was situated in a government building within a stone's throw of the large Lubyanka prison.

Vladmimir Dekanozov was an extremely short man around forty-five years old and with reddish blond thinning hair. He belonged to the confidants of Lavrentiy Beria, Stalin's secret police chief, and he also had a past in the secret police, NKVD. Like Stalin and Beria Dekanozov was Georgian. After a year as an envoy to Berlin he was now the deputy for the Minister of Foreign Affairs' Vjatjeslav Molotov.

To Söderblom's great relief Dekanozov did not even touch on the topic of the Baltic refugees during their meeting. It was not as bad as the Swedish minister had feared, though Söderblom had certainly set the tone by beginning the meeting in a friendly manner, thanking the Russians for obliging Sweden in its request for protection for legation secretary Raoul Wallenberg. Staffan Söderblom said that he hoped that they would show the same consideration for the other Swedes from the Budapest legation.

After the introductory pirouettes the meeting seems to have gone on for quite some time in a fairly relaxed manner, treating not-very-stressful topics of conversation like visa matters and the planned visit of the Red Cross director. Yet Söderblom would not be allowed to relax entirely. Toward the end Dekanozov seized the opportunity to express Soviet dissatisfaction. This time it was in regards to five Soviet sailors who had deserted to Sweden and who Sweden refused to extradite. Söderblom excused himself by saying that he was not familiar with this matter but that he promised to contact Stockholm about it. Thereafter he seems to have done what he could to regain the positive atmosphere. According to the same Soviet meeting minutes Söderblom ended the session by emphasizing that "the Soviet military successes make a great impression on the rest of the world and that news regarding these Red Army victories are given much space in Swedish media."

But he did not ask how he would come in contact with his diplomat colleague Raoul Wallenberg. He had no such instructions. In his report home the Swedish minister toned down the chill he must after all have experienced.

Irritation over all this fawning was beginning to overflow among some of the employees at Gustaf Adolf's Square. Söderblom's servility might have irritated Sven Grafström, the assistant director for the political department, the most. As he saw it the Russians were trying to frighten the Swedes into submission like the Germans had done in the beginning of the war. Grafström felt that the only way to handle the Soviet charges was to fight fire with fire. But at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, they were still hoping to fawn their way to a trade agreement, and he seems to have had a difficult time getting anybody on board with his agenda. At the end of January 1945, Grafström seems to have turned to his private journal to write out the frustration that he felt for Söderblom's tiptoeing, even though it was also an approach deeply ingrained among the higher-ups:

"You can be rather certain that the Kremlin views Söderblom as one would a louse through a magnifying glass, to see how it founders. They can not be ignorant regarding the fact that he, even though he himself has now forgotten, was the one in the administration symbolizing the appeasement policy toward Germany. And what do they see? A little insect kicking about, but not a louse, absolutely not anything that can bite. A faithful little ladybug (---). A wavering attitude from us at this time will give them (*the Russians, author's comment*) the impression that using threats will get them far with us. Söderblom is therefore, in my humble opinion, a highly dangerous representative for us in Moscow. He is seized by a sense of idolization, sees everything through a shimmering filter and will do anything to stay on their good side. He is intelligent but he is not wise."

One week had gone by since Raoul Wallenberg and Vilmos Langfelder drove away among the snow drifts in eastern Budapest. It said on the warrant for their arrest by Minister of Defense Bulganin that Raoul Wallenberg was to be sent to Moscow and that the command for the 2nd Ukrainian Front would report the time for departure from Budapest. That time was now. At midnight the night before January 26, 1945, the message went out. Army General Malinovsky's chief of staff wrote to Moscow that Raoul Wallenberg had been arrested and sent off that same day and that a Captain Zenkov was responsible for the convoy. In addition to Captain Zenkov another four Soviet soldiers were charged with escorting Wallenberg and Langfelder.

The company traveled east by train toward Debrecen planning their first stop in the Rumanian city of Iasi. During the trip Raoul Wallenberg and his driver were once again assured that they were not to see themselves prisoners.

On Saturday, January 27, 1945, the Red Army opened the doors of Auschwitz, the Polish concentration camp, and freed those of the 7,500 emaciated prisoners who were still alive. After the powerful Vistula-Oder Offensive on the eastern front, German troops had been forced to withdraw all the way to the river Oder and the Red Army was now only seventy kilometers from Berlin. The end of World War II seemed close and the outcome more and more obvious.

In the arena of grand politics the presumed victorious powers had begun to rewrite the world order according to the new power shift. Soviet dictator Josef Stalin went in to these negotiations with a particularly straight back. The Swedish Moscow minister Staffan Söderblom was not the only one who tiptoed around this

eastern war victor. The president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, very much belonged to the group of starry-eyed admirers.

Franklin D. Roosevelt had decided that Stalin must be a good man. He assumed that if you handled the Soviet leader right he would work with the United States for democracy and world peace. The American president used to call Josef Stalin "Uncle Joe," and the fact that "TIME Magazine" in 1943 appointed Josef Stalin "Man of the year 1942" reveals something about the political climate in the United States. Roosevelt preferred to interpret British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's somewhat more skeptical attitude toward the communist dictator as lack of personal chemistry. "I think I can personally handle Stalin better than either your Foreign Office or my State Department. Stalin hates the guts of all your top people. He thinks he likes me better, and I hope he will continue to do so," Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote to Winston Churchill in 1942.

When the three of them gathered for a summit in the Soviet city of Jalta to divide postwar Europe into new spheres of influence Stalin rather easily got the others to march to his drum. Just like at the former summit in Teheran in 1943 he determined the location for the negotiations and made the others travel the farthest despite the fact that Roosevelt was the one in a wheelchair. He also managed to get the gullible American president to, just like in Teheran in 1943, spend the nights in palaces littered with Soviet microphones. Every morning Stalin received precise records of what had been said in Roosevelt's suit. It was business as usual for a dictator who saw spies in every bush, who in fact, had spies everywhere himself and who just had to lift a receiver under his desk in the Kremlin to listen in on private conversations of the members of his own politburo.

But Roosevelt was enamored, not suspicious. He was, in addition, in extremely bad physical health, weakened to the point of exhaustion by heart problems and high blood pressure. He actually only had ten weeks left to live, almost exactly what Winston Churchill's doctors predicted when they saw the sick countenance of the American. Roosevelt was definitely not in shape to play hardball.

The American president's foremost ambition with the Jalta summit was to build friendship between the leaders of the world powers in order to create a better world, most specifically expressed in the newly formed United Nations. He did this by demonstrating his own good will and showing humility, as well as faith in Stalin in regards to other agenda items, for example, that of the future of Eastern Europe.

When the Soviet dictator promised to allow exiled Poles into the Polish transitional government and allow free elections in Poland "as soon as possible," Roosevelt was convinced that he meant it. And in response to a direct question the Soviet dictator answered that elections would be held within one month. When Stalin then signed a declaration saying that free and democratic elections was the goal for all liberated countries, the American president did not much ponder the possible different interpretations of this. Even Churchill who had initially been more suspicious allowed himself to be convinced. "Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust Hitler. He was wrong. But I don't think I'm wrong about Stalin," Churchill commented about the Poland promise.

It was indeed not only the Swedish diplomats who were naïve and saw the Soviet power play through rose-colored glasses.

The intrigues between the great powers in Jalta were at their most intense as the train from Rumania rolled into the Kiev Station in Moscow one of the first days of February, 1945. Nothing suggests that the trip had been anything but a rather comfortable experience for Raoul Wallenberg and Vilmos Langfelder. In the Rumanian city Iasi they had been allowed to get off the train and spend a few evening hours at a restaurant called Luther. They had traveled first class and been served the best food the dining-car had to offer. Raoul, for whom it was difficult to stay inactive, spent his extra time on the train writing a spy novel. He had also tried to put together some thoughts regarding a memorandum about his time in Budapest.

The soldiers in the escort continued to be kind. When the convoy left the train they showed Wallenberg and Langfelder the subway, Moscow's pride, which at that time had four lines in traffic. The underground stations were grand artistic masterpieces. One of them was called Lubyanka and as the name indicated, was situated by the large square where the Soviet security service had its headquarters. It is not known if Raoul Wallenberg ever saw this particular station. The convoy preferred to travel on foot, at least a part of the distance from the Kiev station.

The dark yellow turn-of-the-century palace by Lubyanka Square had once been the headquarters of a large insurance company. But after the revolution of 1918, the dreaded security service, at that time called "the Cheka" moved in instead. It was still there but was now called NKVD (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, later KGB). The counterintelligence agency SMERSH also belonged in the

NKVD palace which had been merged with newer buildings until the tentacles of the safety agency reached around the entire block. Inside the surrounded yard was NKVD's much dreaded prison, the starting point of the trip to Gulag hell for innumerable victims during Stalin's reign of terror. It was called **"**The Inner Prison."

Tuesday, February 6, 1945, Raoul Wallenberg and Vilmos Langfelder came walking with their luggage across Lubyanka Square. Perhaps they noticed the large toy store which was ironically the closest neighbor of the NKVD headquarters. The Chief of the Soviet security and secret police, the merciless Lavrenti Beria, had his office on the third floor. But the day Raoul Wallenberg arrived Beria was at the summit in Jalta. Stalin had the good taste to introduce him to President Roosevelt as "my Himmler."

Beria was probably still informed of the transportation of the Swede. It was not a dime-a-dozen prisoner who was recorded in his log that day. The instruction to issue a warrant for his arrest had ultimately come from Stalin himself and the SMERSH spy chief Abakumov had been notified. Beria probably knew of the decision to imprison a diplomat from a non-warring neutral country. It was a precarious move about which Molotov, the Minister of External Relations, would have been informed. But what about Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov who had assured the Swedes that Raoul Wallenberg was in safe hands?

What we know is that the Raoul Wallenberg case was surrounded by secrecy. We also know that the Security Service and the Ministry of External Relations buildings were so close together that they were often referred to as "the neighbors." Beria had less than a minute's walk to Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov who was his confidant and also his former colleague at NKVD. We also know that the Soviet leaders had a great propensity for drama.

