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«The Swedish aid to Soviet Russia during the famine of 1921-1923»

«Помощь Швеции Советской России во время голода 1921-1923 годов»

Stockholm, Riksarkivet.

May-July 2015, December 2015-March 2016

The Russian famine of 1921-23 was one of the worst human disasters of the 20th century. Triggered by a combination of natural and human causes, most notably by seven years of constant war, the famine left millions of Russians without adequate food. My father Gennady Tsidenkov was a historian at Moscow State University and at Samara State University of Economics. His main topic was foreign relief expeditions to Soviet Russia during the Famine of 1921-23. He left a huge archive of documents about these events - the result of 40 years research. From these document I learned about the Swedish Red Cross expedition to Samara region in 1921-1923. I got information where and how the Swedes worked, how many lives they have saved. But I had no “faces” - who were these people? Who organized the expedition? Who donated money, food and medicines? Only in Sweden I could get the answers.

So, the Sverker Åström Foundation gave me the opportunity to do it.

Every working day I started with a trip to Arninge to the National archive of Sweden (Riksarkivet - music to my ears). The Swedish archives is a real dream for all those who once faced the Russian archives. There are no numerous bureaucratic permissions, strict security, unfriendly rules and other limitations. And the most unbelievable thing is that all the secret documents are available to any interested person. There is a great mass of documents at your disposal and you are allowed to make a duplicate of any document you find. The staff is helpful and assists in finding the information you need.

While doing research in Riksarkivet a have learned about the really great person – Prince Carl, a leader of Swedish Red Cross and initiator of rescue operations in Russia. Also Prince Carl created a work plan for the Czechoslovakian Red Cross and the Dutch Red Cross. These organizations began to work under the direct of the Swedish Red Cross. In May 1922, the government of the Samara region reached out

to the Swedish Red Cross to help the Nansens International Committee for Russian Relief and the Norwegian Red Cross that worked in the north of the Samara region. By July 1922, the Swedish Red Cross had been caring for 169,836 human lives.

All these facts inspired me to bring up for discussion the idea of Prince Carl Memorial construction in Samara (website project discussion: <http://samara.ru.livejournal.com/10313310.html>). I sincerely hope that together with regional authorities and community this initiative will be developed.

And I have some reasons to hope for success.

The most amazing discovery in Riksarkivet is the huge collection of the photos made by the delegates of Swedish Red Cross in Samara in 1921-1923. These unique photos are of considerable historical and cultural value. On December 15, due to the kind involvement of the Sverker Åströms Foundation and personally of Disa Håstad, we organized two photo exhibitions at the Nobel Museum.



That day I met Torbjörn Becker, the director of the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics, who offered to organize an exhibition in Stockholm School of Economics. Together with my new friend and colleague in researches Per Allan Ollson we selected photos and made banners and posters for event.

On March 18 the exhibition was officially opened.



The mayor of Samara had read several articles about the Swedish Red Cross expedition to Samara in 1921-1923 in my blog and sent to the Swedish embassy in Moscow the letter of gratitude to Swedish nation for the aid during the famine.

We read out this letter and the answer of Swedish ambassador in Moscow Peter Ericson for the guests of the exhibition.



I hope that with the assistance of the Swedish Embassy in Moscow we can bring the exhibition to Moscow and then to Samara. It will be a significant event for our city.

All the documents that I got in Riksarkivet I will use in my historical dissertation. I have begun to write a thesis and I am planning to complete it next year.

In conclusion, I would like to say heartfelt thanks to an outstanding and amazing person - Disa Håstad who made the dream come true



