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Military Actions at Narva in 1700 According to the Memoirs of Swedish Warriors

Sergei A. Chirkin

Vyatka State Agro-Technological University, Kirov, Russia

✉ s_tchirkin@mail.ru

Abstract: The beginning of the Great Northern War was extremely unfortunate for the Russian State. The siege of Narva by the Russian troops and the defeat they suffered from Karl XII in the Battle of Narva (1700) were the hardest failures of Peter I during the Great Northern War and, at the same time, they gave an impetus to the acceleration of institutional development and reforms. This explains the attention of Russian historians to the circumstances of the “Narva catastrophe.” The memories, diaries and letters of Swedish soldiers, published at the turn of the 20th century, allow us to take a fresh look at the battle and the events that preceded it, given that there is practically no such evidence from the Russian side. In this regard, the purpose of the article is to fill in the gaps in the historiography of the initial period of the Great Northern War, to clarify some details concerning the state and actions of the Russian army on the eve and at the time of the Battle of Narva, as well as its position immediately after the battle. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the fact that most of these materials have not yet been put into circulation in Russian historical science.

Keywords: the era of Peter the Great, History of the Russian army, the Great Northern War, the Battle of Narva, memories

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Военные действия под Нарвой в 1700 г. по воспоминаниям шведских воинов

Сергей Александрович Чиркин

Вятский государственный агротехнологический университет, Киров, Россия

✉ s_tchirkin@mail.ru

Аннотация: Начало Северной войны было крайне неудачным для Российского государства. Осада русскими войсками шведской крепости Нарва осенью 1700 г. и поражение, понесенное ими от Карла XII в Нарвском сражении 19 ноября 1700 г., – крупнейшие неудачи Петра I в Великой Северной войне (1700–1721), способствовавшие одновременно ускоренному реформированию армии и государственных институтов. Этим обусловлено внимание отечественных историков к причинам и обстоятельствам «Нарвской катастрофы». Изданные на рубеже XIX–XX вв. мемуары, дневники и письма воинов армии Карла XII, далеко еще не полностью введенных в научный оборот, позволяют по-новому взглянуть на само сражение и на события, ему предшествовавшие, учитывая, что с русской стороны подобных свидетельств практически нет. В связи с этим цель исследования – восполнение имеющихся пробелов в историографии начального периода Северной войны, уточнение некоторых деталей о состоянии и действиях русской армии накануне и в момент Нарвского сражения, а также о ее положении непосредственно после битвы.

Ключевые слова: Эпоха Петра Великого, история русской армии, Северная война, Нарвская битва, воспоминания

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Introduction

For three centuries, the Russian historical thought considered the military defeat of the Russian army at Narva in 1700 as a hard but important lesson that dramatically accelerated the course of the state reforms and, ultimately, made it possible for Russia to turn into an empire. The siege of Narva and the battle of November 19 are the subject of many studies, both domestic and foreign ones. However, despite the fact that the Narva campaign has been studied for a long time, it hasn't been definitively described yet.

The analysis of the successes and failures of the Russian army, especially in the initial period of the Great Northern War cannot be considered complete and objective without the testimony of the Swedish participants in the events. Meanwhile, only a small part of these materials has been introduced into scientific use in our country. It is worth noting the works of I.L. Andreev, V.S. Velikanov, V.V. Pensky, A.G. Chernichenko, S.A. Chirkin, which rely to some extent on the personal sources of the representatives of the “Swedish camp” (“caroliners,” *karoliner* in Swedish terminology). In particular, there have been introduced into scientific use the “Narva” letters and notes of Charles XII, Count Charles Wrede, E. Decker, A.L. Levenhaupt and M. Steinbock.¹

Along with this, domestic researchers of the Narva campaign overlooked the documents included in the collection of diaries and letters of the soldiers of the army of Charles XII “*Karolinska krigares dagbocker*” (“The Diaries of the Caroliner Warriors”) published in 1901–1918 under the editorship of Professor A.W. Quennerstedt.² It is the referring to these documents that determines the novelty of the presented work.

