



A biography of Richard Zeiner-Henriksen (1878-1965), Commercial Attaché for Norway in Russia

Richard Zeiner-Henriksen was born on 7 September 1878 in Christiania, the name of present-day Oslo. He was born as the middle brother of three. After he completed his business school education he left his hometown at the age of twenty to travel to Germany and seek employment. For a year, he worked seven days a week without pay at an office for import of corn from Russia, which at the time was the granary of Europe. When he was about to return to Norway, his German boss suggested that he learn Russian and travel to Russia, where there were great job opportunities at the time, just as in America. Following this suggestion, Zeiner-Henriksen travelled to Russia in 1900 and lodged with a Russian family in Moscow to learn Russian. He stated himself that it was a very hard process with a language so different from his own – with a different alphabet (Cyrillic) and complicated grammar. After a year he had, however, become quite proficient and through this his social circles grew in size and his possibilities for getting into contact with both other nations and the Russians increased as well. Especially one person became very important for Zeiner-Henriksen – the Norwegian Director Olsen. He was the director of the foreign branch of the large Russian oil company Brødrene Nobel (The Nobel Brothers) and married to the sister of the Russian director of the same company. This company had been established in 1879 by a Swede by the name of Emanuel Nobel – a relative to the famous Alfred Nobel. Emanuel Nobel had come to Russia and founded a mechanical workshop that over time grew significantly in size. On a journey to the Caucasus and Persia around 1890, one of the founder's sons in the company discovered almost by accident a place called Baku by the Caspian Sea and became aware of the large deposits of oil in the area's ground. He understood that through an improvement of the unreliable and primitive extraction methods there was a vast potential present for creating a true industrial bonanza. Upon his return to Saint Petersburg the Nobel Brothers expanded the business by starting their own company branch in the Baku area, and with great enthusiasm and a significant amount of capital the company managed to secure a number of concessions and large plots of land, after which they expanded the company further to include oil extraction and refinement at a larger scale.

Via Director Olsen, Zeiner-Henriksen was given an offer in 1901 of a position in the Nobel Brothers company, more precisely in the section for heavy crude oil. Here he worked for two years until he in 1903 was offered the position as intendant and head of personnel at the oil company in Baku. It would be three dramatic years in an area influenced by a significant degree of development and under primitive conditions with sweltering heat, great distances, infighting among locals, riots and serious oil fires. By this time Zeiner-Henriksen was 25 years old.

In 1906, he left Baku and returned to Saint Petersburg, where his old acquaintance Director Olsen offered him a position as secretary at the new Norwegian General Consulate that had just been opened in Saint Petersburg. Director Olsen had after 1905 been appointed consul general and wanted to have Zeiner-Henriksen with him. The position, however, turned out to last for only a brief time, since Olsen only a year later travelled back to Norway. In Oslo, he built the large villa that today functions as the American ambassador's residency.

Through his work at the General Consulate, Zeiner-Henriksen came into contact with a series of Norwegian entrepreneurs and businessmen who were interested in the large Russian market and not least the Russian timber. As his job as a secretary at the General Consulate ended, Zeiner-Henriksen instead established his own company for import and export. During the next couple of years, the company grew, and after ten years, in 1917, it had grown to a respectable size with branches in both Oslo and New York.



*Richard Zeiner-Henriksen (1878-1965)
in 1919, when he was 41 years old and a
few years before he went to Russia.*

But then the fateful event occurred that would alter completely not only Zeiner-Henriksen's life, but also the lives and destinies of millions and millions of people all over the world from 1917 and up until today – The Russian Revolution!

