

## “The Inquiry into Raoul Wallenberg’s Death should be reopened”

*The official Soviet era claim that Raoul Wallenberg died on July 17, 1947 appears ever more questionable. Since new documentation in the case continues to surface, Russian historian Nikita Petrov and other Wallenberg experts argue that the investigation should be officially reopened.*

In 2001, the official Swedish report of a joint Swedish-Russian Working Group that had investigated Wallenberg's fate in Russia for ten years, concluded with these succinct words: "The burden of proof regarding the death of Raoul Wallenberg rests with the Russian government".

Eleven years later, the world is still waiting for that proof.

The current official Russian version of Wallenberg's fate in the summer of 1947 remains that he supposedly died of a heart attack in the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. This position is so conservative and outdated that it contradicts even the official Russian Working Group report from 2001 which underlined that it was far more likely that Wallenberg's death in 1947 - if he in fact died then - was not due to natural causes but the result of an execution.

### **Death or Isolation?**

As Hans Magnusson, the former Chairman of the Swedish Working Group remarked in a speech in Moscow a few weeks ago, the idea that Wallenberg should have died on July 17, 1947 “seems an increasingly shaky one.” In January, Magnusson was appointed by Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt to conduct a fact finding mission to study what new information exists in the Wallenberg case and how it can best be followed up.

Last September, the chief of the Russian State Security Service's (FSB) Archival Directorate, Lt. Gen. Vasily Khristoforov, emphasized in an interview with the Associated Press (AP) that he was “more than convinced that if Wallenberg outlived the official date of his death, it could only have been by a few days.” Khristoforov offered no insight from what particular knowledge or documentation he derived this certainty.

**A closer examination of all documentation currently available in the case shows that the evidence pointing towards the possible death of Raoul Wallenberg in July 1947 and that of his possible strict isolation at the time is surprisingly even.**

It was in fact Mr. Khristoforov and the FSB archives who have thrown the most serious doubt on the old Soviet version that Wallenberg died on July 17, 1947. In 2009 Khristoforov revealed that a Prisoner No. 7 who is believed to have been Raoul Wallenberg was interrogated on July 23, 1947, six days after the official death date.

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№ по порядку	ФАМИЛИЯ И ИНИЦИАЛЫ АРЕСТОВАННЫХ	Фамилия вызывающего на допрос	Наим. отд. №№ ком.	Время убытия ар-в на допр.		Время прибытия ар-в с допр.		Расписка арестованного по прибытии с допроса
				час.	мин.	час.	мин.	
68								
69								
70								
71	Лангфелдер	Корниженко	53/682	2	15	18	30	Странно
72	Катона	Корниженко	53/682	2	35	18	30	Странно
73								
23 июля 1947								
1								
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What we know for sure is that Raoul Wallenberg was questioned on March 11, 1947 in Lubyanka prison. That interrogation is registered under Wallenberg's own name, not a number. Afterwards his formal trail in Soviet captivity breaks off.

From then on, he could have been either killed or held in Lubyanka, Lefortovo or another prison - most likely in or around Moscow - as a prisoner under investigation. This situation could have lasted for a short while or for many years.

Another possibility is that he was formally charged and sentenced for a crime, and then sent to a known isolator facility like the prisons of Vladimir, Verkhne Uralsk or Alexandrovsk. Alternatively, he could have been transferred to a Special Camp or possibly a Psychiatric Hospital.

Censored page of Lubyanka interrogation register for July 23, 1947. It shows a 16 hour long interrogation of Vilmos Langfelder and Sandor Katona. "Prisoner No.7" is said to have been questioned during the same period, The full image has never been released; courtesy of FSB Central Archive, 2006.

### A Decisive Moment on July 22/23, 1947

If, as Mr. Khristoforov has suggested, Raoul Wallenberg was held as a numbered prisoner in the Lubyanka prison in July 1947, this would indicate that the investigative phase of his case had started in earnest.

As recently released Russian Foreign Ministry telegrams from that time show, Swedish private and official inquiries about Wallenberg had increased pressure on Soviet leaders to give a response about his whereabouts. And clearly, some kind of decisive action was taken on or around July 22/23 1947. On those two days, about a dozen individuals who had direct or indirect contact with Raoul Wallenberg and his driver, Vilmos Langfelder, in Soviet captivity, were all interrogated and subsequently placed in

strict isolation. Most of these prisoners would not emerge from this severe isolation until four or five years later.

