

УДК 008(94)

Charity Support of Russia from the Russian Ethnic Community in Australia at the end of the 20th – beginning of the 21st centuries

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Received 17.01.2016, received in revised form 26.03.2016, accepted 20.05.2016

The article gives an overview of some charity organizations of Russian Australians that provide support to Russian children, disabled people, the elderly. Love for people and the desire to do good continually, inspire all members of the community. They continue the traditions of Russian art patrons and do not separate themselves from their former homeland and its culture. Our former countrymen are concerned not only for the elderly Russian Australians. Living far away from Russia, they show compassion for their former countrymen helping Russian orphans, disabled people, the elderly, orphanages, hospitals, Orthodox churches, etc.

Keywords: charity, charity organizations, help, orphans, disabled people, the elderly, compassion.

DOI: 10.17516/1997-1370-2016-9-6-1451-1457.

Research area: culture studies.

Empathy, compassion, helping people in trouble or elderly people who are not able to take care of themselves, caring for the good of others has always been typical for the Russian people. The hearts of our compatriots who are far from home for whatever reason, on the fifth continent, have not hardened. The evidence of this is a large number of charities and simply caring former countrymen in Australia, which put the care of the people above all, creating favourable conditions for the lives of other people they do not even know.

The organization “Brotherhood Orthodox Work” was established in late 1950s in Melbourne in accordance with the idea of Archbishop John of

Shanghai. Its aim was to help Russian Orthodox people in the USSR. The organization supported those people by sending spiritual literature, which was prohibited at that time, small icons, baptismal crosses, etc. Once a year, fundraising by means of plate collection is organized in all churches for the benefit of “Brotherhood Orthodox Work”. The Brotherhood has existed for many years and has provided missionary, and sometimes financial aid to Russian Orthodox people in Russia (Obshchestvennye i blagotvoritel'nye organizatsii, 2013).

In 1955, the St John of Kronstadt – Russian Welfare Society was founded. The main result of its work have become hundreds of people taken

care of and fed all over the world. Currently, the Society has been taking care of lonely and elderly people. Its other important object of attention is the preservation of the Russian language and culture (Vasil'eva, 2014). In August 2015, the Society celebrated its 60th anniversary.

In 1971, with the blessing of Archbishop Theodosius, the Ladies' Committee of Help to the Diocese was established. The purpose of this Committee was to raise funds to help those in need. Over the years, the Committee has assisted the monasteries in the Holy Land, in Europe and Australia, in particular, in the construction of the Convent in Kentlyn, Australia.

In 1974, the charity foundation named after Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna was founded. The aim of the organization is to raise money for Russian monasteries and shelters. From 1974 to 2010, the Foundation has raised over 300, 000 US dollars (Obshchestvennye i blagotvoritel'nye organizatsii, 2013).

The first task of the "Society of Care about the Russian Rookwood Cemetery" founded in 1980 by its chairman Claudia Nikolaevna Yakunina-Mutsenko, was to lay new asphalt roads around the Russian sector. All works including the construction of the cross were completed in 1984. In 1987, in honour of the 1000th anniversary of the Christianization of Russia, the Society decided to build a chapel above the cross, the monument in the "new" Russian section. The period of completing the construction of the chapel coincided with the restoration of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow. Russian community of Australia supported the call of the Russian ethnic representatives in Victoria that supervised the fundraising.

In 1991, Claudia N. Yakunina-Mutsenko registered a new organization "Russian-Australian Association of Support" to provide humanitarian aid to orphanages and hospitals in Russia. The first container with food

and things was sent to Vladivostok. Over the next few years, several containers with humanitarian aid were sent to Russia. In 1993, Claudia Nikolaevna not only accompanied the container to the Far East, but also organized a charity ball "Sydney-Vladivostok" that impressed everyone due to its scope. Funds raised at the ball, were distributed among the families in need in Vladivostok. In 1994, the Association of Support began to provide financial support to Russian children by giving them the opportunity to study in Australian schools. In March 1995, the Association raised funds to send containers of medical equipment to Vladivostok and Sakhalin.

