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British Public Opinion and the Rupture of Anglo-Swedish Relations in 1717

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Drums pealed and trumpets sounded. Before the gate of St. James's and at four other places in the city of London, it was announced "that the High and Mighty Prince George, Elector of Brunswick-Lunenburg, is now, by the Death of our Late Sovereign, of Happy Memory, become our Only Lawful and Rightful Liege Lord, George, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain."¹ The crowds in the city and in other parts of England appeared happy at the news and were relieved that the Protestant succession had been accomplished without bloodshed. At York, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu listened to the proclamation and saw the event welcomed with "ringing of bells, bonfires, and illuminations; the mob crying, Liberty and property! and Long live King George!"² On that day of August 1, 1714, a new era of English history began which was to have vast constitutional and political results at home and marked diplomatic repercussions abroad.

George I as an elector of the Empire shared the expansionist ideas of petty eighteenth-century German princes. For some time he had toyed with the possibility of adding the Swedish possessions of Bremen and Verden to his electoral domains. Charles XII of Sweden, engaged in the Great Northern War, a titanic struggle which since 1700 had pitted him

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¹ Abel Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain* (38 vols., London, 1711-1740), VIII (1714), 116.

² Lady Mary W. Montagu to E. W. Montagu, 1714, printed in *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, edited by Lord Wharncliffe (3 vols., London, 1837), I, 209.

against Denmark, Poland-Saxony, and Russia, was in no position to oppose the elector made king, especially if the latter could employ British gold and ships to pull his Hanoverian chestnuts out of Europe's Baltic fires. The chief stumbling block for George was the Act of Settlement, the very thing to which he owed his accession to the English throne. That piece of legislation specifically and categorically stated "that in case the Crown and imperial dignity of this realm shall hereafter come to any person not being a native of this kingdom of England, this nation be not obliged to engage in any war for the defence of any dominions or territories which do not belong to the Crown of England without the consent of Parliament."³ It would, therefore, be necessary for George to win his English subjects over to an anti-Swedish policy if the greed of the elector-king were to be satiated. The attitudes of the English towards Sweden and her enemies would have to be carefully studied by the Hanoverian advisers who had accompanied George to England.

It was true that the British of all classes had little love for the Swedes. In fact their feelings towards their Scandinavian neighbors often bordered on contempt. Insular self-satisfaction and provincialism, however, characterized the eighteenth-century Englishman in his relationship to all foreigners,⁴ and there were many in Britain who were ever ready to remind the German king that he had not sprung from English soil. On the other hand, the inhabitants of George's new kingdom could not be classed as isolationists, for many watched events on the continent closely, and gloried in the fact that William and Anne had been arbiters of Europe. A goodly sprinkling of Whig leaders was interested in reviving the favored diplomatic position that England had enjoyed during the two previous reigns. Others wanted to go to war with France.⁵ It was not until 1721 when the bursting of the South Sea Bubble floated Robert Walpole into power, that the "little Englanders" among the Whigs gained control of Britain's foreign policy.

³ Extract of an Act, 12 & 13 W. III, cap. 2, sec. III, in *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of William III, 1 April 1700-8 March, 1702*, edited by Edward Bateson (London, 1937), 481.

⁴ Basil Williams, *The Whig Supremacy, 1714-1760* (Oxford, 1939), 1.

⁵ Wolfgang Michael, *England Under George I* (2 vols., London, 1936, 1939), *Beginnings of the Hanoverian Dynasty*, I, 249.

The ideas and the sentiments of the English regarding northern and northeastern Europe were fixed and definite, but as is so often the case, they were based upon a relatively small amount of information. Two books on Denmark and Sweden crystallized English thought regarding those two countries for almost the entire eighteenth century. Written in 1694 by former envoys to Denmark and Sweden, the *Account of Denmark* by Robert, Lord Molesworth, and the *Account of Sweden* by John Robinson wielded a tremendous influence. The former publication went through three editions in an equal number of months.⁶ It was published anonymously, the author fearing the wrath of the future Queen Anne, whose husband George was a Danish prince. Neither the work by Molesworth nor the one by Robinson presented a completely accurate picture, but as is so often true in history, what people erroneously think to be true, is at a given time apt to be more influential upon the subsequent course of events than is the truth itself.