It is known that Wallenberg's long time cellmate, Willy Rödel was killed in October 1947. Vilmos Langfelder, according to Soviet sources, died some time in 1948, although this date has never been independently confirmed and is almost certainly false. (It is well established fact that Soviet authorities regularly provided fake information about the death of prisoners in reply to outside inquiries)

The absence of any independently corroborated witness testimonies about Raoul Wallenberg's presence in the Soviet prison system after 1947 suggests that he too must have died around that time, but the issue is far from clear.

**“The inquiry into Wallenberg's death should be reopened,” argues Nikita Petrov, the Deputy Director of the human rights group ‘Memorial’ in Moscow. As he told the Russian news agency Interfax on May 29, “from my point of view, this could be a criminal inquiry. Murder is a criminal offense, and here it is important to identify all those responsible and reconstruct the picture of the crime.”**

Israeli human rights advocate Max Grunberg also has urged the Swedish government to pursue an international police inquiry to help establish Wallenberg's fate. The Secretary General of Interpol, Ronald K. Noble, has repeatedly expressed his agency's willingness to support such an initiative. So far, the Swedish government has refused to launch an official criminal inquiry over worries that it could adversely affect its political relationship with Russia.

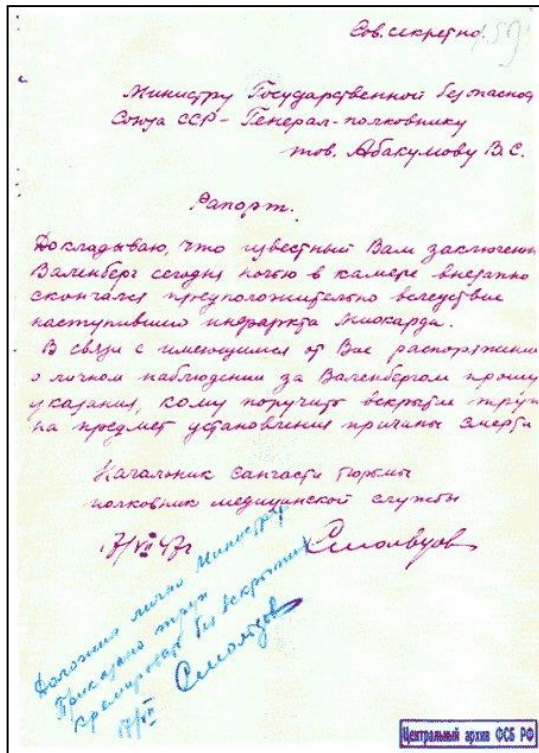
Unlike Petrov, Grunberg and other Wallenberg experts do not believe it is certain that Wallenberg was killed already in July 1947.

“If “Prisoner No. 7” is listed on the Lubyanka interrogation register pages for July 22 and 23, 1947 and it can be confirmed that he was indeed Raoul Wallenberg, it provides additional impetus to consider alternate scenarios of what might have happened to Wallenberg at this moment in time,” Grunberg says.

### **Lack of Access to Key Documentation**

The lack of access to essential documentation in Russian archives has formed the core problem in the Wallenberg investigation since 1991. While Russian officials permitted researchers to study a number of very important archival collections during the time of the Working Group, at critical moments direct access to key files was denied.

Russian archivists have never revealed how and where exactly they discovered the key document in the Wallenberg case so far, the note by Lubyanka Prison doctor A.L.



Smoltsov stating that Wallenberg had died in his cell on July 17, 1947. The document carries a page number, indicating that it had originally been part of a larger file. If Wallenberg was alive on July 23, 1947, the genesis of that document would have to be called into ever more serious question.

Equally serious question marks surround the missing letter written by Minister of State Security Viktor Abakumov to Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov on July 17, 1947. Researchers have already had reason to wonder whether the letter is truly missing or has been intentionally withheld because its contents do not reflect the official version provided by Soviet and Russian authorities about what happened to Raoul Wallenberg.

