

ADMIRAL SIR JOHN NORRIS

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Admiral Sir John Norris

and the British Naval Expeditions
to the Baltic Sea 1715–1727

David Denis Aldridge

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Think not that you are sailing from Lima
to Manillia, wherein thou may'st tye up
the rudder and sleep before the wind; but
expect rough seas, squalls, and contrary
blasts... stand magnetically upon that
axis where prudent simplicity hath fixed
thee, and let no temptation invert the
poles of thy honesty...

Sir Thomas Browne in
A Letter to a Friend

Bremen fell on April 26, The VIIIth Corps
... crossed the Elbe on April 29. They
headed for the Baltic, so as to place themselves
across the land-gate of Denmark.
On May 2 the 11th Armoured Division reached
Lübeck... Our 6th Airborne Division met
the Russians at Wismar.

Winston S. Churchill in
The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy (vol. vi)

A barbaric energy emanated from the Russians
(in a small north German town in May 1945)
which... filled the streets with the
physical presence of a force so strong
that it blotted out any form of vitality
other than their own.

Lali Hortsmann in
Nothing for Tears

Editorial Introduction

This book is the revised PhD thesis of David Denis Aldridge, submitted to the University of London in 1971. The author passed away in autumn 2008 without seeing the results of his work as a printed book. But before his death he finished editing the manuscript and added a new preface. Typically for David Aldridge, a large part of this extensive preface is a tribute to his PhD supervisor, Professor Ragnhild Hutton.

The book is a work of impressive scholarship. It brings together the naval, military, political and diplomatic history of Sweden, Denmark, Hanover, England, and Russia during the critical years of Great Northern War. But first and foremost, it is a biographical study of Admiral Sir John Norris (1670/71–1749), one of the longest serving officers in the British navy. Not much research has been done on Norris, or on the British naval operations in the Baltic Sea during his time. Aldridge's book is an original piece of research based on archive studies in Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Austria. In spite of the almost four decades that have passed since its completion, it retains its scientific value. This is also the reason why the Swedish Society for Maritime History (*Sjöhistoriska samfundet*) became engaged in the project.

The publication of a British PhD thesis in history from 1971 is in many ways a challenging task. The present volume closely follows David Aldridge's own revision of his text from 2007–2008. That did not entail any radical alterations of the original type-written version which included many peculiarities typical of the PhD thesis genre at the time. Among the peculiarities of the manuscript one must mention the endnotes and Aldridge's labelling of references to literature and archival sources. The original thesis includes a large number of endnotes referring to different parts of the type-written manuscript – a contemporaneous way of strengthening the author's argumentation. A complete adaptation of the system was impossible in this edition and consequently some endnotes referring to the type-written manuscript have been omitted. Another idiosyncrasy is the author's way of referring

to literature and his personal way of abbreviating (e.g. RAS, for Riksarkivet, Stockholm; KLU, for Uppsala University Library). In spite of these features, however, the system is reliable and functional for readers.

This edition would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and engagement of many people. Jan Glete, Sweden's leading naval historian and a vice-president of the Swedish Society for Maritime History, initiated the project some years ago. He held Aldridge's scholarship in high esteem, and was convinced that it deserved a broader readership in both Sweden and Britain. Leos Müller, the Society's editor, has been engaged with the practical issues involved in transforming the type-written manuscript into a book, and he was in frequent contact with Aldridge until the author's death. Yvonne Brandt prepared a digital version of the manuscript and Samuel Svärd drew maps on the basis of the author's originals. In the final stage of the work Patrick Salmon of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Mark Davies and Leos Müller proof-read the book. We should also mention the support of Annika Olsson, Publishing Manager of Nordic Academic Press, who managed the production process from the publisher's side. Finally, the publication has been made possible by financial support from the Swedish Society for Maritime History.

Leos Müller and Patrick Salmon, October 2009

Introduction and Purpose

The presence of squadrons of the British navy in the Baltic between 1715 and 1721, the last six years of the Great Northern War between Russia and Sweden which had begun in 1700, has so far claimed little attention from historians working outside the field of diplomatic history. What must still be the two leading contributions to their study were made over sixty years ago, by Commodore H. Wrangel in Sweden and Dr R.C. Anderson in England.¹ Wrangel's work on the Anglo-Swedish naval co-operation of the years 1719–1721 is by far the more exhaustive, and in its massive detail will always remain a definitive study. It is, however, based on Swedish source material alone. Anderson's work covered all the Baltic wars in the days of sail and therefore some fifty pages only could be devoted, to these years. But his book is the leading contribution in English, and is invaluable for its ship lists, its chronological detail, and its plotting of movements. The only specialised study of all the expeditions during the reign of George I, exclusively from the important aspect of supply, was carried out by the present writer and published in 1964.²

There are a number of reasons which may account for neglect of this topic hitherto. Firstly, the Royal Navy's appearance in the Baltic was, if only for climatic reasons, occasional, occurring in each of the last six years of a war that had already lasted fourteen years and which had been no less extensive for northern Europe than had the concurrent Spanish Succession War been for southern Europe. Also, the last two expeditions of 1726 and 1727 (there had been none since 1721) have only a limited interest and, historically, serve merely to confirm Britain's preparedness to maintain the *status quo* in the Baltic. Secondly, the interest and importance of Britain's diplomatic role in the later stages of the northern conflict, after the Hanoverian accession, are of an order with which Britain's naval activities, themselves but a manifestation of policy, can scarcely compete. Thirdly, these expeditions, because they were outwardly uneventful and resulted in virtually no combat,

either on the open sea or in the archipelagos, cannot have attracted naval historians outside Scandinavia: in this epoch it was warfare in the Mediterranean and the Narrow Seas which was tempering navies into instruments of far-reaching power. Fourthly, and concomitant with the comparatively humdrum nature of the British expeditions, are the great naval engagements of the Northern War between the fleets of Sweden, Denmark and Russia, and the phenomenon of nascent Russian seapower, which naturally have a prior claim on military and naval historians of the war as a whole.³