There are indications that Wallenberg and Langfelder believed that they were only staying at Lubyanka for one night. But when the doors closed behind them it was for forever. They were separated rather quickly. In the future they would only hear about each other through other prisoners.

Perhaps Raoul Wallenberg realized what was about to happen when he was taken to the Lubjaka prison's so called "arrest receiving area". Russian author Alexander Solzjenitsyn gave his fictitious story of the prisoner reception area at Lubyanka prison the chapter heading, "All ye who here enter, abandon all hope."

According to Solzjenitsyn the area consisted of minuscule registration booths placed side by side behind olive green doors with oval numerical signs. In the booth “stood a night table and a stool and these took up almost all the floor space. If you sat on the stool you could not stretch your legs.” The arrest receiving area made you think of a morgue.

Now that the end of the war was approaching the Soviet NKVD had to work hard. In Poland alone 27,000 persons presumed to be a safety risk would have to be seized and taken away that spring. Most of these objectionable elements, from inside the country as well as outside, would pass through Lubyanka, this needle’s eye of terror, before they were executed or disappeared into the Gulag. Out of pure necessity, the routines were therefore quick and well rehearsed. The prisoners had to take all their clothes off and were then, like animals, subjected to a so called medical examination of every thinkable part of their body. Sometimes fillings were even burned from the teeth. Heels were cut from shoes and the lining was ripped from suit coats in search of secrets to be used in the coming process. The arrival ceremony ended with the prisoners lining up in front of a pipe with running water and told to wash off.

Raoul Wallenberg had to press his right index finger to a prison card and was registered as “prisoner” Raoul Gustav Wallenberg. It was obvious that the counterintelligence agency SMERSH has begun to doubt his status as a legation secretary, because on his registration card they called him a “diplomatic observer” not a “diplomatic officer”, which was the norm.

Both Raoul Wallenberg and Vilmos Langfelder had had to give up their belongings. The money that Raoul had brought from Budapest was seized as was his backpack with “the most essential”, his diplomat passport, Hungarian driver’s license, calendar and address book. They also took a cigarette case from him, which he, even though he was a non-smoker, used to bring for bribery. The spy novel as well as any notes for a memorandum got lost in the shuffle.

In his backpack Raoul Wallenberg kept, as usual, a number of cans. They belonged to the category “forbidden goods,” but Raoul managed to negotiate keeping them when he was taken to Lubyanka’s prison cell number 121. And being brought to your prison cell meant, according to Alexander Dolgun, an official at the American embassy and a brother in misfortune, a walk along carpeted hallways, an elevator ride a few floors up and then a walk in behind a heavy barred metal door.

"During this trip, from the shower to my first cell, I became aware that I was, in fact, in a huge prison. I would catch glimpses of long gloomy corridors, lined with doors, each door with its peephole and food slot with a sliding metal panel. All the hallways were carpeted and almost the only sound as we moved along was the guard's clucking of his tongue – the signal used at Lubyanka to let it be known that a prisoner was under escort. (---) All those metal doors were gray, battleship gray, and the effect of the gloom and the silence and the gray doors repeating themselves down the corridors until they merged with the shadows was oppressive and discouraging," Alexander Dolgun writes in his book "An American in Gulag."

The prisoners stayed in Lubyanka during the period of investigation, to be moved later when they had been given a sentence, to other prisons or camps. The prison was housed in a six-story structure in the inner yard. There were recreational areas for the prisoners, both in the yard and on top of the prison roof. Prisoners contemporary with Raoul Wallenberg have estimated that the prison could hold about five hundred inmates divided in approximately twenty cells per floor. But the walls were thick and the guards zealous so communication was difficult.

Captain Aleksander Solzjenitsyn arrived just like Raoul Wallenberg to the Lubyanka prison in February of 1945. In his book "The Gulag Archipelago" he writes about his experiences that spring. Solszjenitsyn mentions Lubyanka's chimney which spewed ash flakes from all the documents and novels burnt in Lubyanka's stoves: "We walked in the shadow of that chimney – in a concrete box on top of Big Lubyanka's roof, six floors up. Here the walls were also as tall as three grown men. Our ears heard Moscow –the cars signaling to each other. All we saw was this chimney, the sentry up in his tower on the seventh floor and the confounded little piece of God's sky allowed to be visible above Lubyanka."

In Raoul's cell sat a German diplomat and SS-Captain who had been stationed as a police attaché in Rumania. His name was Gustav Richter. He was a devoted Nazi and had assisted Adolf Eichmann in planning the deportation of Jews from Rumania. Fortunately without much success.

When the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs ten years later managed to track down Gustav Richter he told them that he and Raoul had become good friends during their short time in cell 121. He recalled that the Swede had barely gotten into their cell before he started writing to the prison director. In his communication Raoul Wallenberg protested against his arrest and demanded to immediately be put in touch

with the Swedish legation in Moscow. He referred to the fact that he was a Swedish diplomat and added that as a Swedish citizen, he should be given better food.

Gustav Richter read what Raoul had written and felt that his cellmate had taken it a bit too far. He suggested that formulating things more "objectively" would be more effective. Raoul listened to his critique and reworded his draft before giving the document to the sergeant on duty at the bottom floor of Lubyanka prison.

Two days after his arrival Raoul Wallenberg was brought for a night interrogation by a blond officer and interrogator who spoke very good German. Yanking the prisoners out of their sleep was a common Soviet torture method.

Raoul Wallenberg's interrogation on Thursday, February 8, went on for three and a half hours, from one o'clock in the morning until four thirty. When Raoul returned his face was pale. He told his cellmates that the blond interrogator, whose name was Svertjuk, was "a horrible man." Svertsjuk had accused Raoul Wallenberg of espionage. "You are familiar to us. You belong to a large capitalist family in Sweden," the officer said, making a point.

The Wallenberg banking family was by no means unknown in Moscow. Trying to infiltrate the family behind Sweden's most powerful financial empire had for years been one of the main objectives of NKVD agents in Sweden. The Soviet Ministry of External Relations had recorded the activities of the brothers Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg in special memoranda. On the one hand their participation in an attempt toward a separate peace between Germany and its western allies caused suspicion, on the other, they were also respected for the mediating role that Marcus Wallenberg played in the Soviet Union's peace negotiations with Finland. And behind all this lurked the communist leaders' ideological contempt for big capitalism. In a large Soviet encyclopedia the Wallenberg family would a few years later be accused of supporting German fascism and of actively having worked toward increasing American capitalism in Sweden. Raoul Wallenberg had reasons to not only see the interrogator's questions regarding his family in a positive light.

After Raoul Wallenberg it was Vilmos Langfelder's turn to go through the same treatment. He was brought from his cell he following day. He also was accused of espionage and as the other prisoners remember it, it had to do with spying for "American – or possibly British – interests."

Raoul Wallenberg did not allow them to break him. From some time in cell 121 he was in a good mood. To stay in shape he exercised every day and he exchanged addresses with his fellow prisoners so that they could get together when they were released or notify people about each other once they were let out. “Raoul Wallenberg. Ministry for Foreign Affairs,” it said on the note that Gustav Richter received. They passed their time playing chess and sharing life stories with each other. His cellmates learned things about Raoul such as that he belonged to a famous Swedish banking family and that he had studied architecture in the United States.

When they talked about their families Raoul Wallenberg mentioned his mother, Maj von Dardel. Gustav Richter noticed that he was worried. “What will my family think when they find out that I’m in prison?” Raoul said several times. “I comforted him, explaining that under these circumstances it was certainly not shameful,” Gustav Richter said to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ reporter many years later.

Perhaps some kind of telepathic communication developed between cell 121 in the Lubyanka prison and the Misnovsky villa in the Tverskaja district three kilometers away. Here the Swedish minister Staffan Söderblom lived a rather comfortable life in the most beautiful of settings. The minister’s apartment had a glassed-in winter garden. Grandiose stairs leading up to the private quarters were edged by lion masks in bronze. In the ceiling high above, a square painting with a piece of blue sky and clouds, intended to create an illusion of a window open to the sky.

The house had many windows overall. This for a basic architectural purpose: Those living there should always orient themselves toward the light and the world around them.

Telepathy or not. After several weeks of non-communication from Stockholm, it was, against all odds, the worried and eager-to-please Staffan Söderblom who took the first initiative. And he did it the same day that Raoul went through his first interrogation. Staffan Söderblom was beginning to feel that it was about time that this Raoul Wallenberg received a sign from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Some sort of instructions to the legation secretary there in Budapest would only be appropriate. Perhaps, as the Swedish representative, he could be asked to connect with the new Soviet approved Hungarian government? He sent a telegram to Stockholm wondering if “Wallenberg in Budapest (---) reported to be a legation

secretary, should not, through me and NKID's (*Ministry of External Relations, author's comment*) receive some instructions regarding his status."

It took five days before the Ministry for Foreign Affairs responded to his suggestion. Then all that he got back was a short question wondering what Söderblom meant by his "veiled" proposal. Söderblom did however, receive specific orders to try to immediately find out what had happened to the others in the Budapest legation. This was obviously what they were worried about.

When the Moscow minister elaborated on his thoughts about Wallenberg he finally got a reaction from Stockholm. The question had triggered a certain amount of anxiety with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs since they were uncertain as to how Sweden should relate to the new Hungarian government. But on February 17, exactly one month after Raoul Wallenberg's disappearance, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs sent a message to their legation secretary whom they assumed to be safe with Soviet troops in Budapest. "If you could get in touch with Wallenberg (---) send him our gratitude, as well as greetings from his family and let him know that instructions will be given as soon as someone encounters Danielsson," the Ministry for Foreign Affairs wrote to Staffan Söderblom in Moscow.

Söderblom did as he was told. He sent a note to the Ministry of External Relations at Kuznetskij most, situated not many meters from the Lubyanka prison. He asked his contacts to give "legation secretary Wallenberg" (---) "the gratitude of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, greetings from his family," and then he conveyed the information that he would have to await further instructions until minister Danielsson could be located.