Danish and Swedish absolutism received a severe castigation at the hands of the British press. Molesworth, Robinson, and other writers on northern European affairs failed to realize that the tyranny of the crown was easier for the majority of people to bear than was the oppressive yoke of the nobility.⁷ For example William Benson in *A Letter to Sir J--- B---* (1711) considered Count Johann Patkul, one of the worst exponents of a theory held by the nobles in Swedish Livonia that they should be completely unfettered in their dealing with the peasantry, as "*Brave Patkul* (that noble *foreign Whig*, who took up Arms for the Liberty of his Country)."⁸ The arbitrary taxes levied by the crowns of Denmark and Sweden received their share of censure, and the impoverishment of the nobility was deplored. Governmental interference and the policies of the monarchs were considered to be the sole causes of Scandinavian poverty rather than the long series of exhaustive wars, which had carried in their wake the usual aftermath of hard times. The result was that the men in England who were wont to shout "Liberty and

⁶ [John Robinson], *An Account of Sweden* (London, 1694), i.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 102, 116; [Robert, Lord Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark as it was in the Year 1692* (London, 1694), xlvi-xlix; [William Benson], *A Letter to Sir J--- B---* (London, 1711), 18.

⁸ [Benson], *A Letter to Sir J--- B---*, 21.

Property" were appalled when they heard about conditions in Denmark and Sweden.

Whig sensibilities were further infuriated because the representative bodies in Scandinavia, the Estates, no longer had a dominant voice in the government.⁹ Gentry in both Denmark and Sweden had lost wealth, land, prestige, and political power. Thus the very foundations of the Whig state in England had been eradicated in northern Europe. No wonder that the indignant Molesworth warned his countrymen that "Slavery, like a sickly Constitution, grows in time so habitual that it seems No burden nor Disease; it creates a kind of Laziness and idle Despondency, which puts Men beyond hopes and fears."¹⁰

The preponderance of political strength residing in the church¹¹ and in the army¹² was also anathema to English "authorities" on northern Europe. The Erastian Lutheran church had considerable political influence in both Denmark and Sweden, a state of affairs which must have been quite distasteful to many English low-churchmen and to almost all dissenters. The Scandinavian practice of quartering soldiers upon the population was contrary to the Petition of Right and the Declaration of Right, documents dear to the heart of Whig England. Moreover, the espousal of the idea of divine right by Scandinavian clergymen did little to raise them in the esteem of British pamphleteers.

Robinson has left many descriptions of the Swedish people, some of which still exist in part as generalizations among the English-speaking peoples when they discuss Sweden and the Swedes. For example, the Swedish people had vigorous constitutions, which accounted for their excellency as soldiers, and fitted them more for camp life than for intellectual pursuits. The cold climate of the North froze the minds of the Swedish people in such a manner that they were seldom found "endued with any eminent share of Vivacity or Pregnancy of Wit." They were "Grave even to Formality; Sober, more out of necessity, than Principles of temperance."¹³ These carica-

⁹ [Robinson], *An Account of Sueden*, 116; [Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark*, xlvi-xlvii.

¹⁰ [Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark*, 75.

¹¹ [Robinson], *An Account of Sueden*, 111-112; [Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark*, 258-259; [Benson], *A Letter to Sir J--- B----*, 4.

¹² [Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark*, 123, 125; [Robinson], *An Account of Sueden*, 126ff.

¹³ [Robinson], *An Account of Sueden*, 45-52.

tures of Robinson are the forerunners of the "dumb" and "stolid" Swedes of today. As for the women, they were "accounted more eminent for Chastity before Marriage, than Fidelity after."¹⁴ Generalizations as to the promiscuity of Swedish womanhood are also in current use.

The saving grace of Sweden so far as the British were concerned was the bias maintained by her monarch towards France and the French.¹⁵ It was the mutual distrust of Louis XIV and Versailles that was to arrange England on the side of Sweden in the early stages of the Great Northern War. Conversely, there was much anti-Danish sentiment in England at the turn of the eighteenth century because the Danish court was pro-French and her people aped French clothing, customs, and manners.¹⁶ Notwithstanding that some British pamphleteers¹⁷ striving for the favor of Prince George, poured out apologies for the Danish system, the majority of Englishmen accepted the verdicts of Molesworth and ignored the fact that a diplomat whose mission to Denmark had failed ignominiously¹⁸ might be colored in his opinions concerning that country.

Poland in contrast to Denmark and Sweden had too much liberty for the ordinary English gentry and citizenry to stomach. Daniel Defoe, who before the outbreak of the Great Northern War was an admirer of the Polish king, Augustus, blamed the Polish Diet for that country's many ills.¹⁹ An anonymous pamphlet entitled *The Ancient and Present State of Poland* (1697) rightly asserted that the nobles had a life and death power over the inhabitants who were treated like slaves.²⁰ Jordocus Crull, while attempting

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁶ [Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark*, xlvi-xlvii.

¹⁷ [Jordocus Crull], *Denmark Vindicated* (London, 1694); [William King], *Animadversions on a Pretended Account of Denmark* (London, 1694); and the anonymous *Déffense du Danemark* (Cologne, 1696), are some of the pamphlets written in answer to that of Molesworth.