The 12-volume collection “*Karolinska krigares dagbocker*” significantly expands the source base for studying the participation of the Russian army in the Battle of Narva. The documents presented in it which appeared shortly after the war and reproduce the course of the war from the inside give us the opportunity to look at the Narva campaign from the “enemy” side.

Of the 60 authors presented in this collection of documents, five were participants in the Narva campaign. Their diaries and letters form the basis of this study: “J. Cederhielms bref 1700–1701 samt 1706” [“The Letters of J. Cederhielm 1700–1701 and 1706”], “A. Koskull, själfbiografiska anteckningar” [“A. Koskull, autobiographical notes”], “L. Hochmuths dagbok” [“The Diary of L. Hochmut”], “C.-H. Sperlings dagbok” [“The Diary of C.-H. Sperling”], “Fyra tjänsteförteckningar” [“The Four Diaries”], including the diary of S.-D. Barohn.³

Based on the testimonies of the Swedish participants in the hostilities at Narva, the article reconstructs the circumstances of the initial period of the Great Northern War, in particular, the data on the state and actions of the Russian army on the eve and

¹ I.L. Andreev, *Na puti k Poltave* (Moscow: Veche Publ., 2009); V.S. Velikanov, 1) “K voprosu ob organizatsii i chislennosti russkoi armii v Narvskom pokhode 1700 goda,” in *Voina i oruzhie: Noveye issledovaniia i materialy. Vtoraia Mezhdunarodnaia nauchno-prakticheskaia konferentsiia* (St. Petersburg: VIMAI VVS Publ., 2011), 130–143; 2) *Pokhody Karla XII. Zelandiia i Narva* (Moscow: Kniga Publ., 2014); A.G. Chernichenko, and V.V. Pensky, “Graf Karl Vrede – ottsu, 24 noiabria 1700 g. iz Narvy,” *Setevoi nauchno-prakticheskii zhurnal ‘Nauchnyi rezul’tat’: Sotsial’nye i gumanitarnye issledovaniia*, no. 1 (2015): 56–63; S.A. Chirkin, “Karl XII o voine s Rossiei (iz pisem shvedskogo korolia),” *Voprosy Historii*, no. 4–1 (2021): 40–50.

² A.W. Quennerstedt, ed. *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 1–12 (Lund: Gleerupska univ. bokhandeln Publ., 1901–1918).

³ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 2 (1903); *Ibid.*, vol. 3 (1907); *Ibid.*, vol. 6 (1912); *Ibid.*, vol. 8 (1913); *Ibid.*, vol. 12 (1918).

at the time of the Narva battle, as well as its position immediately after the battle. The purpose of the study is also to identify the degree of objectivity of the Swedish soldiers' judgments and reveal the factors that determined them.

Siege of Narva and military operations on the approaches to it in October – November 1700

First of all, we should consider some unusual testimony relating to the pre-war period. It is the testimony of Simon-Daniel Barohn (1672–1732), a native of Ingermanland, an ensign of the Narva garrison, who was the first to encounter the Russian army that crossed the border.

It should be recalled that from mid-August 1700 troops of about 35,000 people, as well as artillery and a wagon train moved from Moscow, Smolensk and Ukraine to Novgorod.⁴ On September 1, the advance detachment of Prince I.Yu. Trubetskoy set off from Novgorod to Narva. They managed to build a bridge across the Narva which defended the fortress from the east. On September 8, the main forces led by Peter I set off as well.⁵ At the same time, the Russian command managed to keep their intentions secret, and as a result the Swedes could not fully figure them out.⁶

Nevertheless, after noticing the concentration of troops near the border, on August 27, in order to understand the situation, the commandant of Narva, Colonel R. Horn sent S.-D. Barohn to Novgorod.⁷ On the way, Barohn was detained by a detachment of Trubetskoy and taken to the headquarters of the Russian army. The notes of this man that was captured even before the start of active hostilities are of interest as they contain the names of Peter I and his entourage. Besides they reflect the general mood of the Russian command at that time.