Zeiner-Henriksen was in Saint Petersburg in October and personally experienced the Bolsheviks seizing of the power with the storming of the Winter Palace, the deposition and arrest of the Tsar and his family and the lawless conditions with murder, robbery and destruction that followed. His own apartment was ransacked and much of his property stolen, but the worst part was that his entire company, its assets and supply storage, was seized without compensation. He writes himself about this: "Personally, I received the first hard blow when I a few days after the surprise attack on the Siberian Bank presented a check of 100,000 Rubbles, received from the Admiralty in Archangelsk, who settled the accounts for my deliveries during the summer. In the lobby area, I was met by a very unpleasant woman, who simply declined my request for the amount and with a shrug of her shoulder announced that the bank had been nationalized. At first I thought of sending the check to Archangelsk with one of my employees, but when it turned out that the National Bank had also been nationalized I had to bite the bullet and put the piece of paper in my pocket, hoping for a solution to the matter when the conditions had stabilized as the public assumed it would. After this tragedy, I asked the legation at our embassy to seal off my supply storage just in case, but it did not take long before these seals were removed and replaced with the Communist Authorities' confiscation order. ---- Sustaining a livelihood was not a possibility at this point. I cleared out my apartment and moved the remaining items from my home over to the office, where I for a short period kept things going through a collaboration with a few remaining employees, whom I tried to keep afloat until past New Years. I was myself more or less unemployed and decided to go home to celebrate Christmas with my family in my own country. I left my possessions with one of the consulate members and kept myself informed about the development, and in this way I left – completely cleaned out– my promising career. "

And it was not small change that Zeiner-Henriksen had lost. In 1918, a public Norwegian commission was established with the task of registering all Norwegian claims as a consequence of the Soviet Authorities' confiscation of Norwegian funds, assets and properties in Russia. The commission was called "Centralkontoret for norske interesser i Russland" (the Central Office of Norwegian Interests in Russia) As a result of these registrations, a declaration was agreed upon between "The Royal Norwegian Government and the Government of the Socialist Soviet Republics will uphold to each other, their subjects and their companies' demands, both in terms of property and rights, and in terms of the obligations that the two states' current and former governments are responsible for." Despite the clear statements in this declaration, the Norwegian authorities never did anything to follow up on the demands that the Norwegian investors had towards the Soviet Union regarding losses they had suffered in connection with the Soviet expropriation during and after the revolution. At the Central Office of Norwegian Interests in Russia Zeiner-Henriksen registered personal assets corresponding to 433,308 Norwegian kroner, which today would be the equivalent of more than 10 million kroner. The combined Norwegian demands amounted to more than 250 million kroner, which today would be approximately 10 billion kroner. The loss for everyone was devastating!

In the chaotic and dangerous period following the revolution there were many of Zeiner-Henriksen's Russian friends and connections, aristocrats and business leaders that were persecuted, arrested, abducted or killed. As a foreigner, Zeiner-Henriksen had the opportunity to help some of these people, first and foremost with food, money and clothes, and he continued with this over many years when someone needed his help. He was even capable of helping individual families, who were being persecuted, to get out of the Soviet Union with great danger for their lives. Among those he was able to help was one of the directors for the nationalized Siberian Bank and the director's family. In secret, they were brought across the border to Finland and onwards on sleds across the frozen Åland sea before they boarded a Swedish naval ship, which was anchored at the edge of the ice with the purpose of evacuating Swedes from Finland, which was in the midst of a communist civil war. Zeiner-Henriksen secured shelter for several others in Oslo as immigrants fleeing a dangerous destiny in the Soviet Union.

