

The Wallenberg file: November 2012

(Remarks prepared for delivery to the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Raoul Wallenberg, 4 November 2012, National Library, Ottawa)

by David Matas

I stand before you here this evening not to praise Raoul Wallenberg, but rather to try to help him and his family, by attempting to find out what happened to him. I want to go over the questions which remain to be answered about his fate and how Canada can help to answer them.

The general drift of these remarks is that the fate of Raoul Wallenberg, while not yet known, is knowable. Documents exist in Russian archives which would disclose his fate but have not been yet made available to researchers. Sweden has not been as aggressive in pursuing this file as it could have been. There is an opening and a need for Canada to press the matter at the highest level if we are going to come to a resolution on this case.

These remarks are divided into three components. The first sets out unanswered questions about the fate of Raoul Wallenberg and points to the existing but yet undisclosed archives which would answer these questions. The second describes the Swedish efforts. The third proposes a specific Canadian initiative.

I. Unanswered questions

In 2001, after a ten year investigation, the Swedish Russian Working Group on the Fate of Raoul Wallenberg, presented two separate reports, one from the Swedish side, one from the Russian. In addition, four independent consultants to the Swedish Russian Working Group Dr. Marvin Makinen with Ari Kaplan, Susan Mesinai, and Susanne Berger issued reports of their research.

As an appendix to its report, the Swedish side formulated seventeen questions which need to be answered in full before any binding conclusions concerning Raoul Wallenberg's fate

could be drawn. The independent consultants in May 2005 issued a separate list of their own questions. Some of these questions combined, in my formulation are:

A. Arrest

1. Raoul Wallenberg was arrested in Hungary on January 17, 1945 by the Soviets and shipped back to Moscow. Who took the decision to arrest? When was this decision taken? What were the reasons for this decision? Soviet foreign intelligence records from Hungary and Sweden for the period 1943-1945 would shed light on the reasons why the Soviet authorities decided to arrest Wallenberg; the records have not been released. What do these records show?

2. The People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) agent in Budapest Mikhail Tolstoy Kutusov reported extensively on Raoul Wallenberg's activities to Moscow. This file could produce valuable clues as to how Wallenberg's case was perceived and handled in the Soviet system. Russia has refused to permit researchers to review this file. What does this file show?

B. Fellow prisoners

3. The Russian side has allowed limited review of files of prisoners closely associated with Raoul Wallenberg in captivity. Russia has not allowed any access or study of the investigative files of some of these prisoners. What do the investigative files of these prisoners reveal about how Soviet leaders handled Wallenberg's case?

4. In January 21, 1945 Wallenberg was placed in a cell with Gustav Richter, a police attaché at the German embassy in Romania until the Russian takeover. Richter was moved on March 1, 1945. Researchers were not allowed to see the Soviet investigative file for Richter. What does it contain?

5. During the work of the Swedish Russian Working Group from 1991 to 2001, the Russian side denied the existence of the files of Willi Roedel, Raoul Wallenberg's cellmate in Lefortovo prison in 1946/47. Information published in a book about Ivan Serov [former head of the KGB] by Nikita Petrov of the "Memorial" society, this denial was untrue. What do the files of Willi Roedel show about Raoul Wallenberg?

6. Petrov obtained documentation that Roedel was executed in the autumn of 1947. It apparently came from a file of high level diplomats and foreigners who died of natural causes or were killed in captivity. An Associated Press reporter was shown this file from the outside only but not allowed to look inside. Who is listed in this collection? Is Wallenberg part of the list?

7. Former Soviet officials have repeatedly alluded to information that they claim originates directly from the interrogations of Vilmos Langfelder, Wallenberg's chauffeur, arrested with him. Where are these interrogation records and why have they not been shared with Swedish officials? The Soviet government claimed that Vilmos Langfelder had died in March 1948. What were the circumstances of his death?

8. The references to Raoul Wallenberg and Langfelder have been blotted out in the KGB prison journals. When did this happen?

9. Sandor Katona, previously a driver at the Hungarian legation in Sofia and arrested in September 1944, was transferred as a prisoner with Langfelder from the Lefortovo Prison to the Lubyanka Prison on July 22, 1947. Why? What are the dates of Katona's imprisonment? Where is the documentation related to his case?

