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A Projected Invasion of Sweden, 1716

By RAYMOND E. LINDGREN

TODAY the Scandinavian and Baltic states are waging a desperate fight to maintain or recover their independence and liberty, and the changes that may come in their status at the end of the war are obscure. The great question in northern Europe now is what Russia will do in regard to Finland and the Baltic republics. In 1716, in a different situation, Sweden was once before waging a desperate and prolonged battle with enemies to preserve her independence and liberty. Then the ring of foes, including England-Hanover, Denmark-Norway, Poland, Prussia, and Russia, were thirsting for the spoils of the former Swedish empire. England-Hanover, in the person of George I, paid the Danes their price for Bremen and Verden; Prussia had taken eastern Pomerania in the military operations of 1715; Russia had seized the Baltic provinces and was knitting them indisputably into the Russian empire; Poland was at peace, no longer facing the threat of a Swedish invasion from the Baltic provinces. Denmark alone was dissatisfied with affairs. The death blow against Charles XII had not been struck; he still retained the Swedish throne and possessed the southern provinces of Holland, Blekinge, and Skaane which Denmark coveted. Just as today, the purposes and aims of the northern states were antagonistic to peace, for the price of conquest was high and the spoils never satisfactory.

Denmark, besides desiring the southern provinces of Sweden, wanted to regain the Sound dues and the control of the Sound. The Baltic would then be subject to her, and trade and commerce would bring money into the treasury. Russian aims in 1716 were agreeably singular. Peter the Great wanted only one thing—security. Security meant total and complete defeat of Sweden and perhaps the acquisition of Finland, at least Karelia and Viborg in order to protect St. Petersburg. (Today it is to protect Leningrad.) He must also guarantee for himself and his heirs the retention of the Baltic provinces which had been wrested from Sweden's grasp.

Thus he agreed with the Danish aim of an invasion of Sweden where the final battle in the series of Narva and Pultava would be fought. The continuance of Charles XII's rule in Sweden meant to let live a rumbling volcano in northern Europe which, sooner or later, would erupt and inundate the northern powers.

Not all of the European states were of like mind. France, weakened by the War of the Spanish Succession, was unable to help her traditional ally. The Regent was in the midst of a reorientation of French policy which was to produce the alliance with England. The Empire was involved in a struggle with the Turks which was to end with defeat in 1718. Prussia was interested more in retaining eastern Pomerania than in embarking upon a hazardous invasion of Sweden. England looked forward to the day when the powers would be realigned in the Baltic and perceived the necessity of maintaining the balance of power. If Russia under Peter's driving leadership gained hegemony over the Baltic, English trade and commerce would be at the mercy of the "Russian barbarian." If Denmark secured the southern provinces and the Sound dues were put into operation once more, then English goods and traffic would be subject to extremely irksome tolls. Prussia was also becoming too powerful. All these rising giants needed harness; only the retention of a whole and healthy Sweden could supply such reins. English policy from the end of 1716 to 1721 was directed at halting the Russian advance by separating Denmark and Russia and thus breaking up the northern alliance.

During the projected invasion of Sweden all these things came to pass. Denmark and Russia prepared a mighty invasion force with the aid of the English fleet. Tardy preparations delayed the starting date until September, and the Czar proposed a postponement until the following year. That meant quartering Russian troops in Mecklenburg-Schwerin and endangering the neighboring state of Hanover. English policy toward Russia suddenly changed as George I saw in the invasion of Sweden a method of ridding himself of threatening Russian troops. When the Czar refused to withdraw his troops or to continue plans for the attack on Sweden, George ordered his ministers to drive wedges between Denmark and Russia. In this work they succeeded so well that

by January, 1717, the northern alliance lay in splinters. But a year earlier none of these events had "cast their shadows before," and the two northern states were fixed in their resolve to strike at Sweden.

In December, 1715, the attention of all Europe was turned toward Stralsund where the "Lion of the North," Charles XII, was being besieged by the troops of Denmark, Prussia, Poland, and Russia. The allied powers hoped that Charles would be captured in Stralsund, but, when the fort surrendered, the wily king was not among the prisoners. In the night of December 21 he had stolen out of the fort, rowed in a small boat out of the harbor, and reached two Swedish ships lying there in case of such an eventuality. Swiftly Charles was carried to Sweden; speed was requisite, for allied fleets dominated the Baltic as a consequence of the resounding Danish victories of 1715. Worn, haggard, and bedeviled by the ignoble manner of his return, Charles yet had time and energy to arrange details of the defense of Sweden against the attack he well knew was coming.

The arrangement of this attack was made during the course of the winter and summer of 1715-1716. Negotiations with Frederick William I of Prussia resulted in a bluff negative from the "Grenadier King." Poland returned a mild and tactful refusal, on the theory that a soft answer turneth away wrath. Thus only two, Denmark and Russia, were left to carry on the attack. Most of the spring was spent in haggling over petty details of plans—where the two monarchs, Frederick IV and Czar Peter, were to meet, what supplies each was to furnish, who was to command the combined army. The Danish envoy to Russia, Hans Georg von Westphalen,¹ conferred interminably with Peter and his ministers regarding these problems, and the final settlement but provided a convention to be signed by both parties. Russian troops were already on their journey westward; a small contingent had taken

¹For information regarding Westphalen see Raymond E. Lindgren, "Hans Georg von Westphalen and Northern Diplomacy, 1715-1716" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1943); cf. *Dansk Biografisk Lexikon* (Copenhagen), XVIII (1904), 464-65. Dr. John J. Murray, "Baltic Diplomacy, 1715-1716" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1941), especially in his chapter on "Danish Diplomacy, 1715-1716," gives a summary of the diplomacy of the period and the background of the Skaane invasion plan.

part in the siege of Wismar in April, 1716. This last adventure whetted their lust for conquest and caused the Czar to demand possession of the fort. Peter's active participation in the proposed invasion of Sweden was necessary for its success; that he was eager to take part was shown by the willingness with which he came to Hamburg to arrange the details of the plan. He left St. Petersburg, the new capital of Russia, in February, 1716, accompanied by his official retinue and a large force of Russian troops. Small Russian galleys with the troops aboard hugged the coast and sailed west toward Mecklenburg, while the Czar went overland to Stettin to confer with Frederick William I of Prussia. From Stettin, Peter traveled to Hamburg to hold his long awaited conference with Frederick IV.