The concern for the diplomats in Budapest was, as we know, justified. Minister Ivan Danielsson had actually "been encountered" in his hiding place but perhaps not in the manner in which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs might have intended. After a month of fighting the Red Army had finally conquered the Buda district as well. During the final battles German soldiers entrenched themselves in the neighbor villa next to the Swedish legation building at Gyopár utca, in the house belonging to the liqueur family Zwack, the same house that had earlier that fall been the home of Raoul Wallenberg's Humanitarian Department. Soviet soldiers responded by breaking into the actual legation building. They ran up to the bombed out remains of Minister Ivan Danielsson's bedroom where they started fire on the Germans. This is how it came

about that parts of the final battle was fought between the “Swedish” houses. One grenade exploded on the dining room table and two in Ivan Danielsson’s old office which he had fortunately left because of the Christmas holiday.

When the Germans’ resistance had been broken the Swedish legation building overflowed with Russian soldiers in white anoraks. It did not take them very long to find Ivan Danielsson’s generous wine and liquor supply which contained, among other things, 150 bottles of cognac. The Soviet military commander had given his soldiers the promise of a few days of “free looting” after conquering Buda and this was now about to be redeemed. It did not help that Lars Berg, legation officer on duty, had hung a sign written in Russian declaring the building Swedish diplomatic territory and stating that Sweden was a protective power for the Soviet Union in Hungary. Drunk soldiers ran around in the house with bottles in their hands. “They broke and tore up the duffel bags (---). Linen, silk, silver and clothing were strewn over the floor and stepped on by dirty boots. To begin with the Russians were interested in gold, jewels and alcohol. But in the upcoming days they moved on to clothes and rugs (---). The most coveted items were watches and cigarette lighters,” Swedish Hungarian legation assistant Denez von Mezey wrote in his report to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs six months after the event.

A Hungarian maid was raped twice. The safes were broken into like “sardine cans,” and anything of value was tied into ripped-up sheets and hauled away in trucks. Ironically, the soldiers also stole the silverware that actually belonged to the Soviet legation in Budapest.

Drunk Soviet soldiers had also stumbled into the shelter underneath what was left of Fürst Eszterhazy’s Palace. Here, just in case, the hiding Swedes had put up a sign written in Russian with the words, “Swedish legation. Protecting Soviet interests.” The exhausted Swedish minister Ivan Danielsson had prepared to receive a Russian commander but he had dropped a shoe in the dark of the basement and now as the soldiers flew around tearing at watches and guns, he stood balancing barefoot on top of a pile of gravel. “I can hardly imagine that the Vikings could have been any worse,” Margareta Bauer wrote in her memoranda fifty years later.

Lars Berg had left the occupied legation building to try to find a commanding Soviet officer and request protection for the Swedish legation. He was referred to a commander in Pest. The Germans had blown up the bridges but a Russian military ferry brought Berg across the Danube. In Pest he met his Russian

colleague Count Tolstoj-Kutuzov whom he had hired at the Swedish legation in October for interpretation and translation work. Tolstoj-Kutuzov told Berg that when he went to the Russian he was arrested and interrogated for several days. He said that the Russians had accused the Swedish legation of German espionage and that particularly Raoul Wallenberg and Lars Berg were under suspicion. Now Tolstoj-Kutuzov was free again but had been recruited by the Red Army as the one responsible for a bureau for foreigners. Lars Berg felt uncomfortable. “Strangely, Tolstoj did not seem entirely happy to see me again. He had changed in some strange way. He was no longer my kind and straightforward colleague. He asked me nervously if the Russians knew that I had gone to see him.”

Per Anger, Göte Carlsson and Yngve Ekmark had been taken to the countryside by a Soviet major and placed in a barrack with a military guard. They managed to smuggle the Swedish code machine with them**,** which they broke with an axe after they got there. A few days later Ivan Danielsson and legation assistant Mezey were taken to this site as well. They were brought together with the others and moved to the city of Dunavecse seventy kilometers south of the capital. Here, the group had to stay, guarded by armed soldiers.

On her own accord Margareta Bauer, equipped with a sheepskin coat, a bucket and a shovel, had made her way back to the legation building at Gyopár utca. She was now the only one left among the Swedes and she spent her days burning the documents from Svenska kullagerfabriken (Swedish Ball Bearing Factory AB) that the legation had been storing.

Several weeks had gone by since the Ministry for Foreign Affairs called Maj von Dardel with the news that her son had been taken into protective custody by the Soviet troops. But she still had not heard a single word, not even a greeting from Raoul himself. A few days into the month of February she decided to seek out the Soviet envoy to Stockholm, the legendary Madame Kollontaj.

Alexandra Kollontaj’s home and office were housed in the Soviet legation’s stone building on Villagatan 17, not far from the great park Humlegården on Östermalm. Kollontaj had been a minister in the first Bolshevik government after the 1917 revolution, the first female member of a government in Europe. After a wave of executions and strange deaths she was now, in addition to Stalin, the only one from the old revolutionary leadership who was still alive. “It feels like new voids keep

popping up around me," she wrote to her secretary when reports of new deaths poured in from home.

For about two years now Kollontaj had been able to call herself "ambassador", a title that signified her high status at home. She was the obvious central point of Stockholm's diplomatic life. Colleagues remember that she held well attended receptions on all imaginable Soviet holidays. Madame Kollontaj used to receive her guests like an empress in her raised chair surrounded by underlings in dark blue uniforms.

In March of 1945 she would turn seventy-three. She still drew attention to herself but was marked by disease. Two and a half years earlier she had survived a stroke which partially paralyzed her left leg and arm. This did not prevent her from two months later honoring the October Revolution with a magnificent party for 400 guests at Grand Hôtel. "A smiling Kollontaj, dressed in an elegant lilac colored dress, drove in, to great ovations, in her wheelchair. Once again the wine flowed, the caviar looked tempting in its silver jars and jewels glittered," as the Russian journalist and author Arkadij Vaksberg vividly describes it in his biography of the ambassador. During 1944 one party followed the other.

At the time of Maj von Dardel's visit a growing dissatisfaction with the celebrated Alexandra Kollontaj's more and more capricious actions was beginning to become apparent with the Soviet foreign ministry. It concerned the Soviet Union's rejection of the trade agreement. Kollontaj who did not want to see a political crises between Sweden and the Soviet Union had during the negotiations explained to Swedish Minister for Finance Wigforss that the Soviet objections mostly had to do with the conditions for the loan and should not be seen as political posturing.

Her actions regarding this matter caused political turmoil with the Ministry of External Relations in Moscow. Kollontaj was seen as having disregarded her instructions. As written in an internal ministry memorandum: "She weakened the force of our reply. She reduced the issue to the level of simple commerce without even trying to use our reply to further our political interests." One of the authors was named Vetrov and he was the head of the Scandinavian Department at the Ministry of External Relations. He was the one among the ministry staff that Staffan Söderblom met with the most. In his affected memorandum Vetrov mentioned the Baltic States and the Soviet prisoners of war among possible Swedish concessions that Kollontaj had fumbled.

Maj von Dardel and Alexandra Kollontaj had several personal connections. First and foremost they knew each other through Nanna Svartz, the doctor who successfully cared for Kollontaj after her stroke in 1942 and thereafter became her friend. Nanna Svartz had made a name for herself in Swedish medicine. She was a professor and the director for the Medicine Clinic at the Karolinska Hospital. This meant that she worked close to Maj's husband, Fredrik von Dardel, who had been appointed General Director for the Karolinska Hospital when it first opened in 1940.

Nanna Svartz was the first female professor of medicine in Sweden, a not always uncomplicated position among a stiff and altogether male dominated staff. Fredrik von Dardel often had to jump in and support her. This led to friendship between the two, and nowadays their families enjoyed getting together. Nanna Svartz became both Maj and Fredrik von Dardel's personal physician as she was Alexandra Kollontaj's. It is likely that the topic of Raoul Wallenberg would now and then come up at this time.

To these private connections one also has to add that Alexandra Kollontaj, after all the communications around the peace negotiations between the Soviet Union and Finland in the fall of 1944, counted Marcus Wallenberg among her personal friends.

It is not known how informed Kollontaj really was when Maj von Dardel visited her and what Moscow expected her to say. But during their meeting on Villagatan 17, the Soviet ambassador was convincing. She told a worried Maj von Dardel that she could remain perfectly calm. Raoul Wallenberg was safe in Russia. Around this time Alexandra Kollontaj called Ingrid Günther, the wife of Minister for Foreign Affairs Christian Günther, and asked her to come to Villagatan for tea, adding that she had something to tell Mrs. Günther. This is how Ingrid Günther later recalled their meeting: "When I was there she asked me to tell my husband the following: Raoul Wallenberg was alive in Russia, and it would be better for him if the Swedish government did not stir things up over this. I delivered this message of course, and Christian tried as much as possible to comply with these instructions. Madame Kollontaj added: I assure you that he lives and is treated well."

The Soviet ambassador emphasized that this was told in confidence to Ingrid Günther and that she must not tell anybody but her husband.

Exactly what happened to this information after the tea is not known. But the information that Raoul Wallenberg was in the Soviet Union and not with the Red Army in Hungary was, in any case, not recorded in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs journals. It would take years before it became known.

In Budapest Soviet SMERSH agents interrogated a number of the Swedish legation and the Swedish Red Cross workers, not just the mysterious Count Michail Tolstoj-Kutuzov with whom Lars Berg had felt such a sudden discomfort when he encountered him in Pest. Berg's intuition had most likely been correct. According to NKVD officer Pavel Sudoplatov, for many years one of the higher-ups in the counterintelligence agency, Tolstoj-Kutozov had been a Soviet intelligence agent since the nineteen-twenties. During the late fall of 1944 Tolstoj-Kutuzov had characterized Raoul Wallenberg's work in Budapest as "questionable" in his reports, suggested that the Swede had close contact with German counterintelligence and that he was probably acting as a double agent.

As early as February 19 the operative SMERSH unit at the 2nd Ukrainian Front could deliver a rather substantial document about the Swedish legation to their chief at Debrecen, to be forwarded to Lubyanka Square in Moscow. To a large extent it was based on witness accounts from a source who was most likely Tolstoj-Kutuzov, and also Henry Thomsen, another Russian whom Lars Berg had employed at the Skyddsmaktsavdelningen. Thomsen had been arrested by the Russians as early as the end of January and he had also gone through difficult interrogations.