Note supposedly issued by Dr. A.L. Smoltsov, July 17, 1947; Guy von Dardel, Private Archiv

If he was questioned on July 23, 1947, Abakumov could certainly not have reported Wallenberg's death on July 17. Instead, he could have outlined future plans for his execution or his strict isolation, for example. Either scenario did not precisely match the content of the Smoltsov note. Soviet and later Russian officials may have simply felt that such a "mismatch" would be a distraction and create too much speculation and discussion about Wallenberg's fate in the summer of 1947.

### **Stalin's Failure to release Raoul Wallenberg**

Several Wallenberg experts have argued that Stalin would have had little use for Raoul Wallenberg after 1947. But is this assessment really true?

Already by the summer of 1946 the Swedish government had signaled - via Sweden's Ambassador Staffan Söderblom - that it had little interest in securing Wallenberg's safe return. This would have certainly limited Stalin's options of using Wallenberg as a bargaining chip.

Yet, the question remains what Stalin would have made of this lack of Swedish interest. This point retains its importance all the more since we still do not know why exactly Stalin ordered Wallenberg's arrest and why he chose not to release him. Russian

intelligence files, including Soviet intelligence reports from Hungary and Stockholm for the time 1944/1945 which could provide answers to this question, remain firmly classified.

**As the Swedish Working Group Report suggests, the killing of a foreign diplomat was a very serious matter. "Although we know that Stalin had few, if any, moral scruples," the report argues, "it would have been exceptional to order the execution of a diplomat from a neutral country. It might have appeared simpler to keep him in isolation." In other words, Stalin may have wanted to gauge if Wallenberg could not be of some use to him some months or years down the road.**

In the earlier cited interview with the Associated Press, Mr. Khristoforov indicated that he is "100 percent certain ... that Wallenberg never was in any other prison [than Lubyanka or Lefortovo], either under his name or an alias." He also dismissed the possibility of Wallenberg being placed in isolation: "it would have been impossible to keep that secret for long, even under an alias or a number."

However, as Mr. Khristoforov well knows, serious isolation in several Soviet era prisons was very much a reality, as the cases of several prisoners attest. Borish Menshagin, the former mayor of Smolensk and witness to the Katyn massacre of Polish soldiers in 1940, was imprisoned in the Lubyanka and Vladimir prisons for years without other prisoners having the slightest notion that he was held there. Other facilities offered similar possibilities of seclusion, as did a number of Psychiatric Hospitals and Special Camps.

### **Wallenberg a Prisoner under Investigation in Moscow?**

It is possible that after July 1947, Raoul Wallenberg stayed for an extended period as a prisoner under investigation in Moscow (numbered or unnumbered), without formal charge or trial. Still, his presence should have left some traces in various prison registers.

In 2001, FSB archivist Col. Vladimir Vinogradov revealed that a former KGB official by the name of A. V. Bachurin had indicated that Wallenberg had only once requested access to a doctor, a dentist, during his imprisonment. According to Bachurin, the request had occurred in "either Butyrka or Lefortovo prison." The source for this information supposedly was an unidentified medical register in the prison hospital. When pressed on the issue, FSB archivists stated that medical registers are not available in its archives for Butyrka Prison (the records exist only after 1947), as well as for Sukhanovo and Vladimir prisons, and they supposedly did not survive for Lubyanka and Lefortovo. So, on what information did Bachurin base his claim and what documentation was available to him, and when?

FSB officials have repeatedly stated that they made thorough checks of all possible available prison records and registries, but it is far from certain that they also checked these entries for a "Prisoner No. 7", for example. And how would they have recognized Raoul Wallenberg if he had been given an 'alias'? A proper identification could then be made only with the help of records from the MGB/KGB prison department that cross references such information or Raoul Wallenberg's personal and/or investigative file.

And some kind of "cross referencing" system does appear to be available to FSB archivists, to keep track of numbered prisoners, at least in some instances.

FSB officials say that they have no way of fully verifying that "Prisoner No.7" in July 1947 was indeed Raoul Wallenberg. Yet they were able to determine that an earlier "Prisoner No. 7, who was held in Lubyanka Prison in 1945, was a Russian citizen. (This man was definitely not identical with Raoul Wallenberg). FSB claims that the identification of this prisoner was made purely on the basis of entries in the Lubyanka Prison registers. This is not possible since the registers contain no information about a prisoner's citizenship. It remains currently unclear how FSB identified the citizenship of that earlier "Prisoner No. 7" and if this methodology can be applied also to the "Prisoner No. 7" from 1947.