Such historians would not deny that the presence of British warships in the Baltic must have affected, on various occasions, the three principal powers engaged, and one of the aims of this thesis will be to show how this happened. But, in the broad context of the Northern War, the great campaigns of Charles XII and the resilience of Czar Peter I, carrying him, as it seems, to final and ineluctable victory for Russia, by land and sea, exclude lesser themes. And it is within the framework of this engulfing war, when Sweden's precarious hold on her eastern and southern Baltic possessions was broken, and Russia experienced her forward leap under Czar Peter's drive, that Russian seapower tends to be seen more as an organic growth inseparable from a total war effort than as an isolated development.⁴ The new Russian navy, with its fleet of shallow-draught, troop-carrying galleys, was to set a challenge which the rather more traditional Swedish navy, used primarily to operating in the less confined south Baltic, and the yet more traditional British navy, could not meet.⁵

If the history of these Baltic expeditions still awaits examination by an English historian, the same is not true of British policy in northern Europe during the last years of the Great Northern War. With this subject is bound up the question, probably always open to dispute, of how far George I subordinated the interests of Great Britain to those of his electorate of Hanover. In all discussions of this question George's use of British seapower in the Baltic is given prominence, especially the earlier expeditions of 1715, 1716, and 1717, since these were associated either with his undertakings to other members of the anti-Swedish coalition or with political crisis at home. It is unquestionable that George I's great objective as elector of Hanover, the pivot on which his dealings with Denmark and Prussia turned, prior to as well as after his accession to the British throne, was the acquisition of Bremen and Verden. The possessor of these two duchies, although Bremen did not

include the port itself, a free imperial town, was in a strong position from which to dominate the estuaries of both the Elbe and Weser, and the territories had been among the great gains made by Sweden at the peace of Westphalia in 1648. Denmark, owing to her possessions in the duchy of Holstein, virtually commanded the northern shore of the Elbe estuary; and due to her Oldenburg duchy she also had an interest on the Weser. She therefore coveted Bremen and Verden no less than Hanover and, as I will show, part of the bargain struck by George I with Frederick IV of Denmark, by which George obtained *de facto* possession of the duchies, involved the committal of British naval forces in the war against Sweden in 1715. Here were the makings of a direct clash between George as elector of Hanover, and George as king of Great Britain, a power anxious to preserve its friendship with Sweden and which, under the leadership of William III, had entered into a defensive treaty with Charles XII early in 1700.

The thesis that George I was entirely motivated in his northern European policy by his care for his electoral interests, and that, insofar as the Act of Settlement permitted it,⁶ he used the British navy for exclusively Hanoverian purposes, cynically fettering it even after Britain-Hanover reached a new understanding with Sweden in 1719, was enunciated some eighty years ago by the eminent Swedish historian C.G. Malmström.⁷ Since then this censorious judgment has been moderated by successive historians, as the complexities of the diplomatic scene in northern Europe have become better understood. In 1896 Wolfgang Michael brought out the first volume of a history of England in the 18th century,⁸ having examined George I's foreign policy through use, primarily, of the Berlin archives, but also those of Hanover. He revealed the important role played by Prussia in the dispatch of the British squadron in 1715, and something of the antagonism between George I's British and Hanoverian advisers in London. In his second volume, appearing in 1920, Michael dealt with the last years of the Northern War and assessed with some realism the Royal Navy's role in 1719. Four years after Michael's first volume, in 1899, Sir A.W. Ward published a series of lectures on some aspects of the personal union between England and Hanover.⁹ His contribution was not based on any detailed knowledge of the Hanover archives, but his conclusion that Britain's growing continental obligations came to coincide with Hanoverian interests has not been invalidated by subsequent research.

Early in this century, in 1905, S. Schartau revealed the innate strains

in Hanover's relations with her fellow despoilers of Swedish territory in Germany, Denmark and Prussia, and the wariness with which George I, in 1715, made use of the British squadron in fulfillment of his obligations to them.¹⁰ Four years later the English historian J.F. Chance brought out a full history of George I's involvement in the Northern War, built on massive research into English source material, but a very sparing use of Hanoverian sources and virtually none of Swedish.¹¹ The sheer volume of information which Chance accumulated is at once the strength and the weakness of his book, as it is with his later one: *The Alliance of Hanover*.¹² Even treating the period from a primarily naval viewpoint has shown the quantity of information relevant to this particular aspect that Chance discovered, and this is only partly because he was the first historian to make use of the papers of Admiral Sir John Norris in the British Museum.¹³ No historian treating the subject of George I's foreign policy can be anything but highly indebted to Chance, but it must be said that he made no attempt to draw conclusions from material rendered intractable by its bulk. His work may be deemed a useful 'quarry' for researchers, but its most valuable seams are still hard of access; and his mode of writing diplomatic history seems to have impressed English historians sufficiently to deter them from picking up the loose ends in his work for many years.

The Swedish historian N. Herlitz, reviewing Chance in 1911,¹⁴ acknowledged the scale of his achievement but drew attention to specific shortcomings, among which were the little use Chance had made of Malmström, whose work had naturally been based on Swedish source material, and, following from that, his inadequate treatment of the Swedish diplomatic initiative in 1719–1720 for an anti-Russian concert of powers. Herlitz singled out two further weaknesses in Chance's work: his failure to make use of material relating to the Czar Peter, and his neglect in giving anything but limited space to the commercial aspects of the subject, which are inseparable from it, as Chance himself recognised.

In 1931 H. Grönroos, writing in *Historisk tidskrift för Finland*,¹⁵ re-examined the British role in northern Europe 1719–1721 and reached the conclusion that British policy, quite as much as Hanoverian, was a determining factor in the peace-making of those years.

Apart from revising the hostility of Malmström's views on Hanoverian policy, Grönroos grasped the pattern of the northern diplomacy of James Stanhope, George I's leading English minister between 1716

and Stanhope's death in February 1721, and his skill in laying the foundations of new northern alliances for Britain, irrespective of Hanoverian pressures. Grönroos also realised the measure of trust there was among some Swedish statesmen in Britain's motives, and the strength they could muster in opposing others who wished to close with Russia on her terms. But he was insufficiently familiar with English source material to understand the significance of Norris's movements in the Baltic in 1719, and he contributed to the impression of Norris being a slothful and even venal commander, an impression doubtless lent greater authority by Basil Williams in his biography of Stanhope, which appeared a year later in 1932.¹⁶ Five years afterwards, in 1937, appeared S. Jägerskiöld's study¹⁷ of Sweden's diplomatic relations with the rest of Europe during the height of the career of Baron Görtz, a Holstein-Gottorp minister who in 1715 became Charles XII's most influential agent, and who remained in that position until the king's death in December 1718. Jägerskiöld, using a variety of German sources in addition to material in Scandinavia, France and England, brought out Hanoverian attempts to reach an understanding with Sweden in spite of intensive Jacobite intrigue and, of particular interest for the following period 1719–1721, the role of Hesse-Kassel in the underlying dynastic struggle for the Swedish crown between Hesse and Holstein, in which Görtz in his time had been an important figure.

