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# A Soldier by the Name of Zacharoff

Ted Rosvall\*

Family fables. Colorful tales of bright shining stars among one's ancestors. Assertions of royal ancestry and expectations of enormous inheritances. The watchful genealogist should listen to claims like these with a good amount of skepticism. Often they are nothing more than loosely spun cotton candy and nothing to pay attention to. However, there may be a small seed of truth and, therefore, the same dedicated genealogist should always compare the stories to his sources' cold facts.

A letter arrived from America. Mrs. Monica Blanco in Minnesota wondered if I could help her find a mythical ancestor, a Russian prisoner of war by the name of Zacharoff. One of Mrs. Blanco's maternal ancestors, Mathilda Pettersdotter (1836-1916), was born in Göteborg/Domkyrko Parish as an illegitimate daughter of Britta Petersdotter. No information regarding the child's father was available in the birth register or the baptismal records and there were no other leads such as godparents, notes in the household examination rolls, etc. Not even Mathilda's patronymic name was helpful. Perhaps her biological father's first name was Peter/Petter, or did she simply "inherit" her last name from her mother?

Family tradition, however, suggested that the father might have been a Russian prisoner of war by the name of Zacharoff. Were there still really Russian prisoners of war in Göteborg in the 1830s? Hardly. But since the name is so unusual, it ought to be possible to check this out with the help of the many excellent personal registers in Göteborg's Regional Archives (*Landsarkivet i Göteborg*).

I was successful almost immediately. Where would one search for a soldier if not in the Göteborg/Garnison Parish? The soldier Ivan Zacharoff and the maid Ulrika Sjöberg were married there 15 February 1795. I found five children of this couple in the birth and death registers in the same parish:

Maria (née Zacharoff) Strömbom \*4 June 1795; †1834

Abraham Zacharoff \*20 December 1798; †9 March 1799

Anna Christina Zacharoff \*21 July 1800; †7 October 1800

Fredrika Zacharoff \*7 October 1803; †15 December 1803

Johannes Zacharoff \*12 April 1805; †14 June 1805

I could also confirm that Ulrika Sjöberg had a son, born before her marriage, who also eventually was given the name Zacharoff:

Johan Peter (Sjöberg) Zacharoff \*18 October 1792 in Göteborg/Domkyrko Parish; †27 March 1844 in Göteborg/Kristine Parish.

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It is not known whether this person also was the son of the soldier Zacharoff. However, one may speculate that the soldier Zacharoff came to Sweden in connection with the war of 1790 and, therefore, it is likely that this is the case.

The information in the Göteborg/Garnison marriage book is very short, but a volume containing documents regarding forthcoming marriages is preserved. In it is a document with the following text (see figure 1):

Banns were announced for the third time regarding the Christian marriage that has been decided upon between the soldier of the Royal Steding Regiment and Mr. Captain Insensstjerna's Company Iwan Zacharoff and Miss Ulrica Sjöberg.

Votum

Utus 8 Feb:1795

Wed 15 Feb:1795 by J. Norlander

On the back, written diagonally, is the following note:

He, a bachelor twenty-eight years old, born in Moscow, Russia, has through lawful Witnesses proven to the Court of Actuary (*Kämnärsrätten*) his lack of impediments to marriage. She, twenty-seven years old, had authorization from the Domkyrko Parish. Banns were announced for the first time 25 Jan: 1795 J. Norlander

I moved quickly to the archives of the Court of Actuary (*Kämnärsrätten*, the lowest court in the cities, below the *Rådstugurätten*), where I located the matter under the month of January 1795:

After serving notice, the Sergeant of this Garrison's Steding Regiment Paul And: Julius appeared and presented to the honorable Cathedral Chapter here a Decision through the extract of the Protocol of the 21st of this month, where the Cathedral Chapter in accordance with the Royal Majesty's Gracious letter of 13 November 1787 and the regulation of 14 March 1791 referring the Soldier of the above-mentioned Regiment and Mr. Captain Insensstjerna's Company Ivan Sacharoff, born in Russia, to the Court of Actuary to certify, in lack of other proof, that no impediments for marriage exist. The above-mentioned Sergeant requested that the Court of Actuary would allow two witnesses, Soldiers of the same Regiment and Company, Ivan Kusnesoff and Garassin Zilatoff, whose good reputation was certified by the above-mentioned Sergeant, and as there were no objections against these witnesses, they were called and sworn in and warned against committing perjury:

1. Ivan Kusnesoff: that he grew up with Zacharoff in Moscow, Russia, and they served as soldiers with the Resoff Regiment and were captured at the same time in 1790 during the war in Nysloff and thereafter

traveled here together, so the witness is certain that Zacharoff, who never has been married, is free of impediments to marriage.

2. Garassin Zilatoff: reported the same information as the previous witness.

On Zacharoff's request, the Court of Actuary decided to share with him the now executed hearing of witnesses in the form of an extract from the record.