S.-D. Barohn writes:

To the Tsar's question about how many troops there were in Narva, I answered that all of them would remain loyal to the King. The Tsar hit me so hard that my cheek got swollen. Then the Tsar and the generals stripped me naked and, tying my hands behind my back, placed me on the rack (the Russian way of torturing) inflicting terrible pain and burning my back with iron. I was continuously raised and lowered for four hours, so I was barely alive... Then, Major-General Ivan Ivanovich Buturlin rushed to me and began to beat me in the face so hard that blood flowed from my mouth and nose. He showed his bloodstained hand to the Tsar and said: "We will beat all the Swedes like that." The Tsar was very pleased with this, and putting his hand on his shoulder said: "You are my loyal servant."⁸

S.-D. Barohn survived, but lost his health. Two months later, the situation changed – a number of Russian generals were captured, and Barohn returned home.

The events of the main stage of the campaign were reflected in the diaries of three people. These are the Secretary of the Field Office, Baron Josas Cederhelm (1673–1729), Lieutenant-fortifier Ludwig Hochmuth (1667–1709) and Lieutenant of the Life Guards Count Charles-Henrich Sperling (1681–1734). Their diaries contain valuable information concerning both the defensive actions of the Russian army on the eve of the battle and the battle itself. All of them were part of the inner circle of Charles XII, who, as it is known, used to constantly move on the battlefield looking for the most dangerous places.

⁴ S.V. Efimov, ed. *Voiny Rossii v epokhu barokko, 1700–1762* (St. Petersburg: Voenno-istoricheskii muzei artillerii, inzhenernykh voisk i voisk svyazi Publ., 2002), 76.

⁵ P.P. Pototsky, *Gvardiia russkogo tsaria pod Narvoi v 1700 i 1704 godu* (St. Petersburg: I.N. Skorokhodov Press, 1890), 9.

⁶ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 12 (1918), 373.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 375.

Thus, by September 23, the main Russian forces had arrived at Narva, united with Trubetskoy's detachment and besieged the fortress in a wide semicircle. They began to dig approaches, to construct batteries and external fortifications⁹. A month later, there began the shelling of the fortress, but due to the poor quality of the gunpowder and the poor training of the gunners the shelling was not effective. In addition, due to impassability, there was no supply of shells. Along with this, at the end of September, the besiegers learned about the landing of Swedish troops in Pernau. When these rumors were confirmed, and it turned out that Charles XII had arrived in Pernau, Peter I sent a detachment of nobility cavalry under the command of voivode B.P. Sheremetev westward along the Revel Road.

Six thousand cavalry moved 100 kilometers away from the camp, but after the first fight with the Swedes, they began to continuously retreat. This retreat has traditionally been criticized in Russian historiography. Sheremetev was reproached for carelessness, for inability to hold positions of advantage and even for cowardice.¹⁰ However, according to the memoirs of the Swedes, the Russian cavalry, even avoiding fights, gave them a lot of inconvenience. In particular, as a result of the Sheremetev detachment's intensive devastating the surroundings, the Swedes, who were traveling light, without a wagon train, were forced to starve and sleep in the open air. Thus, C.-H. Sperling notes:

We set up a camp three miles from Malholm. All houses and supplies had already been burned and plundered by the six thousand-strong detachment of General Sheremetev... The enemy burns everything before we come.¹¹

One could be only comforted by the fact that things were no better for the Russians. "We hear rumors," wrote J. Cederhelm, not without reason, "that in the Russian camp people are dying of starvation."¹² Indeed, in October, the Russian troops were already suffering greatly from cold, hunger and disease; horses began to die.