Thomsen and Tolstoj-Lutuzov, when they did not give their imagination entirely free reign, both seem to have filtered what they saw for their interrogators through rather foggy Soviet lenses. It is possible that the SMERSH agents' interpretation of the information was affected by the fact that the counterintelligence agency saw as its job to catch as many spies as possible. This tended to increase the number of suspects.

In a report named "Special communication," Colonel Muchortov wrote to Moscow that SMERSH had gathered "information which compromises the activity of the Swedish embassy and the Swedish Red Cross in Hungary." He continued: "The Swedish embassy has taken a considerable number of Budapest civilians under its protection, persons who have no relations to Sweden whatsoever, and given them different kinds of documents like passports, identification documents, and

‘skyddsbrev’. Well-known members from fascist organizations in Hungary belong to this category as do certain coworkers and agents for the enemies’ secret service and counterintelligence, as well as other counterrevolutionary elements evading Soviet authorities.”

The SMERSH colonel referred to an agent who just a week earlier had reported that the Swedish embassy had sold more than 20,000 passports for between 2,000 and 20,000 Hungarian pengö each. The agent claimed that rich Jews like the Manfréd Weiss family had received Swedish citizenship for 200,000 pengö. The obviously misinformed agent thereafter gave the names on the officers who had handled the passport sales and came up with “Countess NAKO, Doctor FLEISCHMANN under the guidance of their boss, FORGACS, as well as the office director MEZEY and also, according to a few sources, Minister DANIELSSON himself.”

Muchortov reported that the trade in most cases concerned schutzpass, but that 300 to 400 temporary passports that equaled Swedish citizenship had also been sold. The SMERSH colonel was informed that most of those who received Swedish citizenship had left on German transit visa just before the Red Army surrounded Budapest.

In the “special communication” the criteria for the schutzpass distribution were portrayed as particularly questionable. The example used came from an earlier statement by Swedish Red Cross delegate Valdemar Langlet which can not have been one of his most eloquent. According to Langlet, the passports went, “… to all those who are oppressed regardless of regime: during fascist reign we will give them to Jews, and when the Russians come closer we will give them to Christians, even if they are fascists, if only they are not too dangerous.”

Several pages listed “proof” that the Swedes were fascist collaborators. The staff members of the actual legation who “until very recently were fascists,” were named, as were Red Cross employees with presumed fascists in their families who “had always been open enemies of Soviet Russia.” As an example of Swedish hostility toward the Soviet Union Colonel Muchortov refers to a source who a year earlier had tried to gain permission from Swedish minister Danielsson to get medicine, food and clothing for Soviet prisoners of war. Since the mysterious Count Michail Tolstoj-Kutosov had been in charge of sick prisoners of war it does not seem too far fetched to assume that he was this source. According to Muchortov’s report

Danielsson had said “there is no point. The Soviet authorities execute its military that returns from captivity and therefore all efforts in this regard are at best for naught.”

During the fall the Swedish military attaché in Budapest Harry Wester had returned home. This was also pointed out as suspicious in the communication, especially since the SMERSH source on site could report what Military Attaché Wester had said during a visit to a camp for Soviet prisoners of war. “I have been to the camp of these swine. What beasts! I will not agree to this again.”

The Swedes liked to broadcast their role as a protective power for the Soviet Union but the counterintelligence reporters did not give them much credit for this. Their aid to Russian prisoners of war, they concluded in a surly manner, did not go beyond ten shirts and twenty boxes of sardines.

“From above summarization, but still far from conclusive facts, it is obvious that instead of protecting the interests of the Soviet Union and Hungary, the Swedish embassy and the Swedish Red Cross protect enemies of the Soviet Union and the Hungarian people and give them refuge and sanctuary. Because of this we are taking measures to arrest persons of interest to you and those who hold protective documents issued by the Swedish embassy,” SMERSH Colonel Muchortov of the 2nd Ukraininan Front ended his message.

He was ordered to gather even more information.

The elderly and somewhat rambling Swedish Red Cross delegate Valdemar Langlet had against all odds managed to get all the way to Debrecen on roads destroyed by bombs. Here he had established contact with the new Hungarian government and asked permission to continue the humanitarian work. The Soviet backed Hungarian ministers expressed their sincere gratitude for the Swedish rescue work and their “great admiration for Danielsson’s heroic performance.”

Now the generous Valdemar Langlet was back in Pest again and here he was quickly added to the group of people taken for interrogation by the Russians. The Soviet military command had received a letter regarding Raoul Wallenberg and one of his colleagues, and they traced it to the Red Cross. They now wanted to see if it was written on Langlet’s Russian typewriter, which it was. The letter conveyed the information that Raoul Wallenberg had traveled with a Russian escort to Army General Malinovsky’s headquarters. This is why Langlet was brought to the military commando.

Professor Langlet had to wait hours before he was let in to the Soviet colonel conducting the interrogations. The questions had almost exclusively been about Wallenberg. “Where was that Wallenberg, where did he live and why was he staying away? Presumably he was German, judging from his name?” Langlet later remembers that the colonel asked. When the Red Cross delegate had to answer that he did not know, but had heard that Wallenberg had traveled to Army General Malinovskij, the colonel came down hard on him. “Then you should not have written the way you did since you did not know if it was true!” Langlet was told.

As historian Bernt Schiller has pointed out the Russians suddenly seemed to want to create smoke screens around who had taken Raoul Wallenberg and where. They, if anybody, knew where the Swedish legation secretary was. It was as if they wanted to rewrite the past in order to be able to change his official status from “protected” to “disappeared.”

Every morning Lubyanka’s prisoners awoke to a guard shouting “Podjom!” (подъём, *wake up call*) and sliding open the food hatch. A pot of tea, or colored water, and a tiny loaf of bread were placed on the shelf inside for the prisoners. For supper they were served variations on watery soups. And in between almost nothing. The possibility that Raoul Wallenberg might have received better treatment after his complaint can not be eliminated but this is how the nutritional intake looked for most of them.

The days in the cells were all about fighting hunger and stomach pains – and putting up with critters. The cell walls crawled with lice that attacked the inmates at night. During the day the cockroaches came out. They thrived in the large cracks in this former palace’s worn and neglected oak parquet floor.

The runners in the hallways outside cushioned all sounds. Quiet reigned at Lubyanka. And desolation. The guards insisted on their rules that when brought to interrogation, exercise or, every ten days to the hygiene procedure dubbed a bath, prisoners should not see anybody but their own cellmates. When the bolt slid open nobody knew what was going to happen or if the prisoner in question would even return.

Tuesday, March 6, it was time. After a few weeks of chess against Nazi Gustav Richter the day-to-day routines changed for Swedish prisoner Raoul Wallenberg in cell number 121. Until now not much had happened during his month

long prison stay. If his case was under investigation it was happening in slow motion. Raoul Wallenberg had not been called to a single interrogation after the torturous night meeting after he just arrived. And he was not to be interrogated this time either. The guards had orders to move the prisoners. Raoul Wallenberg was to be moved to one of the neighboring cells, number 123.

He was not entirely forgotten. Swedish Minister Söderblom had, after all, made a recent attempt to get a message to Raoul via the Soviet foreign ministry. But the message with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' gratitude and the greetings from his family probably did not reach Lubyanka. Still, Söderblom had not requested to meet with his diplomat colleague. He had no such instructions. Perhaps the thought did not even enter his mind. He did, after all, believe that Raoul was still in Hungary.

The day Raoul Wallenberg changed cells in Lubyanka newspaper readers in Sweden could partake in the first detailed account of his activities. Under the heading, "Swedish Feat in Hungary," Dagens Nyheter published an interview with a Hungarian who had managed to flee Budapest. He praised the actions of the Swedes in helping the Hungarian Jews particularly Raoul Wallenberg and Valdemar Langlet. Most of the article was about Raoul. "Nothing was impossible for Wallenberg. During those tumultuous days he received letters with death threats, they threw rocks at his car, they tried in all kinds of ways to make it impossible for him to visit the protégés: armed gangsters were sent to pursue him, but nothing could make him give up," said Dagens Nyheter's source who had worked at a printing press in Budapest and had had contact with Raoul Wallenberg.

The source estimated that approximately 5,000 Jews had been protected in the Swedish houses in a city otherwise paralyzed with fear of the Arrow Crossers' brutal actions. The Hungarian continued his ovations which were recorded like this in Dagens Nyheter: "In the middle of the night Raoul Wallenberg fetched people who had been arrested despite having a schutzpass out of prison, in the dark of night he traveled in his car to the Swedish houses with medicine, made sure that sick people were cared for. (---) All the essentials that they needed had to be brought to them and the legation was tireless in this aspect of its mission."

The first piece of information about the rest of the legation had now reached Stockholm via the Swedish minister in Bucharest, Patrik Reuterswärd. He had received secondhand reports from some of Raoul's protégés who had crossed the border, reports that in their content looked similar to those he would later receive in

the form of letters from Valdemar Langlet. It was now said (*mistakenly*) that all the Swedish diplomats except for Raoul Wallenberg were safe in the Pope's nunciature in Budapest, information immediately cabled to Swedish Radio. But Reuterswärd had also been told by the protégés that Raoul Wallenberg had taken off in a car for an unknown destination. This particular piece of information the Ministry for Foreign Affairs chose not to forward.

In his letter Valdemar Langlet painted a frightening picture of the Arrow Cross attack on the Swedish legation in December. All this taken together called for a reactivation of Moscow minister Söderblom who was now asked to contact the Soviet Ministry of External Relations to convey this information. One of the first days in March Söderblom met with the director for the Scandinavian Department at Kuznetski most (Blacksmith's Bridge, name of street). Söderblom told him that all the Swedish diplomats in Hungary had been found except for Raoul Wallenberg "regarding whom we, through the dedication of the Ministry of External Relations received information a long time ago." He made it sound as though Raoul Wallenberg was now finished business. But he still did not say anything about wanting to meet with him.