The two monarchs met in a series of conferences near Hamburg at the end of May and on June 3, 1716, signed the Altona Convention, the plan for the invasion of Sweden.² By that convention Denmark was to furnish thirty-two thousand men and to provide transports and provisions for thirty-six thousand Russian troops. The Russian corps was to be quartered in Sjaelland, the island on which Copenhagen is located, during the period before the invasion of Skaane. When the allies had finally gained a foothold, these troops were to forage for their own supplies. Other matériel was to be found in the province and its forts. The command of these troops was to rotate. Requests for the aid of an English fleet were to be sent to George I at Hanover; Fabricius, the Hanoverian envoy to the Altona Conference, assured the two monarchs that George's consent would be given and hinted that the number of English ships would be large.

English interest in the invasion project was naturally great. George I, king of England since August, 1714, had reoriented English foreign policy to suit his Hanoverian inclinations and aims. To protect his newly-acquired possessions of Bremen and Verden and to fulfill Danish demands for payment for these provinces, George was compelled by his conscience and his Danish friends

²For a copy of the Convention of Altona, see Edvard Holm, "Studier til den store nordiske Krigs Historie, Frederick IV og Czar Peter," *Dansk Historisk Tidsskrift* (Copenhagen), Series V, III (1881-2), 152-58.

to co-operate. Denmark and Russia both proposed that an English squadron of considerable size should combine with theirs in a naval attack upon Sweden. The Dano-Russian fleet would number perhaps thirty-two vessels, but it was still insufficient to attack the Swedish fleet lying in the main naval base at Karlskrona. Definite assurances were given during June that an English squadron would sail under the command of Sir John Norris to convoy English merchantmen plying their wares in the Baltic. Rumors indicated that this squadron would be given instructions to join the Dano-Russian fleet and to act in collaboration with them.

In spite of these illusory commitments Anglo-Russian relations were stormy. Unfortunately, when Prince Nikita Repnin and the Russian troops had been denied admittance to Wismar in 1716 because of the absence of an agreement covering their assistance, responsibility for the Dano-Prussian attitude was attributed to Hanover. In addition, a pact signed between Prussia, Denmark, and Hanover stated that Wismar was to be turned over to the Emperor Charles VI as an imperial city. Peter, on the contrary, wished the city as his personal prize, having already promised it to the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin as a part of the dowry of the Duchess Catherine, who had married the duke in April, 1716. A second source of conflict was the presence of Russian troops in Mecklenburg. Andreas Gottlieb Bernstorff, George I's famous Hanoverian minister, who had the greatest influence upon his master, held estates and noble rank in the duchy. The Duke and his nobility were involved in a dispute over prerogatives, privileges, and estates when Russian troops arrived and were placed under the authority of the Duke to be used against the nobility. Bernstorff consequently was inimical to Russia as she was aiding in clipping his privileges. Furthermore, public opinion in Hanover disapproved of the marriage of the Duchess Catherine and the Duke of Mecklenburg since it threatened to give Russia a foothold in northern Germany.

The new phase of the northern war, opened by the signature of the Altona Convention, was also troublesome to both Denmark and Russia. Frederick IV lacked the mental agility to cope with rapidly moving events, and the military arrangements for the in-

vasion strained the capacity of his government and treasury. The navy and merchant fleet had to be renovated to handle the immense task of transporting and supplying troops from northern Germany and, when the occasion arose, to support the military operations in Sweden. In Copenhagen confusion reigned supreme, and even the Czar, who arrived on July 17, was unable to correct Danish inefficiency and procrastination.³ Peter himself was impatiently awaiting the arrival of his troops from Mecklenburg; chief among the reasons for his uneasiness was his fear that they would arrive too late and the invasion would have to be postponed until the following year.⁴ Eventually a Danish naval squadron arrived from Norway on August 8 and was dispatched to cover the transport of troops from Mecklenburg and Germany to Copenhagen.⁵

In that city the Czar and Norris, who had become great friends during the latter's visit of the previous year to the Baltic as commander of the English squadron, were able to reach an agreement whereby the English forces could combine with the Dano-Russian fleet under the command of the Czar without prejudice to English dignity. On August 3 a reconnaissance led by the Czar set out for the Skaane coast. Upon his return to Copenhagen he found everything in readiness for the conjunction of the three fleets.⁶ The English and Russian fleet under the Czar's command sailed out of Kjööge Bay on August 18, while the Danish section remained at anchor allegedly because of an insufficiency of pilots but actually because Ulrich Christian Gyldenlöve, the Danish admiral, was piqued over the command and the junction of the Dano-Russian

³The Russian fleet from Riga did not arrive in Copenhagen until July 29, but the Russian ships from Archangel and England and Holland, which had come there during the winter, were ready for action. Concerning the trip of the Russian fleet from Riga and Reval, and the four ships from Archangel, see *History of the Russian fleet during the Reign of Peter the Great*, ed. C. A. C. Bridges ("Navy Records Society," XV; London, 1899.)

⁴Polwarth to Stanhope, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Polwarth* (London), I (1911), 48-49. (Hereafter cited: *Polwarth Papers*.)

⁵The Danish squadron did not sail until the latter part of August, however, due to contrary winds.