Further, feeling the pressure of the Russian cavalry, the Swedes were constantly on their guard. They traveled a significant part of the way in military dispositions, and at rest halts they sent forward reinforced patrols with cannons.¹³ C.-H. Sperling says anxiously:

We don't know if General Sheremetev left or lurked somewhere to take us by surprise. Ahead of us is a forest where the Russian cavalry can easily hide on their undersized horses.¹⁴

On October 26, the only major (but inconclusive) clash between the Russian cavalry and the Swedish avant-garde took place near the village of Purtz. Over the next two weeks, Sheremetev's mounted noblemen retreated continuously. At the same time, the most regrettable retreat, from a military point of view, was their abandonment of the gorges near the village of Pühajõe on the night of November 16-17.

L. Hochmut describes this event as follows:

Sheremetev stood here with six thousand-strong cavalry occupying the gorge, and in anticipation of our arrival they foraged. When we suddenly attacked the foragers, they abandoned their wagons and galloped to their army, and some did not manage to do it. His Majesty wanted to rush after them through the gorge, but we only discharged our cannon at them.¹⁵

⁹ I.L. Andreev, *Na puti k Poltave*, 159.

¹⁰ A.K. Chicherin, *Istoriia leib-gvardii Preobrazhenskogo polka. 1688–1888 g.* (St. Petersburg: A.A. Kraevskogo Press, 1883), 146.

¹¹ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 3 (1907), 4–5.

¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 8 (1913), 161.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1903), 117.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 3 (1907), 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1903), 118.

C.-H. Sperling adds:

Since the passage was visible through, we could have lost more people here than you can imagine, but the Lord was with us, and the enemy left without resistance.¹⁶

Obviously, experiencing remorse about his cowardice, the next morning Sheremetev tried to attack the enemy convoy. This sortie, however, did not yield significant results. We find fragmentary evidence of this in C.-H. Sperling's diary:

Suddenly there was an alarm. His Majesty, with drabants and dragoons, immediately rushed to where it came from, but when he arrived, our soldiers had already captured several Russians.¹⁷

At the same time, the author is probably mum about the losses of his army, because, in his own words, at the end of the day the King personally thanked one of the soldiers "that in the morning his zeal saved the life of His Majesty."¹⁸

Before the last rest halt, eleven kilometers from Narva, at the place of Langena, the Swedes met Russian patrols that were watching the approaches to the camp. Charles XII ordered to prepare for a battle immediately, as he believed that the main enemy forces would soon come, but the Russian generals were in no hurry to leave the fortifications that day. As a result, during the night the Swedes were able to reconnoiter the Russian camp, held a military council and even prepared to cross the moat.¹⁹

In the early morning of November 19, in complete silence the Swedish army left Langena. C.-H. Sperling notes:

No one could imagine that His Majesty would attack the enemy that day. But once His Majesty saw the enemy and assessed his position behind the fortifications, he decided that as soon as we got to him, it was necessary to attack immediately.²⁰

The fortifications looked as follows: "There were ramparts and a deep ditch; the breastwork was studded by stakes; there were defensive fortifications and batteries sheltered along the entire countervallation" (L. Hochmuth).²¹ However, the Russian army could not fully defend them, since it was stretched and had no reserves. Given this, Charles XII decided to break through the Russian defenses in the center, to divide them in half and defeat the enemy in parts.²²

The Battle of Narva and the retreat of the Russian army

At 10 a.m. the Swedes appeared in front of the Russian camp. After giving the troops a short rest, the king went on reconnaissance, and then ordered everyone to line up in military dispositions. At 2 p.m., the Swedish artillery concentrated in the places of the breakthrough opened the fire and the artillery duel ensued. Seeing that the Russians were not coming out into the field, the king gave the signal to storm – two rockets flew into the sky, and to the beat of the drums, shouting "God is with us!" the Swedes rushed to the Russian positions.²³

Thanks to the rapidity, onslaught and cohesion, the Swedes managed to attack unexpectedly. The grenadiers marching at the heads of the columns threw their fascines into

¹⁶ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 3 (1907), 6–7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1903), 118.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 3 (1907), 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1903), 114.

