

## Sparwenfeld's Diary

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**J. G. Sparwenfeld.** In their collections of books and manuscripts in the fields of Slavonic and Oriental studies, several Swedish libraries possess valuable items donated by the scholar Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld (1655-1727). My own interest in the Oriental collections (see Celsius & Benzelius 1706, Tornberg 1849) has focused on certain manuscripts given to Sparwenfeld in Moscow by the exiled Georgian prince Archil Bagrationi (1647-1713) and the French nobleman Balthasar de Lauzière (-1697). (See Johanson 1985ab, 1997.)

Johan Gabriel Sparwenfeld is sometimes referred to as «the first Swedish Slavacist». He was known as an eminent expert on Slavonic languages, particularly Russian, for which he felt a deep love. He is said to have spoken and written fourteen foreign languages, besides possessing a passive knowledge of some other languages. His wide international reputation was based on his large Slavonic-Latin dictionary in four volumes, «Lexicon Slavonicum», one of the most comprehensive Slavonic dictionaries of its time. The original is preserved at the University Library in Uppsala and has been published by Ulla Birgegård (1987-1992, compare Birgegård 1971, 1985). Sparwenfeld kept up an extensive correspondence with eminent scholars of his time, e.g. Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz and Hiob Ludolf.

Detailed information on Sparwenfeld's life and career is provided by Jacobowsky (1932) and Birgegård (1985). Sparwenfeld was sent to Uppsala for education at the age of seven and stayed there for thirteen years. He is claimed to have had an insatiable hunger for knowledge. In 1677 he undertook his first longer journey for study purposes. He studied libraries and archives in Holland, France, Italy, England and Denmark, made contacts with learned and influential persons, and started collecting books and manuscripts.

In 1684, Sparwenfeld undertook a journey to Russia as a member («hofjunkern») of a large Swedish embassy to Moscow. The task of the delegation was to confirm the peace treaties of Kardis (1661) and Pliussa (1667). When the embassy returned to Sweden, Sparwenfeld remained in Moscow for another two and a half years, since he had been awarded a scholarship by the King and Council to study the Russian language and Russian affairs. During this stay his lively interest in the Russian language and culture began.

**A travel diary.** Sparwenfeld's travel diary contains a rather detailed account of the most important events during the journey to Moscow and the long sojourn there: «Giornale dun Viaggio di Muscouia [...]». It is written mainly in Swedish, but includes extensive passages in French and a few pages in Italian. The diary has now been edited by Ulla Birgegård (2002). The edition comprises Sparwenfeld's original text, an extensive commentary, appendices, indices, a few of Sparwenfeld's own drawings, etc. The text contains a large number of names and terms in Russian, written sometimes in Cyrillic and sometimes in the Latin script.

The way to Moscow and the first years there are described in detail. The members of the embassy traveled in sleighs on the ice across the Åland Sea to Finland. Beyond Systerbäck, the author says, people began to understand Russian. In Ingria he found two kinds of «Russians» apart from Russians proper: Ingrians («ingrikar») and Votes («wettalaisar»). The Ingrians, the author says, are of Russian creed and prepared to die for it, although they are Finns and might not understand a single word of Russian. Even less, he claims, do they know anything about their religion. Ingria had been a Swedish province since the peace of Stolbova in 1617. The authorities tried to convert the Finnish-speaking population to the Lutheran faith. All groups who did not understand Russian properly should, as Sparwenfeld tells us, be instructed in the Lutheran religion, and their children should be taken by force and baptized.

People in the area of Nyenskans, he says, live longer than elsewhere and are more fertile. From childhood they read in German, Finnish, Swedish, and many of them also in Russian, so that when they grow up they already know three or four languages.

On the road to Narva, the members of the delegation found no inns and no innkeepers who could provide horses, so that they had to drag themselves in a miserable way through the country. There is a long and detailed account for the travel through Russia. Finally, on the 26th of April the embassy arrived in Moscow through the suburb of Tver'.