¹⁸ Thomas Seccombe, "Molesworth, Robert, first Viscount," *Dictionary of National Biography* (62 vols., New York, 1885-1900), XXXVIII (1894), 121-123. There are some errors in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which states that he terminated his mission in 1694 rather than in 1692. See James F. Chance (ed.), *British Diplomatic Instructions, 1689-1789 . . . Denmark*, in *Royal Historical Society Publications* (Camden Third Series, London, 1900-), XXXVI (1926), 1.

¹⁹ [Daniel Defoe], *The Dyet of Poland. A Satyr* (London, 1705), 36.

²⁰ Anonymous, *The Ancient and present State of Poland, giving a short but accurate Account of the Scituation in that Country* (London, 1697), 3-4.

to vindicate Denmark, drew examples from Polish affairs to place Danish absolutism in a better light and charged that the *liberum veto* was the curse of Poland. According to Crull, "too much liberty is frequently the Spring of fatal Diseases in the Government."²¹

Russia, usually referred to by British writers as Muscovy, was as great an enigma to western Europe in the eighteenth century as it is in the twentieth. Muscovite restrictions on travel to and from Russia gave Englishmen little opportunity to gain information about the Muscovites and their customs.²² It was not until 1692 after the advent of Peter the Great to the throne that the "iron curtain" was lifted. Daniel Defoe, that pamphleteer par-excellence, claimed that the freeing of Russia's intellectual shackles was one of Peter's greatest accomplishments.²³

The "self-styled author of the *True-Born English Man*" gloried that Russia had built an excellent fleet through the efforts of English and Dutch artisans, and he paid St. Petersburg one of the finest tributes that could be made any city by an eighteenth-century Englishman; namely, that it began "to look like our Portsmouth."²⁴ Defoe, however, sounded a note of warning, which more and more Englishmen took to heart as the Great Northern War progressed and as Russian victories made the balance of power in the North more one-sided. As Defoe cautioned, the vast and incredible advancement of the Russians "may serve to remind us, how we once taught the French to build ships, till they are grown able to teach us how to use them."²⁵

The dread that Russia might supplant Sweden and become the single Baltic power spread in England. It was definitely noticeable after the Russian victory over the Swedes at Poltava in 1709. It achieved major proportions after 1716. The brutality of the Russian soldiers in occupied territory and the arbitrary government of Peter did little to allay British fears and sensibilities. The fact that Peter in

²¹ [Crull], *Denmark Vindicated*, 6.

²² [Molesworth], *An Account of Denmark*, xxxv-xxxvi; [Daniel Defoe], *An Impartial History of the Life and Actions of Peter Alexowitz* (London, 1723), 6.

²³ [Defoe], *Peter Alexowitz*, 3.

²⁴ [Daniel Defoe], *The Consolidator. or, Memoirs of Sundry Transactions from the World in the Moon* (London, 1705), 2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

1699 had talked about peace while preparing for a sneak attack upon Sweden did not enhance Russian diplomacy in the eyes of the English, and according to Defoe rendered "the Character of those who had made those Protestations sufficiently contemptible to all the Christian Princes of *Europe*."²⁶

George, then about to ally his Hanoverian electorate with Sweden's enemies, faced a country whose proclivities in general were on the opposite side from his own. Moreover, many Englishmen were uneasy about the acquisition by Hanover of Bremen and Verden.²⁷ Such misgivings were augmented by Tory pamphleteers. Count Karl Gyllenborg, the Swedish minister at London, who was no mean penman himself, more than once reminded George by diplomatic note and through the press that Hanover's attempts to embroil England with Sweden were contrary to the Act of Settlement. A rumor persisted in England that George would use Bremen and Verden as a base to embark German troops for England.²⁸ Thus Britons would be deprived of their hard-won liberties. Government spokesmen on the other hand argued that trade advantages would accrue to England if the elector gained the desired Swedish possessions.

By appealing to English mercantile sentiments, it was possible for the Hanoverians to drum up British aid for George's Baltic policy. So far as Scandinavia was concerned, there was unanimity of opinion in England on matters of trade and commerce. For years British trade pamphleteers had pointed out that Britain's Baltic trade violated most mercantilist principles, principles dear to the hearts of eighteenth century English traders.²⁹ Sweden's monopolies in iron, copper, and naval stores were especially obnoxious to English

²⁶ [Daniel Defoe], *The History of the Wars of his Present Majesty Charles XII, King of Sweden* (London, 1715), 55.

²⁷ Croissy Instructions, *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France depuis les traités de Westphalie jusqu'à la révolution française: Suède* (25 vols., 1884-1929), II (1885), 270; Count Karl Gyllenborg to Count Erik Sparre, June 11, 1715, *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens Historia* (40 vols., Stockholm, 1831-1898), X (1882), 334.

