'The Baltic Sea Region

Cultures, Politics, Societies

Editor Witold Maciejewski

3 The Swedish and the Polish-Lithuanian Empires and the formation of the Baltic Region

Kristian Gerner

The Hanseatic project did not develop into a proper empire in spite of the fact that it wove the Baltic area together commercially. Likewise, the German crusaders were ultimately unsuccessful in their state-building enterprise. In the fourteenth century they had become a lethal threat to the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and the Kingdom of Poland.

1. The simultaneous union formation

The Polish-Lithuanian personal union under Władysław Jagiełło, which was forged in 1385/86 when Rex Poloniae, (i.e., she held the throne; as a female she would otherwise have been called Regina) the young Jadwiga, daughter of king Louis of Anjou of Hungary, who was also of Piast ancestry, married the Grand Duke of Lithuania, was directed against the Teutonic Order. The latter's defeat at the hands of Władysław and his relative, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Vytautas, in 1410 was the beginning of its demise.

In the northern part of the Baltic Region, parallel to developments on the Polish-German front, the Kalmar Union of Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1397 was established with the aim of contesting the commercial hegemony of the Hansa. Thus at the end of the fourteenth century, international politics in the Baltic Region saw the emergence of a Central European empire in the southern part and a Scandinavian empire in the north. During the sixteenth century, Muscovy emerged as a serious challenger in the eastern part of the
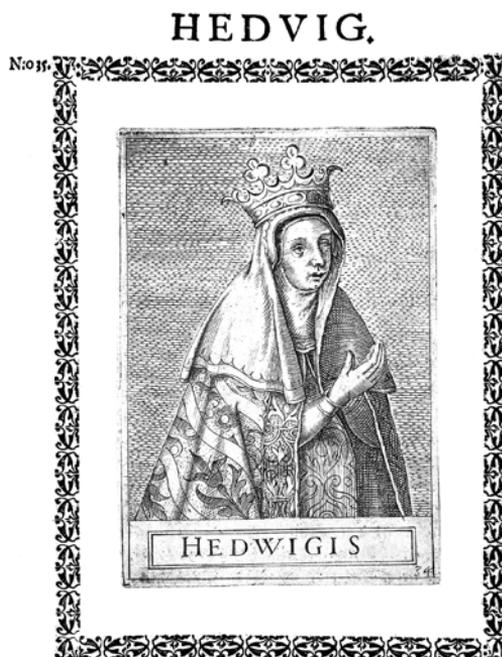

Figure 11. Hedvig (Polish *Jadwiga*) Anjou (1371–99), Rex Poloniae from 1383, canonized in 1997 (*Polska kongars saga och skald*, ed. 1736). Ill.: Uppsala University Library

The battle of Grunwald was to have considerable ideological influence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was one of the central pictures in the Polish artist Jan Matejko's series of illustrations of Polish glorious battles in history, painted at the time when Poland did not exist as a state in the late nineteenth century. The future Nobel Prize Laureate Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote his novel The Crusaders to commemorate the victory. In Kraków in Austrian Poland, a memorial was unveiled on the 500th anniversary of the battle in 1410. In 1914, the German army celebrated its victory over the Russians at Tannenberg, close to Grunwald, as a Teutonic revenge on the Slavs. In 1934, the remains of the victorious Field Marshal in 1914 and the President of the German Reich from 1927 to 1934, von Hindenburg, were buried at Tannenberg in a special mausoleum. In 1939, the Germans

Figure 12. The Grunwald monument in Kraków. Ill.: Małgorzata Sheiki-Binkowska

destroyed the Polish monument in Kraków. After the Second World War, a copy was made and placed on the original site. The remnants of the old one were brought to Grunwald, which had become Polish when German East Prussia was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union in 1945, and a new monument was erected on the medieval battlefield. The place where the High Master of the Teutonic Order fell was marked with a small stone.