**Sparwenfeld in Moscow.** Travelers' journals had already played an important role for the perception of Russia in Western Europe. 17th century Russia had been described by many travelers before, e.g. by Adam Olearius (1599-1671) in his «Moskowitzische und persische Reise» (1633-1639; see the 1986 edition). Nicolaas Witsen (1641-1717) had, like Sparwenfeld, traveled to Russia as a member of an embassy, and written a very interesting diary about his experiences (1662-1665; see the 1966 edition).

Sparwenfeld's diary provides an especially interesting eyewitness report from Moscow during a very complicated period in the history of Russia—the final years of the Muscovite state, before a new era began

under Peter the Great. The 1680s in many ways prepared the ground for what was to come.

At this time—since 1682—Peter shared the throne with his brother Ivan. Russia was *de facto* governed by Peter's sister Sofia and her lover Vasily Golitsyn. The most important problems in Russia's foreign policy concerned the Ottoman Turks and their vassals, the Crimean Tatars. The «eternal peace» with Poland was signed in 1686, while Sparwenfeld was still in Moscow. The arrival of the Swedish embassy had concluded another «eternal peace», on which negotiations had been going on for more than two decades. Sweden, a close neighbor with a long history of contact and confrontation with Russia, had become an important European state, but its expansion had already reached its zenith by 1660. And just a few years after Sparwenfeld's stay in Moscow, the Great Nordic War was to begin. It put an end to Sweden's status as a great power and prepared Russia for the role of the dominant power in the Baltic region. Sparwenfeld's diary definitely sheds more light on Sweden's role on the international scene of action. Like all activities of Swedish scholars in that period, his travel account and his further writings must be seen as products of efforts to glorify the great past of their country (see Johanson, in press).

During Sparwenfeld's stay in Moscow, quite a number of foreign embassies, «secretaries» and couriers from different countries arrived. The diary describes «international Moscow», i.e. the circles in and around the Foreign Office. The society Sparwenfeld moved in mainly consisted of foreigners staying in the *sloboda*, «the German suburb» outside Moscow. It was here that Peter, the young «second tsar», acquired his foreign friends and advisers, among whom the Swiss François le Fort (1656-1699) and the Scotchman Patrick Gordon (1635-1699) were to play the most important parts in his further career. Gordon was in Russian service as a military officer for many decades. Peter was to seize power in 1689, supported by foreign officers under Gordon's guidance. Sparwenfeld himself says that he did not spend much time with the officers, with the exception of major Balthasar de Lauzière and another Frenchman.

From 1685 on, Sparwenfeld's diary contains relatively short and fragmentary notes. The author obviously became so involved in the realities of Moscow life that he had little time to write. On February 26, 1687, he left Moscow, after a conflict with the head of the Muscovite Foreign Office, Vasily Golitsyn, and after saying a tearful goodbye to all his friends.

**Prince Archil Bagrationi.** One of Sparwenfeld's friends was the Georgian prince Archil Bagrationi, who lived with his family as a political refugee in Moscow. He had been crowned the sovereign of Imeretia at the age of 14, but since this was disapproved of by the Ottomans, he had had

to renounce his throne and go to Isfahan, where he had agreed to become a Muslim. As a reward, he had received the Kakhetian throne. After pressure from the Ottomans and Persians, Archil had sought asylum in Russia in 1682. Since the tsars did not consider him to be the true sovereign of Kakhetia, they did not want to receive him in Moscow. They had wanted Archil to settle close to the Georgian border, but he stayed in Astrakhan, hoping to finally receive permission to come to Moscow. He came to Moscow in 1685 and stayed until 1688. Then he returned to Georgia and succeeded in regaining his throne three times. From 1699 he settled in Moscow for good (see Birgegård 2002). Archil is known as a prince with literary interests (Deeters 1963: 143). Sparwenfeld says that he has no words to express the friendship and favor the Georgian prince has shown him and that all the foreigners in Moscow and in the *sloboda* know how much the prince loved and esteemed him.