In the immediately post-war period a notable advance was made in assessing the Royal Navy's role in the Baltic throughout the period 1714–1719. Professor R.M. Hatton, in her study of Anglo-Dutch relations following the end of the Spanish Succession War, revealed the extent to which George I's Baltic policy ran counter to Dutch determination to maintain a northern neutrality and thus safeguard their substantial northern trades.¹⁸ This cleavage in policy between the two Maritime Powers, which had previously been underrated in view of their identity of political and religious interests, was shown by Professor Hatton especially in the conduct of the English and Dutch squadrons in the Baltic in 1715 and 1716, and in the disparate orders their respective commanders received. Simultaneously with Professor Hatton an American historian, J.J. Murray, was investigating Anglo-Dutch relations in the post-Utrecht period, and from him came a series of articles dealing with the expeditions of 1715 and 1716 in yet greater detail.¹⁹ These, and others, comprised a book which appeared in 1969: *George I, the Baltic, and the Whig Split*.²⁰ Here Murray made convincing

use of pamphlet material in order to set the scene of Anglo-Swedish relations at the time of the Hanoverian accession, and he gave long-needed emphasis to commercial issues. In his treatment of the complex circumstances in which an invasion of Sweden from Denmark was abandoned in September 1716 without actually being attempted – in this Norris was intimately concerned – Murray broke new ground for an English-speaking historian; but he was less successful in the arduous task of coalescing comprehensively the Whig party split itself with the way in which George I's northern policies were threatening to develop. Here my indebtedness to Murray's work goes without saying.

At the same time as these researches in the late 1940s, Fritz Genzel, in a University of Bonn dissertation which remains unpublished, was making a fresh assessment of the personal union of the British crown and the electorate of Hanover with particular regard to the Northern War during the years 1715–1719.²¹ For the first time the question was probed through a systematic use of the Hanover archives allied with English source material, including Norris's papers. Genzel demonstrated, as had Ward, the extent to which Hanoverian policy-making was carried out in London, once George had come to the throne, and not in Hanover; his cautious politics, however much he might be influenced by leading Hanoverian advisers; the all-pervasive effects of the Mecklenburg crisis of 1716–1717, the consequences of which will be seen to persist throughout the years under study here; and, more clearly than ever before, Norris's role in the Baltic in the crucial year of 1719. Although he had made use of much fresh material at Hanover, and certainly his researches relieved me of the necessity of working there, Genzel's conclusions that the policies of Britain and Hanover in the north finally converged in their interests, and therefore conferred a respectable impartiality on George's hitherto embarrassing dual role, were close to those of Grönroos twenty years previously, and, indeed, to Ward's at the turn of the century.

Several other works have appeared since 1950 which have, perhaps, a less direct bearing on this study but which are nonetheless indispensable to it. In 1952 the Swedish historian Jerker Rosén, in the concluding pages of a volume in *The History of Swedish Foreign Policy*,²² although he was unable to account fully for Norris's delaying tactics in 1719 in coming to Sweden's defence, understood the subtlety of Stanhope's use of British seapower in bringing Sweden away from a surrender to Russia and into a dependence on Britain-Hanover. At the same time

Stanhope managed to avoid, though this was more by accident than design, an open rupture with Russia which would not have been in British interests. In the final analysis Rosén held the view that, while Stanhope succeeded in isolating Russia diplomatically, and defeating her support, and the Emperor Charles VI's, of the rival Holstein claimant to the Swedish throne by buttressing the Hesse dynasty with subsidies and naval protection, the balance of power in Europe after Russia's dictation of peace terms to Sweden in 1721 rested on Russia herself, Britain, and the empire. He acknowledged the importance of Prussia's position and the consequences of Stanhope's alliance with her, in achieving the balance, but judged Sweden as but a pawn in the game which had had this outcome, blandished as necessary by the Royal Navy's long aria until finally dispensed with.

In 1952 Walther Mediger, in *Moskaus Weg nach Europa*,²³ took a long view of the impact of Russia on western Europe in the 18th century, and in his earlier pages made use of material in the Hanover archives which suffered destruction during the Second World War. He traced the way in which Russo-Hanoverian relations, initially friendly, were irreparably soured by the Mecklenburg crisis, but he also showed that there was a body of opinion within the electorate which had favoured neutrality in the Northern War and was anxious, while keeping a watchful eye on Russia's commercial ambitions, to take the heat out of the antagonism towards her which was generated in 1716. In a further two-volume work published in 1967,²⁴ Mediger significantly elaborated on his findings in the destroyed archives to show that Russia's association with the duchy of Mecklenburg was traceable as far back as 1706, ten years before the fateful dynastic alliance of April 1716 with Duke Karl Leopold; and that Czar Peter was principally attracted to the duchy because of the potential of its inland waterways as a route to the North Sea, rendering it a possible commercial enclave for Russia with a much more direct exit from the Baltic, and entrance to it, than the Danish-dominated Sound of Copenhagen with its tolls. Commercial ambition, and strategic considerations when it came to attacking Sweden from the south, became intermingled for the Czar; but the fashion in which his plans, and finally the presence of large numbers of his troops in the duchy over the winter of 1716–1717, reacted on a Hanoverian government led by an émigré Mecklenburg nobility, driven from its estates by the repressive policies of the Mecklenburg dukes, was nothing less than catastrophic. Mediger's researches must

