



CARL LINNAEUS PREPARES FOR WAR

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The year 2007 is the Tercentenary of the birth of Carl Linnaeus. With Linnaeus as a hub, this presentation will give a picture on health care, medical services and drug provision for the Swedish fleet towards the middle of the 18th century. The investigation refers to documents from the period 1739-1741, when Linnaeus was appointed medical doctor at the Admiralty. They tell us about his selection of drugs provided for the Galley fleet in the upcoming war with Russia. Inspection protocols, discovered in the Military archives, made up upon the return of the fleet have been scrutinized, as have a few prescriptions of the hand of Linnaeus.

Sweden had encountered almost two decades of peace when in the summer of 1741 one is ready for war again, a war against the Tsar of Russia. Theodor Ankarcrona is in charge of the Galley fleet harboured in Stockholm and Linnaeus, responsible for the sick bay of the Admiralty has to supply the fleet with an appropriate selection of drugs. The list comprises 132 different remedies at amounts sufficient to treat 6000 men.

The fleet sets out in the early summer of 1741. The Swedish forces are thoroughly defeated at Villmanstrand. The fleet that should have been in action south of Fredrikshamn is not engaged at all. Nevertheless, drugs are needed as a majority of the crews fall sick from rotten food, stale water and flues.

When the Galley fleet returns to Stockholm, visitations take place. The medical chests of the vessels are inspected by a three mans committee and remaining supplies of Materia Medica are accounted for. By comparing the inspection protocols with the supply list originally made up by Linnaeus one gets a pretty good picture of the provisions and how they were dealt with, as well as of applicable treatments.