C. July 17, 1947

10. For decades, Russia claimed that Raoul Wallenberg died on July 17, 1947, in Moscow's

Lubianka prison. Yet in 2009, Russian officials wrote in a response to queries from researchers that prisoner number 7 who was "most likely" Wallenberg, had been interrogated on July 23, 1947, six days after his official death date. Can we see the interrogation registry for Lubianka prison for that day?

11. Though the Russians have said that this prisoner number 7 was most likely Wallenberg, they have not asserted that with certainty. Yet, the Russians were able to provide full identification for an earlier prisoner number 7. Why can the Russians identify one prisoner number 7 with certainty and not another?

12. What happened to Raoul Wallenberg on 17 July 1947, if anything? If Raoul Wallenberg died of natural causes on that date, how did it happen? If he was executed, who took the decision? If he died on that date, where was he buried? If he was moved on that date into isolation as a numbered prisoner, where are the relevant papers?

13. Access to internal correspondence files containing relayed orders and instructions between the Soviet security services (the Ministry of State Security (MGB) prison department and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) prison directorate) and the Soviet leadership - such as the Central Committee and the Politburo - would reveal how Soviet leaders handled the Wallenberg file. There is not this access now. What information would this access provide? The Politburo in its August 1947 session almost certainly discussed Wallenberg. What do the documents from that deliberation show?

14. Soviet archival records state there to have been a letter dated July 17, 1947, from Viktor Abakumov, chief of the Smersh military counter espionage, to Vyacheslav Molotov, then Vice Chair of the Council of Ministers and Deputy Prime Minister about Raoul Wallenberg. The letter itself is missing. This letter is dated on the day the Smoltsov memorandum says that Wallenberg died. What was in the letter? Where is the letter?

D. The Smoltsov report

15. A report by A. Smoltsov states the Wallenberg died of a heart attack on July 17, 1947. Smoltsov was then chief of health services at Lubianka prison. A memorandum signed by then Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko from 1957 states that this memorandum had been found. When was the Smoltsov report found? Where was it found? By whom was it found?

16. According to Smoltsov's son, Viktor Aleksandrevitch, Smoltsov was on medical leave because of illness on the day he wrote the memorandum about the death of Wallenberg and was unexpectedly called to work one evening in July 1947. This information was given by the son to a Russian representative of the Swedish Russian working group on Raoul Wallenberg. The son refused to meet the Swedish members of the working group. What are the precise dates and circumstances of Smoltsov's illness and employment in 1947? Was he, in fact, at work when the report he was supposed to have written was authored? Was he called in to write the report on July 17, 1947 or some other date? He lived till 1953. What was the genesis and purpose of his report?

17. The Soviet Union did not, through the Gromyko memorandum, give an honest reply in 1957 to Swedish queries about Wallenberg. For instance, the Gromyko memorandum mentions the prison medical service's records at Lubianka Prison. No such records exist, or have existed, according to the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) deputy head of archives. To take another example, the Gromyko memorandum pointed out that 'a certain former leader of the state security organisation furnished the Soviet Foreign Ministry with incorrect information over a number of years'. This is not true. The Foreign Ministry received nothing at all from the Ministry of State Security before February 1947, after which it was told that Raoul Wallenberg was in Ministry of State Security custody. Why was the Gromyko memorandum not honest?

E. Numbered prisoners

18. Deputy Foreign Minister A. Vishinsky in May 1947 asked for a solution ['liquidatsye'] of the Raoul Wallenberg case. That solution could have been either execution or assignment of a false identity and holding in isolation. Several Lubyanka prisoners were convicted by a special military tribunal of counter revolutionary activity and then assigned either a false identity or a number and held in isolation. Researchers have identified all but six of the numbered prisoners sentenced between the spring of 1947 and May 1948, the period when Wallenberg would have been sentenced if he was convicted by this court. Who were the six unidentified numbered prisoners, prisoners 14, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20? In what isolation prisons were the six placed?

F. Witness information

19. A number of witnesses - staff and prisoners formerly held in Vladimir - gave testimony that Wallenberg was there in the forties, fifties, sixties and seventies. An examination of Vladimir prison records shows that there was an uncharacteristic frequency of seemingly empty cells in a way which appears to confirm that an isolated prisoner may have been held there. What is the explanation for this evidence?