always be of seminal importance in any discussion of George I and the Northern War: they define the mechanism of the mine which was to blow the anti-Swedish coalition asunder, and they project Bernstorff, George's leading Hanoverian minister since 1709, but a leading Mecklenburg noble first and foremost,²⁵ as an international statesman. Bernstorff cherished a long-pondered design through which Hanover, with Russian help, would oust Sweden from her holdings in northwest Germany and leave Denmark and Prussia in no doubt as to which was the leading power in that part of the empire. If the formal investiture by the Emperor of Bremen and Verden in his electorate was George I's ultimate dream, rather than mere *de facto* ownership of the duchies, it must be said now that he was hardly less motivated, especially after 1716, by the need to secure the integrity of the Imperial Circle of Lower Saxony. This Circle,²⁶ of which Hanover's accumulated territories formed an integral part, included Bremen, which fact directly introduced Sweden into the Circle in 1648; the whole of Holstein, hence the Danish crown by virtue of its Holstein possessions was involved in the Circle, as were the Holstein-Gottorp dukes by virtue of their possessions there,²⁷ and, not least, Mecklenburg. The imperial town of Wismar, however, which like Bremen and Verden had also passed to Sweden in 1648, lay outside the Circle, though surrounded on all sides by Mecklenburg territory; and it was for Wismar that the Czar's troops drove early in 1716, since this was the last of the Swedish prizes still untaken in north Germany. However, Danish troops took it first and their commander, significantly a Mecklenburg emigré in Danish service, refused to let the Russians in. This was the first clear evidence of the fear in which the Russians were beginning to be held by the other members of the anti-Swedish coalition, and Wismar's future continued to be a lively issue in Hanoverian policy for at least the next two years.

At the Nystad peace settlement in 1721, George I was to be summarily rebuffed by the Czar in his desire for some guarantee of the Lower Saxon Circle's security; but he seems no longer to have shared Bernstorff's fears of a Russian return to Mecklenburg, partly no doubt because there was still a token Hanoverian force there following an 'imperial execution' against Duke Karl Leopold in 1718, one of Bernstorff's triumphs. But this much might be added: although Norris's last commission in the Baltic in 1727 was to defend the Danish coasts in pursuance of a new defensive treaty between Britain and Denmark – at this time Russia under the Czarina Catherine was avowedly support-

ing the claims of the dispossessed Holstein duke, now her son-in-law, to his territories in Schleswig occupied by Denmark – this expedition is also suggestive of a revival in George I's mind, in the last months of his life, of the fears which had haunted the now-deceased Bernstorff. The presence of the Royal Navy at the Sound of Copenhagen in 1727 is an illustration, though not an exceptional one, of the convergence of British and Hanoverian interests.

In 1954 there appeared in a German translation from Russian L.N. Nikiforov's *Russisch-Englische Beziehungen unter Peter I.*²⁸ This usefully traced British relations with Russia from the time of William III, and then showed how the involvement of Hanoverian interests prejudiced a fruitfully developing relationship. Nikiforov used Russian sources exclusively, invaluable in themselves, and necessarily relied heavily on Chance. He could not realise how long-standing Russia's connection with Mecklenburg had been by 1716; but it must be said that his book is marred, not surprisingly, in view of its date – it received the Stalin Prize in 1951 – by a continual undertone of resentment at the way Russia came to be regarded by western powers which owed her everything for removing Swedish hegemony from the Baltic.

Eight years later, in 1962, Claude Nordmann produced his *La Crise du Nord au Debut du XVIIIe Siècle*,²⁹ perhaps a somewhat misleading title since the author concerned himself only with the period 1714–1721 and not, in any way, with the course of the Northern War up to that time. Through his researches not only in Sweden, Denmark and England, but also in France, Spain and Italy, Nordmann was able, in particular, to give fresh definition to the place of Jacobite intrigue in Swedish diplomacy at this time, especially as that diplomacy was exercised by Görtz. He also re-examined Görtz's role in the attempted Russo-Swedish *rapprochement* during 1717–1718, and gave an emphasis to the personal antagonisms which erupted between George I and Bernstorff on the one hand, and Czar Peter on the other. Nordmann's spectacular grasp of his theme, achieved through enviably wide reading, renders his book as indispensable as Mediger's. As few other books can have done it recreates with incisiveness a time which has been well described as 'the golden age of political adventurers'.

Lastly, in 1968 came Professor Hatton's biography of Charles XII,³⁰ to which any historian treating this period must be much indebted. Specifically in my context, it places firmly in the Northern War, as it stood in 1715, the appearance of British warships in the Baltic at a time

when the odds against Charles XII in beleaguered Stralsund seemed overwhelming. Was British seapower at this moment going to be used to assure victory for the anti-Swedish coalition, or was it not? It was a tremendous question for the Swedes. Again, for 1718, Professor Hatton demonstrates the way in which Norris's Baltic squadron might have affected the timing of Charles XII's last campaign in Norway, owing to the threat of an Anglo-Danish fleet concentrated off the Norwegian coast in the area of Strömstad. But the biography has probably been of most value here in its delineation of the Swedish scene after Charles XII's death, and its gauging of the pressures which caused the 'Swedish Revolution'.³¹ Fredrik of Hesse-Kassel, Charles XII's brother-in-law who became king of Sweden in 1720, is a central figure in the years 1719–1721: his services to Sweden after his marriage to Charles's only surviving sister, the Princess Ulrica Eleonora (Charles never had a brother), and his strategic concepts, receive due scrutiny from Professor Hatton, as does Charles's extreme reservedness, as a king who would 'marry when the war is over', over the poignant question of the succession. Ulrica Eleonora's childlessness could only prolong this smouldering problem, as also the question of the degree of recognition which could or should be extended to the rival claimant, the Russian-sponsored duke of Holstein-Gottorp, the only child of Charles's deceased elder sister. Fredrik's insecurity once he had become king laid him peculiarly open to any favours George I felt disposed to give him as his ally, and here Norris's role was to be of paramount importance.

*

It will be seen from this introduction that the work done in the late 1940s and early 1950s by Professor Hatton, J.J. Murray, and Fritz Genzel, is that which most directly touches upon my theme. But it must be emphasised that it was not within the terms of reference of any of these three scholars to investigate the British naval presence in the Baltic from an essentially naval viewpoint. My purpose is both to do this, and to attempt an evaluation of Sir John Norris's qualities as a commander, and an executor of British-Hanoverian policies. This latter objective clearly necessitates a bias towards the diplomatic history of the period, a period which can have few rivals as witnessing the exercise of diplomacy through seapower.