Figure 13. A post-war poster, symbolizing the historical Polish narrative on Germans (Grünwald 1410 – Berlin 1945 by Tadeusz Trepkowski). Ill.: Uppsala University Library

Northern Mediterranean. To the west, the Dutch slowly became more and more visible. All this was directly connected with the simultaneous demise of the Hanseatic League and of the Teutonic Order. In 1525, the Order was secularised in Prussia and accepted the King of Poland as its overlord. Half a century later its Livonian branch passed away at the beginning of the great war that was to rage from 1558 to 1721. The main players in this struggle for political hegemony in the region were the states of Sweden and Denmark, the Commonwealth of the Two Nations (Poland-Lithuania), Muscovy and finally Brandenburg/Prussia, the successor state to the Teutonic Order. The Dutch navy was very influential as well in the contest, with the English following suit. Political and military power, control of trade and religious beliefs were involved in the struggle. To this came the issue of the right to the Swedish crown, which was contested by all three Polish Vasa kings. It was only in 1660 that king John Casimir had to renounce his claim to the Swedish crown. During the wars of succession in Muscovy in 1605-1613, the *Smutnoe Vremya*, The Time of Troubles, Sweden and Poland also competed with Russian princes for the Russian throne. Novgorod was occupied by Sweden in 1611-1617, and Charles Philip, the brother of Gustavus II Adolphus, was launched as a candidate for tsar. King Sigismund III Vasa alternatively launched his son or himself. Polish troops occupied Moscow in 1612 but were defeated and driven back by Russian troops under the merchant Minin and Prince Pozharskii. Later this event was remembered in Russia as a turning point in history which signaled the rise of Russia to the status as a great power. To celebrate the 200th anniversary, a monument was made, to be placed on the Red Square in Moscow in 1812. Napoléon's invasion of Russia and his occupation of Moscow forced the Russians to postpone the project for a while, but the ideological impact of the monument was strengthened when Napoléon too was forced to retreat and the French invasion was successfully overcome. In 1613, Michail Romanov, the son of the Russian patriarch, was elected tsar of Muscovy. The Romanov dynasty would hold power until 1917.

2. The Stockholm period

The seventeenth century has been called "the Stockholm period" in Baltic history. Sweden emerged as a great power in European politics, the peak being reached in 1648-1660. In 1630 Sweden entered the thirty years war, and at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Sweden acquired a number of commercially and strategically important cities and provinces in the southern Baltic area. In 1645 and 1658, after successful wars against Denmark, Sweden acquired the southern provinces of Halland, Scania and Blekinge as well as Gotland in the Baltic Sea and the Norwegian provinces of Bohuslän, Jämtland and Härjedalen. The new territories were to be successfully integrated with Sweden. The new boundaries were marked by water and mountains, which made most Swedes perceive them as "natural". When Finland and the Åland islands were ceded to Russia in 1809, the Swedish state was given its definite territorial form.

Three major wars were fought between Sweden and Muscovy/Russia. In 1617, Sweden was victorious, the peace treaty of Stolbova barring Muscovy from direct access to the Baltic Sea. The war in 1656-1661, which ran parallel to both states' simultaneous struggle with Poland, ended in status quo. In 1721, the Great Nordic War ended with the Peace of Nystad. Russia retained the Baltic provinces of Estonia and Livonia which had been occupied in 1710 and also took Karelia with the city of Viborg.

3. The Swedish-Polish rivalry

The special Swedish-Polish relationship began in 1562, when John, the brother of king Erik XIV of Sweden and Duke of three counties in east Sweden (Finland), married Catherine Jagiełło (Katarzyna Jagiellonka), sister of Sigismund II August, king of Poland. It took on deep significance in 1587-92, when John and Catherine's son Sigismund was elected king of Poland and inherited the Swedish crown, respectively. It ended after Sweden's defeat at Poltava in 1709, when Stanisław Leszczyński, who had been elected king of Poland in 1704 under Swedish pressure, was forced to give up his Polish throne to the returning August II.