²⁸ Gyllenborg to Sparre, June 11, 1715, *Handlingar*, X, 334.

²⁹ The number of pamphlets on trade is large. Sir Charles d'Avenant, William Wood, Sir Josiah Child, Joshua Gee, Sir William Temple, Onslow Burrish, and Daniel Defoe are some of the writers on Baltic trade and commerce. For a fuller account of trade pamphleteers see John J. Murray, "Baltic Commerce and Power Politics," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* (San Marino, California, 1937-), VI (1942-1943), 293-312.

economists, not only because they were at odds with the theory of mercantilism, but also because of the high-handed manner in which they were enforced.³⁰ Swedish commercial restrictions upset the balance of trade, and in English eyes sinned against the bullionist doctrines of the time. By reserving the carrying trade of the monopolized products to themselves, Swedish merchants committed heresy against the power objectives of British mercantilism.

Sweden's trading tactics then presented George with an excellent opening wedge, which could be employed to force a breach between England and Sweden. English commercial grievances were such that they might be manipulated to heighten English animosity towards Sweden. Throughout the war of the Spanish Succession, it had been increasingly difficult for the Admiralty to procure naval stores, dependent as it was for supply upon the Baltic, along whose shores the Great Northern War raged. Sudden changes in policy by Swedish diplomatists and economists often placed the Royal navy in a precarious position.³¹ Attempts had been made through bounties to foster naval store manufacturing in the American colonies, but to no avail.³² The needs of the fleet for the first half of the eighteenth century continued to be filled by Baltic forest products, needs which became greater as the wars in northern and western Europe continued and after Russian arms captured Swedish possessions in Finland and in the Baltic provinces.

With the loss of those lands to Peter's troops, Charles XII resolved that no one should profit from his own misfortunes, and subsequently forbade all neutral nations from trading with Swedish possessions in Russian hands. Swedish privateers and naval units straightway began to enforce their royal master's commands, and the English fleet's growing demands for naval stores thus became more arduous to realize. Losses to English shipping in the Baltic mounted, and one of

³⁰ Eli Heckscher, *Svenskt Arbete och Liv fran mideltiden till nutid-en* (Stockholm, 1941), 130.

³¹ Robert Jackson's memoir on the Swedish Tar Company, December 29, 1709, State Papers, Sweden, Public Record Office, 95/18. A copy of this memoir edited by John J. Murray may be found in the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, X (1946-1947), 419-428.

³² Various letters of the Council of Trade and Plantations, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies, 1706-1708, June*, edited by Cecil Headham (London, 1916); and *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, American and West Indies, 1710-June, 1711*, edited by Cecil Headham (London, 1924).

the last acts of Anne's government had been to send a small naval force to Baltic waters to protect British merchantmen. The action proved impotent, but was to serve as a precedent for larger squadrons, which under the guise of convoying the merchant fleet might be diverted to aid Hanoverian politics.³³

George, who had an excellent grasp of European diplomacy, immediately saw the possibilities offered to his designs by the trade squabbling. Before he had even arrived in England, he instructed one Schreiber, his electoral representative in Stockholm, to inform the Swedish government that he had "already receiv'd very great Complaints of the violences done his Subjects trading in the Baltic" and that he would "not be able to refuse when he comes over to his Kingdoms to grant his Subjects the assistance they may desire to obtain satisfaction for the Losses they have unjustly suffer'd." The British resident minister at Stockholm, Robert Jackson, was ordered to make out a bill for damages inflicted upon English merchants. The charges amounted to approximately £65,449.³⁴ Charles's countermove was to issue a newer and stricter edict of privateers.³⁵ By so doing, he played into the hands of Hanover.

George as elector declared war on Sweden in October, 1715.³⁶ As king of England, he remained neutral in the northern conflict, for England and Sweden had a mutual defensive treaty that was to be in force until 1718. A British squadron earlier in 1715 had gone to the Baltic under the command of Admiral Sir John Norris. The merchantmen had been convoyed to their destined ports and some reprisals had been made on Swedish shipping. To the Admiral's surprise, the presence of the naval force and British diplomatic pressure

³³ Various letters of Robert Jackson, State Papers, Sweden, Public Record Office, 95/18. See also the instructions for Captain Archibald Hamilton, commander of the squadron, July 22, 1714, printed in *British Diplomatic Instructions, 1689-1727 . . . Sweden*, edited by James F. Chance, in Royal Historical Society *Publications*, Camden Third Series, XXXII (1922), 67-69.

³⁴ Jackson to Townshend, September 25, 1714, and Jackson to the Swedish chancery, January 14, 1715, State Papers, Sweden, Public Record Office, 95/21.