Back home in Norway Zeiner-Henriksen married Erica Wang from Gjøvik in 1919, and during the next three years they primarily lived abroad. During Lenin's final two years, from 1922 to 1924, the Soviet authorities implemented a new, more liberal economic policy, which once more made it possible for private companies to do business in Russia, even from abroad. Several Norwegian parties banded together in a company named "Petrograd Trading and Shipping Co.", which would then negotiate with the Soviet Authorities regarding import and export. With his broad knowledge of Russia and his fluent Russian Zeiner-Henriksen became associated with this company, and in 1922 he moved with his family to Saint Petersburg, which had now been renamed Leningrad. Here Zeiner-Henriksen and his family found an apartment, which they would live in for the next five years. He described the place in the following way: "One of the members of the Soltikov Nobel family was now, since the old princess had recently died, able to make her private apartment available in the impressive mansion at the Rumjanzeff square between the Field of Mars and the Troitsky bridge across the Neva river. The British embassy was situated in one part of the mansion towards the Neva river, while the third floor was dominated by former magnificent ballrooms – now empty and vacant. The private quarters consisted of three rooms on the second floor, each consisting of 60-80 square meters, a large kitchen and servant rooms, all fully furnished and equipped with wonderful marble fireplaces. The Museum Foundation had confiscated some of the very valuable antiques, but these were supposed to stay in the apartment for the time being before they could be moved to the museum at some later point. Included in the tenant agreement were two of the old princess' female servants, who were to live in their own apartment. The old watchman Andrei was to assist us with what we needed in terms of heating and similar issues, and his wife Natalia, a first-rate cook, wanted to take over the position as housekeeper, and finally our dear Marie – who was of a Swedish background – could take over the position as our chambermaid and nanny in the years ahead. The house was number 1 on the Millionnaya street. In this way, we became a kind of meeting place for family and friends, who often visited us and through their kind nature gave us much joy throughout the years up until 1927, where we had to return to our own country."

This period from 1922 until 1927 was a busy period for Zeiner-Henriksen and it was also here that his interest in Russian icons was awoken in earnest. After the Communist Revolution, religious life in Russia was declared unwanted. "Religion is opium for the people," said the Communists. The result of this was that the Orthodox Church was persecuted in many different ways and hundreds of thousands of priests, abbots and bishops were persecuted, arrested, banished and killed in numerous Soviet Gulags or "work camps". Churches and monasteries were destroyed or used for storage, horse stables, workshops etc. and out of approx. 250,000 orthodox churches in the enormous Russian area there was only about 15,000 left after the Russian Revolution. One of the results was of course that many of the hundreds of thousands of icons that had adorned the walls of these churches and monasteries and weren't destroyed were instead sold on the market, which had never happened before. This was when Zeiner-Henriksen had the great fortune that he through his interest in the churchly art came into contact with some of the few specialists on the subject of Russian icons and had their expertise and help to find the icons which were of qualitative significance. Strangely enough the scientific study and assessment of the icons was of a fairly new date. Throughout the centuries, it had been the religious significance of the icons that had mattered. They were neither museum objects nor goods to be sold. But as the interest grew in the artistic value of these icons a field of study developed in Russia concerning the conditions of the art form, both in terms of their preservation, their meaning, their locations and how to determine the age of the icons.

The Russian icons were not painted by identifiable artists, as was also the case in the rest of Europe. They were painted by monks or inspired artists who were not to be identified but should instead be considered a medium or instrument to depict the churchly truths that survived through the artistic tradition. In orthodox art, it is therefore not a question of depicting objects as the artist sees them but rather as a manifestation of the divine vision, far beyond human and individual comprehension.

Because of this the icons are never signed, and it is only from notes in the church records or other religious sources that one can attempt to find out who painted a specific icon. In this way, we do know from church records in the monastery at Zagorsk that it was the greatest and most important of all

the Russian icon painters – Andrei Rublev – (1370 – approx. 1430) who during the period between 1411 and 1422 painted the completely unique and now world-famous icon called “The Trinity”, which depicts the three archangels from the old testament, faithfully inspired by his first abed, Saint Sergius of Radonezh.