For most of her history, Poland has been a continental state. However, after the union with Lithuania in 1385-6, in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Poland aspired

Figure 14. The first Catholic translation of the Bible into Polish was dedicated to Sigismund III Vasa. 1599, when the Bible was printed, was the last year of the union of Poland, Lithuania and Sweden. Photo: Witold Maciejewski

to become a leading sea power in the Baltic Region at the cost of the continuously weakening and finally dissolving Teutonic and Livonian Orders. The same period saw the ascendancy of Sweden to Baltic great power status. The two states had intimate and multifaceted contacts, both friendly and antagonistic. Especially memorable is the Swedish invasion of Poland and the widespread destruction brought by the Swedish troops in the war between 1655 and 1660.

In order to defend her conquests at the 'sea-side' ('sjökanten'), on the southern and eastern Baltic coast, Sweden had to control the hinterland with troops, and these had to be fed at the cost of the adversaries. At Altmark in 1629, a truce between Sweden and Poland left Livonia with Riga in Swedish hands. This was confirmed in a new truce in 1635. Apart from the economic and strategic issues, there was a certain confessional flavour to the conflict.

An example is a decoration on the Swedish man-of-war 'Vasa' from 1628. It sank immediately after it had left the shipyard in Stockholm. Thanks to this accident, the ship remained well preserved at the bottom of the sea. In the 1950s it was rescued and placed

Figure 15. The Swedish man-of-war 'Vasa', a draft by Björn Landström (*Vasa*, ed. By Mats Erling, Vasamuseet 1990). Ill.: Uppsala University Library

in a special museum. On the ship, the contemporary viewer can see the wooden head of a grim Triton with a beret on his head, i.e., a typically Catholic priest's cap: 'It was certainly making fun of the Catholic enemy who, when Vasa was built, above all was Poland'. ("Skeppet Vasa – en färgglad reklampelare", *Universitetsläraren*, nr. 19, 1999, p. 15). This was at the time when the Swedish Lutheran State Church was increasingly becoming an instrument of state propaganda and patriotic indoctrination of the people. The King ordered the priests to hold especially anti-Papist and anti-Polish sermons.

In 1655, Sweden's new king Charles X Gustavus and the Council deemed it necessary to invade Poland-Lithuania with the double aim of securing Sweden's strongholds in East Prussia and keeping a new challenger in the east, Muscovy, at bay. Poland had lost part of its eastern territories to Muscovy as a result of Bohdan Khmielnicky's rebellion in 1648, which ended with the treaty of Perejaslav in 1654. Immediately after the treaty, Muscovy attacked Poland and occupied the eastern borderlands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. They were later to be considered to be a specific historical region and were called the *Kresy wschodnie* in Polish, or just *Kresy*. In 1655, even Wilno was occupied by Russian troops. The local aristocracy in the Lithuanian part of the Commonwealth now had three options: to remain loyal to the Polish crown, to accept Muscovite sovereignty, or to conclude a new union, this time with the other attacking power, Sweden. It was also a choice between the three faiths of Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism. As a remnant from the impact of the Reformation on Poland in the sixteenth century, some families among the Lithuanian nobility were Calvinist, i.e., Protestant. And in spite of Polish attempts to bring all the Orthodox subjects in the east into the Catholic Church through the so-called Union of Brest in 1596 (hence "Uniates"), Orthodoxy had remained an important factor there.

4. Traitors, heroes and the intervention of the Holy Virgin

On 20th October, 1655, the Swedish general Magnus de la Gardie, son of James who had invaded Moscow and occupied Novgorod during the Time of Troubles and grandson of Pontus de la Gardie, who had secured the Swedish hold on Estonia back in 1561, agreed at a meeting in Kiejdany with the Lithuanian Great Hetman Janusz Radziwiłł and his brother Bogusław on a union between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under a common ruler, the Swedish king. Lithuania's aristocracy would remain masters in their land, and the Catholic church would retain its strong position. In some Polish historiography, the Swedish-Lithuanian union became known as the Treason of Kiejdany. In contemporary Lithuania, the 340th anniversary of the union was celebrated in 1995 as a symbol of Swedish-Lithuanian historical bonds and friendship.