Only a day or so later Söderblom received instructions from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm to once again consult with the Ministry of External Relations. It now concerned a more personal message for Raoul Wallenberg. Söderblom was to ask the Russians to tell Raoul that he was "missed" at home and that Sven Salén wondered when he expected to return. This last volley Söderblom chose to pass on to the minister in Bucharest. Why bother Moscow again when Raoul Wallenberg was somewhere in Hungary? he might have thought. His primary task in Moscow was after all to accomplish noticeably better relations between Sweden and the Soviet Union. Then you would not unnecessarily bother them with nonsense.

Protected or disappeared? It was becoming increasingly more obvious that the Russians wanted to redirect the communication away from the quick reassuring piece of information that Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov had delivered. And Ambassador Kollontaj during her tea times in Stockholm for that matter. Wasn't it a bit problematic that the Swedes had received a written notice that Raoul Wallenberg had been taken into protective custody by the Red Army? Would it be possible to draw attention away from this and hide behind something more vague?

Nine thirty at night on March 8 information about the Swedish Budapest colony suddenly surfaced on the news on Soviet run Hungarian Kossuth radio. Under the heading, "Talk: The Terrorism of the Man-hunters. Swedish Diplomat On Hungarian Deportations" the information about the situation in Budapest that Valdemar Langlet gave during his visit with the new Hungarian government in Debrecen was repeated. Langlet was said to have estimated that approximately half a million Hungarian Jews had been deported by "Hitler and Arrow Cross bandits." Thereafter the radio station reported that one of the directors for the "Red Cross action" in Budapest, Raoul Wallenberg, had disappeared "without a trace" on January 17th. The studio reporter's conclusion was shocking. "All signs point to Gestapo agents having murdered him," the journalist confirmed without wavering.

From protected to disappeared – a new Soviet approach toward Raoul Wallenberg begun to take shape. Now they just had to spread this strategic disinformation to the right recipients. Because of this it was probably not just chance that the Stockholm based exiled Hungarian Vilmos Böhm shortly thereafter called the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and told them about the Hungarian radio feature. And that he sent a printout to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs translated into English. Vilmos Böhm had been a minister in a short-lived Hungarian communist government after World War I. He now translated Hungarian news and announcements to English at the British embassy's Press Reading Bureau in Stockholm. He was one of the people Raoul consulted with before leaving Stockholm for his appointment in Budapest. According to intelligence historian Wilhelm Agrell, Vilmos Böhm worked during this time under the alias Orestes, as an agent for the Soviet security agency in Stockholm.

Speculations that Raoul Wallenberg could have been murdered by Gestapo reached them, but seems to have been deemed as not very believable by the Swedish foreign ministry leadership at Gustaf Adolf's Square. On the other hand, they were not unaffected by the signals that Raoul Wallenberg might have disappeared and not at all be safe with Russian troops. The confusion did not exactly lessen when contradictory information about the whereabouts of Minister Danielsson and the other Swedish diplomats began pouring in. They were not at all safe in the Pope's Nunciature in Budapest according to sources. In Stockholm, anxiety grew. A new telegram went out from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm to Minister Söderblom in Moscow: "As we hear contradictory rumors regarding the members of

the Budapest legation, you are instructed to assertively demand answers regarding the whereabouts of Danielsson, Anger and Wallenberg."

Raoul Wallenberg had been moved and replaced Vilmos Langfelder in Lubyanka prison cell number 123. He shared the small space with one of his former cellmate Gustav Richert's German colleagues, Willy Rödel. Legation Council Rödel was a large man in his fifties who, like Richert, had been stationed in the Rumanian capital of Bucharest. Here he had been the political advisor to the German minister and profiled as an expert in the "Jewish question". There is no information about the personal chemistry between Rödel and Wallenberg, but from now on they would bunk together in different cells for another two years.

Raoul's third cellmate in his new place was a Czech interpreter from a German signals intelligence company (Horcherkompani). His name was Jan Loyda and he was Raoul's age and sometimes referred to as "The Czech" despite being a German citizen since his twenties.

It caused a certain amount of attention among the other prisoners that a diplomat from neutral Sweden was locked up in Lubyanka prison. Rödel and Loyda understood from Raoul Wallenberg that he viewed his own arrest as an inexplicable mistake by the Russians. He told Rödel and Loyda that he was convinced that this mistake would be sorted out and that he would begin his negotiations as planned.

Raoul Wallenberg was still in a good mood. He exercised every day in his new cell as well. His cellmate Jan Loyda said that during the time he spent in cell number 123 Raoul began working on the early drafts of a monument of victory in honor of the Red Army. He often sang and described one of the Swedish folk songs he often chose as his favorite. Raoul also wanted to have a refresher course of the Russian he had learned at school. The two cellmates, who were the same age, decided that Loyda would teach Raoul Russian and Raoul would teach Loyda English.

They were now well into March of 1945. Spring drew near and outside the high walls of Lubyanka the snow had begun to melt. In Budapest this change in the weather had caused a spring flood so powerful that the Danube almost overflowed.

There in the Hungarian capital, Raoul's colleagues Lars Berg and Margareta Bauer stood their ground as best they could while the leaders of the Swedish legation played cards and made corn pipes in their "protective custody" in

the Hungarian countryside. Lars Berg had remained in Pest and prepared two office rooms for himself in the Swedish Red Cross Ullöi út building only a few blocks from Raoul Wallenberg's now destroyed main office.

Slightly worried Berg noted that Valdemar Langlet and the Swedish Red Cross's activities had once again begun "swelling uncontrollably." Even worse, when he went out in the street he noticed a Swedish flag flying on a building only a few houses away. A sign on the door proclaimed in Hungarian, Russian and German that this was the "Royal Swedish Legation". He went inside and found Raoul's Hungarian colleague Otto Fleischman by a desk in the midst of issuing certificates bearing the stamp of the Royal Swedish Legation and even Raoul Wallenberg's forged signature. He also got to meet the others in the think tank around Raoul – Hugo Wohl, Pál Hegedüs and Vilmos Forgács who said that they wanted to resume the work, run hospitals, large kitchens and orphanages just like Raoul Wallenberg had planned. They said that they had money but needed the legation sign and the stamps. Perhaps Lars Berg could be their new boss?

Lars Berg felt honored but was surprised. He had never refrained from sharing his skepticism over what he regarded as "digressions" in Raoul Wallenberg's explosively growing humanitarian action. He did not have to contemplate this for very long to realize the danger. By now the Russians had arrested and interrogated many of his Hungarian colleagues at the Swedish legation. Valdemar Langlet had been detained for a fairly long time and it was only a matter of time before it was his turn. Lars Berg knew that the Russians suspected them of espionage and that his and Raoul Wallenberg's names had been singled out. He asked Fleischmann to immediately cease the activities. Thereafter he wrote a diplomatic note and placed an advertisement in the newspaper stating that all Swedish schutzpass were invalid from now on.

Before they went their separate ways Pál Hegedüs brought Lars Berg to the ruins of Hazai Bank. Hegedüs wanted to hand over a packet that Raoul Wallenberg had deposited in the bank and that the Russians had missed during their plunder. Hegedüs had found the packet in a water-filled basement and placed it in one of the empty safes. Lars Berg opened it right there. "It turned out to contain 870,000 pengö in banknotes, a ring with an unusually large diamond, a copper plate and a document which in sonorous verse and with exceptionally artistic illustrations depicted Raoul's deeds in Hungary. "Evidently a Christmas gift from one of his

colleagues or admirers," Lars Berg writes in his book, "Vad hände i Budapest." (What Happened in Budapest?)

At the legation building on Gyópar utca Margareta Bauer had had to put up with Soviet raids now and again and had had to ward off arrests but had still managed surprisingly well. She thanked God that the legation's faithful cook Fódor and his wife had stayed. Food was the last thing she had to worry about. Still, she was relieved when Lars Berg sent a kind Soviet soldier in a jeep with orders to bring her to the Red Cross building in Pest.

Thursday, March 15, Per Anger appeared suddenly in the doorway of Lars Berg's new legation office in Pest. "Well, hello!" After a month of waiting in Soviet "protective custody," they had finally been told that all the Swedish diplomats would be returning home to Sweden via Rumania and the Soviet Union. "A truck is waiting in the street," Per Anger told Margareta Bauer and Lars Berg. Since neither of them owned more than the shirts on their backs they could leave rather quickly. Margareta Bauer looked around on the truck bed where Minister Ivan Danielsson and the others were waiting. Where was Raoul Wallenberg? She asked this question of the Soviet officer escorting them. He saluted her and said that they had already taken care of Wallenberg. He was in southern Hungary and would be home in Sweden before they arrived.

Valdemar Langlet had believed for a long time that Raoul Wallenberg would appear again. But he had changed his mind and launched a new theory which the Swedish diplomats would now hear. "It is possible that he has really ended up in the hands of disguised Arrow Crossers, in which case you can only fear the worst regarding his fate," as he wrote in yet another letter to Reuterswärd, the Swedish minister in Bucharest.

The Red Cross delegate was ill and would stay in Budapest for two more months. They said goodbye. Lars Berg did not have time to exchange the 890,000 pengö that he had found among Raoul's deposits at Hazai Bank. He left all the money with the Swedish Red Cross and asked them to send it later with Langlet. But all the rest of Raoul's belongings, the ring, the plate, and the nice Christmas book, he brought with him to Stockholm.

The truck with its slightly disheveled Swedish diplomats went on a farewell tour around Budapest – to Per Anger's latest living quarters at Countess Nákó's at Uri utca 15, to Fürst Eszterhazy's ruined palace and to the bombed and

plundered legation building on Gellert Hill. Among the mess in the liqueur family Zwack's villa Margareta Bauer found her letters from home and a bag with cardamom that she brought. Per Anger managed to get his hands on a dress shirt and a beloved picture of his wife Elena Anger. That was all. "Saved your albums but most other property bombed during wardays (---) I love you," Per Anger eventually wrote to his wife in one of the first signs of life from him in several months.

They had a week long trip to Bucharest ahead of them on the shaky bed of a truck. They were given vodka and Margareta Bauer sang in parts with Yngve Ekmark. The first night they slept on straw sacks.