During one of her trips to Vladivostok for the distribution of humanitarian aid, Claudia Nikolaevna visited the Regional Psycho-Neurological Orphanage No.1, which was in poor condition. Returning to Sydney, she appealed for help to the Russian community in Victoria and to the Association. In 2004, the Orphanage's repair began, and in 2008 it was completed. New doors, windows, floors, ceilings and radiators were installed inside the building, the rooms were renovated. New comfortable beds for the children were purchased. The repair costs amounted to 104,500 US dollars and 105,848 US dollars were raised as a whole.

The next big project of the Russian-Australian Association of Support was the repair and improvement of the children's hospital: Orphanage No.2 "Regional Children Psychiatric Hospital". The building of the hospital was renovated, equipment, furniture, new plumbing and television sets were purchased. The work was completed by the end of 2009.

On May 2, 2012, C.N. Yakunina-Mutsenko officially announced the completion of two years of her supervision of charity organizations: "Society of Care about the Russian Rookwood Cemetery" and "Russian-Australian Association

of Support” (Obshchestvennye i blagotvoritel'nye organizatsii, 2013).

In 1980s, Russian-Slavic Cultural Society was founded in Brisbane, the head of which was Nina Innokentievna Cherepanova for 15 years. Being originally from Transbaikalia, she raised funds and sent containers with aid to Chita, sent money to the victims of the Chernobyl disaster and the earthquake in Armenia, brought wheelchairs for soldiers who participated in the Afghanistan War, syringes and drugs for hospitals in Russia.

In 1990, Charity Foundation for the victims of the Chernobyl disaster was founded as the affiliate of the Russian House in Melbourne, which had existed for more than 13 years, collecting humanitarian aid across Australia. Depending on the financial capacity, one or two forty-foot containers were sent to Russia each year. Parcels were paid for by the Foundation from the funds received from various civil society organizations, raised during Victoria business conferences, etc. In January 2003, a container with products for orphanages and elderly homes was sent. The cargo was intended for orphans and elderly people of Tula, Ivanovo, Sergiyev Posad and Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius. The container's cost was 135,908.25 US dollars (Derevtsova, 2003; Kovalenko, 2003).

Within the period of 12 years, 200 containers had been sent to Russia. However, in recent years, the number of containers sent by the organization has decreased. This is due to the termination of the contract with the Baltic Shipping Company, which was transporting the humanitarian aid of the Peace Fund to Russia for free. Unfortunately, it was found out that for many years the Soviet government did not pay customs and port fees for the stay of the vessels in Australia. Two vessels were arrested by the Port Authority. One of them had been sold to pay for the previous debts repayment and the representative office

had closed. As a result, Russian vessels ceased to enter the port of Melbourne and other Australian ports. The Foundation had to pay 6,000 US dollars for a 40-foot container (with a discount). If the Foundation had unlimited, or just extra funds, it could have sent 3-5 containers per year, while there were enough things that had been always replenished.

Once a year, they brought children for rehabilitation. The number of children depended on the circumstances, while the Foundation brought as many children as possible. The Foundation did not pay for the tickets, the cost of the children's return tickets was covered by charitable non-governmental organizations in Russia. Consequently, the number of children was dependent on these organizations. The Foundation insisted that those children should be from poor families, those who were either actually irradiated in the infected areas, or the children of parents affected by radiation in Chernobyl, or in another nuclear accident in the former Soviet Union. In order to bring orphans to Australia, it was necessary to find sponsors in Russia and Australia, while for children from low-income families the costs were covered by the companies their parents worked for.

The membership fee of the Foundation amounted to only 20 US dollars per year, but it helped to improve the lives of many children who needed support (Derevtsova, 2003).