At the same time as Radziwiłł formed his union with Sweden, another camp within the Lithuanian aristocracy recognised as Grand Duke of Lithuania tsar Alexei Mikhailovich of Muscovy, who was at war with both Sweden and Poland. A third camp among the aristocracy and the gentry remained loyal to the Polish crown. In classical manner, these men formed a confederation. In the Polish interpretation, the significance of the religious dimension, which was to be given artistic expression by Sienkiewicz in his famous Trilogy about Poland's wars in the seventeenth century, was that there was a Protestant crusade by the Swedes at the same time as Poland was attacked by Orthodox Muscovites and Moslem Ottomans and Tartars. The significance of the political dimension was that a highly centralised state where the king had strong executive power, Sweden, attacked the Noble Republic with its Golden Freedoms.

The pivotal change of atmosphere, following immediately upon the so-called miracle at Częstochowa, has been described in the following way in Oscar Halecki's classical history of Poland:

> It mattered little now that in the beginning of 1656 the Great Elector [Frederick William of Brandenburg], consummating his disloyalty, allied himself with the King of Sweden and declared himself his vassal in his capacity of Duke of Prussia. Some days later the Confederation of Tyszowce united the immense majority of the Polish nobility and gentry round John Casimir, who had returned from exile, and the whole country rose against the foreigner in a unanimous outburst of reviving patriotism. The chief traitors disappeared, struck by death that seemed a judgement of heaven, and courageous and disinterested leaders, Stephen Czarniecki in Poland, Paul Sapieha in Lithuania, placed themselves at the head of the movement of liberation (Halecki 1978).

A historian of a later generation, Adam Zamoyski, takes quite another view of the union of Kiejdany, noting that Charles X Gustavus and John Casimir were of the same Vasa dynasty:

> Swedish troops appeared in every province, often accompanied by magnates or szlachta who supported Charles. Since there was little to choose between one Vasa king and another many accepted what seemed to be a fait accompli. The structure of the Commonwealth seemed to have fallen apart like a house of cards. [——] The majority of the population of the Commonwealth was quite prepared to accept Charles as king, but he was only interested in keeping Pomerania and Livonia, and treated the rest of Poland as occupied territory. He and his generals immediately began exporting everything they could lay their hands on – pictures, sculpture, furniture, entire libraries. The Protestant Swedes also took to burning down churches, having first emptied them of everything portable, and this sacrilege incensed the peasants, who were hardly concerned as to who sat on the throne. [——] A guerilla war developed, with bands of loyal szlachta and peasants making life very unpleasant for the Swedes (Zamoyski 1987).

According to Halecki, the resistance against the Swedes was caused by the Radziwillian treason of Kiejdany, but according to Zamoyski, it was caused by the Swedish deluge. Halecki's interpretation fits into the romanticist vein in Polish historiography, Zamoyski's into the positivist. The Marxist Jerzy Topolski's interpretation is compatible with that of Zamoyski but adds a further dimension:

> The rapidity with which the Swedes managed to conquer Poland [——] was facilitated by the fact that some magnates and part of the gentry expected that Charles Gustavus would attack Russia, with which Poland was involved in a conflict over the Ukraine, and joined his ranks. In their eyes it was an ordinary change of ruler, actually within the same dynasty. It was only the ruthless pillaging of the country by the Swedes which brought about a change in public opinion and led to nationwide resistance (Topolski 1986).