I was also able to find more information about Ulrika Sjöberg. She was born 23 December 1764 in Göteborg/Domkyrko Parish, the daughter of lumberjack Kristoffer Sjöberg (ca. 1723-1783) and his wife Anna Christina (ca. 1745-1791). In addition to the above-mentioned children, Ulrika also had another illegitimate son, Johan Fredrik, who was born and died in 1787. Ulrika passed away a widow on 8 May 1828 in Göteborg/Garnison Parish. As for the soldier Ivan Zacharoff, there is no information about when or where he died, except that it must have happened before 1828, as his wife was mentioned as a widow at that time.

This also means that Ivan Zacharoff could not have fathered Mathilda Pettersdotter, who was born in 1836. On the other hand, he was probably the father of Johan Peter Zacharoff (1792-1844), who could very well have fathered Mathilda. He had been a widower for eight years at the time Mathilda was born. If he went by his middle name Peter, and not Johan, this would also correspond with Mathilda's patronymic name—Pettersdotter.

Now it was time to start studying the rolls. "The Royal Steding Regiment," which eventually was incorporated into Göta Artillery Regiment, and the Captain Insenstjerna's Company list the soldier and later artillery soldier Ivan Sacaroff (Zacharov, Zacharoff[f], and other variations) as number 19 from the early 1790s until 1808. At this time, things got rough. The war against the sworn enemy to the East broke out and the number of rolls increased. The information is more vague and there are many changes. The general enlistment rolls do not include Ivan Zacharoff's fate, but the War Archives have other types of rolls to search.

In the Payment Rolls (*Avlöningsrulla*) for Göta Artillery Regiment 1808, the month of June, we read the following:

- No. 19 / Artillery Soldier Ivan Sacaroff / Appointed to Capt. Ehrenström's Battery
- No. 22 / Ivan Kunisoff / Appointed to Carlsten

From the same source, the month of July:

- No. 19 / Iwan Sacaroff / In the field
- No. 22 / Iwan Kusnesoff / Carlsten

Kusnesoff, a name we remember from the witness' testimony above, is mentioned in August, again staying at [Fort] Carlsten and in October, which

constitutes the last Payment Roll. Zacharoff is again listed as being "in the field."

What happened after this is uncertain. Was Zacharoff sent to the war in Finland? Was he killed there? Had he suffered from a field disease and died in some hospital in Finland or on his way back?

After the war, a new roll was created, based on the remaining men. On 12 November 1809, Insenstjerna's Company lists the following:

No. 19 / Vacant

No. 22 / Johan Kusnesoff 47 1/2 years old, served 19 10/12 years / Appointed to Carlsten

Zacharoff is gone, probably deceased. But why is this not noted anywhere? Are there more rolls to consult? Yes, actually, there are. "Bröd Munstrings Rulla" for Göta Artillery Regiment and Captain Insenstjerna's Company, created 10 September 1809, tells the following (see figure 2):

No. 19 / Artillery soldier Iwan Zacharoff / Ill at the hospital here

"Here" refers to Göteborg and the soldier Zacharoff probably died there between 10 September and 12 November 1809. But why does he not show up in a register of deaths? Are there possibly other sources to investigate? Irritated, I turned the pages of the archive lists and my attention fell on a volume called "Report Journal, 1809-1812." Could this be a hit?

		76 <sup>te</sup> <u>Genstapelkapitel</u>									
Compapel	17.	Johan Deke	1	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1
Löre Dite	18.	Sacant för kronanvärk	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1
Artillerist	19.	Iwan Zachareff	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1	1
	20.	Sacant för kronanvärk	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1	1
	21.	Sven Dahlberg	"	"	"	"	"	"	1	"	1
	22.	Iwan Kusnesoff	"	"	"	"	"	"	1	"	1
	23.	Jens Thelning	1	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	1

*Substans Laxaretet  
Gårstades*

*Com: i full*

*Com: Carlsten*

Fig. 2. From "Bröd Munstrings Rulla" for Göta Artillery Regiment and Captain Insenstjerna's Company created 10 September 1809. See text for details.

The Report Journal turned out to be a type of log book, where the officer of the guard noted more or less important events each day, e.g., farmer's permission, fights, drunkenness, etc. The notes start 13 October and are rather difficult to read. The following entry from 30 October (see figure 3) was deciphered:

According to a received notification from the army hospital, the following artillery soldiers have died during the month of September in Göteborg in the 2nd Major's Company: No. 73 Lindström the 28th; Capt. Insenstjerna's No. 19 Sakaroff the 29th; Capt. Blomcreutz Company, No. 70 Olgren the 24th; and at Brinkeberg Place, Capt. Bäckman's Company, No. 75 Hansson the 5th of the last September.

Bingo! It obviously pays to glance a little in other directions, and to try the more uncommon sources. Perhaps this is where the answers are, rather than in the large series of church books and estate inventories, where practically all genealogists search due to tradition.

Ivan Zacharoff survived one war, became a prisoner of war, and later came to serve the country he previously fought against. Was he a deserter or merely a poor, simple soldier who had to grab any chance for survival? And he was not the only one. Apparently there were quite a few Russian Soldiers in Sweden after the war of 1809. It would be interesting to find out what happened to all of them and even more fascinating to locate their records in the Russian War Archives.