²² V.S. Velikanov, *Pokhody Karla XII. Zelandiia i Narva*, 100.

²³ L.G. Beskrovny, and G.A. Kumanev, *Severnaia voina 1700–1721 gg. K 300-letiyu Poltavskoi pobedy. Sbornik dokumentov*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Kuchkovo pole Publ., 2009), 148.

the ditches, and the infantry marching behind them got over the fortifications and attacked the regiments of Trubetskoy. Half an hour later, the breakthrough was in three places, the center of the Russian camp was cut off from the flanks, the rampart and ten guns of the main battery were in the hands of the Swedes.

There began the battle, which, as it is believed, claimed the lives of seven thousand Russian soldiers, whereas the Swedish side lost less than a thousand. However, the Swedish losses seem somewhat underestimated, given that the Russian soldiers fought back fiercely. This episode is reflected in all sources considered. For example, J. Cederhelm said the following about the retaliatory fire:

Bullets whistled <...> One could see and hear cannon and other shots. One cannon ball fell away from me, another behind me, not wounding me, although it is difficult to imagine this.²⁴

The king who was in front of the center of his army also came under fire. As C.-H. Sperling notes:

His Majesty and a squadron of dragoons rushed to pursue those retreating, although from the retrenchment they fired cannons and muskets at him <...> Thus, His Majesty forced the enemy behind the retrenchment that was already about to flee to fight desperately again seeing no other way out.²⁵

Moreover, at first the Russian soldiers even tried to regain the main battery. J. Cederhelm recalls:

We went to reconnoitre the enemy that at that moment was trying to win back the main rampart which we had just captured.²⁶

And yet, the grass-green Russian units could not resist. At first Trubetskoy's division retreated, then A.M. Golovin's division fled. Both of them rushed to the bridge over the Narva which immediately collapsed due to a great many people. As a result, two divisions retreated to the river; the soldiers panicked; the Russian command lost control, and the junior officers did not know what to do. Trying to escape, some Russian soldiers pretended to be killed, but the Swedes guessed that and pierced them with bayonets and swords.

J. Cederhelm notes:

Holström acted like a real warrior: he was fighting in the forefront and killed several Russians.²⁷

The officers of the Russian headquarters headed by the Commander-in-chief, Duke Charles-Eugene de Croix also rushed to seek salvation (not so much from the enemy, but from their angry soldiers). To stay alive, they intended to surrender. Thus, J. Cederhelm clarifies the circumstances of their capture:

Since the victory was a foregone conclusion, the fugitives left the army to surrender, and at first they approached the city walls with an offer to surrender.²⁸

The command of the Narva garrison rejected the surrender, and then Duke de Croix went back; and "when he was going to surrender, a bullet tore out a piece of his cloak."²⁹

²⁴ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 8 (1913), 166.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3 (1907), 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 8 (1913), 163.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 165–166.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2 (1903), 124.

However, the battle unfolded on a narrow sector of the front, and some regiments of the Russian army were sidelined from the battle. Their participation could have turned the tide, but the lack of a unified command and confusion disheartened the Russian soldiers:

Eleven thousand people stood motionless; they did not hit us in the back or on the flank, as we had disconcerted them.³⁰

As for Sheremetev that the Swedes were still very much afraid of, he made another miscalculation: instead of going into the enemy's flank, his cavalry detachment rushed across the river afloat; up to a thousand horsemen drowned.

And yet, not all Russian units were seized by stupor and panic. On the left flank, A. Weide's division repulsed all attacks of the Swedes. By the evening, it even pressed the enemy, but failed to exploit the success, as it had no connection with other regiments. Near the collapsed bridge, surrounding themselves with artillery carts like a wagon fort (a mobile field fortification), the Preobrazhensky, Semyonovsky and Lefortovsky regiments, as well as the soldiers of Golovin's division that joined them met the Swedes with fire. Abandoned by their commanders, they still managed to stop the onslaught of the column of General K.-G. Rehnschild.