Sir John Norris

Britain, Hanover, and the Baltic Sea in 1714

In 1714 Sir John Norris was probably 44, his birth date, and his parentage, still remaining undetermined.³² At the age of 9 or 10 he had entered the navy under the patronage of Captain Cloudesley Shovell (1650–1707), and with Shovell the young Norris remained, mostly serving off the Barbary Coast, until he achieved his first captaincy in 1690. Unfortunately we lack a biography of Shovell, who had also entered the navy as a boy and who must have exerted a formative influence on the central character in this study. However, we know of other personalities in the navy to whom Norris became known in the 1680s: Captain Matthew Aylmer (1650–1720), who converted to the Irish Protestantism from which Norris sprang, and Captain George Byng (1663–1733), who stood as witness at Norris's wedding in 1699 when he married one of Aylmer's daughters. Aylmer and Byng, and to a lesser extent Shovell, had played leading roles in the autumn of 1688 in ensuring that the navy, whose commander remained personally loyal to James II, made no attempts to interrupt the course of William III's expeditionary force. Doubtless it was partly because of this that Aylmer enjoyed high favour with William in later years; but the point that requires emphasis is that Norris, as a young man of 18, was close to a circle of naval officers who were ready to dedicate their fortunes to the Protestant Succession.

Political influences surrounding Norris were to be given yet more emphatic definition in the 1690s, when in 1694 he earned the professional esteem of Admiral Edward Russell (1653–1727) in the Mediterranean, on the eve of Russell's first spell as First Lord of the Admiralty and his political prominence as a member of the 'Whig Junto'.³³ At

the end of the Nine Years War, Russell, now Earl of Orford, was able to protect Norris from possible dismissal after he had held a commodore's command in Newfoundland which seems to have been placed at risk owing to vendettas among Norris's officers. After a rigorous enquiry into the Admiralty's affairs, and the fall of the 'Junto' itself, with Orford's departure from the First Lordship, Orford was unable to help Norris through a resumption of investigations into his Newfoundland command. To some extent Norris's political affiliations, at a time of Tory triumph, must have told against him, for whatever his innocence or guilt he was suspended from the navy in April 1699.³⁴ This suspension was to last for two years, and it follows that Norris, in a period of peace, was robbed of any chance of serving under Sir George Rooke (1650–1709) in 1700 when that admiral commanded a force of 16 warships sent to the Sound of Copenhagen.

The outbreak of the Spanish Succession conflict brought Norris back into active service, and in 1705 he made good his 15-year absence from Shovell's side by becoming his flag-captain in the Mediterranean when Shovell had the command there. Advancement now came rapidly: at the end of that year Norris received a knighthood on bringing to Queen Anne the news of the capture of Barcelona, sailing back to England with his future political superior General James Stanhope; and in March 1707, back in the Mediterranean, Norris at length achieved flag-rank, a promotion which he owed to the interest of lord Somers, another 'Junto' leader.³⁶ It was on his return to England that October, in his flagship *Torbay*, that Norris witnessed the destruction on the rocks of Scilly of Shovell's flagship *Association*: the foundering of this ship and Shovell's death, due solely to faulty charts and an ill-known current – Trinity House accepted the assurance of the Scilly light-keeper that his light had been clear³⁷ – was a disaster for Britain's sailing navy only comparable to the loss of *Royal George* with Kempenfelt in 1782. It must have marked Norris's seamanship for life.³⁸

In 1708 Norris had his first, and very minor, diplomatic assignment to a European court, that of Turin, in order to escort the consort of the Archduke Charles to Genoa whence she took ship for Barcelona.³⁹ What was of much more certain consequence for the future this year was his taking one of Rye's two parliamentary seats on the Lord Warden's and Customs House interest, and by 1710 he seems, from his estate of Hempsted Park near Benenden, to have so cultivated his supporters that he could survive a disputed election petition in a time of surging

Toryism.⁴⁰ Norris's Junto's Whiggery had now brought him into the important political following of naval officers and administrators who looked to Orford as their leader,⁴¹ though since he was not actually a parliamentary client of Orford's he would not have been as close to that powerful and astringent personality as his two immediate seniors in flag-rank, Sir George Byng and Sir John Jennings (1664–1743), who her secretary described to the Duchess of Marlborough as:

The particular friends and servants of Lord Orford, and raised by him who has one merit, really very great and unquestionable... to have always preferred the best officers in the service.⁴²

He was writing thus in 1709 at a time when strong pressure was being exerted on Orford to return to the Admiralty for another spell as First Lord. Orford did in fact return, but his unyielding insistence that this move first received parliamentary approval was due to his having stood in danger of impeachment with Somers in 1701 over William III's first Partition Treaty.⁴³ The parliamentary process of impeachment, described by Pares as 'almost useless as a weapon against ministers who were almost certain to be lords' (because the process depended on the Upper House passing judgment),⁴⁴ was yet a dread instrument which 'cast a long shadow over the politics' of Anne's reign.⁴⁵ Its power to bring royal and government servants to account – in its ultimate expression it carried the death penalty – cannot be lost sight of in any study impinging on 18th century government, and on at least two well-attested occasions while he was in the Baltic Norris refused to take actions which might lay him open to Parliament's displeasure, and even its vengeance.

It is very difficult to judge what kind of man Norris was in 1714. Clearly he was well-connected by marriage and political persuasion, and professional progress included the Mediterranean command in 1710–1711. His surviving correspondence reveals an unlettered man, but one who was well able to express himself and pass an articulate opinion, often a very shrewd one, with whatever quaintness. A reputation for a natural irritability and bombastic loquacity has come down to us, possibly from prejudiced observers.⁴⁷ My impression of him, for what it is worth, is on the whole a contrary one: that he was a man of ingrained caution and calculation, impervious to the provocation of circumstance – he was certainly to experience this hazard in full measure – and quite unyielding in his adherence to his instructions. In addition,

on one occasion he took a step which, while it was realistic, required a high degree of political courage in a man who was, in effect, serving two masters. I discuss below, on the little evidence there is, why Norris received a command in 1715 which, on their political records, his seniors in active flag-rank, Byng and Jennings, were no less fitted for. If on his side there was primarily a desire to return to active service, and the crown's payroll, after a period during which he had suffered from Tory disfavour,⁴⁹ he had one quality with which probably none of his seniors could quite compete and which was a simple point for George I to take: apart from the years 1699–1701 and 1713–1714, there had not been a whole year during which Norris had been out of a ship since as a child he had sailed for Tangier and Shovell's tutelage in December 1679.