Around this time another, for the Raoul Wallenberg case not insignificant transfer was taking place. The Kremlin's irritation over Ambassador Alexandra Kollontaj's independent actions in Stockholm had grown to an outspoken mistrust. Her alleged deceit regarding the trade negotiations was one of the triggering factors, her openness regarding the whereabouts of Raoul Wallenberg another. According to Russian author Arkadij Vaksberg, Kollontaj told Minister of External Relations Molotov what she had said about Raoul Wallenberg to his mother and to Ingrid Günther. Molotov had become irritated and ordered her not to talk to anyone about things like that, presumably because behind the scenes some sort of revision process of the truth she had just conveyed was going on. "Protected" would now seriously be transformed into "disappeared."

The Russians' strategy regarding this procedure seems to have been to allow this new interpretation of reality to make its own way through rumors planted in radio shows or at cocktail receptions. The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs would via unofficial routes become convinced that Dekanozov's maneuver was based on a fable. This is how it came to be that Soviet diplomats in Bucharest were swarming around with their Swedish colleagues at a reception in Bucharest in the middle of March. Over drinks it was said, most likely to Minister Patrik Reuterswärd, that nobody in Moscow knew anything about this Wallenberg and that he had "disappeared somewhere."

Kollontaj's honesty was becoming a problem, and did she not have just a few too many close personal relationships with influential Swedes?

In the middle of March, 1945, Madame Kollontaj was since a few weeks back seriously ill with pneumonia. Her doctor, Nanna Svartz, treated her with

penicillin but Kollontaj was still ill the day the message came. Stalin wanted her to leave her position immediately and return to Moscow. Nanna Svartz was called to her side and could not say no when her friend pleaded with her. She had to leave everything and escort her famous patient home. On March 18th the Soviet military plane took off from Stockholm.

Moscow minister Staffan Söderblom had barely received the news about Kollontaj's arrival before arranging a visit with the legendary Swedish envoy. Söderblom still perceived his situation in Moscow as "anything but easy" and had run into a number of difficulties of late. The Ministry of External Relations had not responded to any of his inquiries regarding Raoul Wallenberg and the other Budapest Swedes. He had become more and more unwilling to present new ones.

Now Staffan Söderblom instead brought all his issues to the sick seventy-three-year-old diplomat. One by one he went through the upcoming United Nations conference, the Baltic refugees and the Folke Bernadotte visa. Finally, he mentioned that he had asked the Ministry of External Relations where Danielsson, Anger and Wallenberg were, but had not been given an answer.

Later Söderblom wrote to Stockholm that Kollontaj had promised him to "rush the investigation regarding the Budapest Swedes." But Nanna Svartz, who was present in Kollontaj's apartment, did not remember that particular point of discussion as a routine issue. "Sometimes they raised their voices and then I heard that it concerned Raoul Wallenberg."

Not many days went by before at least some of the reinvented Soviet reality took on a life of its own at the Swedish foreign ministry. Perhaps it was the carefully placed Soviet signs that had reached them, or perhaps what made a difference was Söderblom's wishes to be rid of the problematic issue. Kollantaj might even have repeated her hint that everything would turn out well if only the Swedes did not stir things up around Wallenberg. Nobody knows. But suddenly the new Soviet perception of reality also became the Swedish one.

When the truck from Budapest arrived in Rumania and everything seemed to be under control, Staffan Söderblom grabbed his pencil and wrote what looked like a final statement to the director of the Scandinavian Department in the Soviet Ministry of External Relations. He listed the names of all those who happily arrived in Rumania and mentioned that Valdemar Langlet was still in Budapest. He then came to Raoul Wallenberg, and suddenly Dekanozov's clear message from

January was entirely forgotten. It no longer mattered that the Vice Minister of External Relations had actually left a written receipt that Wallenberg was under Soviet protection. It did not matter that this written receipt indicated that the Russians, if Raoul Wallenberg now indeed was lost, should know what had happened and have the responsibility of telling the Swedes.

Staffan Söderblom did not request any kind of information because the new Soviet truth had also become the Swedish one. Staffan Söderblom wrote to the Soviet Ministry of External Relations that Raoul Wallenberg "according to the Swedish legation in Budapest" had been "lost since January 17, when he said he was leaving by car." When the month of March was almost over, the current truth at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm was that they lacked "further information" about Raoul Wallenberg.

The process had come full circle. Raoul Wallenberg was no longer under Russian protection. He had disappeared.

The quick diagnosis that the British doctor had made in Jalta had been correct. Thursday April 12, American President Franklin D. Roosevelt died from a massive stroke during a vacation at his beloved Warm Springs in Georgia. The last weeks of his life Roosevelt had been able to see the superior allied troops completely obliterate the formerly so dreaded German army. But the war victories in the field had been accompanied by increased verbal sparring between the United States and the Soviet Union. Stalin seemed to have changed into an entirely different person. He refused to allow American officers into Poland to assist their liberated prisoners of war. And he refused to allow any other ministers into the Polish interim government than those handpicked by the Soviet government. The solemn words about democracy that Stalin had signed began to seem like inflated, perhaps even popped balloons. The atmosphere gave premonitions of the coming cold war.

"Ironically, the imminent collapse of Hitler's mighty war machine produced a new situation in which Stalin's deep-laid suspicions of Western purpose would surface more violently than ever before," as the United States' then ambassador to the Soviet Union, Walter Harriman, wrote in his memoirs, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946.*

In a letter at the beginning of April Stalin did not shy away from accusing President Roosevelt straight out of pursuing secret western ally efforts toward a separate agreement with the Germans. Offended, Roosevelt replied to Stalin only a few days before he died: “It would be one of the great tragedies of history if at the very moment of the victory, now within our grasp, such distrust, such lack of faith, should prejudice the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, material and treasure involved (---). Frankly, I cannot avoid a feeling of bitter resentment toward your informers, whoever they are, for such vile misrepresentations of my actions or those of my trusted subordinates.”

Stalin might well have been making stone soup but his suspicions were not entirely without cause. The Germans had in fact sent out a few negotiation feelers of the above mentioned suspicious kind. A few of them went via Stockholm. As historian Bernt Schiller has shown, Raoul Wallenberg’s relative Jacob Wallenberg received a visit in February. It was an envoy for German Minister for Foreign Affairs Joachim Ribbentrop. The German wanted to get a message through to Winston Churchill that Hitler would consider a separate agreement with the British and the Americans, based on their common interest in stopping a Russian advancement. The brothers Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg had after all earlier during the war been effective communication channels in such regards. When Jacob Wallenberg rejected this idea as not feasible, Ribbentrops’ envoy found his way instead to Iver Olsen at the American legation. It was in truth a negotiation effort in Raoul Wallenberg land.

This Sweden approach continued in April. Heinrich Himmler then sent his loyal Walter Schellenberg to Stockholm to, with the help of Folke Bernadotte, try to come to an agreement with the western allies. Walter Schellenberg had been one of Jacob Wallenberg’s communication channels in the German SS. When Raoul Wallenberg left for Budapest in the fall of 1944 Jacob Wallenberg had asked this same Schellenberg to protect his cousin’s son.

Nobody knows how much of this that the Soviet secret service had managed to snoop out. But for the well-informed Russian counterespionage with a talent for conspiracy theories of Stalinist proportions it would not have been difficult to conjure up a connection that was less than beneficial for the young Swede in Lubyanka prison cell number 123. That the connection was insignificant and rather random hardly mattered. In Stalin’s Soviet Union the appearance of the truth could be at least as decisive as the truth itself.

At the American legation in Stockholm, information that Raoul Wallenberg had disappeared created anxiety. American Minister Herschel Johnson felt responsible and got engaged with the matter. He wrote to the State Department in Washington where the current secretary of state was Edward Settinius. Johnson made clear that he felt that the American embassy in Moscow should offer help to Staffan Söderblom, "as we had a special interest in Wallenberg's mission to Hungary." The message was heard. American Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, the one who originally helped make the War Refugee Board a reality, wrote a special greeting on Johnson's telegram: "Let Stettinius know I am personally interested in this man."

The United States' Moscow ambassador, Walter Harriman, did as he was told but Staffan Söderblom rejected the American help. "The Swedes say they have no reason to think that the Russians are not doing what they can and they do not feel that an approach to the Soviet Foreign Office on our part would be desirable," Harriman reported back to Washington. Stettinius continued: "The members of the Swedish Mission in Budapest are expected to arrive in Moscow within a few days en route to Stockholm and may have additional information concerning Wallenberg."

They arrived together before lunch on Friday, April 13th, and got off the train at Kiev Station in Moscow – Per Anger, Ivan Danielsson, Margareta Bauer, Asta Nilsson, Yngve Ekmark, Denez Mezey and Göte Carlsson. Only Raoul Wallenberg was missing. The trip had gone well. They had had their own blue dining car of "old tsar Russian model" and had stopped in Odessa for three days where they went to see the opera "Madame Butterfly."

Staffan Söderblom and Ingemar Hägglöf stood waiting on the train platform. They were a little tense, mostly because Minister Söderblom had feared that the Russians would redirect the diplomat car to Sibiria. Hägglöf was troubled. He had until the very last moment hoped that Wallenberg would be on board. They had met briefly in Paris one summer eight years earlier when Raoul and his cousin Lennart Hagströmer were there on a business trip.

Staffan Söderblom had everybody over for lunch at the Minovsky villa and then spent the afternoon meeting with Ivan Danielsson. The others were taken on a sightseeing tour of Moscow and visited several places, including the Red Square not far from the Lubyanka prison. Söderblom and Danielsson had a private talk. They

also visited briefly with the director for the Scandinavian Department at the Ministry of External Relations. The minister, named Vetrov, gave them five minutes. During this time none of them so much as approached the subject Raoul Wallenberg.

But in their private talks the Swedish envoys must of course have talked of Wallenberg. Danielsson had a new angle regarding the mystery Raoul Wallenberg to share, a frightening rumor that Valdemar Langlet had heard. What if Raoul Wallenberg had been abducted by disguised Arrow Crossers? In that case, anything might have happened. Raoul was probably dead. Many theories were flying around. Staffan Söderblom was convinced by what he heard from the Budapest Swedes. The conclusion of all this was that Raoul Wallenberg was probably dead.

