The ruined fantasies of intelligent minds: ‘the Nobel’s town’ and neglected Swedish heritage in St. Petersburg

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Abstract
The present article aims at giving a brief introduction to the Nobel family’s living in Russia and to the generally unknown architectural heritage in St. Petersburg that Nobels had left before fleeing the country after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and that still exists in a rather neglected state. This heritage resembles and symbolises many Nobel’s technological and social inventions that were complexly applied to the overall improvement of the average peoples’ everyday life through the development of the new type of housing for the workers – the so-called Nobel’s worker’s town.
I touch upon the themes of creativity and intelligence, fantasies and materialisation of utopian dreams that were defining features of several generations of the Nobels through the case of the family’s Russian period. To think on where fantasies of the seemingly pragmatic entrepreneurs and serious scientists had brought them and how their heritage had become a subject to oblivion on one side and an object of universal appreciation on the other, I trace the destiny of Nobels’ architectural heritage formed in St. Petersburg by Swedish and German architects. This urban heritage is a part of the creative outcome of intellectual work ongoing within the family and a bitter symbol of efforts to materialise their “fantasy” of developing the system of “social responsibility”, which, as they believed, could sustain and revitalise another fantasy - the successful existence of the so-called “fair capitalism.”

Keywords: Nobel family, St Petersburg, Russia, architectural heritage, Swedish heritage.