20. Shiryagin from Charkov wrote a letter about Raoul Wallenberg in the spring of 1956 which caused the MID [Soviet Foreign Ministry] to worry about the information spreading. The Foreign Ministry requested the KGB to silence Shiryagin on this issue? Why? What was in that letter? Where can the information in that letter be found today?

21. Varvara Ivanovna Larina and Aleksandr Timofeyevich Kukin, former employees of Vladimir prison described a foreign prisoner in 1960 held in Korpus 2 in solitary confinement who met the description of Raoul Wallenberg. Josip Terelya, a former prisoner, did the same for 1970. Who were the foreign prisoners in solitary confinement in 1960 and 1970 in Korpus 2 of the Vladimir Prison?

22. Zigurds Kruminsh, the former cellmate of Francis Gary Powers and of Marvin W. Makinen in the Vladimir Prison, stated that he met a Swedish prisoner in Vladimir. Who were the Kruminsh cellmates in the Vladimir Prison, particularly those in Korpus 1 at the time the Gromyko Memorandum was released in February 1957?

23. Who were the Swedish prisoners in Vladimir prison? How many were there? Other Russian prisons issued statistical information about foreign prisoners by nationality. Why was this not done for Vladimir?

24. In 1961 Dr. Nanna Svartz of Sweden reported that her Russian colleague Dr. A. L. Myasnikov revealed to her during a meeting that he had direct knowledge of Raoul Wallenberg's presence in the Soviet Union. A second Russian physician, Dr. Grigory Danishevsky, was also present during part of the conversation. What do the reports of Drs. Myasnikov and Danishevsky to Soviet authorities about their encounter with Dr. Svartz say?

25. In May 1965 the Central Committee of the Communist Party Soviet Union approved an official reply to be given to Dr. Svartz. The notations on the document show that the Myasnikov/Svartz issue was also discussed by a full session of the Politburo. What are the contents of the documentation that was preparatory to the meetings of the Central Committee and the Politburo?

G. Exchange

26. Did the Soviet side try at any time to indicate that they were interested in an exchange of Wallenberg for a Soviet prisoner in the West? The Soviet embassies in Istanbul, Turkey and later Helsinki, Finland attempted through Pavel Erzine and Viktor Vladimirov in 1956 to arrange discussions through Finnish diplomat Ake Frey between the Soviet leadership and the Swedish Prime Minister about the possibility that "they (the Soviets) will repatriate him

(Raoul Wallenberg) if he is still alive". Where are the papers relating to the discussion between Vladimirov and Frey?

H. Transfer of belongings

27. Soviet officials in October 1989 handed over belongings of Raoul Wallenberg to his family, including currency, claiming that they had recently been found during refurbishment of a basement containing KGB records. Raoul Wallenberg's belongings were kept in a file in the care of a KGB archive official during the 1950's, 1960's and early 1970's. What happened to Raoul Wallenberg's other possessions?

28. The Soviet and Russian governments claim that Wallenberg died in 1947. Once a prisoner died, under official Soviet administrative rules any currency was permanently confiscated by the Soviet State within six months of his death. If Raoul Wallenberg indeed died in 1947, why then was his currency not confiscated?

29. Soviet authorities in 1989 may not have returned the original bills taken from Raoul Wallenberg, but may simply have issued authentic World War II currency to reimburse Wallenberg's family. In that case, how did Soviet authorities know what amount they should return?

30. A receipt stating the precise amount taken from Wallenberg should have been placed in his prisoner file when he arrived in prison. Does this mean that this receipt and possibly Raoul Wallenberg's personal or investigative files were available in 1989? Researchers have copies of receipts for Langfelder and Katona but not one for Wallenberg.

31. What possessions did Raoul Wallenberg take with him from the Lefortovo Prison to the Lubianka Prison in March 1947? The entry in the official registry of possessions of prisoners in the Lubianka Prison which shows this is censored. When did this censorship

occur?

I. Documents

32. Few internal KGB papers were preserved, it seems, from the 1956-57 period. Why is this so? When were the papers destroyed? On whose orders were they destroyed?