³⁵ Swedish ordinance of privateers, February 8, 1715, in Guillaume Lamberty, *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIII siècle, contenant les négociations, traites, résolutions et autres documens authentiques concernant les affaires d'état* (14 vols., Hague, 1727-1740), IX (1731), 250-251.

³⁶ War manifesto of George I, October 15, 1715, printed in *The Historical Register* (23 vols., London, 1717-[1739]), I, 15-18.

had not maneuvered Sweden into any overt acts of aggression.³⁷ Thus no pretext was given the fleet to engage the Swedes openly, for the main duty of the squadron, as far as the British ministry was concerned, was the protection of commerce.

As a result, George's allies complained about Norris's inactivity, because George had intimated to them that they could count upon English naval support for their military ventures. The king of England's hands were tied, however, by his ministers and by his parliament. The best that he could do was to arrange it so that a small detachment of English naval vessels late in 1715 aided in the siege of Stralsund. That act did not satisfy his allies who had rightfully expected more substantial aid. It also exposed him to criticism at home from the Tories, who in foreign policy wanted him to observe the Act of Settlement in spirit as well as in word.

The next year, 1716, Hanover's allies, Denmark and Russia, planned a joint assault upon Scania, the southern province of the Swedish homeland. English naval assistance was prerequisite if the attack were to be successful. Once more it was necessary for the Baltic squadron to play a role wider in scope than the protection of commerce.³⁸ Once more attempts were made to prepare the British people for the action. Charles XII was charged with harboring Jacobites and with other violations of the existing treaty. British ministers and Norris sent the Swedish king almost insulting letters, which may have been intended to lash him into taking retaliatory measures. Overt acts would have supplied fuel for the government press and in part would have justified George's policies. Charles, however, kept his head and refused to be stampeded into a war with England. Norris, therefore, was again forced to operate in a hostile fashion against Sweden without a suitable pretext.³⁹ As a result, many people at home viewed his actions with misgivings and began to question the validity of England's Baltic diplomacy.

³⁷ Various letters of Sir John Norris, Letter Books of Sir John Norris, British Museum, Add. Mss. 28,144; and letters to captains of the squadron, Order Book of Sir John Norris, British Museum, Add. Mss. 28,135.

³⁸ For details on England and the Scania invasion plans see John J. Murray, "Scania and the End of the Northern Alliance," *The Journal of Modern History* (Chicago, 1929-), XVI (1944), 81-92.

³⁹ Various letters of Jackson, State Papers, Sweden, Public Record Office, 95/22.

The arguments of the opposition were well summed up by a pamphlet written by Gyllenborg, which was run in the *Post Boy*. In it, the Swedish minister flatly stated that England was bound by treaty to help Sweden in the Great Northern War and not to aid her enemies. In so far as the seizure of ships was concerned, Gyllenborg reminded the English that they had followed a similar procedure during the war of the Spanish Succession, when all Swedish ships bound for France had been stopped by the Royal navy. Charles had not yet received any compensation for those losses, yet England was demanding immediate reparation for the damages that she had suffered in the Baltic. Moreover, it was pointed out—and with some justification—that many ships that had been stopped en route to Russia had been destined for service in the navy of Peter the Great. The somewhat valid charges that Charles was harboring Jacobites was passed off as a myth by the Swedish diplomat, who aptly informed the money-conscious British that the cost of the Baltic squadron far exceeded any shipping losses that the English had suffered. Gyllenborg rightfully asserted that the main reason for the fleet being sent to the Baltic was to force Charles to accede to the illegal seizure by Hanover of Bremen and Verden.⁴⁰

The Whig press girded itself to refute Gyllenborg's arguments. Many publications friendly to the Hanoverians made much of the fact that Charles had not returned a favorable reply to the various diplomatic representations of England, and, therefore, George had no other choice but to allow Norris to participate in the planned operation against Scania. Abel Boyer in the *Political State of Great Britain* erroneously claimed that Charles by way of answer to the English overtures had threatened to confiscate all the possessions of British subjects residing in Sweden if Norris joined in the action against Scania. The English journalist stated that: "This Menace was justly resented by the Crown of *Great-Britain*, and thereupon Orders were sent to Sir *John Norris* to joyn the Confederated Fleet with the best part of his Squadron and to order the rest to convoy the *English Mer-*

⁴⁰ Count Karl Gyllenborg, "An English Merchant's Remarks upon a Scandalous Jacobite Paper, publish'd the 19th of July last in the *Post-Boy* under the Name of a Memorial presented to the Chancery of Sweden, by the Resident of Great Britain," printed in Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain*, XII (1716), 305-320. Also printed in French in Lamberty, *Memoires*, IX, 667-677.

chantships to the several Ports they were bound to."⁴¹ Thus was a case constructed by the court.