Hearing a shooting by the river, Charles XII rode to the place of the combat. He personally attacked the Russian wagon fort several times, but to no avail. His guards that had been called to help the king were not able to break the Russian defense either. The actions in this area ended only at 4 p.m. with the onset of darkness.

In a number of works, there is a statement that the encircled Russian guards were waiting for the main forces of the army to rescue them at night. This, allegedly, did not happen, since the Russian generals began negotiations with the enemy.³¹ According to the testimony of the Swedes, it was the Preobrazhensky regiment soldiers that asked for negotiations before everyone else:

The battle for the wagon fort lasted until it got dark. Soon we saw a colour bearer with the Russian flag, although at first, we thought that it was one of our soldiers; and thus we did not immediately realize that it was a negotiator. But it really was a negotiator who came to ask for an exit from the wagon fort... At first His Majesty would not hear anything about this, but since it had already become known that the tsar had fled the day before, he answered that he would be merciful to everyone who laid down their arms. The negotiator asked him to speak with his generals and was ready to bring hostages... Finally, His Majesty agreed.³²

Generals I.I. Buturlin and Ya.F. Dolgoruky, the representatives of the Russian headquarters, that came for the negotiations at 8 p.m. asked for the withdrawal of their troops with personal weapons, artillery, banners and wagon trains. In response, the king agreed to give them only the banners, weapons and six cannons for the guards. The generals asked twice for time to consider these terms, and an hour later they agreed to capitulate. Certainly, this decision saved the Swedes from unpredictable consequences: at that time the outcome of the battle was not yet completely clear; the number of undefeated Russian troops was still considerable; and the physical capabilities of the winners were already stretched thin.

³⁰ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 8 (1913), 165.

³¹ P.P. Dirin, *Istoriia Leib-gvardii Semenovskogo polka* (St. Petersburg: Eduarda Goppe Press, 1883), 51.

³² *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 3 (1907), 12–13.

C.-H. Sperling summarizes these negotiations as follows:

When... the Russian general appeared, begging His Majesty for surrender on certain conditions, His Majesty heeded their request with special favor, as well as the request of those who were in the wagon fort. He promised everyone his patronage, allowing those who were in the wagon fort to leave with weapons. After that, the wagon fort was occupied by the detachment of Major-General Posse, and at 11 p.m. the enemy retreated to the river.³³

Russian and Swedish sappers began to restore the bridge over the Narva. At the same time, for the rest of the night the Swedish cavalry remained on horseback, and the infantry stayed with weapons at the ready.

General Weide who at the beginning of the battle had beaten off all the attacks of the Swedes was with his division at a distance, near the village of Yuala, and knew nothing about what was happening. Having received the news of the surrender, he immediately wrote to Swedish General O. Welling about his readiness to surrender on reasonable terms. In response, it was promised that they could leave, but without banners and weapons.

However, in the darkness, in the conditions of overall confusion, separate skirmishes continued for some time. J. Cederhelm witnessed the following:

When we sat down to rest, a cannonball suddenly flew over the army and killed the last man in the second row.³⁴

C.-H. Sperling, in turn, recalls the following episode:

When the shooting subsided, His Majesty ordered the wounded to be collected and taken to the city. Everyone was surprised to see their quick return, since the enemy that stood in their way fired a volley at them. The Russian generals immediately assured His Majesty that this was a misunderstanding, as not everyone had yet learned about the mercy shown to them. Then the wounded were taken away without any obstacles from the enemy.³⁵

The Swedes were amazed at the number of the surrendered Russian units. C.-H. Sperling notes:

The next morning, a lot of Russian soldiers appeared, who had previously been on the other side of the fortress or on the right flank of our attack... There were at least fifteen thousand Russians, whereas there were less than three thousand of us.³⁶

In addition, according to J. Cederhelm, the entire area around Narva was littered with the bodies of the dead: "Russians are lying everywhere like grass."³⁷

