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Interrogations in Lubyanka

(Translated from the Russian by the author. This English version includes additional information about the time of interrogations and other details that become available after the publication of the Russian version)

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On the night of July 22/23, 1947, when Raoul Wallenberg was presumably already dead (apparently, he died five days before that, on July 17, 1947), most of Raoul Wallenberg's and Vilmos Langfelder's cell-mates were interrogated one after another. According to the later statements of these cell-mates, the interrogators had two purposes. First, to find out what the cell-mates knew about Wallenberg and his case. And second, to prohibit any further talk about Wallenberg among the prisoners. A study of archival documents allowed me to reconstruct the sequence of the events during that night.

Lubyanka Prison. At 8:10 pm Sergei Kartashov, head of the 4th Department of the 3rd Main Directorate (military counterintelligence) of the State Security Ministry (MGB), called for Ernst Huber, a former German intelligence man. In April 1945, Huber was Langfelder's cell-mate for 19 days. The interrogation took place at Office 687a on the 6th floor of the main Lubyanka building attached to Lubyanka Prison; offices of the 3rd MGB Main Directorate were located on the 4th and 6th floors of this building. According to Huber's later description, "the leader of the examination was a young blond giant." Possibly, this was MGB Minister Viktor Abakumov, who was not a blond, but quite tall and big. If so, the high rank of interrogators such as Abakumov and Kartashov demonstrates the importance of the Wallenberg case. The interrogation lasted for 35-40 minutes and at 8:50 pm Huber was back in his cell in the prison.

Lefortovo Prison. Aleksandr Kuzmishin, head of the 2nd Section of the 4th Department of the MGB 3rd Main Directorate, called for interrogation of the following prisoners.

Willi Schliter-Schauer, according to information released by the FSB, was interrogated from 8:05 pm to 9:15 pm (i.e., at the same time as Huber in Lubyanka). Schliter-Schauer was one of Wallenberg's cell-mates and a cell stool pigeon. Then Vilmos Langfelder was interrogated from 9:30 pm till 10:00 pm.

Gustav Richter, the former Police Attaché of the German Legation in Bucharest (Romania), an SD operative, SS-Sturmbannfuhrer and a representative of Adolf Eichmann, was interrogated from 10:10 pm to 10:30 pm. Richter had been Wallenberg's cell-mate for two months.

It is not known who was interrogated next. Possibly, as Richter later testified, it was Wilhelm Rodde, a former German diplomat and Richter's cell-mate after Richter was moved out of the

cell he had shared with Wallenberg. However, July 22, 1947 was not on the list of dates of Rodde's interrogations released by the FSB.

Eiro Pelkonen, a former Finnish soldier, one of Langfelder's cell-mates, was next. He was in Kuzmishin's office from 10:50 pm till 11:00 pm.

Horst Kitschmann, the former German Military Attaché in Finland and Sweden, and also one of Langfelder's cell-mates, was interrogated from 11:00 till 11:20 pm.

The next person is unknown. It could be Ernst Krafft, the former German Rear Admiral and one of Langfelder's cell-mates, as Hille later testified. However, as with Rodde, July 22, 1947 was missing from the list of dates of Krafft's interrogations released by the FSB.

Reiner Stahel, former Lt. General, head of the German High Command's "Sonderstab Stahel" and the former German Military Commandant of Rome and Warsaw, and one of Langfelder's cell-mates, was interrogated last, from 11:40 pm till midnight.

Back in Lubyanka Prison. According to the information released by the FSB from a register of prisoners' movements, in the early morning of July 23, 1947, Langfelder was transferred from Lefortovo to Lubyanka Prison. It is unclear what happened to Langfelder after that.

According to the interrogation list released by the FSB, after Langfelder's transfer to Lubyanka, Kartashov interrogated him on July 23, 1947, from 2:15 am till 6:30 pm. No evidence of this interrogation or source of this information was given. Therefore, it remains a mystery whether the series of interrogations that started in Lubyanka with the interrogation of Huber on the evening of July 22, 1947, in fact ended with the long interrogation of Langfelder on the evening of July 23, 1947.