The sudden decision of Peter in September, 1716, to call off the Scania invasion led to considerable speculation by the English pamphleteers and newsletter writers. Daniel Defoe in the October issue of *Mercurius Politicus* correctly analyzed the military situation and claimed that Swedish armed strength and the lateness of the season may have deterred Peter from consummating Russo-Dano plans against Sweden.⁴² Yet, it was not until the next year that he appeared to be cognizant of a widening rift between George and Peter.⁴³

Boyer, on the other hand, seemed to have a better grasp of the entire Baltic problem. He informed his readers by way of explanation of the changing events that George had no desire to see Charles and Sweden crushed completely, for such an occurrence would upset the balance of power in the North.⁴⁴ Up to September, 1716, Boyer had not mentioned Bremen and Verden in the *Political State*, although he had made some vague references about George gaining from Sweden "advantages to all his Dominions." The September and October issues, however, devoted considerable space to the prevailing arguments in England, which lauded or condemned the king's Baltic policy.

The quick change of the Baltic situation resulting from the postponement of the attack upon Scania also confused certain ministers in the government. A split in the ministry began to develop between those men who would go all the way with George in his foreign policy and those who were of the opinion that British interests must not be sacrificed for those of Hanover. Foremost among those in the pro-Hanoverian camp were General James Stanhope and Charles Spencer, Earl of Sunderland. Opposing them were Charles, Viscount Townshend and Sir Robert Walpole, who had at one time espoused and fostered George's diplomacy but were now wavering in their allegiance to the policies fostered by the king on behalf of Hanover to the detriment of England.

The hotheads in the Hanoverian group wanted orders sent immediately to Norris commanding him to attack Rus-

⁴¹ Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain*, XII, 205.

⁴² [Daniel Defoe], *Mercurius Politicus* (London, 1716-1720), October, 1716, p. 383.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, March, 1717, p. 190.

⁴⁴ Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain*, XII, 305.

sian troop galleys as they were returning to Mecklenburg. Thus would Russian power in the Baltic be eliminated in one fell swoop. Townshend, who was the secretary of state, opposed such a move because he feared that it would ruin Britain's source of naval stores and thereby eventually expose England to attack. Thus by late 1716, a swing away from an anti-Swedish policy was discernible in some high places. In other quarters, there was dissatisfaction with the entire Baltic policy of the sovereign.

On September 23, 1716, Townshend wrote Stanhope a letter which was intended only for the General. In it the secretary of state expressed the hope that the Norris squadron would come back to England as soon as possible, and that the king would engage Russia neither actively nor openly. Furthermore, Townshend charged:

This Northern war has been managed so stupidly, that it will be our ruin. Is it possible for the king to carry it on with Denmark only on his side, and Muscovite troops against him, supposing even the intended project should succeed? Would it not therefore be right for the king to think immediately how to make his peace with Sweden even tho' he should be obliged to make some sacrifice in obtaining it.⁴⁵

To make matters worse for the Hanoverians, opposition groups as usual were clustering around the regent, the future George II. The Prince of Wales was of the opinion that a conflict with Russia would be most unfortunate for England. He was especially concerned about the situation because British spies had uncovered information that Sweden was negotiating with the English Jacobites. If as intelligence showed, Charles XII was contemplating an invasion of England to restore James Edward Stuart, the Pretender to the British throne, all English naval units should be near home and not off fishing in the troubled waters of the Baltic. As any action on behalf of the Pretender would be accompanied by domestic revolt and rioting, it was absolutely necessary to the security of the House of Brunswick that no outside help for the Jacobites be allowed to land in Scotland or England.⁴⁶

The grumblers in the government were not to have their way. Townshend's letter to the untrustworthy Stanhope who

⁴⁵ Townshend to Stanhope, September 23, 1716, printed in *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole*, edited by William Coxe (3 vols., London, 1798), II, 86.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 87-89.

abused confidences more than once was forwarded to the king. By the end of the year Townshend was eased out of his office of secretary of state and replaced by the scheming Stanhope. Walpole's position was precarious. Notwithstanding, the two cousins had at their command a considerable following in the parliament. If a sufficient number of Tories sided with them when it came to voting supplies, it would be difficult for George to obtain funds to outfit and to maintain a Baltic squadron, without which the elector of Hanover would amount to little in Baltic diplomatic circles. Drastic measures were, therefore, necessary so the government might rewin British public opinion to favor the sending of fleet units to the Baltic in 1717. The movements of the Swedish minister Gyllenborg supplied George with the propaganda ammunition he badly needed.