33. Wallenberg researchers found in Swedish archives in January this year and released a September 16, 1991 memorandum from the Swedish Embassy in Moscow citing the former head of the Soviet "Special Archive," Anatoly Prokopenko, as telling Swedish diplomats that the KGB instructed him to stop a search for documents by researchers working on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. Prokopenko said he complied because he was working to open other archives to the public and realized that open disobedience would lead to his immediate ouster. "I had to make a sacrifice for the sake of uncovering numerous other secrets of the archive," Prokopenko said. What procedures will be implemented to ensure meaningful access to important documentation so that a credible investigation can be conducted?

II. Swedish indifference

It took a full six years after his disappearance in 1945, until 1951, before Swedish officials asked US authorities for assistance in the case. Those in charge of Swedish foreign policy between 1945 and 1947 showed an indifferent attitude to the Wallenberg case. What were the reasons for this?

Sweden could file a formal motion concerning Raoul Wallenberg with the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearance but has not done so. Sweden could also ask that Interpol issue a Yellow Notice in the Wallenberg case, an international alert that would allow police agencies to become actively involved in the efforts to determine his fate by assisting in the location of witnesses and by taking other investigative measures. The Swedish government has rejected requests for these initiatives on the basis that it would complicate Sweden's

political working relationship with Russia, including in the area of archival research. The Swedish government has made requests for clarification after the 2009 disclosure that Wallenberg "most likely" did not die on July 17, 1947 after all, but did not raise the issue at the Putin/Medvedev summit meetings in Stockholm November 2009 and Moscow March 2010.

In a letter sent to me in May 2004 about Raoul Wallenberg, former Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham referred to "Sweden's natural right to take the leadership in this case". As a result, I wrote to the Swedish Foreign Ministry. The ultimate conclusion of an exchange of correspondence was that Sweden declined the leadership Minister Graham had offered to Sweden and instead, in a letter sent in January 2005, deferred to and expressed appreciation for "whatever is being done in other countries, including Canada, to throw light on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg." We can not count on Sweden to lead this file.

III. What Canada should do

Prime Minister Stephen Harper should contact Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin asking them to authorize the access of Canadian government designated researchers to Russian witnesses and closed archives to research the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. Canadian designated researchers should conduct research in Russian archives and locate and interview Russian witnesses on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg patterned on the research and interviewing currently undertaken by Canadian researchers in Russian archives for the purpose of war crimes prosecution.

Canada has negotiated with Russia a Memorandum of Understanding to permit, for Canadian war crimes prosecution, direct Canadian access to archives, firsthand Canadian efforts to locate Russian witnesses, and in person Canadian interviewing of Russian witnesses. There should be a similar memorandum or an amendment to or interpretation of the existing one so that Canadians can pursue directly in Russia Raoul Wallenberg research.

Canada can employ researchers and investigators who have gained experience through the war crimes effort with Russian archives and locating and interviewing of witnesses to conduct research in Russia on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg.

The history of war crimes research in the Russia which preceded the current Memorandum of Understanding reads much like the history of research into the fate of Raoul Wallenberg. Peter Kremer, a former head of the War Crimes Unit in the Department of Justice, reports:

"From the start of the (war crimes) project until July 30, 1990, 42 requests for assistance were sent to East Bloc countries and the USSR....Of the 42 requests, only 20 responses were received, 2 of which were negative and many of which contained limited information concerning the Canadian suspect. Normally, there was a time lag of at least six months and up to two years from the delivery of a request to the receipt of a response. Unofficial and official enquiries about the status of the requests did little to expedite responses ... Because there was no way of evaluating the thoroughness of the methodology employed by the Soviet Procurator's Office in identifying and tracing witnesses or locating relevant historical documentation, it was not possible to make a final assessment on the investigation." John D. McCamus, Report to the Deputy Minister Concerning certain allegations of anti-Semitism, March 1998, pages 144, 145.

What Peter Kremer said of war crimes research applies equally to Raoul Wallenberg research. Many requests for information about Raoul Wallenberg from Russian archivists go unanswered. Of those that are answered, the answers contain limited information. The time lag between a request for specific information relevant to the Raoul Wallenberg investigation and a response is at least several months and can be years. Enquiries about the status of the requests do little to expedite responses. Because there is no way of evaluating the thoroughness of the methodology employed by the Russian authorities in identifying and tracing witnesses or locating relevant historical documentation, it is not

today possible to make a final assessment on the investigation on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg.