Obviously, the interrogations of July 22, 1947 were carefully prepared beforehand. For instance, on December 29, 1945 Huber was convicted of being a German spy by the Special Board (OSO) and received a 10-year sentence. However, on February 8, 1946, he was sent to the Ivdellag labor camp in the Ural Mountains. On April 26, 1947 Huber was ordered back to Moscow, where he arrived on May 2, 1947. Another German convict, Wolfgang Richter, a lawyer, was brought to Moscow from the same camp along with Huber. Possibly, this Richter was mistaken for Gustav Richter. Two days after Huber's arrival, Daniil Kopelyansky, an investigator from Kuzmishin's department, interrogated him. Then Kartashov's interrogation on July 22, 1947 followed.

After the night interrogations, all the prisoners, including Huber, were put in solitary confinement. While incarcerated in a small cell known as a "box," Pelkonen unsuccessfully tried to commit suicide.

In August 1947, Kopelyansky interrogated Huber once again. His next interrogation was in February of 1948. This time another investigator of the same department, Boris Solovov, interrogated Huber. Interestingly, after having been previously kept alone, Huber was kept with Schliter-Schauer, a cell informer, from April 1948 till April 1950.

Although the reason behind Wallenberg's imprisonment and death is still unknown, what did the cell-mates and other inhabitants of Lefortovo Prison, who were in contact with Wallenberg in the neighboring cells through knocking, know about his case?

A Letter to Stalin

According to Richter's testimony in 1956, in early February of 1945, after two days of imprisonment, Wallenberg was called for an interrogation. The investigator told Wallenberg: "Well, you are well-known to us. You belong to a great capitalist family in Sweden." Wallenberg was accused of espionage. The interrogation lasted for about an hour and a half. Additionally, Richter recalled the following:

At the beginning of February 1945, R. W. wrote a letter addressed to the director of the prison, in which he protested his treatment and arrest. R. W. also referred to his Swedish citizenship and his status of a diplomat and demanded the right to get in touch with the Swedish Legation in Moscow. R. W. handed this letter to the guard on duty on the ground floor.¹

Jan Loyda, who shared Cell 140 in Lubyanka Prison for two months in 1945 with Wallenberg and Willi Roedel (later a long-time Wallenberg cell-mate), told his cell-mate Erhard Hille:

R. W. said that the Russians did not have any reason to keep him imprisoned at all. He worked for the Russians in Budapest. This the Russians did not believe. The leaders of the examinations said that R. W. was a rich Swedish capitalist, and such a man would not do anything for the Russians.

Was there really a "Russian motive" in the Wallenberg case? In fact, Hermann Grosheim-Krysko (alias Tomsen) and not Wallenberg headed the Russian Section at the Swedish Legation in Budapest. Was Loyda or Hille, who recalled the story, mistaken? In any case, Gotthold Starke, a former German diplomat and then Soviet prisoner, clearly remembered a similar story he had heard from Langfelder's cell-mate Hille:

. . . Since Sweden served the Russian interests in Hungary [which was true, Sweden represented Soviet diplomatic interests in Germany and its allies, including Hungary—V. B.], R. W., among other things, was commissioned to protect Russian citizens in Hungary. When fights began in Hungary and the Russians approached the city, R. W. and his driver had gone to meet the Russians. He had reported himself at the army command and drawn the attention to the fact that in Budapest were Russian citizens, whom the Swedish Legation had protected, and who were brought together in a special block by R. W. According to the driver [Langfelder], this was the reason for their trip by car. The Russian authorities, however, had misunderstood the action and arrested R. W., as well as his driver.

¹ I used the official translation from the German into English made by the Swedish Foreign Office and published as *Raoul Wallenberg. Collection of Documents* (Stockholm, 1966) as a reference. However, I fixed grammar errors in the translation. V. B.