It was during this new stay in Russia between 1922 and 1931 that Zeiner-Henriksen had the opportunity to establish his collection of important icons. A precondition for Zeiner-Henriksen’s possibilities for creating his collection was firstly that it was only at this point that a good enough expertise regarding the restoration of the 400-500 year old icons had been developed. The icons were in general very dark because of hundreds of years of deposits by smoke from candles, dust, oil, and new layers of paint or “touch-ups” of the colour. And it was only when several such layers had been removed that you could truly get a grasp of the icons’ original appearance and quality. The restoration was done by a conservationist who poured alcohol over a small area and then lit it. When the flame had burned for a while and softened a layer of dirt, it was carefully scraped away with a palette knife or similar. It was only a small area and layer that could be treated at a time in this way, so it was both arduous, difficult and extensive work to have these restorations made. Here Zeiner-Henriksen says what it was like for him to first lay his eyes on an icon where the restoration process had been completed on a part of the image: “It was as if looking through a window into a new world filled with light and colour – as if looking into the soul of the image.” From then on Zeiner-Henriksen’s passion for the old icons had truly been awoken! On several of the icons, Zeiner-Henriksen left, for the sake of curiosity, a small area in the bottom of the image, which shows how dark the icon had been before its restoration.

Zeiner-Henriksen had early on come into contact with some of the most well-known Russian specialists regarding Russian icons – Professor Anissimov and Doctor Karovin. These experts on the art form often came to Zeiner-Henriksen with old icons, which they thought would be of interest to a collector like him, so that the icons in this way could be saved and restored. As soon as Zeiner-Henriksen had bought the icons they were presented to a public museum committee, who after their own examination provided an export license which was valid for three months. Because of this deadline, the restoration of the icons had to commence immediately so that they could be finished within the three-month period. It was often a race against the clock.

From 1924, with Lenin’s death and Stalin solidifying his powerbase, the economic conditions were once more restricted to a point that it became impossible to run a private company. Zeiner-Henriksen was appointed to the position as Norwegian commercial attaché and could, as a diplomat, continue to help Norwegian companies with both the exports and imports that they were interested in. But the deals themselves were done through the Soviet Trade Delegation in Oslo. For the next two years Zeiner-Henriksen and his family continued to live in Millionnaya no. 1 in Saint Petersburg, but in 1927 the conditions in the Soviet Union became so increasingly difficult and dangerous that Zeiner-Henriksen sent his family – wife and two sons – back to Norway.

He stayed on by himself for four more years until 1931, before he was finally deported. With Stalin’s so-called Moscow trials against his real or imagined enemies and the substantial persecutions and deportations that followed, the Soviet Authorities no longer wanted foreigners present and especially deported people who had knowledge of the conditions before the revolution and who spoke the Russian language. Zeiner-Henriksen describes what happened to him personally: “In the fall of 1931, I was ready to leave for Norway, when I received a phone call from one the Scandinavian colony’s female commissioners about a visit, since she had some beautiful items she wanted to sell. I tried to say I did not have time for a meeting, but finally I had to promise to agree on a visit. It turned out to be some large gems, which I immediately declined to buy. At the very same moment an officer from the GPU (The Secret Police) appeared and demanded to search the premises. I presented my diplomatic passport and wanted to leave, but the officer in question refused to let me do so. During the investigation, some garments appeared, which she did not want to discuss further, but I explained that they had been given to her by my wife and myself. This was very worrisome and I was accused of smuggling, which had to be reported to our legation at the embassy, which I did not mind doing. This ended the charade, but only after the officer in question offered me to keep the gems. I naturally declined this kind offer stating that these kinds of gems did not interest us at all, and thinking to myself that this was clearly