This is how Peter Kremer and the War Crimes Unit dealt with their problem. Peter Kremer reports:

"Following a review of the status of investigations in the fall of 1990, a new strategy was developed for obtaining the necessary information on which to base investigative decisions ... The responsible authorities in the USSR were approached regarding the possibility of Justice historians conducting primary research at Soviet Archives. At the same time, it was decided to explore changing procedures in witness location and interviewing. This included obtaining greater access to KGB investigative files to identify and trace witnesses, mass media advertising for witnesses in the USSR, and interviewing and taking statements from Soviet witnesses according to Canadian police procedures. In November 1990, Justice war crimes officials travelled to Moscow and met with senior representatives of the Procurator General of the USSR, the Main Archival Administration and the Department of State Security (KGB) to discuss these issues. Agreement was reached permitting historians working for the Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes Section to conduct primary research in the Soviet Union and to have more flexibility in locating and interviewing Soviet witnesses. A more direct and less formal method of communicating with the appropriate Soviet officials was also arranged." (pages 145-146)

For Raoul Wallenberg research also, a new strategy is needed. The responsible authorities in Russian should be approached regarding the possibility of Canadian historians' conducting primary research in Russian Archives, about obtaining access to KGB files to identify and trace witnesses, about advertising in the mass media for witnesses in Russia, and about interviewing and taking statements from Russian witnesses. Canadian officials

should meet with senior representatives of the Procurator General of Russia, the Main Archival Administration and the Department of State Security (KGB) to discuss these issues. Agreement should be sought permitting historians working for the Government of Canada to conduct primary research in Russia on the fate of Raoul Wallenberg and to locate and interview Russian witnesses. A direct and informal method of communicating with the appropriate Russian officials should be arranged.

It is impossible to say in advance what such a change in the strategy of research would yield. We do know, however, that the comparable change in the strategy of war crimes research, at least in the eyes of the Canadian Justice War Crimes Unit, was extraordinarily fruitful. Peter Kremer reports:

"A major step forward in the investigation of the East Bloc and USSR cases was the ability of Justice historians to conduct primary research in all government archives ... The assistance and cooperation from central, district and local officials in the former East Bloc countries and republics of the former USSR has generally been excellent."
(page 147)

I would not suggest that war crimes researchers and investigators currently working on pending cases be shifted to Raoul Wallenberg research. However, there are by now a number of historians and investigators who are alumni of the War Crimes Unit. These people have the contacts and the experience. They could easily be hired on contract to carry on, for Raoul Wallenberg, work that is similar to the work they have already done on war crimes and crimes against humanity. They could work in tandem with qualified independent Wallenberg researchers on contract with the Government of Canada.

War crimes investigations in Eastern Europe functioned cooperatively, Canadian investigators' working in conjunction with Australian and British researchers who were interested in the same files or the same witnesses. That history and spirit of cooperation

could easily be transferred to Raoul Wallenberg research. The utility of multilateral cooperation in war crimes research did not necessitate multilateral agreements on that cooperation. Bilateral agreements were sufficient there and they should be sufficient here.

Canada has lived through the difficulty of research and investigation in Russia for the purpose of war crimes prosecutions, denaturalizations and deportations. We should learn from that history, benefit from that experience for Raoul Wallenberg research. War crimes research has given Canada the tools to conduct Raoul Wallenberg research. We should use those tools now that they are at hand.

Raoul Wallenberg was Canada's first and for almost sixteen years, from 1985 to 2001, its only honorary citizen. In the absence of Swedish leadership, Canada should not let this file drop.

Conclusion

The Wallenberg case raises many questions. However, these are not just unsolvable mysteries. They are questions with answers which are set out in documents which exist but which the Russians to date have not disclosed. The means to answer the questions are at hand.

However, getting access to the relevant documents is not so simple. We need a concerted international effort at the highest level to get to the bottom of this story. In September this year, shortly before the Vladivostock Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) summit, B'nai Brith Canada wrote to Prime Minister Stephen Harper requesting that he ask Russian President Vladimir Putin to grant researchers access to relevant documents to researchers. I reiterate to Stephen Harper that request here.

Wallenberg has been much honoured, but little helped. It is an irony and a tragedy that he

who helped so many was so little helped himself; that he who rescued so many was not himself rescued.

Someday the truth about Raoul Wallenberg will be told. We must make every effort to ensure that that day is today, while his family members who knew him are still alive, still looking to find out what happened to him.

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