An outline of the political circumstances in which a powerful British squadron was dispatched to the Baltic in 1700 reveals how Britain and Hanover were then able to act in effectual partnership, the one as a sea-power, the other as a land power. But their outward accord masked the different motives from which they were acting, and these motives – the British being neutral but for firm arbitration, the Hanoverian vigorous but for, cynical, military intervention – help an understanding of their clashing attitudes towards northern affairs in 1714. Commercial ambition was certainly common to both parties, Britain acting as an island state concerned for her sea communications in the widest possible sense, Hanover as a land-locked state seeking a western littoral. In this she had a great deal, perhaps everything, in common with another power about to take action in the north: Russia.⁵⁰

At the end of the 17th century Denmark had been deprived for 40 years of all her possessions in Sweden, which had once included Sweden's present western provinces of Bohuslän, Halland, Skåne, and Blekinge, this latter comprising the southeast corner of the Swedish land mass. Furthermore, Sweden's merchant traffic at sea had enjoyed, since 1645, exemption from payment of the Sound Tolls – tolls levied by the Danes at Elsinore where the Sound is at its narrowest – and these revenues formed the basis of Danish finance.⁵¹ The Swedes, apart from their German possessions which also included Stettin, controlling the Oder estuary and western Pomerania with its great fortress town of Stralsund, dominated the Baltic to the north and east: Finland and Finnish Karelia formed a Swedish grand duchy, and their 16th and 17th century conquests from Poland and Russia had won the Swedes Ingria,

Estonia and Livonia.⁵² This empire was difficult to administer, for the Baltic was more a hindrance to effective government than it was the nation's moat. Yet the area this empire embraced was immensely rich in the staple commodities which were the life-blood for any European sea-faring nation in the centuries of sail: all types of planking, mast, and spar, timber; practically all the hemp required for rigging and cables; flax for canvas, and pitch and tar, though in decreasing quantities during the 18th century, for caulking, and protection of standing rigging.⁵³ In this situation Sweden was in a seller's market, and her studied protectionism had long bedevilled her political as well as her commercial relations with the British and the Dutch.⁵⁴ Again, and certainly no less pregnant for the future, Sweden's dominance of the east Baltic littoral and hinterland blocked a burgeoning Russian commerce which could only move along the region's historic trade routes, and use its ports of Viborg, Narva, Reval and Riga, at Swedish pleasure and to Swedish profit. Russia's White Sea exit to the west at Archangel, in contrast to these other ports, was ice-bound for more than half the year.⁵⁵

The other trading nations had therefore to accept Sweden's writ in the Baltic, but those nations, and especially the Maritime Powers of Britain and the United Provinces of Holland, had also to look to their interests at the entrance to the Baltic itself. Here, since a dominance of both shores of the Copenhagen Sound by one power was undesirable, Danish claims on Sweden's coastal provinces were not looked upon with favour. Cromwell, in 1658,⁵⁶ and William III, in 1689, had intervened decisively to re-establish a power balance between Denmark and Sweden in this strategically vital area; on both occasions rather more to the Swedish than the Danish advantage. But it is to the southern part of the area we must look, in order to identify the source of Dano-Swedish tensions in the second half of the 17th century. Here the bounds of the Danish kingdom marched with the territory of Schleswig, in which both Denmark and the dukes of Holstein-Gottorp held sovereignties, though in some parts Holstein-Gottorp held territory in fee to Denmark. To the south of Schleswig, in Holstein, Denmark and Holstein-Gottorp again held sovereignties, but about half of the territory of Holstein was comprised of 'Unions' where both kingdom and ducal house shared sovereignty. In point of mere title the Danish crown was in a stronger position than the ducal house in Holstein because Holstein lay within the empire's boundaries, and the kings of Denmark were 'imperial' dukes of Holstein, rendering them imperial vassals senior to the dukes

of Holstein-Gottorp.⁵⁷ The relevance of this tangled situation, the cause of endless disputes described in this study, is owing to the fact that in 1654 Sweden and the Holstein-Gottorp house entered into dynastic alliance, thus posing a continuing threat to Denmark's security.⁵⁸ While William III maintained this tense situation, George I, first as elector in 1715 and then as king in 1720 (under Stanhope's guidance) modified it by guaranteeing 'ducal' Schleswig to Denmark; and if this British defensive obligation was to be a formative influence in Townshend's foreign policy in 1721 – here there was a complete identity of interest between Britain and Hanover – the obligation also caused Norris's last expedition to the Baltic, that of 1727.

Clearly, between 1715 and 1720 British policy towards territorial changes in the south Baltic underwent a modification and one that was inspired by Hanover's example. But both at Altona in 1689 and at Travendal in August 1700, Hanover partnered the Maritime Powers in guaranteeing the Holstein-Gottorp position in Schleswig-Holstein as against Denmark. It is true that early in 1700 the electorate was not a party to The Hague treaties between Britain, the Dutch and Sweden, when Britain (so anxious was William III to keep Charles XII away from France when the Spanish succession question overhung Europe) guaranteed all the Holstein-Gottorp lands and all Swedish possessions in Germany, as well as undertaking to send financial assistance, or men or ships.⁶⁰ Yet in May 1700, following yet another Danish attack on Holstein-Gottorp, Hanoverian troops under the elector's command marched into Holstein on the duke's behalf, complementing the arrival of the Anglo-Dutch fleet at the Sound.⁶¹ The elector of Hanover was acting as a guarantor of Altona, but he was motivated more by hostility towards the Danes, who had so far refused to recognise his state's elevation to the 9th electorate of the empire in 1692, than he was by sympathy for the Swedish/Holstein-Gottorp cause. In the Lower Saxon Circle politics at which George was playing, the Swedish presence in the duchy of Bremen was no more welcome to Hanover than the Danish presence in Holstein. But at present Sweden was the leading northern power, and however strained her garrison arrangements might be in Bremen due to her far-flung commitments, it was with Sweden that Hanover must side. The time for driving any bargain with the Swedes over Bremen had not yet come, and in the interim Danish power on the Elbe's northern shores must be checked at every opportunity. What there was in Travendal for all the parties concerned with France's future

designs was an undertaking by Charles XII that he would confine his fight with the Russo-Saxon coalition confronting him to eastern Europe, well clear of the empire itself; and he himself could feel assured – his dynastic links with Holstein-Gottorp had been renewed in 1698 through his elder sister's marriage to the then duke⁶² – that the forces of the Travendal guarantors would protect his rear to the west. What there was in Travendal specifically for George of Hanover, apart from the kudos of a successful intervention alongside his allies, was a Danish recognition of his electoral status.⁶³ But the Great Northern War had now begun for Sweden, and a year later the Spanish Succession War would open in Italy. The demands of these two engrossing struggles would render increasingly effete the various obligations entered into in 1700, Hanover's obligations, north German state as she was, becoming atrophied through her experience of the constraints endemic in the Swedish 'foot in Germany'.