The war ended with the peace of Oliwa in 1660. Sweden did not acquire any territory from Poland, but John Casimir renounced his claims to the Swedish throne. The Polish king also lost his suzerainty over Brandenburg-Prussia. In 1886, the future Nobel prize laureate in literature, the Polish writer Henryk Sienkiewicz published, as part of the Trilogy, his novel about the Swedish war, called The Deluge. Reading it and seeing movies based upon it, generations of Poles have been given a vivid picture of the horrors of the Swedish war. The war is also at the core of Polish national mythology in a positive sense, thanks to the legend of the Black Madonna in Częstochowa as the Protector and Saviour of Poland. The legend was born when, after the successful resistance against the Swedes, who had to lift their siege on Częstochowa at Christmas in 1655, king John Casimir proclaimed the Holy Virgin to be Queen of Poland.

5. Reconstruction of Sweden and destruction of Poland

After defeating the troops of the Russian tsar Peter I at Narva in the late autumn of 1700, King Charles XII of Sweden spent the following years waging war in Poland with the aim of dethroning August II as king of Poland, because in his capacity as king of Saxony August had declared war on Sweden in 1700, and have him replaced on the Polish throne by Stanisław Leszczyński. The Swedish troops caused a second deluge. In 1706, August agreed to denounce his rights to the Polish crown. This was the peace in Altranstädt.

Commenting on the effects of Charles XII's campaign in Poland, the Finnish writer Zacharias Topelius wrote with the benefit of hindsight in the mid-nineteenth century that it entailed 'The destruction of Poland, the defeat of Sweden and the loss of Finland'. Topelius was very popular in both Finland and Sweden in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and his views certainly helped to create the impression that the fates of Sweden and Finland, and of Poland on the other hand, were closely linked in history. Actually, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Sweden was rather close to sharing the fate of Poland. However, the domestic policies of King Gustavus III (1771-92) and his constitutional reforms in 1772 and 1789, which strengthened the executive power and managed to rally the lower classes behind the King, led to the postponement of the partition of Sweden into a latter period of European history. This partition came only in 1809 when Russia, as a result of the agreement with France at Tilsit in 1807, was able to conquer the eastern part of Sweden and make it the Grand Duchy of Finland. The major part of Sweden remained a sovereign state. Moreover, as a result of the defeat, the Swedish king Gustavus IV Adolphus was forced to abdicate. He was succeeded as King by his uncle, Charles XIII. However, the real executive power was held by the crown prince, elected by the Swedish Diet in 1810, Jean Baptiste Bernadotte. To the Swedish crown the latter could add the Norwegian one as well: in Kiel in 1814, Denmark had to cede its Norwegian part to him. He adopted the Swedish name Karl Johan (Charles John). The main street in Norway's capital Oslo still bears his name.

It is instructive to compare the fate of Sweden in the early nineteenth century with that of Poland in the late eighteenth century. When, after the first partition in 1772, king Stanisław August Poniatowski and the Polish Long Diet in 1788-1792 attempted to rescue the Polish state by adopting the constitution of 3rd May, 1791, the action triggered internal opposition and external aggression, which led to the second partition. Renewed resistance under Tadeusz Kościuszko only sealed the fate with the third partition in 1795. By contrast, the Swedish constitutional reform in 1809 and the reconstruction of the state after the first partition turned out to be successful. One

Figure 16. Empress Catherine of Russia, Stanislaus Augustus of Poland, Joseph II of Austria and Frederic the Great partitioning Poland (*La Situation de la Pologne en MDCCLXXIII*, after an engraving by Moreau). Ill.: Uppsala University Library

main cause was that the setting was different. In 1809 a major war was being waged in Europe, and the Swedish government had space for manoeuvring between the great powers.