On the train platform that evening Staffan Söderblom motioned for Per Anger to come closer. "Remember, when you return to Sweden – not a bad word about the Russians!" The following day Minister Söderblom telegraphed the latest news to Stockholm: "Wallenberg, sentenced to death by the Arrow Crossers and the Germans, crossed over to the Russians on his own. As soon as they encountered him, I was officially notified. Thereafter Wallenberg seems to have left in a car for Debrecen and is feared to have been killed during that trip. There are different theories: car accident (very likely), robbery ending in murder, an Arrow Cross ambush, etc. I fear that we will never find an answer."

In a letter shortly thereafter he would expand on his theories. "I fear that the Russians, no matter how much they might wish to, can not elucidate what happened. First of all, according to all reports mayhem reigns in Hungary. (---) Unfortunately, one must also realize that Marshal Tobuchin's headquarters and subordinate staff offices can hardly at the present time be expected to pay much more attention to a case like this. Finally, it is also possible that in the case of Wallenberg having suffered a deadly car accident or been murdered during his trip east from Budapest, his disappearance in this ongoing chaos, in the midst of this enormous Budapest battle, might have left no trace."

The following week the Budapest Swedes were expected home in Stockholm after a stop in Helsinki. Their arrival had been announced in the Swedish newspapers for several days, but there had been nothing about exactly who among the legation employees that were included in the collective mention of the Budapest Swedes. Maj von Dardel hoped until the very last moment that her son was also on his way home. But on Tuesday the assistant cabinet secretary Vilhelm Assarsson at the

Ministry for Foreign Affairs called her. He told her that the Budapest legation staff would arrive by boat from Finland the following day but that unfortunately Raoul Wallenberg would not be among them.

Maj and Fredrik von Dardel still went to Skeppsbron to meet the steamer S/S Arcturus on that Wednesday morning, April 18th. The dock was full of families bearing flowers and gifts. They waved eagerly and cheered when the boat approached. A small reception committee from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs stood waiting in front of the customs office, and in the throng were also many exiled Hungarians hoping for news about their relatives.

In the middle of the dock stood Per Anger's wife Elena and their one-year-old girl Birgitta with a "dew fresh red rose" on her little bonnet. Lars Berg's mother cried when she hugged her twenty-six-year-old son. Out of the corner of his eye the young diplomat noticed Maj and Fredrik von Dardel who stood quietly watching the others. "The tears that ran down Raoul's mother's cheeks were those of heavy sorrow," he wrote in his book a few years later.

When an appropriate number of days of rest had gone by, Maj von Dardel tried to invite Budapest Minister Ivan Danielsson to her home to learn more about Raoul. He declined the invitation saying that he had "no appropriate clothing."

On that first day Svenska Dagbladet wrote about the concern over missing legation secretary Raoul Wallenberg. But the Ministry for Foreign Affairs communiqué about Raoul Wallenberg was not released until Friday evening. It "hit Stockholm like a bomb," the newspaper Expressen wrote the following day. The news that Raoul Wallenberg had been taken into protective custody by the Red Army had been very calming. The family had been told that "there was no immediate concern for worry." In addition the returnees had talked about the Russians' "excellent" treatment of the rest of the Budapest legation staff. And then suddenly the Ministry for Foreign Affairs changed their tone. Now it was said that, "no information exists and the possibilities that Mr. Wallenberg is still alive must be seen as limited."

Friday, a press conference was held with Per Anger and Ivan Danielsson on the podium. "Not a bad word about the Russians," Staffan Söderblom had requested and those words were fresh on their minds. The press meeting came to be dominated by the revelation of the drama in Budapest. The diplomats touched on

Raoul Wallenberg's great achievements but without complicating matters with the fact that he had not been on the boat.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs does not seem to have conducted any kind of interviews with the Budapest Swedes. A few of them had to turn in written reports though not about Raoul Wallenberg's disappearance but about the course of events at the legation. But in addition to these reports Ivan Danielsson had forwarded the sinister rumors from Budapest, the ones that made Söderblom write home speculating in murder or a "fatal automobile accident." And the Ministry for Foreign Affairs saw no other solution than to officially share their trepidations.

The following day Raoul Walleberg was honored for his actions, in both Swedish and foreign newspapers. "Raoul Wallenberg. Architect. Credited with leading rescue of 20,000 from Nazis," wrote the New York Times. "His name and his memory is associated with lasting honor. USA's refugee organization (*War Refugee Board, author's comment*) has also expressed its admiration for his deed, which is viewed as one of the greatest of its kind during this war," wrote Svenska Dagbladet's editorial page.

Meanwhile the Ministry for Foreign Affairs lashed out at Söderblom in Moscow. The Russians had assured them that Raoul Wallenberg was under their protection. So what was this? Presumably Minister for Foreign Affairs Christian Günter himself was the one to react. Söderblom was now told in no uncertain terms, or given "definite instructions" as it was called in foreign ministry language, to seek out Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov, refer to his message from January 17 and demand a "careful investigation" into "what has befallen" Wallenberg.

Staffan Söderblom must have moaned. He had tried to convey to the people at home that he felt that this question should be handled elsewhere and not be allowed to interfere with the troubled and sensitive relationship with the higher-ups in Moscow. Especially not now when so much pointed to Raoul Wallenberg probably having been killed in an accident or by disguised Arrow Crossers. How about the new Hungarian government in Debrecen, might they not be able to give a better answer? Would it not be better to turn to Madame Kollontaj personally? Perhaps her friend Marcus Wallenberg could write a letter?

The truth was that Staffan Söderblom had not touched the topic of Raoul Wallenberg with Dekanozov since January 26. He had then nervously begun the meeting by thanking the Russians for being so accommodating regarding protection

for Raoul Wallenberg. Since then he had only mentioned the name Wallenberg to lower officers. Reluctantly, he would do what he had been ordered to do but not without ingratiating himself.

Staffan Söderblom now began the meeting by handing a letter to Dekanozov, a letter containing the official demand that the Soviets take measures to try to locate Raoul Wallenberg. The vice minister of external relations promised they would do this. But Söderblom did not stop here. He had, after all, recently conveyed to the Ministry of External Relations that Wallenberg had most likely disappeared. So he had to give some sort of explanation. He blamed it on the fact that Swedish media writing so much about Raoul Wallenberg's deeds had increased Swedish concern regarding what might have happened to him. Afterward, Dekanozov wrote the following notes regarding Söderblom's thoughts around Raoul Wallenberg. "He might possibly have had an accident. The Swedes were notified of an accident like that by Jews coming from Budapest to Bucharest. I asked what kind of accident for Wallenberg that Söderblom was referring to. Söderblom clarified that according to his witness' reports Wallenberg might have, after being encountered, died in a car accident."

Maj and Fredrik von Dardel still lived in their large six-room apartment on Östermalmsgatan 12 despite the fact that all the children had now left home. But they had started looking for something new. Their daughter Nina's husband Gunnar Lagergren had returned home for Christmas, 1944. They had moved to a house on Lindingö with six-month-old daughter Nan. Their son Guy von Dardel had graduated as a civil engineer the year before and moved to Linköping. Here he worked at SAAB while writing on his dissertation. And then there was Raoul who had not, of course, lived at home for several years. But what had happened to him?

Maj von Dardel loved her firstborn son but she was not an overly sensitive or overprotective mother, and not a bundle of nerves who vented her worries unnecessarily. Rather the opposite. Raoul's mother had suffered more in life than most people and was by nature a rather tough and candid person. Over the years she had clearly shown that she could handle goodbyes and long separations if she knew it was the best thing for her children. Her Raoul had been sent to experience the world at the young age of twelve. At nineteen he moved to the United States, and she had not seen him for three and a half years.

But the experience on Skeppsbron was too much, in addition to her suspicion that something horrible had happened. This could not be reconciled with what she had heard from Madame Kollontaj.

Those close to Maj von Dardel describe her as a particularly action oriented person, a faster-than-lightening, instinctive problem solver. It was obvious that she now had to act on her own. At the same time it was difficult for her to turn to the Soviet legation again when she had already received such a clear – and reassuring – message.

Maj von Dardel now sent a message to the Soviet legation on Villagatan and asked them for information regarding Raoul Wallenberg. When the diplomats sent her message on to Moscow, they wrote like this: “He was last seen traveling in a car belonging to the Swedish legation, and he was said to have gone from the German zone to the zone surrounded by Soviet troops. In Sweden it is rumored that Wallenberg was seen on a train for the troops on its way to the SSSR. Since then nobody has heard from him.”

Perhaps it was just a strange coincidence but the following day the Soviet legation in Stockholm turned to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and demanded that one of the refugees from the Baltic States, teenager Lidija Makarova, be released. As if they wanted to send a signal: If we get her, you get him.

Maj von Dardel might not have been allowed to meet with Ivan Danielsson but she did manage to meet with others among Raoul’s diplomat colleagues from Budapest. It seems as if Per Anger visited the von Dardel family one of the first days after returning home. Lars Berg probably also stopped by Raoul’s parents’ home. Because he had managed to bring the ring, the plate and the nice Christmas book from Hazai Bank.

Fredrik and Maj von Dardel now heard the Budapest Swedes’ speculations. But they also got to take part of Per Anger’s new theory. He had recently begun to doubt the version that Staffan Söderblom was propagating. News that the Swiss diplomats Harald Feller and Max Meier had also disappeared in Budapest after being “offered to inspect a certain legation site in Pest with a Russian escort,” had recently been received at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm.” Anger began to suspect a logical connection - that they were all imprisoned. But he failed to get anyone at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to listen to his theory.

Per Anger was right. Since March 4 Harald Feller and Max Meier each had their own cell at Lubjanka prison.