⁶Polwarth to Stanhope, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 48-49.

fleets. Gyldenlöve, however, was forced to set sail the next day by express orders of the king, and he joined the large group of allied vessels lying off Bornholm on August 20. So many of these ships were on the seas, a Jacobite rather humorously wrote, that the Baltic could “. . . not be reckoned tolerable . . .” as a route to Sweden.⁷

Assured of safety under the guns of Karlskrona, the Swedish fleet remained quietly at anchor. No plan was arranged by Norris, the Czar, and Gyldenlöve for an attack upon the fort or fleet since such a venture would be useless if not closely followed by a landing force. The mission of the allied navy was then accomplished by simply waiting and watching, taking care that no Swedish ships should escape from the harbor to threaten English commerce. While he was waiting at Bornholm, news came to the Czar of delays in arranging for transports and the transfer of Russian troops to Sjaelland, and on August 25 he left for Stralsund and Mecklenburg to supervise the embarkation of Russian troops for transport to Copenhagen. Since the problem of the command had reared its head again, it was decided that no chief should be selected but that a council of war should have a collective responsibility.⁸ The Swedes fortunately refused to leave their haven or the allied fleet might have suffered disaster from the divided command.

At Stralsund the Czar found conditions inextricably tangled, for which responsibility could not be laid upon Denmark's motives but upon her lack of money. Danish transports were not yet ready, though Russian troops had been waiting for some time. A Dan-Russian conference in Copenhagen on August 24 over the dual questions of the army command in the Skaane invasion and of transport ships led to a heated dispute over the weather. Admiral Judichaer, in charge of the Danish admiralty in Gyldenlöve's absence, had his feelings considerably ruffled by the questions

⁷J. Erskine to Duke of Mar, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Stuart Papers* (London), II (1904), 389.

⁸For the story of the allied fleet under the command of the Czar see *Beyträge zur Geschichte Peters des Grossen*, ed. H. L. C. Bacmeister (Riga, 1774) II, 40-46; Norris to Polwarth, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 66; A. P. Tuxen, H. W. Harbou, and C. L. With-Seidelin, *Bidrag til den store nordiske Krigs Historie* (Copenhagen, 1920—), VIII, 259-60.

of Peter Shafirov, the Russian Vice-Chancellor, and indignantly blamed contrary winds for the failure of the Danish transport to arrive sooner. He vigorously complained of the scarcity of ships and his inability to find enough to carry the Russian troops. He had raked through all the ports from Danzig to Copenhagen to collect those he now had.⁹ Due to the strenuous efforts of Danish agents in Pomerania and Mecklenburg, however, the transports were secured and made ready. When Tordenskjold, the famous Danish captain in charge of the naval convoy, arrived at Warnemünde on September 1, one hundred and eighty-six vessels were loaded, and in a short time they sailed for Copenhagen. When the full military contingent arrived in the Danish capital on September 9, 10, and 15, twenty-nine thousand Russian troops were in the vicinity of the city; almost an equal number of Danish soldiers were in the same region.¹⁰

The arrival of his troops made the Czar more eager than ever to begin the invasion. On September 10 he undertook a second reconnaissance of Swedish shores and defenses. His snow was shelled by the shore batteries off Karlskrona, and Peter narrowly escaped by luck and fast sailing. Yet he did discover that Charles had strengthened land fortifications considerably and had brought the major part of the Swedish army into the south. Two Swedish soldiers captured on a third reconnaissance by Russian Cossacks revealed that Charles had some twenty thousand men in Skaane and that artillery was concentrated heavily in Landskrona and the seaports. By September 15 the southern provinces had become a veritable storehouse of arms and men, but even then the full extent of these defensive measures was not entirely recognized by either Danes or Russians. General Weide, the Russian infantry commander, who arrived from Mecklenburg on September 10, urged the Czar to give up the invasion because of the tardiness of Danish preparations and the successful reinforcement of Swedish defenses by Charles.¹¹ In a conference between the Russian and Danish

⁹August 24, 1716, Tydske Kancelliets Udenrigs Afdeling. *Geheimregistratur der Anno 1716*. (Copenhagen) Vol. 258. (Hereafter cited: *Geh. Reg.*)

¹⁰For transport of Russian troops see Karl Julius Hartman, *Tsar Peters Underhandlingar 1716 om Landgang i Skaane* (Helsingfors, 1887), pp. 79-80.

¹¹Holm, pp. 79-81.

ministers held the same day as the disembarkation of Weide's troops, the Russian attitude seemed to be inclined toward carrying out plans, for the Danes were questioned as to their intention regarding transports for Russian cavalry.¹²

But it was the conference of a week later which brought the first portents of the impending failure to carry out the Skaane project. In this meeting, which included the most important ministers of both countries,¹³ doubts began to pour forth. Dubiety had been expressed by the Russian ministers in the preceding meeting of September 10, but proposals then made had been merely taken under consideration; now the reply was to come. A wide variance of opinion was immediately shown in the two views of Swedish vulnerability. The Russian ministers claimed the time of year too late, blaming the Danish officials for neglect of their duties. The Danish chief-of-staff, Scholten, confidently boasted that Landskrona could be taken in fourteen days. The Danish ministers, knowing what was impending, began pleading that the coming year was most uncertain; they had already spent too much in preparing the present campaign to stop now; there might not be transports for 1717. Thus they begged for the consummation of the "design on Skaane." That Charles XII would again invade Norway was inevitable, and the Danes had no way to combat the Swedish forces; only the attack on Sweden could prevent Charles from invading Norway.¹⁴

Dano-Russian schemes appeared to be crumbling through circumstances beyond the control of either nation. It was a bitter pill for the Danes to swallow, and they persisted in hopes that some plan could still be arranged. Frederick, in a resolution of September 19, spoke hesitantly of the invasion as something yet to be accomplished during the month.¹⁵ The same day, a second

¹²September 10, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

¹³Danish: Wibe, Sehested, Krabbe, Holstein, Scholten, Westphalen, and Dewitz; Generals Leegaard, von Einden, Boisset, and Count Sponneck. Russian: Golovkin, Shafirov, Tolstoi, B. Dolgoruki, Sheremetev; Generals Weide, Reprin, G. Dolgoruki, and Butterlin.