On the rebuilt bridge, the Russian guards and those who fought with them in the wagon fort were the first to cross the Narva with banners, drums and weapons in their hands. Charles XII ordered that both banners and muskets be taken away from the rest, since the Swedes revealed a violation of the night agreement (the removal of part of the Tsar's treasury). At the same time, all the officers and generals were detained (about 70 men). By the end of November, 23 thousand Russian soldiers returned to Novgorod. Thus, the total losses of the Russian army amounted to 7 thousand people killed, wounded, captured, drowned and those who died of hunger and cold. The Swedes obtained 20,000 muskets, 30,000 rubles from the Tsar's treasury, 200 banners and all the artillery.³⁸

³³ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 3 (1907), 14.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 8 (1913), 166.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 3 (1907), 14.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 8 (1913), 163.

³⁸ I.I. Rostunov, V.A. Avdeev, M.N. Osipova, and Y.F. Sokolov, *Istoriia Severnoi voyny, 1700–1721 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 1987), 174.

Summing up “the greatest victory over the Russians”, J. Cederhelm notes: “Now this whole country has been cleared of them.”³⁹ In fact, the Russians did not completely leave Ingria; some of their detachments continued to operate in the vicinity of Narva. This, in particular, is evidenced by the diary of the Livonian nobleman in the Swedish service, at that time Officer of the Westmanland Infantry Regiment Anders Koskull (1677–1746).⁴⁰

At the beginning of 1701, A. Koskull from Narva was sent to Stockholm on a mission to deliver new recruits to the active army. A. Koskull writes in his diary:

They sent me with the wife of a non-commissioned officer, the Russian woman, who knew their language. I got clothes, and the imaginary wife put wine and tobacco into our sleigh, and we set off. I pretended to be a deserter who fled from Narva to the Russians. Twice we met Russians; she gave or sold them wine and tobacco. This caring woman not only failed to betray me, but six days later she took me to Finland, from where she came back.⁴¹

These lines exhaustively characterize both the level of counterintelligence work and the general discipline in the Russian army on the eve of a possible offensive by the Swedes further to Russia.

Conclusions

The memoirs of the soldiers of the army of Charles XII contain a lot of valuable information about the state and actions of the Russian army on the eve and at the time of the Battle of Narva. These testimonies expand our understanding of the course of the hostilities near Narva in the autumn of 1700 and allow us to better understand the reasons for the only unconditional victory of the Swedes over the Russian army in the Great Northern War. Besides, they specify the circumstances concerning the formation of the regular Russian army.

Thus, the testimony of S.-D. Barohn about Peter I is unique in its own way. In the descriptions of the two-week pursuit of the Russian cavalry, our attention is attracted by the concerns and hardships of the war. The reports about the combat of the Russian guards contain facts that are alternative to those that have been established in a number of historical works. The notes of the post-Narva period reflect the tragicomic features of the Russian military organization.

In general, the above fragments of memories are very concise; they are given with few details. Besides, they do not contain derogatory characteristics of the enemy. It seems that the latter aspect, essentially imagological, is still to be researched.

In conclusion we should note the following: although the battle at Narva did not result in the complete defeat of the Russian troops, its consequence was a radical reform of the Russian army. As a result, already in 1701–1702 there were the first victories over the Swedes. The definitive rectification of the “Narva errors” led to the outstanding successes of the Russian army in 1709–1721.

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³⁹ *Karolinska krigares dagbocker*, vol. 8 (1913), 164.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6 (1912).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 303.

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Информация об авторе / Information about the author

Сергей Александрович Чиркин, канд. истор. наук, доцент кафедры истории и философии, Вятский государственный агротехнологический университет; 610017, Россия, Киров, Октябрьский пр-кт, д. 133; s_tchirkin@mail.ru; <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9569-5789>

Sergey A. Chirkin, PhD in History, Associate Professor, Department of History and Philosophy, Vyatka State Agrotechnological University; 133, Oktyabrskiy Ave., Kirov, 610017, Russia; s_tchirkin@mail.ru; <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9569-5789>