Now Raoul's famous relatives were activated. Staffan Söderblom came up with the idea that Marcus Wallenberg write a letter to his dear friend Madame Kollontaj. If his suggestion was the cause, or if Maj von Dardel herself contacted the bank director is not clear. But Marcus Wallenberg had nothing against getting involved. He consulted with Raoul's boss Kálmán Lauer regarding the details around the Budapest mission before he wrote his letter. Lauer told the whole story from the beginning as he remembered it. Then he speculated about what might have happened. Raoul had "many notes and photographs of the horrible deeds that the German and Hungarian Nazis had committed and it was possible that an accident had happened to him on his way to Debrecen," Lauer wrote.

Marcus Wallenberg's letter arrived via courier to Moscow on Friday, April 27, and on Saturday Staffan Söderblom visited Kollontaj to hand it over. Marcus Wallenberg had addressed the repudiated ambassador in French and made clear that he wrote her in a "strictly private" matter. He asked Kollontaj to use her good influence to send out inquiries since the family was getting very worried.

But messenger Söderblom had it all figured out. When he reported home to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs about this visit on the eve of Walpurgis night, he ended it like this: "As I have stated earlier, it might unfortunately be the case that this matter will remain an unsolved puzzle."

When the Lubyanka prisoners were brought for interrogation they usually went with their guards from the "inner prison" to one of the rooms higher up in the "Big Lubyanka" building, the palace that had once been the home of an insurance company. The interrogation was a carefully recorded procedure. The length of it was noted in a journal and the prisoner had to sign his name. The entire procedure usually ended with the prisoner being handed a piece of paper and told to write down his life story. It was a cunning strategy. It was important that the story did not change from the previous time. The abbreviation SMERSH stood for "Death to the spies," something that the interrogators liked to remind the newly arrived.

The last Saturday in April of 1945 Raoul Wallenberg was for the second time during his two months at the prison brought from his cell. Shorty after three in

the afternoon the cell door opened. Unaware of the hoopla that his name had stirred up in the Swedish public in the past few days Raoul Wallenberg began his walk.

He was placed eye to eye with interrogator Kuzmisjin who was the head of the counterespionage agency SMERSH's third department. Perhaps it was exactly the hoopla in Stockholm that brought on this séance. Or there might possibly be a connection between the urge to interrogate the Swede and the persistent Soviet attempts to get the Baltic refugees extradited from Sweden. The 30,000 Balts were often brought up among diplomats and just a few days earlier the Russians had sent an official request that Miss Makarova be sent "home" to the Soviet Union. Soviet diplomacy was often about this kind of exchange of concessions. You did not offer anything without getting something in return.

The SMERSH colonel Kuzmisjin did not speak German particularly well and he usually had an interpreter with him. Even so, his interrogation of thirty-two-year-old Raoul Wallenberg went comparatively quickly. The interrogation lasted only one hour and twenty-five minutes. Raoul seems to have grabbed this opportunity to protest his arrest. Raoul later told his cellmates that he said to the Russians that they "did not have any reason whatsoever to keep him prisoner. He had worked for the Russians in Budapest." But Kuzmisjin had not believed him.

Shortly thereafter Raoul's cellmate Jan Loyda who was the same age as Raoul, was taken away. The interrogator asked him with whom he shared a cell. "Two diplomats, Wallenberg and Rödel," Loyda answered. "Wallenberg is no diplomat, but a Swede who has helped rich Jews in Hungary," countered the interrogator to Loyda's great surprise.

By this time Jan Loyda had gotten to know his Swedish cellmate well and appreciated him very much. Afterward he would describe him as a "very kind, friendly and helpful" person. It was a part of the routine for Raoul Wallenberg to ask the guards to give his cigarette ration to Vilmos Langfelder. When Loyda returned to the cell he told Raoul what the interrogator had said, "so that he would better understand his position vis-à-vis the Soviet authorities."

That weekend, a festive atmosphere filled the city outside Lubyanka's walls. Muscovites poured out in the streets in the unusually beautiful spring weather and began celebrating their victory on the sly, despite the fact that the Germans had not yet officially capitulated and that there would be yet another day or so before Soviet troops would finally take Berlin. "Everywhere there was a feeling of spring,

victory and joy. It was as if the entire Russian people lived up during those days after years of suffering, darkness and endless work. The parade in the Red Square on May 1 held the same air of victory – and glorious weather," wrote the second in command at the Swedish legation, Ingemar Hägglöf, in his memoirs.

A week later peace was a reality. In the afternoon of May 7, the news reached Sweden. Stockholm exploded in euphoria. Kungsgatan was soon so packed with people that it had to be closed to car traffic. Trashcans were upended and soon "the air between the buildings glittered from a paper snowfall," as the newspapers said the following day. Rolls of paper were pulled from accounting machines in offices and flung around so that, "long streamers flew in the spring wind." People were waving flags in all the windows. Young boys pinned newspaper headlines to their chest and ran around. Champagne corks exploded on the balconies and on Strandvägen, below Mellaneuropeiska Handelsbolagets office "there was a flag on every single stroller."

One family did not participate in the festivities on that historic Monday. Maj and Fredrik von Dardel did not run out to Kungsgatan like everybody else. In their apartment on Östermalm, it was difficult to muster up any true joy that the war was over.

Maj von Dardel received many letters praising Raoul Wallenberg's deeds. The War Refugee Board's representative in Stockholm Iver Olsen had written her already in April and thanked her for Raoul's contributions, which "from an American standpoint" were considered the greatest of their kind during the entire war. World Jewish Congress's executive committee unanimously decided to write to the Swedish government and deliver a special thank you to the Budapest legation, particularly to Raoul Wallenberg, Valdemar Langlet and Asta Nisson for their "sacred" mission work. "The Jewish people will never forget the men and women who did their best to help us survive the inferno of the last few years, despite the difficulties and even personal risk which beset their paths all too often," wrote President Stephen S. Wise.

The down-to-earth Maj von Dardel stubbornly refused to believe the defeatists who claimed that her son was already dead. She turned to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs regarding a more mundane matter. Raoul's mother felt it was only right for the government agency to pay the bills for her son's life insurance – from wages due.

Staffan Söderblom had celebrated the peace by giving a big luncheon for ambassador colleagues in the Swedish legation villa in the Tverskaja district. Lunch had been planned, as it were, but it now became especially festive with champagne, toasts and formal speeches. Under normal circumstances, however, his life was both stressful and difficult, he felt. The coal negotiations with Poland had been dumped in his lap and the 30,000 Baltic refugees in Sweden had not yet been taken off the Soviet list of demands. In Stockholm the Russians exerted pressure regarding the young Makarova and then there was Raoul Wallenberg. "I am under a lot of stress and have many irons in the fire, a very large work load and much responsibility. There are difficulties to address which demand attention and patience," he wrote to his mother around the time for Pentecost.

Shortly before that weekend he had made it through yet another trying meeting with Vice Minister of External Relations Dekanozov. Söderblom had then asked Dekanozov for answers regarding both Raoul Wallenberg and the Swedish Berlin diplomats' planned trip home from Berlin. But unfortunately their meeting at Kuznetskij most was not the most pleasant. A visibly irritated Dekanozov had been close to a breaking-point several times and it had concerned the 30,000 Baltic refugees in Sweden.

During the month of April the Soviet Ministry of External Relations had sent clear signals regarding another bilateral question, that of transit visa for Swedes in Asia. This issue could be greatly facilitated if Sweden would be more forthcoming regarding the Balts. It was an obvious offer of an exchange of concessions which had also been made only a few days earlier. But when the question now came up again Staffan Söderblom replied that he felt that it was uncouth "to in these international dealings link one question with another."

Dekanozov raised his voice. He angrily pointed out that the Russians had difficulties accepting that the Swedes prevented the Soviet diplomats from getting in touch with the Baltic refugees in the camps. He asked Staffan Söderblom to "disregard the current refugee question" and instead raise the issue to a theoretical level. This is how a troubled Staffan Söderblom reported the verbal sparring to Stockholm:

"What would you say if there were Swedes here with whom you were refused personal contact," Mr. Dekanozov asked. I (*Söderblom, author's comment*) explained that in the event that there were Swedes here who wish to live in the Soviet

Union I surely would not wish to try to persuade them to return home. Mr. Dekanozov answered that there might indeed be cases where I would wish to make personal contact."

Staffan Söderblom failed to draw the obvious conclusion. In the state's investigation into the Raoul Walleberg case in 2001-2003 secretary Johan Matz had to resort to research theories regarding the psychology of learning to explain why. Matz refers to the human propensity for sorting information, partly according to her understanding of how reality looks and partly according to her understanding of how it should be. It is, Matz concludes, "reasonable to assume that a Soviet internment of Wallenberg was in such enormous conflict with what Söderblom wanted to see, given his goal to improve Swedish-Soviet relations, that he consciously or subconsciously blocked information pointing in this direction.

On Tuesday, May 29, it was time for line-up and departure for the three prisoners in cell 123, Willy Rödel, Jan Loyda and Raoul Wallenberg. They probably each received a small bundle to bring, containing their clothes and other belongings. On Lubyanka's inner yard a prison transport was waiting its backdoors open. None of their cases had been heard yet, no sentence had been given. But now they were to be moved from Lubyanka to Lefortovo, the large trial prison in Moscow.

Two weeks later the Budapest legation's Swedish employees met for a festive reunion at Restaurant Rosebad next to Strömmen in Stockholm. Lars Berg had composed a long poem about their various adventures which he dedicated to Minister Ivan Danielsson. "*Once in happy Budapest, life was such a colorful fest,"* Lars Berg rhymed. In his verse he featured all his colleagues, so also Raoul Wallenberg. "*And if we had some trouble, Wallenberg had double. Rarely did he take a break. He always ran, was always awake*." And Berg was surely satisfied with his rhyme about Raoul's food purchaser. "*Ekman, of course, bought many a pig, to the lowest black market prize, jiggety jig*."

The poem went on in the same style, over two double columns on an A4 sheet of paper. You can almost hear the laughter when it was read. Despite everything that happened, the bottom line was that the ending of the adventure was mostly good, the poet Lars Berg seems to have implied:

Indeed, Budapest paid a high cost,

And one among our ranks was lost
But the rest of us managed to rise from the mud
Somehow escaping the biblical flood