¹⁴Protocol of September 17, 1716, *Geb. Reg.* It was agreed that both states would keep their armies in the field in order to be prepared for the next year.

¹⁵King's resolution, September 19, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

general ministerial conference was the scene of the actual anti-climatic official statement. Shafirov took upon himself the unwelcome task of informing the Danes of the Czar's unalterable decision to give up the Skaane undertaking and of his intention to renew plans for next year. In addition to the lateness of the year the Russian ministers added that the difficulty in outfitting the Danish fleet had delayed action. A request for some commitment found the Danish ministers lamely refusing to plan for 1717 on the grounds that changed circumstances would alter views. The Russians condescendingly offered to bear a portion of the cost of transports out of pity for Denmark's plight, and they were also willing to furnish some troops for the protection of Norway.¹⁶

The reasons for giving up the invasion were clear enough. The Czar had seen the state of defenses erected by Charles in southern Sweden and understood the problem of facing him, while the Danes did not. Peter had no intention of risking his army and fleet in a struggle to the death under adverse winter conditions. His experiences with Charles had taught him a healthy respect for the Swedish king's ability to fight. That ability would be increased a hundred-fold when the Swedish army was battling on its own territory in defense of its own lands. Russian soldiers would lose their lives; Denmark was not supposed to suffer such losses, as it was claimed that she had mostly foreigners in her army.¹⁷

Many reasons were alleged by the Danes to be the basis of the Czar's refusal to continue operations, but few were wholly true. It was claimed that Russia had begun separate negotiations with Sweden, but only two attempts had been made and the Danish envoy, Westphalen, had been fully informed as to details.¹⁸ A

¹⁶Protocol of conference between Scholten, Wibe, Sehested, Dewitz; Weide, Shafirov, and Dolgoruki, September 19, 1716, *Geb. Reg.* The question of these troops was to be a perpetual source of conflict.

¹⁷*Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du XVIII siècle, contenant les négociations, traités, résolutions, et autres documens authentiques concernant les affaires d'état*, ed. Guillaume de Lamberty (The Hague, 1700-1748), IX, 628-30. Here is a letter of "A Gentleman of Mecklenburg to His Friend at Copenhagen" in which the Russian side of the controversy is defended.

¹⁸Westphalen to King, June 20, June 27, 1716. *Tydske Kancelliets Udenrigs Afdeling. Rusland B. Relationes aus Rusland von Ao. 1713 bis 1716.* (Copenhagen) Vols. 58-59. (Hereafter cited: *Rusland B. Relationes. . .*)

report, current in Copenhagen, that the Czar intended overrunning Denmark and seizing the country had little basis in fact but was widely accepted among the common people.¹⁹ That the Danes feared the Russian soldiery was evident from the strong measures taken to protect vital places upon their arrival and during their stay in Denmark.²⁰ Neither was there truth in the rumor of the Czar's interest in securing a separate peace with Sweden through the threat of armed force to be used against Denmark. He was sincerely determined to carry out this invasion, but only if the chances of its success were more certain than at the last they seemed to be. If he had been able to secure assistance from the Danes for the Russian diversion across the Gulf of Bothnia, and to effect the actual union of the English squadron under Norris with his fleet, the Czar would have completed plans even at so late a date. His distrust of the Danish ministers, the Wismar affair, the delay in transporting Russian troops to Denmark, and the Danish protest of Russian troops quartering in Mecklenburg all combined to make him disinclined to continue the alliance.²¹ The presence of a coterie of Danish ministers favorable to the Mecklenburg nobility, and thus presumably opposing Russian aims in the duchy, also made the Czar suspicious. He blamed Bernstorff, George I's Hanoverian minister, for the Danish attitude, for their lack of enthusiasm, and for their procrastination; more and more Peter was becoming disgusted with the scheming of George and the Hanoverian group.

The effect upon Europe of the Czar's decision to abandon the Skaane plan was twofold. Russian policies in western Europe, hitherto feared on account of the marriage of the Duchess Catherine to the Duke of Mecklenburg, were now viewed as dangerous

¹⁹Bacmeister, II, 55-56; Holm, p. 124.

²⁰Peter Henry Bruce, *Memoirs of Peter Henry Bruce, Esq., a Military Officer in the Service of Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain* . . . (London, 1782), pp. 162-63; Bacmeister, II, 556. This work mentions that the Danes were lined up on the ramparts with guns to see that the Russian troops left and to be sure that they did not return. Another report by Polwarth was that he had learned that Russian troops had been fired upon when they landed. *Polwarth Papers*, I, 74-79.

²¹Holm, pp. 83-89; Tuxen, Harbou, and With-Seidelin, VIII, 286-92.

because of their potentialities. And, paradoxically enough, giving up the project strengthened the Czar's hands, for being entrenched in Mecklenburg, opposed to Hanover and Denmark, and not too friendly with Prussia, he could threaten all three with equal ease by the solidarity of his military position. This was later to prove beneficial to him in playing the game of power diplomacy.

Danish opposition to Peter's decision was officially stated in a painfully long letter from Frederick to the Czar.²² The Danish king also enclosed a general resolution with various details of why his country wished to proceed and the purpose of their delay in preparations. The most logical pretext was that the Danes would find it impossible to spend money again on military and naval preparations. Frederick pleaded for the completion of plans for many reasons: the expenses of transport rentals, the necessity of raising funds again in 1717, the unlikelihood of the English fleet assisting in the spring, the fear that Charles would invade Norway, and the danger that other powers might meddle in northern affairs and upset the fortunate circumstances of this autumn.²³ The Czar's answer remained the same.