Thus the ultimate result of the long conflict between Sweden and Poland was the reconstruction of Sweden as a middle power and the disappearance of Poland as a political actor in the Baltic Region. The struggle of Sweden and Poland in the seventeenth century was part of the overall competition for hegemony in the Baltic Region. One may argue that the idea of the Baltic Region as an entity crystallised in this epoch with the Swedish notion of *Mare nostrum*, our sea, as *Mare Claustrum*, the closed sea. These developments can also be used for a demonstration of how concepts covered by names of states have changed content repeatedly with regard to both spatial configuration, political structure, and ethnic composition. Up to 1809 Finland was an integrated part of the Swedish kingdom. At the same time, that area bordered on Muscovy and her successor Russia. The city of Viborg in Karelia, at the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland, was an important Swedish military, administrative and commercial centre. To secure its hinterland, the Vasa kings set out on a policy of expansion with the aim of barring Muscovy from reaching the shores of the Baltic Sea. The Swedish acquisition of the cities of Narva and Reval and of the provinces of Estonia and Livonia should be seen in this perspective. The capture of the cities of Riga, Memel, Pillau and Elbing under Gustavus II Adolphus and of Vorpommern, Rügen, Stettin and Wismar at the end of the Thirty Years' war, was simply the logical consequence of this policy of expansion. It had its own momentum, bringing Sweden to conquer large parts of Denmark in 1645 and 1658 and to attack Poland in 1655.

Poland's successful resistance against Sweden in the 1655-1660 war meant not only that Sweden had to give up its ambition to add Lithuania to its provinces in the east. It is also a fact that the peace of Oliwa in 1660 came to mark the zenith of Swedish expansion and power in the Baltic Region. It was concluded in the same year as the peace of Copenhagen with Denmark, which also meant a territorial concession by Sweden concerning the island of Bornholm and one Norwegian province, Trondheim, which were given back to Denmark; they had been acquired in 1658.

During the following decades, the Swedish state grew "inwards" as an effect of economic policies designed to meet the demands of the permanent military mobilisation. Under Charles XI, foreign policy changed fundamentally to acquire a defensive character. The administrative and judicial systems were reformed and became more efficient, and the cadres of officers and state servants were increasingly recruited from the gentry and common people. The political power of the king was reinforced at the cost of the aristocracy. This had a double effect. The rise of a modern bourgeoisie was promoted, and the peasantry was not politically disenfranchised. The political influence of the aristocracy was broken once and for all, especially after the implementation of the decision at the Diets in 1680 and 1682 that their huge properties should be returned to the state. In Swedish history, this is known as the Reduction.

Charles XI (1672-97) and his son Charles XII (1697-1718) were absolutist rulers, but they prepared the way for the modern state by promoting the emergence of a servant class with a certain sense of patriotism and diligence. The fruits were harvested in the mid-eighteenth century during the epochs called the Era of Freedom and the Gustavian Era. Absolutism was abolished with the constitution of 1719, and the following decades saw the emergence of strong parliamentary influence on policy-making and legislation. Whereas Gustavus III, with his constitution of 1772 and his Act of security in 1789, managed to strengthen the role of the executive, this did not mean that parliamentary life and politics were brought to a standstill. The main result was that Russian and French direct influence over Swedish politics was curbed.

6. Modernisation of Sweden

While the eighteenth century saw the fruition of the modernisation of the Swedish political and economic fabric, the preceding seventeenth century was the century of the final Europeanisation of Sweden. Because of the importance of Sweden in the thirty years war and because of the opening of the country to massive technological and cultural influence from France and the Netherlands, Sweden ceased to be viewed as part of the wild and barbarian North and became a recognised member of European civilisation. Experts in law and the humanities, such as Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorff were recruited to promote the political influence of Sweden in Europe. The French philosopher René Descartes visited Stockholm to lecture for Queen Christina. Uppsala university, which had been closed under the first three Vasa kings, was reopened under Duke Charles in the 1590s. In 1632 an Academy was founded in Dorpat (Tartu) in Livonia and in 1640 another in Åbo (Turku) in Finland. In 1668 a new university was founded in Lund, ten years after the conquest of the province of Scania. All this was a conscious attempt to strengthen the centralisation and homogenisation of the state by binding the newly-acquired territories as well as Finland closer to the government in Stockholm and instill a sense of Swedish patriotism in both the common people and the nobility.