### **Raoul Wallenberg in Vladimir Prison?**

Interestingly, out of tens of thousands of entries, Soviet officials in 1947 censored only four names in the Lubyanka prison register (listing prisoners' personal possessions) - those of **Raoul Wallenberg, Vilmos Langfelder, Sandor Katona** (Langfelder's cellmate) and **P.S. Aladjani**, an Armenian Roman Catholic Priest.

Obviously, all four cases were highly sensitive. But according to Susan Mesinai, a former expert to the Swedish-Russian Working Group, there could be another common denominator: The censoring could indicate that all four men were eventually sentenced as numbered prisoners and sent to Vladimir prison.

In her official report from 2001, Mesinai pointed out that the chronological numbering of altogether thirty sentenced prisoners held in Vladimir between the years 1947-1952 shows obvious gaps. In fact, for the years 1947/48 - the most critical period of the Wallenberg case - six numbers remain unidentified.

Aladjani was held in Lubyanka prison as a numbered prisoner *under investigation* during the Spring of 1947. During this time he was known as "Prisoner No. 30". He was sentenced in June 1947 and was sent to Vladimir prison as "*Sentenced* Prisoner No. 15". Sentenced Prisoners 14, 16-20 are currently unknown (see illustration below).

It is possible that one of these unidentified numbers was assigned to Raoul Wallenberg, Mesinai argues; (especially if he had indeed been designated "Prisoner No. 7" under investigation in July 1947. He could have then become, for example, "Sentenced Prisoner No. 16" [or No. 17, 18, 19, or 20]).

**Excerpted List of Numbered Prisoners sentenced in 1947/48 and sent to Vladimir Prison**

Prisoner No. 14	<i>unknown</i>	
<b>Prisoner No.15</b>	<b>P.S. Aladjani</b>	<b>June 24, 1947</b>
Prisoner No.16	<i>unknown</i>	
Prisoner No.17	<i>unknown</i>	
Prisoner No.18	<i>unknown</i>	
Prisoner No.19	<i>unknown</i>	
Prisoner No.20	<i>unknown</i>	
<b>Prisoner No.21</b>	<b>N.V. Molochnikov</b>	<b>May 29, 1948</b>

(Source: "Liquidatsia: The Question of Raoul Wallenberg's Death or Disappearance in 1947", Susan Mesinai, 2001)

More information about the system of numbering prisoners during 1947/48, including whether or not numbers 14, 16-20 were indeed ever assigned and, if so, to whom should be available in old MGB archives, especially in the files of the MGB Prison Department.

Surprisingly, of the thirty highly secret numbered prisoners incarcerated in Vladimir until 1952, three had direct contact with Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. All three were Hungarians with ties to British intelligence: Karoly Schandl, a lawyer (No. 26), Laszlo Pap, an officer (No.25 ) and Tibor Klement, a wireless radio operator (No. 24).

Numbered or not, Russian officials have always maintained that Raoul Wallenberg was never formally charged or sentenced for a "crime". However, they have never let researchers verify this claim by allowing them to review the lists of the special MGB Board (OSO) that handled the sentencing of prisoners. In most cases, the sentencing of a prisoner appears to have been a prerequisite for his or her transfer from an investigation prison to a punishment facility, like Vladimir.

Two other former consultants to the Swedish-Russian Working Group, Marvin Makinen and Ari Kaplan, have conducted a complex database analysis of the prisoner occupancy of Vladimir prison for the period of 1947-1972. They have been able to prove that the official prison registry ('kartoteka') shows crucial gaps, indicating the possible presence of at least one or more unknown secret prisoners held in the prison during those years.

Makinen – who had been imprisoned in Vladmir himself in the early 1960's - and Kaplan analyzed in great detail the reports of numerous witnesses who said they heard or met a strictly isolated Swedish prisoner in Vladimir prison in the mid 1950's and early



1960's. These witnesses included former prisoners as well as former prison personnel. They were able to identify specific dates and cell locations where such a highly secret prisoner could have been held.