As British intelligence had discovered, Gyllenborg in London and Baron Georg von Görtz, Charles XII's minister at large on the continent, had been negotiating with the adherents of the Pretender. The gist of the conversations revolved around a substantial loan that was to be given to Sweden by the Jacobites in return for an invasion of England by Charles which was to restore the Stuarts to the English throne. Whether the Swedes were interested only in obtaining money by fair means or foul, or whether they did actually contemplate the use of force to unseat George is a moot point that has been argued pro and con by Swedish and English historians. There can be no doubt that Charles had ample cause to act against George, but he lacked the military resources required for such a large scale undertaking as the invasion of England via Scotland. On the other hand, money to buy ships was a *sine qua non* for the Swedes, who if they could appear strong militarily in 1717, stood an excellent chance to win favorable peace terms by playing one of their enemies off against the other.⁴⁷

As stated above, the British government had known for some time of the negotiation and had intercepted many of Gyllenborg's letters. On January 29, 1717, contrary to international law, Gyllenborg was arrested and his papers seized. George and his favorites dramatically began a campaign to show the English to what dangers they were threatened by

⁴⁷ For details on this plot see John J. Murray, "Sweden and the Jacobites," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, VIII (1944-1945), 259-276.

Sweden and to urge the sending of a squadron to the Baltic to prevent England from becoming a battlefield.

Gyllenborg's intercepted letters were arranged into a "white book" and were published and distributed at government expense.⁴⁸ In addition the letters in one form or another were printed in the news magazines along with appropriate comments. Verses referring to Charles as "the refuse of mankind" were hawked in London streets. A memoir by Jackson, which had listed British maritime losses, and an earlier petition of the Muscovy company, which had asked for a redress of commercial grievances, were run in the more important publications of the time. Boyer devoted approximately two-thirds of the February number of the *Political State of Great Britain* to northern affairs. Stanhope took the letters of the Swedish ministers before the Commons and read them in an attempt to whip the house into fever heat over Swedish perfidy. As Defoe so aptly summed up the situation in the *Mercurius Politicus*: "Things growing ripe now for a Breach with Sweden, every thing was done both publick and private, that might provoke the People against the King of Sweden; As first, a Book was published, Entitled, *The Narrative of the Life and Death of John Rhindolt, Count Patkul . . .*"⁴⁹

The item to which Defoe gave first place among many publications designed to arouse anti-Swedish sentiment appears to be one of his own works, an atrocity story written almost in the modern manner. With great and gory details, Defoe, described the last moments of Patkul, whom Charles had executed for treason.⁵⁰ Two years earlier under the guise of being a Scotsman in Swedish service, Defoe had written a biography of the Swedish ruler. In it he had pointed out that the Patkul execution had been bungled and consequently was rather harsh even by eighteenth century standards.⁵¹ In the

⁴⁸ *Letters which passed between Count Gyllenborg and Barons Gortz, Sparre, and others*, published by authority (London, 1717). The original dispatches seized by the English may be found in *Intercepted Letters (Sweden) 1716-1717*, State Papers Foreign, Confidential, S.P. 107/13 which have been microfilmed and are in the possession of Indiana University Library, Bloomington, Indiana.

⁴⁹ [Defoe], *Mercurius Politicus*, April, 1717, p. 255.

⁵⁰ [Daniel Defoe], *A Short Narrative of the Life and Death of John Rhinholdt Count Patkul* (London, 1717), *passim*. This work is commonly attributed to Molesworth, but the style, treatment of subject matter, and use of material appear to belong to Defoe. A good argument, however, can be advanced for the Molesworth thesis.

⁵¹ [Defoe], *The History of the Wars of his Present Majesty Charles XII, King of Sweden*, 275-276.

narrative of Patkul, Defoe quoted himself and cinched his argument with the fact that even one of Charles's own soldiers had to admit the brutality of his king. The British pamphleteer pictured Charles as a "ravenous Beast of Prey," and warned his countrymen what they might expect if and when Charles ever attempted to conquer England.⁵²

The story of Patkul was not the only offering that Defoe left on the altar of Mars. In *The Plot Discovered* (1717) and in *What if the Swedes should Come* (1717), the venom of his pen rendered George yeoman service. The former contribution is especially violent in its language. It was an answer to a defense of Gyllenborg entitled *Fair Payment no Spunge*, a pamphlet which Defoe branded as "vile" and jesuitical.⁵³ Defoe in *The Plot Discovered* labeled the Swedes as knaves, fools, men as stupid as the barren rocks, libelers, and coxcombs. Gyllenborg so far as Defoe was concerned was a "reptile" and a "loose lying" one. It would almost seem that the author of Robinson Crusoe had an aversion to fish, for the Swedish people were referred to as Codsheads and their ruler as a "Stockfish Lunatick."⁵⁴