Rooke's presence at the Sound in 1700 was an important naval precedent for Britain. A Commonwealth fleet had put out for the Baltic in 1658, but winter weather compelled it to return before it could reach a Swedish haven.⁶⁴ It is therefore probable that Rooke's was only the second force of British warships ever designed for the Baltic. Yet it must be quickly stated as a qualification that large convoys of Skagerrak and Baltic bound British merchantmen were practically annual by the later 17th century, being escorted by two or three warships which lay either at Gothenburg or Elsinore while their charges freighted in Norway or in the various ports of the Baltic beyond the Sound.⁶⁵ That this was the invariable practice was confirmed in 1714 by the Secretary of the British Admiralty, Josiah Burchett, himself a chronicler of naval history;⁶⁶ when an Anglo-Dutch fleet for the Baltic was under consideration. In answer to a query from The Hague as to where the Baltic Sea, as distinct from its approaches, was reckoned to begin Burchett explained:

it is not reckoned we are in the Baltic Sea until we have passed the Sound and come the length of Falsterborn.⁶⁷

Warships on convoy duty in these waters would have been able to water locally, and also purchase fish, and possibly butter and cheese; and the same could have been true of those warships detailed to convoy round the North Cape of Norway to Archangel, a port increasingly attractive to western traders during the Nine Years War.⁶⁸ It is of interest, and

obviously indicative of Swedish anxiety to do everything possible to retain the Anglo-Dutch fleet in northern waters in 1700, that Rooke was told the fleet could be supplied from a number of Swedish ports both outside and inside the Baltic. In fact the British force had its own agent to manage its victualling: Captain Gilbert Burrington reached Rooke with fresh supplies from home on 24 July, though by the end of August supplies were again running short. There is no certain evidence in 1700 as to whether the Royal Navy's Board of Victuallers was conscious of an unprecedented supply problem with the Baltic being the scene of operations, but they were certainly thinking of shipping supplies as far up the Baltic as Stockholm.⁶⁹ As events were to prove, there was no need for Rooke to enter the Baltic itself this summer, but the Admiralty had had to envisage entry because there was no means of knowing what Denmark's naval tactics might be: in seamanship at least the Danes knew themselves to be superior to the Swedes,⁷⁰ and there was every possibility that their ships would leave the Sound having removed the navigation marks in order to hamper an Anglo-Dutch pursuit, and attack the Swedes to the south, simultaneously disrupting supply lines to the forces of the Altona guarantors in Holstein. In fact the Danish fleet stayed in Copenhagen, protected both by the base's armaments and by the British and Dutch commanders being under instruction, in the interests of the power balance, to prevent the Swedes achieving their main objective: the destruction of the Danish fleet.⁷¹

The passage of the Sound was a notoriously difficult navigation for sailing ships: the channels between the Copenhagen shore and the 'Middle Ground', and between that shoal and Saltholm were narrow, and in time of war could be rendered virtually impassable by the Danes through their use of floating batteries and removal of the marks. 'The Grounds', as they were known, also had the disadvantage in Norris's words

of no regulation of Flood or Ebb [so that a ship aground] must be obliged to take out either guns or stores to get off again.⁷²

The alternative passages into the Baltic, the Great and Little Belts, on either side of Funen, were even simpler for the Danes to dominate for they were surrounded by Danish territory and no less treacherous for ships. The Danes also levied tolls on traffic there, but the Belts were rarely used by merchantmen originating from outside the Baltic, and

in Norris's fleet in 1719, there was no one who knew their navigation. Such was the preponderance of Dutch charts, a revised one for the Kattegat being published in 1700, that Rooke would have been largely dependent on them even had the Dutch not been his confederates.⁷⁴ But he would have been familiar enough with John Seller's *The English Pilot*, which had first appeared in 1671 and contained detailed descriptions not only of the Kattegat, where Seller warned his readers 'the skilfullest and best experienced of all pilots have there enough to do', but also of the Baltic itself.⁷⁵

I have not traced how many pilots Trinity House supplied in 1700, but that there was a shortage of knowledgeable ones for the Baltic is suggested by an Admiralty enquiry, of the Brethren, as to what 'three Masters belonging to the Navy are the best acquainted with the Baltic Sea'. Trinity House replied that they had never examined a Master as to his capacity for taking charge there, but had produced pilots for the area on demand. If there is a hint here of injured pride, the Brethren were reminding Burchett in 1709 that it was knowledge of 'Pilot's Water' which gained a pilot his certificate, and this area simply comprised 'from the River of Thames through the North Channel as far as Orfordness and through the South Channel into the Downs'.⁷⁶ The situation concerning qualified pilots for foreign waters was therefore outside the Brethren's terms of reference, but when Norris was suddenly ordered to the Sound in 1709 they said there were 'a sufficient number of pilots at Yarmouth or thereabouts well qualified, to meet the admiral's requirements'.⁷⁷ Since in later years Norris was to find allegedly qualified pilots for the Baltic much more liabilities than assets, it is most likely that the British seafarers who knew the Baltic best, many of them even intimately, were the crews of the merchantmen which made regular Baltic runs.