Yet so long as the fleets and armies were still in Denmark, allied hopes for some military or naval action persisted. The return of Norris from Bornholm on September 20 caused the Danish ministers and king to try to have the English admiral mediate with the Czar, as his standing with both parties was well known. In the conference on this subject the English-Hanoverian ministers were told the "descent" was not to be made, nor could Denmark carry out the invasion alone. For that reason Norris was requested to see the Czar and to convince him of Denmark's desire to persevere in plans already arranged. Norris did confer with the Czar and thought he had succeeded in persuading Peter.²⁴ Later that evening, while visiting with the Czar at the house of Sheremetev, the Russian field marshal, Norris was informed that the Russian ruler would not continue present co-operation with Denmark and that draft conventions for the next year would be taken up in the

²²September 20, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

²³"Species facti," September, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

²⁴Norris' report of September 25, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

future.²⁵ The Hanoverian-English envoys were ordered by Stanhope to seek any chance and to use all possible means to have the attack on Sweden completed. Incidentally, following the usual lines of George's policy, they were also to suggest to the Czar the possibility and advisability of having his troops in Poland rather than Denmark or the Empire, as the war between Turkey and the Empire might involve Poland.²⁶

Under such circumstances it may readily be surmised that relations between Russia and Hanover were becoming more and more strained. Bernstorff was credited with a proposal to seize Russian ships, and even the person of the Czar himself, in order to guarantee the withdrawal of Russian troops from Denmark and the Empire.²⁷ When Stanhope in London learned of the possibility of Peter's taking possession of winter quarters in Denmark or the Empire by force, he sent word that strong representations should be made by Norris or Bothmer if the report proved true. All possible aid should be given to Denmark if the situation should come to such an impasse.²⁸ In a letter of September 29, Polwarth assured Stanhope that no violence was to be feared between Denmark and Russia over the question of troops. He did report that the Czar was attempting to secure winter quarters in Denmark and, it was rumored, had offered the Danish king a sum of money for such quarters²⁹—the last, a cheering bit of news for George I who was determined to keep Russian troops out of the Empire, even if it led to serious diplomatic conflicts with Russia. This avid desire to see Russian troops removed from Mecklenburg for the winter compelled George to ask his ministers to co-operate to the fullest extent with the Danes in any plan that they might propose.³⁰ In spite of Norris' assurance that the Russian corps was

²⁵Polwarth to Robethon, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 83-84.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁷J. F. Chance, *George I and the Northern War* (London, 1909), p. 134.

²⁸Stanhope to Norris, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 83.

²⁹Polwarth to Robethon, *ibid.*, I, 85.

³⁰*British Diplomatic Instructions, 1689-1789, Sweden*, ed. J. F. Chance ("Camden Third Series"; London, 1922) I, 89-90. (Hereafter cited: *British Diplomatic Instructions . . . Sweden*.)

only pausing in Mecklenburg on its way to Poland, George began gathering his own troops on the Mecklenburg border in anticipation of trouble and to protect Hanover in case of hostilities.

The Danes were equally resolved that Russian troops were not to remain in Denmark. Where these troops were sent was immaterial to the Danes, but they must depart from Danish territory. Frederick IV in a letter to the Czar, dated September 23, showed his willingness to allow Russian troops to remain if they were used for the Skaane invasion but refused an offer of fifteen battalions on the plea that such a number would be insufficient to protect Norway and Denmark. Russian troops should be embarked on Danish transports to sail wherever the Czar wished; the necessary arrangements had been made with the Danish admiral, Judichaer, to fulfill these provisions.³¹ No direct answer to this letter was received and the omission was attributed to the Czar's ill-humor.

In order to have his case clearly stated, Frederick wrote to Emperor Charles VI disclaiming any responsibility for Russian activities or for what damage they might do. At the same time, a second letter to the Czar reiterated the Danish demand for the removal of Russian troops from Denmark as soon as possible. Again no answer was received from the Czar, but a statement was given to Sehested by Dolgoruki, the Russian minister to Denmark, to the effect that the embarkation of troops, with the exception of the cavalry, would take place whenever feasible. The Czar desired very much to have the protection of the Danish fleet for the trip to winter quarters, a request which was a tactful and tacit refusal of the Danish petition for the loan of Russian troops to protect Norway and Denmark. Dolgoruki's request for Danish proposals for a 1717 invasion plan was refused on the grounds that any proposition should first come from the Russians, and that thereafter the Danish Council would consider the basis for a convention.³² The Council in addition refused the Russian demand for troop quarters in Denmark, in Danish-German provinces, or in Norway.³³ Another note of September 29 showed still

³¹Frederick to Czar, September 23, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

³²Frederick to the Czar and explanation, September 26, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

³³Answer to Dolgoruki, September 28, 1716, *ibid.*

further obstinacy in regard to the withdrawal of her ally's troops and future campaign plans.³⁴

In pursuance of Stanhope's orders the English-Hanoverian ministers futilely attempted to reorganize matters. A conference between Danish and Russian ministers, with Norris as moderator, resulted in nothing. Norris, however, was placed in an embarrassing position by Gyldenlöve's request to cover the transport of Russian troops, for he had to refuse. George did not wish to support Russian policies in Germany in any respect, even to the extent of assisting in transferring them from Denmark to Mecklenburg. Shafirov also refused to agree to the plea for continuation of the invasion plan; he stated bluntly that the Czar would quarter his troops in Mecklenburg in order to have them close at hand in the following spring.³⁵

A meeting between the Czar and Frederick on October 3 changed the position of the two states not a whit,³⁶ but the ministers of George I were ordered to urge a plan for an invasion from Finland, or, as suggested by Stanhope, an immediate attack upon Karlskrona.³⁷ The ensuing English-Hanoverian conference with the Czar's ministers proved wholly unsuccessful.³⁸ Norris, however, agreed to present Russian ideas on the subject to the Danish ministers, which he did on October 5. At an earlier private meeting with Norris, Sehested had learned enough about the Czar's proposals to make it apparent that the Czar intended to divide his troops into three parts. Attention was also paid to the embarkation of Russian troops, which had been unable to sail from Copenhagen due to the lack of wind.³⁹ The presence of twenty-two Swedish men-of-war off Danzig was alluded to; Norris suggested allied naval action off Bornholm to prevent the Swedish fleet from

³⁴September 29, 1716, *ibid.*

³⁵Polwarth to Robethon, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 86-88.

