

## **RAOUL'S GIRLFRIEND: A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE**

**© C.G. McKay**

In my talk "Three Puzzles" delivered at a symposium on Wallenberg at Utrikespolitiska Institutet in Stockholm in December 2007, I devoted a section to the so-called "Smit Connection". By this turn of phrase, I meant partly Raoul's friendship with the young Dutch girl Berber Smit and partly the fact that Berber's father, Lolle, the Philips manager in Budapest, was an active player in Allied underground activities in Hungary during the war. "The Smit Connection" was yet another vivid reminder- if it were needed!- of how Wallenberg's mission was carried out against a background of delicate interacting forces, many of which were not readily perceptible. Nor could it have been otherwise, given the situation occasioned by war.

At the same symposium, ambassador Harald Hamrin gave a talk introducing the new Wallenberg data base, furnished by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and available on the web. Curiously enough, it was when poking around in this very data base during a period of residence in France, that I discovered a document which added a poignant afterword to my tale of the "Smit Connection". Let me explain what it was.

When it became general knowledge that members of Raoul Wallenberg's family would visit Moscow in autumn 1989, a middle-aged woman contacted the Swedish Legation in South Africa. Mrs. Barbara Hogg's message was clear and unambiguous. She was Dutch by birth- her maiden name was Smit- and during the war, she had been in Budapest where she had assisted in the work of the Dutch Consulate. She had known both Per Anger and Raoul Wallenberg rather well, particularly the latter: she even went as far as to claim: "I was his girlfriend".

So much for Mrs. Hogg's antecedents? What did she want? Basically two things. She wanted contact with Raoul Wallenberg's family and with those Swedes who

had served in Budapest. Most of all, she wanted to accompany the Swedish delegation on its trip to Moscow. It was evidently a trip which she viewed with some trepidation: she feared the Russians but felt at the same time it was her duty to go.

In the eyes of the Legation, Mrs. Hogg seemed a reliable person and in any case, the information which she had provided about herself could be easily verified. They promised to get in touch with her as soon as they had heard from Stockholm.

And then.....nothing, nothing whatsoever!

Why did Stockholm fail to respond to the Legation's enquiry? Were Wallenberg's nearest family members ever made aware of Mrs. Hogg's intervention? If so, what did they do?

These questions still remain unanswered.

What is clear, is that once again in this extraordinarily ineptly-handled case, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs had seriously slipped up in its investigational work. An important testimony had, for whatever reason, been effectively dismissed without the slightest examination. By bizarre contrast, the ravings of lunatics and fortune-seekers on the fate of Wallenberg, have been meticulously preserved for posterity. It was an error of breathtaking historical stupidity. The terrible irony is of course that when the meeting in Moscow finally took place, Wallenberg's pocket diary was returned to the family. This diary convincingly proved that Raoul Wallenberg had indeed been close to Berber Smit. Mrs. Hogg's story was essentially correct. She had not been indulging in fantasies.

Life alas does not always give us a second chance. It is now too late to ask Mrs. Hogg about her memories of Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. She died in June 1997. Although in my view, her recollections are unlikely to have dispelled all the obscurities in the case of Raoul Wallenberg, it is nevertheless to be

greatly regretted that her unique and valuable testimony was never presented.

© C.G.McKay, Uppsala, April 2008.

+ one attachment:original document concerning Mrs. Hogg