During the summer of 1946, Wallenberg wrote a letter to Stalin. According to the recollection of one more former German diplomat, Bernhard Rensinghoff, in this letter Wallenberg pointed to his diplomatic status and asked to be interrogated. Additionally, Wallenberg requested Stalin's permission to contact the Swedish Embassy in Moscow. He wrote the letter in French. As Rensinghoff stated, "after some time R. W. got a message, in which the dispatch of his letter was confirmed." Where is this letter now? Did it survive? We do not have answers.

In July of 1946, Wallenberg underwent a lengthy interrogation. Later on there was one more interrogation, during which Wallenberg asked the investigator about his future. According to Willi Bergemann, another imprisoned German diplomat from Bucharest, the investigator "referred to the conference that was to be held in Moscow in March 1947 and at which the fates of the prisoners were to be decided." It remains unclear what conference the investigator was referring to.

Rensinghoff recalled that Wallenberg's last interrogation in Lefortovo occurred in late February-early March of 1947, just before Wallenberg and Roedel were transferred from Lefortovo to Lubyanka. Wallenberg knocked a message that Rensinghoff remembered as following:

The investigator informed him [Wallenberg] that his case was quite clear, and that it was a 'political one.' If he considered himself innocent, it was for his sake to prove this. The best proof of his guilt was the fact that the Swedish Legation in Moscow and the Swedish government had done nothing to his case [which was not true, there were diplomatic inquiries regarding Wallenberg—V. B.]. R. W. asked the investigator, who held the examination, to be allowed to contact directly the Swedish Legation in Moscow or the Red Cross or at least to write them. This request was rejected with the words 'nobody cares about you.' 'If the Swedish government or its Legation had taken any interest in you, they would have contacted you long time ago.'

All together, according to the information given above, Wallenberg was called for interrogation five times in February 1945-March 1947.

Langfelder's former cell-mates later recalled that he, like Wallenberg, was also accused of espionage. Rear Admiral Ernst Krafft told Eiro Pelkonen that in 1946 investigators tried to prove that Langfelder spied for the Western Allies. The head investigator claimed that Wallenberg was not a diplomat, but "a messenger for a contact with a Jewish organization" in Budapest. Krafft died in Vladimir Prison on July 27, 1954, and, therefore, could not testify later about Wallenberg and Langfelder as the other cell-mates did.

All this information shows that Wallenberg and Langfelder were accused of espionage for the Allies. Earlier, during interrogations of the other members of the Swedish Legation, the Soviet interrogators raised one more accusation—that Wallenberg helped the Germans. They also mentioned contacts with a Jewish organization. Apparently, they meant the American Jewish charity organization, "Joint," which provided money for Wallenberg's humanitarian work in

Budapest. In any case, it is evident that during the night of July 22/23, 1947, interrogators ordered the cell-mates to stop talking about Wallenberg and his case.

A Comment (written in 2006)

According to the MGB records released by the KGB/FSB in 1991 and 2000, Raoul Wallenberg was interrogated five times in 1945-47:

(1) February 8, 1945 (Lubyanka Prison, Office 481a)

Interrogator: Yakov Sverchuk, head of the 1st Section of the 2nd SMERSH Department
Time: 01:05-05:35 am

(2) April 28, 1945 (Lubyanka Prison, Office 481a)

Interrogator: Aleksandr Kuzmishin, senior authorized officer (of Sverchuk's section)
Time: 3:35-5:00 pm

(3) August 2 [?], 1946 (Lefortovo Prison, Office 19)

In 1991, the KGB released an incorrect date for this interrogation, July 17, 1946, and the FSB has never corrected it. My guess is that it was August 2, 1946, based on the dates of interrogations of Isaak Wolfin, an arrested Soviet diplomat, whose record also appeared on the released document with the wrong date for Wallenberg. According to the records on Wolfin's Prisoner Card in Vladimir Prison, he was arrested on July 20, 1946, and, therefore, could not have been interrogated on July 17, 1946. Two years later, on March 6, 1948, Wolfin was convicted of being a Swedish spy and sentenced to 20-years. He was imprisoned in Vladimir Prison.