³⁶Protocol of conference between Frederick IV and the Czar, October 3, 1716, *Geb. Reg.* During this conference the Danish king spent most of his time lamenting the abandonment of the Skaane invasion.

³⁷*British Diplomatic Instructions . . . Sweden*, I, 90, 91, 93-94.

³⁸Summary of conference, October 4, 1716, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 88-89.

³⁹*Ibid.*, I, 89-90. It was almost as difficult to get the Russian troops out of Copenhagen as it had been to transport them there.

re-entering Karlskrona, recommending engaging it in battle, if possible. The suggestion was taken without comment but re-appeared in later conferences.

Two meetings between the Danes and English-Hanoverians resulted in little agreement but disclosed a rapidly growing anti-Russian sentiment. It was even suggested that the Russians be prevented from landing troops in Mecklenburg, but the English were dubious of their ground, and Norris told the Danish king that they had orders to "assist" the Danes. A short time later Polwarth received a letter from Robethon, the Hanoverian secretary in London, ordering him to press for the attack upon Karlskrona and to cease anti-Russian activity for the moment.⁴⁰

Norris dined with the Czar on October 9 and proposed the plan of the attack upon the Swedish naval base with the combined allied fleet. The Czar seemed inclined to favor the plan, but he evidently desired some assurance that Denmark would join, for Norris, Polwarth, and Bothmer conferred on the following day with the Danish Admirals Gyldenlöve, Raben, Sehested, and Generals Scholten and Dewitz, concerning the question.⁴¹ Evidently the Russian minister, Shafirov, with others of the Russian staff, was in attendance, for his opinions were expressed at various times during the discussion. Norris outlined plans for a raid upon Karlskrona stating that express orders had been given by the English king for the junction of the English squadron with the Dano-Russian fleet. Peter approved highly of the plan, so Shafirov said, and Russian forces would be employed if it were found practicable. The scheme, Norris went on to add, would require twenty to thirty thousand men to attack from the land side, while the allied fleet would enter the harbor and destroy the Swedish ships lying at anchor.

Danish objections to the plan were most vigorous, and the Danish generals were of the opinion that, unless the Czar used his galleys to aid the combined force operating within the harbor, nothing

⁴⁰Cf. Memorandum of conference, October 5, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*, and Polwarth's memorandum, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 90; also letters between Polwarth and Robethon, pp. 73-93. For the second conference see Memorandum of conference, October 8, 1716, *ibid.*, I, 91-92.

⁴¹*Ibid.* I, 92; October 9, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

could be done at this late season. Scheltinga, the Russian vice-admiral in command of the galley fleet, refused to approve this proposal as the galleys were too light to withstand winter storms. Danish objections were also raised because of: the need of heavy siege artillery; the necessity of finding horses, a difficult task so late in the year; and the want of provisions for the entire army. A second reason for opposing the plan was that Charles XII was supposed to have his army congregated in Skaane, which made the affair doubly hazardous. The bombardment of Karlskrona, the attack from the land side, and the destruction of the Swedish fleet were not to be lightly undertaken at this juncture. The Danes were no doubt wary of the plan and of its cost to their government. From these surly expressions of Danish obstinacy Norris observed that nothing could be done. He therefore asked for a report of the results of the conference for Frederick IV and the Czar, and pleaded for some form of plan for the following year. Yet he could not answer affirmatively Dolgoruki's inquiry as to the powers of the English-Hanoverian ministers to negotiate; all he could say was that no hindrance stood in the way of securing instructions and full powers if there were some prospect of the conclusion of a convention. Sehested complimented the English ministers on their proposal, while tactfully and belatedly expressing Danish willingness to join a combined operation against Karlskrona if the scheme were practicable, but no obstacle to the embarkation of Russian troops and their transportation out of Denmark could be considered at the moment.

The failure to agree to Norris' proposed attack on Karlskrona marks the last serious endeavor to secure action from the Russo-Danish armies and fleets in 1716, but, diplomatically, the Danish king's statement the next day, October 10, denotes the end of the northern alliance. Its immediate publication in news journals drove both the Czar and George I onto the defensive, for the king's declaration placed responsibility for the failure of the plan upon the Czar's shoulders and showed George to be a willing partner in the invasion of Sweden as king of England. Repercussions in English public opinion were immediate, for the majority of the people did not wish to see Sweden's position altered; such an

alteration would jeopardize the balance in the Baltic by making Russia a major power.⁴²

In spite of current disagreements as to policies and plans both the Russian and Danish ministries were laboring to perfect a convention for the coming year covering an invasion of Sweden. Two draft projects were presented at a conference on October 10 in which the Russian ministers found the Danish draft proposals unsound, mainly because the co-operation of the English fleet was not stipulated, and the Danish navy was not bound to support the Russian descent across the Gulf of Bothnia into Sweden.⁴³ The disparity in the texts of the draft treaties was too great for early removal by negotiations. The Danish answer to the Russian proposals, handed the Czar by Westphalen, consisted largely of complaints, together with protestations of desires to continue plans for an invasion. Frederick IV did not offer a single rational proposal or reason for not accepting the Russian draft, or any defense of his own counter-proposal.⁴⁴ Polwarth wrote early in October to Robethon of the unlikelihood of any agreement for action in 1716 and even stated that it was strongly possible that the Czar might leave Copenhagen without formulating any plan for the spring campaign.⁴⁵ The Danes insisted that English aid must be given and that England must promise them a squadron in 1717.

