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Sweden In The Seventeenth Century (European History In Perspective)



Synopsis

The history of Sweden in the seventeenth century is perhaps one of the most remarkable political success stories of early modern Europe. Little more than a century after achieving independence from Denmark, Sweden - an impoverished and sparsely-populated state - had defeated all of its most fearsome enemies and was ranked amongst the great powers of Europe. In this book, which incorporates the latest research on the subject, Paul Douglas Lockhart:- surveys the political, diplomatic, economic, social and cultural history of the country, from the beginnings of its career as an empire to its decline at the end of the seventeenth century- examines the mechanisms that helped Sweden to achieve the status of a great power, and the reasons for its eventual downfall- emphasises the interplay between social structure, constitutional development, and military necessity. Clear and well-written, Lockhart's text is essential reading for all those with an interest in the fascinating history of early modern Sweden.

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Customer Reviews

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PAUL DOUGLAS LOCKHART is Associate Professor of History at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. He is a specialist in the history of early modern Scandinavia, and his previous publications include *Denmark in the Thirty Years' War* (1996).

This book was purchased through its U.K. site. In his history of Sweden in the 17th century Prof. Lockhart writes about King Karl X Gustav's July 1655 invasion of Poland-Lithuania. In the last third of page 96 he mentions Karl X Gustav gaining the support of Prince Rákóczi of Transylvania. He goes on to say that Prince Rákóczi's subsequent invasion of Poland raised "the specter of Hapsburg intervention." Prof Lockhart does not mention that Transylvania was a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. Both Karl X and Rákóczi knew that Ottoman vassal states had to have advance approval of any sort of alliance. This point seems as important a factor as Hapsburg concern. Sweden sent a delegation to Turkey in early 1657 to seek the required approval for a Swedish-Transylvanian alliance. The Turkish Grand Vizier, Köprülü Mehmed Pasha, opposed any alliance between Sweden and Transylvania. The Ottomans invaded Transylvania in the spring of 1657 to punish Rákóczi for invading Poland without approval - while Rákóczi was in Poland. He was defeated in July of 1657 and returned to Transylvania without most of his army. He fought two Turkish invasions (1657 and 1658 - 1660) and ended up dying of battle wounds in June of 1660. After his death Turks and the Hapsburgs essentially divided up Transylvania. Sweden's 1657 ambassador, Claes Ræmbold, wrote a report to Karl X Gustav which was subsequently translated into English. A careful review of that report raises all sorts of questions about Karl X Gustav's motives and plans. Karl X Gustav essentially used Rákóczi and then abandoned him. Did Sweden use the possibility of an indirect alliance with between Sweden and the Ottoman Empire as a way to discourage intervention by other European powers from approximately 1655 to 1658? Other powers were likely reluctant to enter into any conflict involving Sweden until the intentions of the Ottomans were clear. The Turks had already attempted to take Vienna and would try again. How much of a risk was Karl X Gustav taking? As Lockhart describes, Sweden was weak and lacked resources. Turkish approval of a Transylvanian

invasion of Poland could easily have been interpreted as an intervention into European politics. Might this have started another major European war? And ending up destroying the empire he had expanded first as a general and then as king? Karl X Gustav encouraged Rákóczi to invade in advance of Turkish approval. This resulted in Turkey using the failure to obtain advance approval as the reason to invade Transylvania and depose Rákóczi - the Ottomans wanted a reason to depose such an independent vassal. Sweden gave Turkey a reason. Was this intentional or unintentional? The absence of any mention of Turkish involvement leaves out a bit of history that could be included and which might help to give a fuller picture of Sweden as a major player in the European politics of the period. Other descriptions by Prof. Lockhart of events surrounding Sweden's Polish invasion have detail that provides useful information (e.g. detail about Karl X Gustav justifying his invasion on the grounds that the majority of Polish nobility had invited him). The Ottoman involvement would have equally added useful background information. On Page x at the start of the book Karl XI, the son of Karl X Gustav, is not included in the chart of Swedish Monarchs. Is this an accidental omission or is there a particular reason for his absence from this chart? Karl XI did rule the Swedish Empire from 1660 to 1697. The cover uses a picture of a painting by Flemish artist Bonaventura Peeters held by a German museum. Several museums in Stockholm have art usable by publishers which may be a bit more representational of Sweden in the 17th century. Should this valuable work go into a second edition this reader suggests some review and revision. This book is needed as most detail about this period is in Swedish. A Swedish historian who speaks/reads but doesn't want to write in English might be considered as an assistant editor for this work.

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