In 1991 in Sydney, a committee “Australia's Help to Chernobyl” was founded with the purpose to assist children and families affected by radioactive contamination. The Committee raised funds for the purchase of food, vitamins and clothing for orphans, assisted the hospitals that lacked medical drugs, surgical instruments and equipment, as well as paid for the visits and treatment of children from Russia to Australia. (Obshchestvennye i blagotvoritel'nye organizatsii, 2013)

The members of the Committee called the first container of humanitarian aid "Christmas". Along with a wide range of products, medications and clothing, the children also received toys. The cost of the cargo was estimated at 870 thousand dollars, the destination was the Urals. Humanitarian aid in the container was delivered in February 1991 to Chelyabinsk Orphanage No. 5, Children's Department of the Burn Care Centre and Children's Hematology Department of the Regional Hospital, as well as to Kunashir District Hospital and children's homes in Yekaterinburg, Satka and Zlatoust.

The committee "Australia's Help to Chernobyl" directly connected with hospitals, orphanages and nurseries of radioactively contaminated areas, during its existence had sent two containers to St. Petersburg, two containers to Belarus, two containers to Chelyabinsk and one container for earthquake victims in Neftegorsk.

The first group of children arrived in Australia for rehabilitation (they had treatment courses in their own country) in August 1991 on the call of the Australian Committee of Aid to Chernobyl for six weeks. These were children from Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine. In August 1992, eleven children aged between six and eleven years old from Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg and Zlatoust arrived in Australia accompanied by the doctor. They stayed in Australia until the end of September. Only one visit in 1992 cost 12,827.65 US dollars for the Committee. In 1993, children from Gomel oblast, Belarus, came to Australia accompanied by three supervisors. In 1994, in September - October, Australia again hosted 20 children from Belarus. In 1995, children from Chelyabinsk, Miass, Yekaterinburg and Semipalatinsk came for rehabilitation, 15 children in total. In 1996, children from Russia were not able to come to Sydney due to the termination of flights of Aeroflot company. In 1997, the Russian Club

in Sydney held a grand concert in favour of 10 children that came to Australia from Yekaterinburg. Many Australian families and organizations volunteered for participation in the rehabilitation of children.

The Committee, as well as other Russian charitable organizations in Australia, had received its funds from lotteries, charity concerts, tea tables, membership fees and donations from various organizations. The aim of the Committee was not only to make an effort to improve children's health, but also to keep in children's minds the memories of the people's kindness in the country, which hosted them so cordially. They took home with them the knowledge of a new culture, customs, people of a different origin, they had a desire to learn a new language. After all, the younger generation of Russia is a piece that brings home the warmth of the people who live away from Russia, but remain Russian forever (Shapovalova, 1998).

In October 2002, 11 children from Chelyabinsk stayed in Sydney. On concessional terms the children visited such Sydney attractions as the aquarium, the zoological garden, Koala Park, etc. For the whole month they were under the constant attention of Australian families in the homes of which they were able to relax and improve their health. The programme was possible to implement due to the help that the Committee "Australia's Help to Chernobyl" received from charitable Australians (Ivacheva, 2002).

In 1996, SBS TV reported that children were dying in the hospital in the city of Omsk because they had nothing to be treated with. No drugs. With the blessing and according to the Decree No.12-2 issued on December 8, 1998, of Archbishop Hilarion, the Archbishop of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand, the charitable foundation named after St. Nicholas was founded by the group of Russian Australians, who immediately responded to the trouble.

During the work of the Foundation, tens of thousands of dollars were sent to Russian Siberia. (Shreider, 2003).

The project "Hope" began operating in 1994, after the family of Vera Derevtsova helped a girl from the Far East of Russia.

The medical base of the project is the Mater Hospital, the largest medical and training facility in the southern hemisphere. The material base of the project was created with the assistance of the Russian community and all people of goodwill in Australia, regardless of their origin.

On April 18, 1999 in Brisbane, a delegation from the Russian Federation Ministry of Health was invited by the project "Hope" to negotiate with Mater Misericordiae Children's Hospital, which resulted in signing of the agreement on cooperation on April 21. The agreement was the completion of the five-year collaborative project "Hope" and the Russian Association "Hope" aimed at helping children suffering from neuromuscular diseases.