Norris implied that such aid would be given, if the dual questions whether they were to undertake the Skaane or the Finnish invasion and whether Russian troops would be removed from Mecklenburg were settled. When the Danes asked him to secure instructions and full powers, Norris stated that no action could be

⁴²October 10, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*; George I to Frederick IV, September 5, 1716, Tydske Kancelliets Udenrigs Afdeling, *England C. Envoye extraordinaire Henrik Frederik von Söhlenthals Gesandtskabs-Arkiv* . . . 1711-1731 (Copenhagen); cf. Chance, *George I and the Northern War*, pp. 141-42. (Hereafter cited: *England C. Envoye* . . . *Söhlenthals*.)

⁴³October 11, 12, 1716, *Geb. Reg.* Other copies of the draft treaties are to be found in *England C. Envoye* . . . *Söhlenthals*; a résumé of them can be found in Holm, pp. 105-7; the conference of October 10, 1716, is in *Geb. Reg.*

⁴⁴October 14, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

⁴⁵October 11/22, 1716, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 106.

taken until it was apparent that the two questions had been completely arranged to the satisfaction of George I. Norris was even more reluctant to mollify the Danes when he found that Gyldenlöve had orders to sail with the English fleet no farther north or east in the Baltic than the island of Öland. Norris begged Sehested for Danish fleet support, but his own request was blocked by the necessity of securing Bothmer's and Polwarth's consent. Norris' chief aim in proposing such a combination was to protect merchantmen and to see that a watch was kept on the cruising Swedish fleet. Sehested referred Norris' letter to Gyldenlöve, which was tantamount to pigeonholing the matter.⁴⁶

Thus northern affairs seemed to be coming to a conclusion little desired by any members of the northern league. Because it was so clear that nothing was to be done—and George I at Hanover had received this impression—orders were given to Norris in the last week in October to leave the Baltic when the fleet and merchantmen were ready. The English king expressed his complete dissatisfaction with Danish obstinacy and ordered Polwarth to protest against Danish conduct in the matter of transports to Mecklenburg and her selfish insistence upon her own plan for the invasion of Sweden in 1717. He was also to ask why she refused to quarter Russian troops in Denmark.⁴⁷ Evidently George was somewhat piqued by the naked state in which Frederick had left him by uncovering his anti-Swedish policies. Norris' conduct at Copenhagen had been exemplary, so the king stated, which meant that the English admiral had avoided committing himself, or England, to any further action in behalf of the northern alliance, a policy which George wished to have pursued.⁴⁸

Futile attempts to arrange an invasion plan for 1717 and to mend relations between Denmark and Russia continued. Conferences regarding plans ended in disagreements, recriminations, and Danish pleas of poverty, while Peter stubbornly insisted on Denmark

⁴⁶Norris to Polwarth and Norris to Sehested, *ibid.*, I, 99; Sehested to Norris, October 15, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

⁴⁷Stanhope to Polwarth, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 99.

⁴⁸Stanhope to Norris, October 16, 1716, *British Diplomatic Instructions . . . Sweden*, I, 94-95.

assuming a larger economic and military share in projects for the coming year.⁴⁹ To the English ministers Frederick IV complained of the Czar's resolute insistence upon his own scheme, and for that reason he wanted to know if George would not give orders to Norris to combine the English squadron with the Danish fleet, either in the Baltic or off Norway.⁵⁰ On October 21, before anything could be done by the English ministers to fulfill Frederick's request for the English squadron, the Danish king issued a declaration in reference to the Czar's position, his loan of troops, and the coming campaign of 1717. The Danish king, hitherto well-advised, revealed a lamentable lack of counsel in the issuance of this declaration. It was, perhaps, justified as a defense of Denmark's prerogatives, but, in light of what was being attempted, it showed a misapprehension of the diplomatic consequences. By this rejection of the Russian proposals, greater problems than Danish officials could solve were created. The declaration read like a rebuke to Russian hopes of a Dano-Russian alliance; henceforth Denmark could not hope to gain the Czar's consent to any alliance, however attractive it might be. By the same declaration Frederick doomed to failure Westphalen's subsequent attempts to formulate a plan for northern collaboration.⁵¹

This resolve was perhaps the reason why the Czar questioned Norris as to what aid George would give him if he undertook an invasion of Sweden alone. The Dano-Russian alliance was discarded as the Danes were raising too many difficulties. Specifically, the Czar asked for a combined Dutch-English squadron to cover the Russian expedition from the Aaland Islands into Sweden. While Norris stated he personally thought it would be agreeable to George I, the plan was eventually to be discarded because the Czar would not fulfill the English demand for the withdrawal of his troops from Mecklenburg.⁵²

The chances that the Skaane invasion could be completed in

⁴⁹October 17, 1716, *Geh. Reg.*

⁵⁰Protocol of conference, October 20, 1716, *ibid.*

⁵¹King's declaration to Czar's proposals, October 21, 1716, *ibid.*; Westphalen to King, October 21, 1716, *England C. Envoye . . . Söhlenthals.*

⁵²October 25, 1716, *Geh. Reg.*

1716 were remote. Danish pessimism was further confirmed when Westphalen was sent to find out whether an agreement could not be reached before the Czar's departure from Copenhagen, which was planned to take place soon, and he was told by Shafirov that the Czar's final resolution had been given the Danish ministers in previous conferences. If Denmark wished to begin negotiations on the basis of his proposals, efforts would be made to arrange a concert; otherwise nothing would be attempted.⁵³ The brevity of time was apparent when it was perceived that Russian troops were ready to sail and that the Czar was soon to follow.⁵⁴

