

RUSSIA, ENGLAND AND SWEDISH PARTY POLITICS, 1762-1766: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN GREAT POWER DIPLOMACY AND DOMESTIC POLITICS DURING SWEDEN'S AGE OF LIBERTY. By *Michael F. Metcalf*. Stockholm and Totowa, N.J.: Almqvist & Wiksell International and Rowman and Littlefield, 1977. x, 278 pp. \$35.00.

This book is a Stockholm University dissertation by a young American scholar who learned well the craft of diplomatic history from leading Swedish masters. Metcalf chooses a major problem of eighteenth-century Swedish politics—the collapse of the nearly thirty-year dominance of the Hat Party—and illuminates the relationship of this change to pressures exerted by England, Russia, Prussia, Denmark, and France. Metcalf shows an impressive command of sources, which include materials from the archives of Paris, The Hague, Copenhagen, Merseburg, London, Belfast, Moscow, and Leningrad, in addition to extensive Swedish materials. He was especially fortunate to gain access to the Soviet foreign affairs archives; this was a rare opportunity, even though he was not allowed to examine the complete file for the period in question.

Swedish party politics in the “Era of Liberty” is a fascinating subject that enjoys a large literature in Swedish. Yet, apart from the well-known work of Michael Roberts, few monographic studies have appeared in English. Hence, Metcalf is not merely contributing to a debate among specialists but also affording non-Swedish speakers a closer look at the workings of a political system that served as an important model for the growth of European parliamentary government.

Metcalf's focus is on the efforts of others, principally England and Russia, to influence that system. England's objectives were limited to increased commerce and a mutual defense treaty, the idea being to break Sweden's ties to France. Russia pursued the much more ambitious aim of altering the Swedish constitution and then drawing the reformed polity into a comprehensive alliance of northern powers—Nikita Panin's “Northern System.” Metcalf sees the *riksdag* of 1765–66 as a major test of Panin's system, since the achievement of Russian aims in Stockholm required the close cooperation of England, Denmark, and Prussia. The study demonstrates that the system functioned well in this instance, even if divergent interests of the various governments ultimately frustrated Panin's hopes for a broad alliance of northern courts.

Methodologically, Metcalf runs into difficulty. He sets out to measure the effect of foreign influence by comparing flows of foreign money with the actions of Swedish parties or decisions of the *riksdag*. Yet the monetary contributions and their timing seem to have been much less a barometer of foreign influence than a measure of the commitment of foreign courts to certain policies or changes. Moreover, since money is so central to the discussion, it is irritating to find it variously represented in a half-dozen currencies, without a set of equivalencies by which to compare amounts.

Still, within the limits of traditional diplomatic history, Metcalf gives a thorough and masterful exposition, and demonstrates that these methods, when applied with rigor and talent, can lead to many interesting discoveries and corrections of present knowledge. His study, therefore, represents an important contribution to the diplomatic history of the eighteenth century.

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BERING'S VOYAGES: WHITHER AND WHY. By *Raymond H. Fisher*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977. xiv, 217 pp. Maps. \$17.95.

Bering's voyages hold a special fascination, as does Fisher's book, despite occasional repetitiveness. With the minuteness which often distinguishes medievalists, Fisher

investigates the background and text of Peter the Great's instructions to Bering—the meaning of every word, possible thought behind it, the way the orders were understood by Bering and his officers, and even the sentence structure. He tries to find out what Peter wanted, what he did not want, and what aims he might have covered up by the wording of the instructions, lest other nations get wind of his purposes. Fisher checks this information against the views of other historians, both Soviet (he agrees most with Polevoi) and American, especially Golder and Kerner. He repeats what he explained in detail in his article in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 17, no. 3 (1969), namely, that Kerner erroneously considered the Amur River as Bering's chief objective.

The book includes reproductions and discussions of possibly all the maps available to Peter and his contemporaries. Fisher says little about Dezhnev's 1648 trip, which he has also previously discussed (*Pacific Historical Review*, 25, no. 3 [1956]) and about which Bering probably learned only when crossing Siberia. Peter may not have known about it, yet he apparently believed that America and Asia were separated by water, and if not, he thought that at best a connection might be found which extended from Kamchatka rather than the Chukotsk peninsula. Accordingly, Fisher states that Peter's instructions were clear. It was not the geographical question of a land bridge that was to be solved; indeed, he says, "the result of the voyage should not be mistaken for the purpose" (p. 106). The goal was to reach America, to see whether a European settlement already existed there, possibly to take possession of unoccupied territory as protection for Siberia, and to open up trade. Discovery was to serve a pragmatic end. This applies also to Bering's second expedition, which envisaged eastward expansion, aggrandizement, and Siberian security. Fisher discusses this with equal precision. In both cases, Bering followed instructions, even though, on the basis of information received in Siberia on his first trip, he changed the direction of this first voyage from east to north.

By maintaining that America, trade, and expansion rather than scientific exploration were the primary aims, Fisher believes that he has the solution to the "why" of Bering's voyage, at least until new sources with unexpected supplementary evidence are discovered. We can easily follow his argument, even if we sometimes find an excess of subtlety. For example, Fisher makes too much of the demand for secrecy regarding Bering's aims. Secrecy is a permanent Russian institution—it was even imposed on Alexander von Humboldt in 1829. He overemphasizes the fact that there is "no indication of interest in the geographical question" (p. 117, in regard to the second Kamchatka expedition), thus contradicting Kirilov's statement in a memorandum mentioned on page 132. Indeed, how important exact geographical knowledge must have appeared to Peter is also demonstrated by a much later example, namely, during the Crimean War, when Russian knowledge and British ignorance of the existence of navigable straits between Sakhalin and the continent played such an essential role. Fisher is also inclined to emphasize (using italics) certain points in the records at the expense of others which may merit equal attention, as in Chirikov's instructions on page 134. Perhaps a discussion of Steller's fundamental contribution to establishing the fact of the separateness of the two continents could also have been included.

Such considerations—as well as the lack of a map showing Bering's and Chirikov's routes—notwithstanding, Professor Fisher has indeed made a valuable contribution to the history of Bering's famous voyages.

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