Sparwenfeld had promised to do the Georgian prince a great favor, namely to establish a Georgian printing press for him. In order to thank for this promise, Archil gave Sparwenfeld a number of his works when saying goodbye to him. On this occasion, Archil also delivered a speech that was translated from Georgian and Turkish into French by major de Lauzière.

**Balthasar de Lauzière.** Balthasar de Lauzière himself, sometimes referred to as Balthasar Emelianovich, had given Sparwenfeld a large number of precious manuscripts. This French nobleman came from Aix-en-Provence. He had, as he writes in a letter to the tsars, earned the rank of major in France and, after serving the French king for eleven years, left to get to know other countries and languages. He had gone to England, Holland and Sweden. In Poland he had met the Polish envoy Solomon Zgórsky and accompanied him to Persia. He had stayed in Persia for two years and then had gone with the Polish envoy to Astrakhan, where he had joined the Imeretian tsar, and came with him to Moscow to serve the Russian tsars. Here he made Sparwenfeld's acquaintance.

In a letter of September 1687, de Lauzière himself tells Sparwenfeld that he had been appointed lieutenant-colonel, whereas Patrick Gordon and François le Fort had been appointed general and colonel, respectively. With a good deal of irony he describes the participation in the disastrous first Crimean campaign under Vasily Golitsyn as commander in chief. In the campaign against «les tatares» the Russian troupes had suffered considerable casualties: «l'on compte que nous auons bien perdu trente mille hommes». At the bottom of this letter, de Lauzière adds in Turkish in Arabic script that he would write much more, if he only dared.

His career in the Russian armed forces continued under Peter the Great. The final phase was the participation in the last Azov campaign. Though he must have been inexperienced in naval warfare, he had now

been appointed rear admiral in tsar Peter's new navy with the official title «schantbeinacht» (cf. Dutch *schouwt-bij-nacht*). The navy was successful: Peter the Great seized the fortress of Azov in 1696. For de Lauzière this battle was fateful: he was wounded and died on February 22, 1697, after his return to Moscow.

**Sparwenfeld in Sweden.** In Russia, Sparwenfeld had acquired large numbers of precious books and manuscripts on historical, linguistic and other subjects. Some of them had been provided by his friends, others by the Foreign Office. These literary treasures were later to enrich Swedish libraries. In 1705 Sparwenfeld began to donate part of the huge collections, and several other donations followed. Most of his Slavonic collection went to Uppsala University Library through large donations in 1721 and 1722. A large portion of his correspondence is preserved in the City Library of Linköping.

The Great Northern War broke out in October 1700. After the battle at Narva, a number of generals and their «secretaries» were brought to Sweden as prisoners of war. Sparwenfeld knew some of them personally from his years in Moscow, and thus saw them again in his own country. He dealt with the prisoners in a way that was regarded by Swedish authorities to be too pro-Russian. Tsarevich Alexander, Archil's eldest son, belonged to the prisoners, and his father tried to have him exchanged. After a decade in Sweden, he was allowed to go home, but died on his way in the town of Piteå.

What about the Georgian printing press? Sparwenfeld had asked Nicolaas Witsen, the Burgermeister of Amsterdam—the same Witsen as mentioned above—to support this project. The Hungarian Nicolas Kis (Misztótfalusi Kis Miklós), one of the most eminent makers of typefaces of his time, seems to have produced the types, but Archil did not have the means to pay for it until 1703. Thus, the Georgian printing press in Amsterdam did not come about. Later on, Sparwenfeld had Georgian typefaces cast in Stockholm. In a letter of August 10, 1727, he mentions to Erik Benzelius Jr. that at least a few prayerbooks had been printed with these fonts in Moscow («Ett lijtet Georgianskt, eller Grusinskt tryck läht jag giuta här i Stockholm för prinsen av Imeretti, [...] aff dhesse boksteffwer bleffwo een eller annan små bönebok trycker i Moskuo»).

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