an attempt to lure me into a honey trap. Before we parted ways, he asked me to look him up the same evening at Hotel Europa, so we could discuss the issue further. I agreed to this and showed up at the designated hour. In the hall, I was met by a sinister person – presumably the officer's bodyguard – and was taken to the inner room. Without discussing much else than what had happened to me during the revolution and that I had been appointed commercial attaché to promote business relations between Norway and the Soviet Union, he asked me the following question: "You are of course aware of what it is our institution is interested in?" His assignment was to get a written statement from me about my assignment in the Soviet Union, and he had no doubt about us coming to an agreement upon for instance that I would accept a position as the institution's agent within the diplomatic corps and through this work reclaim the losses I had suffered during the revolution. Without hesitation, I agree to give him the statement and wrote it down personally at his desk. It was a fairly simple statement on why I was in Russia and that I hoped I could continue my work with the Soviet Union. This ended our meeting, but before we parted ways I demanded to have his word that the next day, when I would pass the border on my way home there would be no problems for me whatsoever. We shook hands on this and the promise was upheld in all regards, but just in case I had booked a compartment together with the new Swedish minister and everything went smooth as silk. During the evening as I left the officer at Hotel Europa I was worried that his sinister henchman would follow me and perhaps get rid of me, but I was spared this fate. --- Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs was now aware that I had to avoid any further stays in the Soviet Union and assigned me to correspondence with the respective private connections instead. In that sense, my "diplomat career" was over as the connection to the East went sour. ---- The episode with the GPU in Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) was presumably an attempt to get rid of the "Old Russian", since I managed to get around the denial of a residence permit in 1926 by being appointed commercial attaché with a diplomatic passport. And I could therefore cross out my old line of work through 30 years and bid goodbye to all my dear, old friends and Russia!"

In connection with the donation of the large icon to the Nidaros Cathedral on its 900th anniversary in 1930, Zeiner-Henriksen writes himself: "At an early point in my enthusiasm for icons, my friends presented me with an icon of an unusual size of 1 by 1.3 meters, the so-called "The Veil of Veronica". Over the centuries, it had become so darkened with dust, smoke from the candles and old lacquer that I could barely make out the contours of the face of Christ. Before I decided to purchase this monumental piece of work from a large iconostasis, I demanded to have it restored, so that I could have an idea of what its original appearance had been in the 1500s. This was probably a lengthy assignment for the conservator, but I had a deadline of three months before the export license would expire and I therefore agreed with him that he would commence on the work immediately. He only, however, managed to clean half of the icon given the short time frame, but the result was so overwhelmingly beautiful that I decided to purchase the icon and brought it home with me. I would then later bring it with me as an import item and have it restored completely in Norway.

I remember that I from the very first moment thought of the Nidaros Cathedral as a fitting place for such an impressive piece of art. I later presented this idea to Director Thiis from the National Gallery, who whole-heartedly supported the proposition. The ceremony in connection with the Nidaros Cathedral's 900 anniversary in 1930 was approaching, and I therefore decided to present the gift on this anniversary to our church community most respected representative. The godly image was, however, a product of a Greek Orthodox church community, wherefore the College of Bishops in Trondheim insisted on having the icon presented to them, before a final decision could be made on the matter. I brought the icon with me up to Trondheim and received the entire collegium's approval regarding my request to personally deliver the gift on the anniversary. This became one of the greatest experiences of my life, since the Archbishop called me forth in front of a crowd of thousands from the Evangelical Church's dignitaries from the old as well as the new world. The peculiar aspect of the whole ceremony was that I could present a shrine from Academy in Novgorod, which was Saint Olav's homeland from where he came to Norway and fell in the battle of Stiklestad – 900 years before the "The Almighty Inspired Christly Treasure" from his homeland became part of his grave in the wonderful mausoleum of the Nidaros Cathedral."

After returning to Norway in 1931, Zeiner-Henriksen once more opened his own business and with his family he moved into the family's property at Uranienborgveien 1 – a richly decorated farm house from 1875 on the corner of Uranienborgveien and Parkveien towards the Palace Park, behind the Royal Palace. Here there were large rooms and almost 4 meters to the ceiling, so there was plenty of space for Zeiner-Henriksen's large collection, which now consisted of nearly 70 icons.