A final ceremonial meeting between the two monarchs was proposed, and Frederick IV prepared a statement of Danish aims and purposes.⁵⁵ On October 26 Westphalen was sent to the Czar to pave the way for this display of amity between Frederick and Peter when the latter was to leave Copenhagen. He was unable to see the Czar and thus unable to accomplish his purpose, but Shafirov told him that no hindrances prevented the arrangement of a convention for a spring campaign. Denmark's plan for English assistance was making negotiations a difficult matter, for George was obstinately insisting that the Russian corps be removed from the Empire.⁵⁶

Thus, instead of the ceremonial meeting with its fine phrases and friendly assurances, only a statement was issued of the Czar's wishes. The Danes were advised to persuade England to agree to the Russian proposals and were to give such proofs of their intention to enter the campaign of 1717 as the king of England should

⁵³Westphalen to King, October 23, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

⁵⁴As a matter of fact Russian soldiers had been on board ships in Copenhagen harbor for a month awaiting favorable winds to set sail for Mecklenburg. Their departure was watched with care, and artillery was trained on the ships to be sure that they did not return. While in Copenhagen harbor, the Russians had suffered greatly from lack of provisions, wood, and water, but the Danish people showed little solicitude for their plight. Polwarth to Robethon, *Polwarth Papers*, I, 106-7; Tom Bruce to Duke of Mar, *Stuart Papers*, III, 55, 126-27. Cf. Tuxen, Harbou, and With-Seidelin, VIII, 321-22.

⁵⁵October 25, 1716, *Geb. Reg.* An interesting proposal was made here. Two thousand Danish or English sailors were to be used on board Russian ships in order to allow the Russian fleet to be fully equipped.

⁵⁶Westphalen to King, October 26, 1716, *Geb. Reg.*

require.⁵⁷ The same morning the Czar and Czarina left Copenhagen for Hamburg with the usual formalities of salutes and courtesies from the Danish court. Norris, with the Danish fleet, eventually sailed to Bornholm to join the merchant ships there and to convoy them to Copenhagen. In the middle of November he left Copenhagen harbor and arrived at the Nore on November 29. Thus, in spite of the continuance of diplomatic endeavors to arrange a plan for an attack upon Sweden in 1717, the drama of the Skaane invasion of 1716 was over with the main actors departing the stage.

The negotiations during the winter of 1716-17 succeeded only in pointing out the differences between the two camps within the northern alliance. Westphalen, the Danish envoy, followed the Czar to Hamburg, Pymont, then to Holland, all the while lamenting his inability to make progress in arranging a convention for a spring campaign. He complained of the drunkenness of the Czar, of his absorption in social affairs, and of his deliberate avoidance of the subject of Dano-Russian relations.⁵⁸

European alliances were being rearranged, and neither the Czar nor his ministers were in a mood to talk of a campaign in 1717 when matters of such importance were being discussed. The European realignment was formally begun in January when the secret negotiations of Abbé Dubois ended in a defensive alliance between France and England. Having relations with France on a firm basis, George increased his hostility toward Russia. He insisted upon the removal of Russian troops from the Empire before discussing co-operation between Russia and England in a Swedish invasion. He further attempted to cajole Denmark to side with him against the rising Russian influence in northern Europe.

Various incidents also arose to confuse and complex Dano-Russian relations. The Travemünde affair, involving the quartering of Russian troops in a city supposedly under Danish jurisdiction, placed Westphalen in a very delicate and embarrassing position.

⁵⁷October 27, 1716, *ibid.*

⁵⁸For information on these later negotiations see Westphalen's letters to the king and Sehested, November 14, 17, 18, 24, 27, 29; December 5, 12, 28; January 2, 5, 9, 12, 16, 19, 26. *Rusland B. Relationes*. . . .

Shafirov called the matter an "innocent demarche"; the Danes termed it a serious infringement of their sovereignty. Westphalen was forced to explain a heated letter of Frederick to Peter regarding the matter, but he could only offer weak excuses. In January a series of conferences in Amsterdam and Copenhagen between the Danish and Russian ministers brought about the final break.⁵⁹ Shafirov explained the situation to Westphalen, but concluded with ominous words: "I wish Denmark good luck and victory on her way alone."⁶⁰ It was more than Westphalen could bear; he wrote in discouraging terms to the Danish king. A Danish victory in the northern war did come in 1719, but it was yet long distant and then only partial.

The projected invasion of Sweden in 1716 is unique in that, while failing, it caused Sweden to cease her efforts to regain her lost dominance of the Baltic and to turn her thoughts to peace. If successful the expedition would have meant the end of Sweden as an independent state and would have given Russia all of Finland and hegemony in the Baltic. The land of Sweden itself would have been divided and the southern portion given to Denmark. The major stumbling block to these plans was the failure of England-Hanover, in the person of George I, to co-operate. He opposed Russian aggression and aggrandizement abroad; he opposed the extension of her influence and prestige; Danish control of the Sound was dangerous and the balance of power must be maintained in the Baltic. He envisioned a balance between Denmark, Sweden, Prussia, and Russia with the English fleet serving as the counterweight. At the time set for the invasion in September, 1716, he was in favor of supporting Russo-Danish claims and policies, but he soon perceived his error and changed his plans.

Today these same territories are under fire. What is to be the solution to the problem of possession of the Baltic provinces and dominance of the Baltic Sea? It was not settled by the abortive

⁵⁹For the story of these conferences see letters to Westphalen, January 12, 19, 30, 1717, Tydske Kancelliets Udenrigs Afdeling. *Rusland C. Envoye extraordinaire Hans Georg von Westphals* Gesandtskabs-Arkiv, Sept. 1714-1717. (Copenhagen) Vol. 129; also Westphalen to King, January 9, 23, 26, 1717, *Rusland B. Relations*. . . .

⁶⁰Westphalen to King, January 26, 1717, *Rusland B. Relations*. . . .

Skaane expedition in 1716, but today the decision, not made in the time of Peter the Great and Charles XII, is likely to be in favor of Russia.