A former Vladimir prison worker, Varvara Larina, has confirmed the presence of such a heavily isolated foreign prisoner. During an interview in 1993, she identified Wallenberg's photograph out of a series of pictures shown to her that included images of Wallenberg not previously published in the international press.

According to official Swedish records, no known Swedish citizens were at that time incarcerated in Vladimir prison. So, if not Raoul Wallenberg, who is this Swedish captive? In spite of repeated requests, Russian officials have not provided any information about this man.



Zigurds Kruminsh (left) who shared a cell with Dr. Marvin Makinen (right) in Vladimir prison in 1962, told Makinen about a secret Swedish prisoner held there. Apparently the man had been arrested on charges of espionage and was to be "well rewarded" when he returned home. Kruminsh shared cells with a number of foreign prisoners, including Francis Gary Powers. As a native Latvian, Kruminsh should have had few problems distinguishing a Swedish citizen from other Baltic/Scandinavian prisoners. Kruminsh's account has been echoed by at least five other former inmates of Vladimir prison. (Photo Source Kruminsh: "Operation Overflight", Francis Gary Powers, with Curt Gentry, Tower Publications, 1965; Photo Source Makinen: Makinen, 2012 Info Source: "Cell Occupancy Analysis of Korpus 2 of the Vladimir Prison", Marvin Makinen and Ari Kaplan, 2001)

There are also reports about another currently unidentified Swedish prisoner by the name of "Eriksson" who is believed to have been imprisoned in Vladimir in 1950. This other man "Eriksson" is definitely not identical with Raoul Wallenberg <http://www.thelocal.se/39692/20120315/>

### **More Question Marks about Raoul Wallenberg's Death in 1947**

Other serious questions marks persist about Raoul Wallenberg's death in 1947. The official investigators of his case were at the time completely occupied with the ongoing Nürnberg war crimes trials. That is why many of the foreign prisoners held in Moscow prisons were not formally charged or sentenced until 1948 or even as late as 1951.



**How long could Raoul Wallenberg have survived? That question is currently impossible to answer. The official Soviet notification of Wallenberg's death to the Swedish government from February 1957 raises doubts that he was alive beyond that time. However, the question remains why Soviet officials at that moment offered such an ambiguous account of his alleged death and why Russian officials have not provided a fuller explanation of Wallenberg's fate since then.**

Several witness testimonies that may or may not have referred to Raoul Wallenberg have never been completely refuted, including the still unresolved discussions between the Swedish physician Nanna Svartz and the prominent Soviet cardiologist Alexander Myasnikov in 1961. More documentation is undoubtedly available in Russian archives that should clarify once and for all whether Professor Svartz simply misunderstood her colleague or if Myasnikov in fact had specific knowledge of Raoul Wallenberg.

In his memoirs, former Soviet intelligence official Pavel Sudoplatov suggested that Wallenberg had died as a result of poisoning in the so-called "Laboratory X" run by Gregory Maironovsky. However, Vadim Birstein, an expert on the history of the Soviet Security Services, has noted that when Sudoplatov – himself a prisoner in the 1950's and 60's - applied for official rehabilitation to the 23rd Soviet Party Congress in 1966, he did not include Raoul Wallenberg on a list of persons in whose death he or Maironovsky had been directly involved. (The four names were Bishop T. Romzha, American Communist I. Oggins, the Polish engineer Samet and the Ukrainian politician A. Shumsky.) The omission of Wallenberg's name from this secret internal document is notable, since the execution by poison of such a high-level foreign prisoner would have surely ranked as a significant event.

Finally, the accidental "discovery" of Raoul Wallenberg's personal belongings in 1989 raises numerous questions. Russian officials claim that a package/envelope/plastic bag containing several of Wallenberg's personal items, such his prisoner registration card, his address book and diplomatic passport as well as a set of banknotes in different foreign currencies were found by accident, during renovations of the former KGB archives.

Wallenberg's address book, for example, would have normally been kept as part of his investigative file.