Gothenburg, founded by King Charles IX in 1603 and really built under his son Gustavus II Adolphus after a fire in 1611, became an important port on Sweden's west coast. Its city plan and buildings were designed by Dutchmen, much as part of Danzig was redesigned in the same period. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thousands of Dutch merchants, bankers, artisans and shipbuilders lived in Danzig, the inner city of which acquired that Dutch-Flemish architectural character which was to be restored after 1945. When the Swedish state furthered the development of mining and metal works, entrepreneurs and craftsmen from the Netherlands took a very active part in developments. Whereas Gothenburg was the earliest visible sign of the Dutch impact on Sweden, the most significant actor was the merchant and iron product specialist Louis de Geer (1587-1652) who moved from Amsterdam to Sweden in 1627. His contribution to the modernisation of Sweden was such that the Swedish historian Eli Heckscher argued that it was doubtful whether any other individual had exerted such an economic influence on Sweden as de Geer. He owned iron mines and works, brass foundries and ship yards and also engaged in large-scale farming. He is given the honour, by another Swedish historian, Jerker Rosén, of having given the Swedish working class its schooling in new technologies. It was easier to tell what he did not control than to enumerate all the enterprises under his control. He was the biggest creditor and financier of the Swedish Crown (Rosén 1962).

Dutch commercial, economic and cultural influence on the development of some leading cities in the Baltic Region as well as on whole states, functioned as an uniting link between Sweden, Poland, Brandenburg (Berlin, Potsdam) and Russia (St Petersburg) in the seventeenth century (see also case chapter 4).

The economic policy and social policies in Sweden followed the principles of cameralism. They differed from the mercantilism of the day by giving a greater role to the state and socialising the citizens to become loyal servants of the state. Lutheranism was put to ideological use in this endeavour. Moreover, as the Swedish historian Stellan Dahlgren has expressed it, 'the army was not only an instrument of warfare but also a tool for enforcing social discipline in the country'. (Dahlgren 1992).

For Sweden, the remaining legacy was status as a medium power. This position was lost with the defeat at Poltava in 1709. The legacy was one of the successful construction of a viable civic state. With the loss of the Baltic empire, Sweden also lost sight of Poland and her increasingly troublesome affairs.

7. Archaisation of Poland

During the first half of the seventeenth century, Poland-Lithuania reached its greatest territorial size ever. However, the second half of the seventeenth century saw the beginning of the demise of the state not only as a great power but also as such. Its capital Cracow had been one of the cultural centres of Europe from the high Middle Ages, with a university dating back to 1364 and reopened at the beginning of the Jagiellonian period. The other capital of the Commonwealth, Wilno, was a centre of both Polish and Jewish culture, also with international contacts. In 1579, the Jesuit college in Wilno was raised to the level of university. However, the reign of the three Vasa kings saw both the emergence of Warsaw as one of Europe's baroque cities, opera and all, and the decline of royal power as such. Whereas the Swedes ruined Warsaw, the old eastern capital, Wilno, was thoroughly ravaged by Muscovite troops in 1655.

The decline of Poland had its causes in the combination of a rather weak central royal power and the economic and demographic consequences of the many wars fought on the vast territories of Poland-Lithuania during the better part of the seventeenth century. The Swedish invasions were highly effective in reducing the prosperity of the Polish state, both by blockading exports and because of the devastation of both cities and the countryside during the deluge. The campaign of Charles XII was an additional blow both to political stability and to the economic fabric.