Constantly did the *Mercurius Politicus* defend the government from the many who attacked its Baltic policy. There were some in England, however, who thought that George was making a great fuss over little. Defoe for his part refused to argue the feasibility of the plot, claiming that his was the work of the historian, the true presentation of the facts. He was positive that a plot had existed and that an invasion of England had been actually contemplated by Charles XII.⁵⁵ After all, "what Action can be so hardy, so daring, or so desperate, but may be expected from a King that sleeps in his Boots, and lies in the Straw?"⁵⁶ Englishmen were warned about the hardships they would suffer even though the attack should be repelled after a landing had been effected. According to Defoe, the exposure of the plot had been delayed to give the British minister in Stockholm, Jackson, an opportunity to get safely out of Sweden.⁵⁷ It perhaps was just as well for

⁵² [Defoe], *Count Patkul*, 57-58.

⁵³ [Daniel Defoe], *The Plot Discovered* (London, 1717), 3, 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12.

⁵⁵ [Defoe], *Mercurius Politicus*, February and March, 1717.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, February, 1717, p. 64.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

the government propaganda offensive, that the British people did not know that the first news that Jackson received concerning the exposure of the plot was when he read a story about it in a Königsberg newspaper.⁵⁸ Such information came too late to keep him out of prison.

There were others in England who were not so optimistic as Defoe about the probable fate of Jackson. On Monday, February 25, 1717, John Morphew of the *Post Boy* was arrested for inserting a paragraph in his journal wherein he speculated as to what might happen to Jackson. Morphew pointed out that Gyllenborg had been treated harshly by the English for no valid reason, whereas Jackson had "advised the Danes and Muscovites how and where to undertake Descents in Sweden; and that his Original Letters upon this Subject were intercepted, and are forthcoming."⁵⁹ The opposition could it appears also stretch a point of fact when it suited its purpose. The government was further irritated by the insinuating way that Morphew asked questions on the details of a plot that supposedly threatened the settlement of Utrecht.

Morphew was not the only one in England asking questions. Nathaniel Mist in his *Weekly Journal* wondered why a plot which supposedly had such widespread domestic ramifications had been accompanied by so few arrests. He called attention to the fact that "Persons of Distinction" whose identities were to be revealed were still unknown.⁶⁰ Mist would agree that Gyllenborg had in all likelihood been approached by Jacobite agents and had perhaps listened to them, but gave the lie to the rumors current in England that a large Swedish naval force was on the prowl off the coast of Scotland.⁶¹ Mist also ran accounts of acts of generosity which had been shown British seamen by Charles XII,⁶² and he assured his countrymen that Charles's chief interests were east in the Baltic provinces and not west in Scotland. He also drew a herring across the track by spreading fears as to the growing might of Russia.⁶³

⁵⁸ Jackson to Stanhope, March 6, 1717, State Papers, Sweden, Public Record Office, 95/22.

⁵⁹ Printed in Boyer, *The Political State of Great Britain*, XIII (1717), 241.

⁶⁰ London, *The Weekly Journal*, February 9, 1717, p. 52. The *Journal* has been microfilmed and a copy is in the Indiana University Library, Bloomington, Indiana.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, March 2, 1717, p. 68.

⁶² *Ibid.*, June 8, 1717, p. 156.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, June 1, 1717, p. 145.

The writings of such men as Mist and Morpew could not cope with the flood of material that came from the paid pens of government pamphleteers. Moreover, the Tory press had to be wary in order that its members avoid imprisonment, for this was a period of English journalism when there was little distinction between a pamphlet written in opposition to the government and a treasonous libel. Under the circumstances, the opposition did well. In spite of the war scare that had been raised, George won the motion to secure funds for the Baltic squadron only by four votes.⁶⁴

An open rupture had been brought about between England and Sweden by the arrest of Gyllenborg. The break, however, might be quickly closed if George received sanction from Sweden for his seizure of Breman and Verden. It was important to the elector of Hanover that he have his Baltic squadron, with which he could exert pressure not only upon his enemy Sweden, but also upon his allies, Denmark, Russia, and Brandenburg-Prussia. George placed little trust in his erstwhile friends, and they entertained a mutual sentiment regarding him. His victory in parliament had been won through an astute use of propaganda and the paid press. The severance of diplomatic relations assured him of British naval assistance in his attempts to achieve a pacification in the north which would be favorable to his electoral designs. His English subjects had to a large extent underwritten his Hanoverian policy.

⁶⁴ Isaac S. Leadam, *The History of England from the Accession of Anne to the Death of George II (1702-1760)*, in William Hunt and Reginald L. Poole (eds.), *The Political History of England* (12 vols., London, 1905-1919), IX (1912), 279. See also [William Cobbett], *The Parliamentary History of England* (36 vols., London, 1806-1820), VII (1811), 440.