Interrogator: Daniil Kopelyansky, senior authorized officer (of the same section, headed now by Kuzmishin)
Time: 10:30 am-1:00 pm

(4) August 30, 1946 (Lefortovo Prison, Office 21)

Interrogator: Daniil Kopelyansky, senior authorized officer
Time: 10:00 am-Noon

(5) March 11, 1947 (Lubyanka Prison, Office 671)

Interrogator: Aleksandr Kuzmishin, head of the 2nd Section of the 4th Department,
3rd MGB Main Directorate
Time: 2:15-4:00 pm

However, it is unknown if these interrogations were all that actually took place.

As for Huber's interrogation on July 22, 1947, the Swedish Report (2000), using inaccurate information released by the FSB, mentioned that it lasted "for six hours, between 20.10-02.00" (p. 147). Goeran Rydeberg repeated the same error, citing a four-hour-interrogation, on p. 68 of his book *Raoul Wallenberg. Historik och nya forskningsfalt* (<http://www.utrikes.regeringen.se/fragor/wallenberg/pdf/EW/rydeberg.pdf>). According to the documents of Huber's Prisoner File, Kartashov interrogated Huber for about 40 minutes.

The mistake regarding the length of Huber's interrogation was, possibly, made intentionally. According to the FSB data, on July 23, 1947 Huber's interrogation ended at 2:00 am and, after a break in 15 minutes, Langfelder's 16-hour-long interrogation began without interruption. Since the FSB did not provide the Swedish group with any documentary evidence of this interrogation, it appears suspicious to me. First, there could be an error in time as in Huber's case. Second, an interrogation of a foreigner through translators could not last for 16 hours without an interruption. Typically, interrogators took breaks. For instance, here are the times of two interrogations of Richter (from his Personal File):

February 3/4, 1945, three times (13:30—17:20; 18:05—23:10; 1:00—2:35);

February 5/6, 1945, three times (9:40—12:40; 13:30—17:35; 21:10—24:40).

Therefore, without additional information from the FSB about Langfelder's interrogation on July 23, 1947, it is unclear what really happened to Langfelder that day.

The fate of Vilmos Langfelder is still unknown. Personally I do not trust the KGB information that Langfelder "died on March 2, 1948 in prison," as Konstantin Lunev, First Deputy KGB Chairman, wrote to the Soviet Foreign Ministry on June 12, 1957. In 1991, the KGB released a copy of this letter to the Swedish group. However, this date is probably wrong. On August 18, 1955, the Presidium (former Politburo) of the Communist Party's Central Committee issued a special directive to the KGB to always give false dates for prisoners' deaths and only an approximate cause of death. Following this instruction, in 1955-63 the KGB *always* gave false dates of prisoners' deaths.² The KGB (and then the FSB) started to release documents with real dates and causes of deaths only in October of 1989.

Regrettably, the Swedish Working Group never insisted on interviewing Nikolai Selivanovsky, who in 1943-46 was Abakumov's deputy in SMERSH responsible for counterintelligence. In May 1946-November 1947, Selivanovsky headed the 3rd MGB Main Directorate (military counterintelligence) and at the same time, continued to be Abakumov's deputy. In other words, as head of the directorate, Selivanovsky supervised the Wallenberg case and interrogations in 1947. Possibly, he even attended the interrogation on July 22, 1947, and was the "blond giant" whom Huber described. In any case, Selivanovsky undoubtedly was personally involved in the case. In September 1947, he ordered Erhard Hille and Jan Loyda transferred to Moscow after it became clear that not all Wallenberg's and Langfelder's cell-mates had been interrogated on the

² See Ivan Serov's order No. 108ss dated August 24, 1955. Document No. 36 in Artizov, A., Yu. Sigachev, I. Shevchuk, and V. Khlopov, *Reabilitatsiya: Kak eto bylo. Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy. Mart 1953-fevral' 1956* (Moscow: Demokratiya, 2000), pp. 254-255 (in Russian).

night of July 22/23, 1947. Selivanovsky died in 1997, when the work of the Swedish-Russian Group had been in progress for six years.