In contrast to Sweden in the seventeenth century, Polish society developed neither an efficient central administration nor cities and modern manufacture. Poland remained an agrarian country with enserfed peasants and an exporter of raw materials, ranging from foodstuffs to iron ore and charcoal. Hamburg and Amsterdam superseded Danzig, under Polish suzerainty, as the most important trading ports for Polish goods. From the 1620s to the 1650s, the Swedes intermittently sealed off Danzig so efficiently from trade in the Baltic Sea that the city itself and Polish exports never really recovered from the crisis. To make things worse, England and the Netherlands increasingly imported the traditional export products that had come from Poland from their overseas colonies at the same time as Muscovy re-entered the Baltic market, competing with the same raw materials as Poland. Contrary to Sweden, Poland did not have a strong central power that could step in and promote economic life with the help of mercantilist and cameralist methods.

The wars with Sweden and Russia in the 1650s brought almost total ruin to Poland. In this decade, the urban population declined by more than two thirds. A consequence was that the commercial and administrative cities such as Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań, Lublin and Wilno recovered slowly. Instead there was a certain growth of the private towns. However, these functioned as transmission belts for the exchange of goods used by the aristocracy, the owners of the towns. There was not much enterprise, investment and commodity production in these towns. The lifestyle of the ruling aristocracy was geared towards manners and the ideals of a fictitious past, expressed in the ideology of Sarmatism.

One may even argue that in contrast to Sweden, which underwent modernisation, Poland underwent archaisation, ending in the institutionalisation of the liberum veto and the manifestation of strife and anarchy surrounding the election of the king in 1696-7. The latter was called 'one of the most dismal episodes in Polish parliamentary history'. by the historian Zamoyski (Zamoyski 1987). His Marxist counterpart Topolski caught the whole political development of the decentralisation and ultimate demise of state power, especially after the end of the rule of the Vasa dynasty in 1668, the kings of which were the last that could rely on a kind of historical or traditional legitimacy, with the phrase: 'That weakening was caused by the transformation of the fairly efficient system of the so-called democracy of the gentry into an oligarchy of the magnates' (Topolski 1986).

In his book on Polish-Scandinavian relations, the Polish historian Kazimierz Âlaski has described the mutual Swedish and Polish experience of one another during the seventeenth cen-

tury as a process of increasing alienation and enmity. Among Swedes, the impression of Poland as an anarchic society was reinforced. According to Âlaski, it was during this period that the Swedish language was enriched with the expression 'polsk riksdag' (Polish Diet) as a metaphor for political disorder and internal strife. On the other hand, the Polish popular dictionary was completed with expressions such as *zły jak Szwed* (evil as a Swede) and *brudny jak Szwed* (dirty as a Swede) (Âlaski 1977).

8. The outcome of the Swedish-Polish rivalry

By the early eighteenth century, Sweden and the Poland were on the wane, something that was accentuated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when first Poland and then Sweden were partitioned. Poland disappeared as a state and most certainly as a maritime power, if it had ever been one. Sweden under its new ruler, crown prince Bernadotte, compensated for the loss of its eastern part, which became the Grand Duchy of Finland under the Russian tsar, by forging a union with Norway which, through the treaty of Kiel in 1814, was disentangled from the Kingdom of Denmark. In 1864, the latter also lost the southern duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg to the German states of Prussia and Austria. All in all, by this time Germany and Russia emerged as great powers in the region, although the British remained hegemonic in the North Sea. The British navy remained an important military factor also in the Baltic Sea, as is evident from its crucial role in the Crimean war. The United Kingdom played an important role in the economy of both Sweden and Denmark.

In the course of the long war between 1558 and 1721, the smaller peoples on the eastern Baltic shore also suffered terrible losses. The countryside was almost bled to death repeatedly, and it is estimated that during the war activities in the 1620s and in the 1650s up to two thirds of the population died. Except from outright murders by the marauding troops, people died from starvation, which was caused by bad harvests and by pestilence. It must also be added, that among the soldiers, who suffered a very high death toll, the majority died from illness and malnutrition and not in battle. The human cost of the Swedish Baltic Empire was tremendous.

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