Interestingly, researchers just recently learned that, contrary to previous Russian claims, large parts of the investigative material of Wallenberg's cellmate Willy Rödel have been preserved. The last page of this documentation consists of an envelope which contains, among other things, Rödel's diplomatic passport and prisoner card. This



Willy Rödel; courtesy of Rödel Family archive

raises the question whether the investigative files of Raoul Wallenberg and Vilmos Langfelder also survive, although perhaps in consolidated form.

The presence of the currency Raoul Wallenberg carried from Hungary in Russian archives in 1989 is also noteworthy. Susan Mesinai points out in her 2001 report that according to Soviet administrative rules in 1947, the money should have been either returned to the dead prisoner's family at the time or that it should have been confiscated by the Soviet state six months after the prisoner's death.

It is certainly possible that in special cases like that of Raoul Wallenberg formal administrative rules were

not always followed. Still, the mere fact that Wallenberg's possessions were preserved in Russian archives, as well as the timing of their discovery –

right before President Mikhail Gorbachev issued an invitation to Wallenberg's family to come to Moscow in 1989 – suggests that the Russian political leadership never fully lost track of the material or the case.

### **Is the Truth known in Moscow?**

It appears very unlikely at this stage that the current Russian leadership does not know what happened to Raoul Wallenberg. High level institutional memory was available until very recently and to some degree remains available today. Sergei Kartashov, head of the Fourth Department, Third Main Directorate of MGB that investigated Raoul Wallenberg's case in 1947, died only in 1979; top members of the Soviet hierarchy lived well into the 1980's and 1990's. Anastas Mikoyan, a longtime member of the Politburo, survived until 1978; Vyacheslav Molotov was still alive in 1986 and Georgy Malenkov lived until 1988. Abakumov's deputy, Nikolai Selivanovsky died only in 1997. Yevgeny Pitovranov, the Head of the Second Main Directorate MGB was alive until 1999, and two of Raoul Wallenberg's interrogators, Danil Kopelyanksy and his colleague Boris Solovov lived past the year 2000.

**According to Nikita Petrov, there is little doubt that Russian authorities are continuing to conceal important documentation. As he told Interfax, “there is a bulk of evidence which is gradually coming to the surface. These documents were not known at the time the Russian-Swedish commission was working. This gives us reasons to suggest that not everything was investigated in the Wallenberg case,” Petrov said.**

Just this past May, the FSB archives published a collection of documents about Willy Rödel, the very papers Russian officials claimed for years did not exist. While the publication is certainly a very welcome step, it should not detract from the fact that researchers have been consistently denied access to this very file in the original form as well as to other key files in Russian intelligence archives. This material would shed important light on the handling of his case in the Soviet security apparatus. If such access were granted, it is quite clear that important progress in the question of Wallenberg’s fate would be made.

Arseny Roginsky, the co-founder of ‘Memorial’, shares this assessment, stressing in a recent interview that the Raoul Wallenberg mystery could undoubtedly be solved, but that a solution would require “free independent researchers working in Russian archives.”

At last month’s Raoul Wallenberg conference in Moscow Mr. Khristoforov emphasized yet again that the case is far from closed and that two FSB archivists are currently continuing the search for any trace of Wallenberg in Russian archival collections. Why not invite other Russian and international experts to join these efforts, so that a truly comprehensive review can be conducted? A few weeks ago, in a letter addressed to the Russian Foreign Ministry, Raoul Wallenberg’s relatives called precisely for such a meeting of experts in order to create a broader “blue print for resolving the case.”

**The simplest explanation why the Russian government does not release the full facts about the case is that the truth does not fit with the decades old Soviet version of his fate. President Putin may feel that revelation of the truth about Raoul Wallenberg runs counter to his idea of promoting only "useful" history, the presentation of historical events in ways that serve to reinforce Putin's idea of a strong, powerful Russia. It is time to be daring and to face the possible contradictions - the world and Raoul Wallenberg have been waiting far too long**

Susanne Berger June 26, 2012

For further reading about ongoing research in the Raoul Wallenberg case:

[www.raoul-wallenberg.eu](http://www.raoul-wallenberg.eu)  
[www.raoulsfate.org](http://www.raoulsfate.org)

[www.vadimbirstein.com](http://www.vadimbirstein.com)  
[www.regeringen.se](http://www.regeringen.se)