Over the years, Zeiner-Henriksen had sold several icons to the National Gallery and to Bergen's Art Museum. A few special icons had also been sold to private people in Norge. An international known, Russian icon specialist, Professor L. Ouspensky, who lived in Paris, described these sales in a letter dated Paris, April 1961: "Some reflections over the collections of icons in Norway. When travelling in Norway, one has the pleasure to find that this country has some of the richest collections of icons. In this connection, there are two museums that are particularly blessed: One in Bergen, which has fourteen icons, of which eight are very beautiful. The other is the museum in Oslo, which has an even more important and homogenous collection of twenty-four icons. Few museums in Western Europe can boast of such collections. When these two Norwegian museums have this advantage, it is mainly due to Mr Zeiner-Henriksen. Since he lived in Russia and was well acquainted with the great specialist Anissimov, Zeiner-Henriksen has learned to appreciate the icon art at a time when few knew anything at all about icons. He succeeded in establishing an important collection and retained it under often difficult circumstances. He left several paintings to the museums in Oslo and Bergen. The latter museum's seven most beautiful pictures are due to him, the museum in Oslo can credit about twenty to Zeiner-Henriksen. This means that his country's national treasure and the importance of these museums have been seriously improved due to Zeiner-Henriksen."

The large International Boy Scout Movement has Saint George as its patron saint. Saint George's battle with the dragon is a favourite theme for Russian icons and Zeiner-Henriksen had just such an icon in his collection. He therefore had the idea of a banner made for the Norwegian Boy Scout Movement with a copy of the Saint Georg, depicted on his icon, and through his business relations he collected a number of sponsors who could cover the expenses of the banner. Over the course of a year it was made in a size of approximately 1 x 1 meter, where the icon's Saint Georg, sitting on a white horse, was embroidered on a white silk cloth. The banner with a pole cost 9,000 Norwegian kroner in total – a fortune at the time. The banner was solemnly handed over by Zeiner-Henriksen himself during a large gathering at Tullinløkka park in Oslo in 1935, where the leader of the Boy Scouts of Norway, Møller-Gasmann, in front of a couple of thousands of boy scouts in uniform, accepted the banner, which was then carried at the front of a large parade up through Karl Johans gate. Unfortunately, the banner was seized by the Germans during the WW II occupation and vanished without a trace.

In the spring of 1944, Zeiner-Henriksen's oldest son was arrested and sent to the Dachau concentration camp, where he died. Since there was a risk that Zeiner-Henriksen's icons might be expropriated by the GESTAPO, they were hidden away at his brother Asker's place until the war was over. When the icons in the spring of 1945 were brought back to Zeiner-Henriksen's home and put on display once more, he began work on a project to publicize a book about icons, where his own collection could serve as illustrations for this little known and old art form. His icons had throughout the 1920s and 1930s been exhibited several times both in Norway and in Sweden, but here they had only reached a limited number of people. With a book one could reach many more. The most well-known Norwegian publishing house for art books was Dreyers Forlag. It was therefore natural that Zeiner-Henriksen presented his ideas to the company's CEO Butenschøn, who was immediately on board with the project. In 1946, a dinner was therefore held at Zeiner-Henriksen's home to discuss the possibilities of such a book on icons. Present were, besides Zeiner-Henriksen, CEO for Dreyers Forlag Butenschøn, National Archivist Harry Fett, Director Johan Langaard for the National Gallery, Director Dahl for Christiania Kjemigrafiske Anstalt, the painter Henrik Sørensen and Professor Helge Kjellin from Uppsala in Sverige. It was here decided that Dreyers Forlag would publish the book with depictions of Zeiner-Henriksen's icons and other collections from all over Norway and Sweden, and that Professor Kjellin, as the most respected Scandinavian source on Russian icons, would write the words. This scientific work took

many years, but in the fall of 1956 the book "RUSSISKE IKONER" (Russian Icons) was finally published. Dreyers Forlag presented the book in the following way:

"Here we present a work without equal within Nordic art literature about the Russian icons, a genre within art that today is captivating both art lovers and art historians world-wide. Thanks to the Norwegian collector Commercial Attaché R. Zeiner-Henriksen, who lived in Russia during the years following the Russian Revolution, it has been possible to secure a representative selection of masterful works that otherwise would presumably have been lost for good. With this rich material and a large number of other icons in Norwegian ownership as a starting point, the leading authority on icon research, Professor Helge Kjelling in Uppsala, has written a history of the icon painting and a detailed description of each of the individual works, which we dare say is ground-breaking. But it is first and foremost the 52 wonderful colour reproductions that make this publication a unique introduction to a world of beauty, which is still unknown to many. The icon painting includes a religious element that is inextricably bound to the artistic expression. The images that are often modest in size, glow with a concentrated richness in colour, which fascinates as much through the religious devotion they emanate as their pure artistic qualities. --- The author (Kjelling) states: "It is an enigmatic and peculiar world of beauty that this special art form reveals – the inner life, the pious devotion to God and the soul's exalted world of ideas. It is an art form that through its striving for a timeless depiction of the divine has a message to us contemporary people as well, not least to the artists of today, also to the abstract ones, and to those who seek the concrete reality outside of things."

"Russiske ikoner" is a book in a large format, 24 cm x 31,5 cm, 332 pages, split into three main sections: The first part is a history of the development of the icon, the other is a section of charts with 52 pages of reproductions in colour of the icons with descriptive text and the third part provides notes on the iconography and the history of the subject matters depicted, illustrated with more than 200 images in black and white. In the last part, the author deals with a large number of icons and provides references to the different schools and artists' work methods throughout the different periods."

At an age of 72, Zeiner-Henriksen had moved from his apartment behind the Royal Palace to a villa that he had built outside of Oslo at an age of 72. Here he had even more room for his collection. It was needed, since 6 large icons from Russia were added during the 1950s. Around the time of Zeiner-Henriksen's deportation from the Soviet Union in 1931, he had bought six large icons from an iconostasis. These were being restored at the time of his departure and he could therefore not bring them with him to Norway with such short notice, as he became unwanted in the Soviet Union and had to leave the country for good. When they had been completely restored, the icons were therefore delivered to the Norwegian delegation, where they were put on display. That was the best way of storing them. Since Zeiner-Henriksen could no longer return to the Soviet Union after he had been deported, the icons simply stayed in their place at the delegation in hopes of finding a solution later on. Then the Second World War came to Norway in 1940, and when the Soviet Union and Germany in 1940 agreed on a non-aggression pact, Norway, as a warring nation against Germany, lost its friendly standing with the Soviet Union and the Norwegian delegation had to close and the Norwegian diplomats had to leave the country. Sweden, who were neutral during WW II, were not impacted by this change in the political landscape and therefore, in agreement with Norway, took care of everything that was located at the closed Norwegian delegation, including the six icons. These were hung at the Swedish delegation, where they stayed for the next 15 years, before they were exported and refund to their owner Zeiner-Henriksen. He could therefore easily use more space in his house, since the last six icons all measured 120 cm x 56 cm.

In 1958, Zeiner-Henriksen turned 80, and on his birthday on the 8 September, he had the pleasure and honour of being awarded the King's Medal of Merit in gold for his contribution of the collection of Russian icons in the Norwegian museums. The medal was given to him by the National Gallery's director, Sigurd Willoch.

Since Zeiner-Henriksen was now an elderly man, he felt that it was too great a responsibility to have so many icons in his home, and several interested parties began to approach him in regard to selling

parts of the collection, which was now close to 75 pieces. When the Louvre Museum in Paris asked to buy two of the icons of their own choice, he agreed to sell these to the museum. For him it was also a sign of international recognition that a world-famous museum such as the Louvre, with their high standards of quality, found his artwork so valuable. Zeiner-Henriksen also receive requests from abroad to sell icons from his collection, from Christie's and Sotheby's in London and particularly from a company called "A la vieille Russie" in Paris and New York, who specialized in the selling of valuable Russian Icons, paintings and artwork, who worked for the House of Fabergé company in Saint Petersburg and many others. Throughout the next ten years, a close collaboration between the owners of "A la vieille Russie" and Zeiner-Henriksen was established and a large part of his collection was sold through this company, to the pleasure and satisfaction for him, both economically and as a recognition of his foresight, collector's passion and understanding of an art form.

Zeiner-Henriksen died peacefully in his home on 17 February 1965 – 86 years old and surrounded by his beloved icons.