During the period of its functioning, the Committee invited numerous delegations of doctors and officials from Russia, arranging their acquaintance with the methods of treatment and support of patients with neurological diseases, which were a novelty for Russian specialists. For a long period of time there was an exchange programme with Russian colleagues in Moscow. They had got to know the methods of surgical treatment of neurological diseases. Australian teams of surgeons and physiotherapists came to Moscow to carry out training and operate together with Russian colleagues. Within the framework of this programme, Russian doctors have operated on more than 300 adults and children, which, of course, has radically changed the lives of the patients (Koshkova, 1999; Kuchina, 2001; Derevtsova, 2003, Russkaia pravoslavnaia...2000).

In September 2004, the Foundation "Victims of Beslan Appeal" which received donation of

more than 20 thousand dollars was established than 20 thousand dollars (Churkin, 2005).

In Australia a non-profit charitable organization "Help Journal Australia" is also operating. The organization helps children and young adults from Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union, suffering from cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis and other chronic and serious diseases to raise funds for treatment, purchase of medications and wheelchairs for these patients, because often the help of the benefactors is the only way for them to start moving and improve their condition and simply survive.

The organization started its work recently in 2012, but has already achieved certain results. On April 28, 2013, a charity run in support of the Cerebral Palsy Alliance was held in Sydney.

The Australian public also know well the fruitful and tireless work of the Russian Committee for assistance to needy compatriots established by the efforts of church leaders in Australia, which operates under the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church. On August 31, 2014, the Committee held a Spring Ball dedicated to raising funds for compatriots in need (Edinenie, 2014).

In 1999, an Australian company "Orthodox Work – Sydney" was established (a charity that helps sick orphan children).

The organization "Orthodox Work – Sydney" for 10 years has been holding charity concerts "Golden Heart", as well organizing other charity concerts, where the professionals and amateurs of all ages take part. In June 2013, one of these concerts took place with an auction of cakes and a lottery, the money from which were sent for the noble deeds of organization: assistance to orphans in Russia. On March 23 and April 13, 2014 in the musical Camelot Cafe in Sydney the charity concerts were held. As a result, more than six thousand dollars were sent

for the treatment of Liuba Chaban in Odessa suffering from leukemia. Information support was provided by the newspapers “Unification”, “Horizon” and Russian Radio Australia. The concert “Golden Heart” for the benefit of orphans in Russia took place in May 2014 for 13 times, and as always, the hall was crowded. The Society Chairman Irina Konstantinova told the editor of “Unification” that the concert, including the tea table, allows to collect a few thousand dollars, to be sent to Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Last year, the amount of the organization’s aid amounted to more than 20 thousand dollars. The Society gets help not so much from Sydney residents, but the Russian citizens of Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. They send things and money, which

are then sent to sick children and low-income families (Edinenie, 2014).

Love for people and the desire to do good continually, inspire all members of the society. Empathy, compassion and charity have never been alien to the heart of the Russian people. All this is a part of the traditions of Russian Australians, which goes back to hundreds of years ago. Russian people, wherever they may live, are always ready to help those who need help, always respond to the call to provide support, particularly to the poor, sick and disadvantaged children. Kindness and compassion are the distinctive features of the Russian soul. Thus, our former compatriots living in Australia, having brought with them the old Russian traditions of philanthropy, continue to multiply them nowadays.

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Благотворительная помощь России от русскоязычной общины Австралии в конце XX – начале XXI века

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В статье дается обзор некоторых благотворительных организаций русских австралийцев, оказывавших и оказывающих помощь российским детям, инвалидам, пожилым людям. Любовь к людям и стремление постоянно делать добро вдохновляет всех членов общества. Они продолжают традиции русских меценатов и не отделяют себя от своей бывшей Родины и ее культуры. Наши бывшие соотечественники заботятся не только о пожилых русских австралийцах. Живя вдалеке от России, они проявляют сострадание к своим бывшим землякам, оказывая помощь российским сиротам, инвалидам, пожилым людям, детским домам, больницам, православным приходам и т.д.

Ключевые слова: благотворительность, благотворительные организации, соотечественники, помощь, дети-сироты, инвалиды, пожилые люди, милосердие.

Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.