The passage to the Skagerrak from Britain had one outstanding landmark, which convoys crossing the North Sea from their rallying point off Flamborough Head could easily recognise. This was the Naze of Norway where, although a light had been placed there in 1700, Trinity House in 1708 could say that, in their opinion, there was no need for one. After the Naze the ships bound for the Sound rather than for the Norwegian timber ports had to watch for the Skaw, a long and low spit of land on northeast Jutland for the western end of which the church tower of Hirtshals was the warning mark. The Skaw light was the most important one on the passage, and in 1725 Norris and others criticised

it as being placed on too low a tower.⁷⁸ On a clear night a ship which had rounded the Skaw could pick up good lights on the Swedish side of the Kattegat, the Vinga beacon at the approaches to Gothenburg and the twin light-towers on Niddingen to the southward. The Trindel reef and Laesö were hazards on the Danish shore, followed further south by the island of Anholt with its shifting reef extending eastwards and dangerously close to the straight course down the Kattegat to Elsinore. Here one of Norris's ships was to come to grief in 1718 although the island did have a light. Finally, on the Swedish shore of the northern entrance to the Sound stood the headland of Kullen, which had had a light since 1560, a year before one was placed on the Skaw. When all these lights were adequately fuelled and properly tended – they were either in braziers on the tops of store towers or hoisted aloft on a spar by block and tackle, the *vippfy* – they were reasonably effective; and they were certainly a legacy of the Hanse, a recent authority having described the Kattegat in 1600 as the best lit stretch of water in the known world.⁸⁰

But the Kattegat lights obviously suffered near if not total eclipse in times of war between Denmark and Sweden, and in his time Norris had to remonstrate about their condition with Dane and Swede alike. In September 1700 Rooke might have been able to sail up a peaceful Kattegat homeward, but after Charles XII's defeat by Czar Peter at Poltava in 1709 Denmark re-entered the war, and with a navy Rooke's masters had preserved. It was, however, probably an event in the east Baltic in 1710 which really escalated Swedo-Danish hostilities in the Baltic's approaches, this being the capture of the leading east Baltic port of Riga by Russia. Charles XII, now a fugitive in Turkey, immediately reacted to the news of Riga's fall by declaring a prohibition of all trade with ports taken from him by the Czar. In fact, only the Finnish ports were still held by Sweden, and a Swedish privateering war now began which was to give the Great Northern War a new dimension for the Maritime Powers.⁸¹ In the Kattegat, and it has to be remembered that if Britain had close commercial ties with Riga she had yet closer ones with Gothenburg, no encouragement was needed to give vigour to attacks on merchantmen bound for the east Baltic. Gothenburg, which like other centres of Swedish commerce had suffered much from allied privateering against neutral shipping in the Nine Years War and in the present Spanish Succession struggle, was no laggard in fitting out privateers and by the end of 1710 the port had some 12 vessels opera-

tional.⁸² In their turn the Danes, in April 1710, barred from Swedish ports all neutral shipping carrying contraband, and this especially hit British and Dutch merchant shipping in the Elbe, whence through Hamburg the Swedes in north Germany received their supplies. However, not until 1714 did the Danes bombard and take Heligoland, a Holstein-Gottorp possession whose pilots were knowledgeable about the Elbe and therefore useful to British and Dutch traders; and with the Heligoland Bight commanded by the Danes there was here a privateering war injurious to British trade yet distinct from Sweden's in the Kattegat and Baltic.⁸³ I suggest below how the situation in the duchy of Bremen's estuaries in 1714–1715, rather than the situation in the Baltic itself, could have brought about, in the context of George I's use of British seapower, an uncontentious combination of his kingly and electoral interests.

When we turn to the Baltic, there, by the end of 1710, the situation was judged sufficiently serious by the new Tory government in London for it to send James Jefferyes to Charles XII to ask for a withdrawal of the trade prohibition, as well, as representing to Charles that the recent Neutrality Conventions, to which the British and Dutch were parties in accordance with their 1700 policy, were in Sweden's interest. Charles XII was unmoved by Jefferyes's pleas that the prohibition must seriously endanger Britain's ability to maintain her naval strength; and though Jefferyes remained with Charles for the rest of the Turkish exile, and followed him to Stralsund at the end of 1714 whence Jefferyes was to witness helplessly the height of the privateering war in 1715, all his protests fell on stony ground.⁸⁵ As regards the Neutrality Conventions, which were designed to quarantine the Swedish troops remaining in north Germany and neutralise the areas they occupied as well as all the Holstein-Gottorp lands, Charles treated these according to their deserts as he saw them. While he might not doubt that the Maritime Powers, on their record and still in the toils of their war with France, were *bonafide* subscribers to the Conventions, what was he to think of participation in them by Russia, Denmark and Saxony?⁸⁶ In my context their interest is long term, for it was now that Charles, Viscount Townshend, Britain's Whig ambassador at The Hague where they were signed, gained his grounding in the intricacies of the Schleswig-Holstein situation which would preoccupy him, though in a rather different form, in 1721.⁸⁷ Within a year, in fact, the Conventions were being dismissed not only by Charles XII but by Czar Peter: for both

monarchs they were having the effect of keeping troops out of the Balkans where they both needed them, Charles to force his way back home through Poland with Swedish troops, the Czar for help against the Turks from the Saxons.⁸⁸

At the time of Anne's death in August 1714, developments in northern Europe, and the many problems in which they had their roots, had attained proportions far beyond the compass of the policies which Britain, the Dutch, and Hanover had pursued at the start of the Great Northern War. While sympathy towards Sweden from the side of the Maritime Powers had now been seriously affected by the ravages of Charles XII's privateers, these nations were also drawing the first breaths of peace after their war with France and following up their respective gains as the victors. The elector of Hanover, who as an imperialist leader had played a distinguished part in the Spanish Succession struggle, for his part left Europe in no doubt what he thought of Tory peace-making in partnership with France in 1711, with its disregard of the Emperor's interests.⁸⁹ His distrust of the Tories was but reinforced 6 months later, when in June 1712 British forces were withdrawn from the Netherlands leaving the imperialists and their allies to face France alone. This development came at a most unpropitious moment for Hanover, with her obligations to Vienna, for over the past two years she had had no choice but to involve herself in a scramble with Denmark and Prussia to peg out claims against Sweden. Within two months of the British withdrawal, with Hanoverian troops thus more than ever committed in the Netherlands, Danish forces were launched across the Elbe into the duchy of Bremen, the port of Stade falling to them on 27 August. The most Hanover could do, witness as she was to the sudden blighting of her hopes of possibly purchasing the duchy from Sweden, was to throw what troops she had into Verden, and this was done with local Swedish consent. George may have felt disposed to place some of the blame for this dramatic reverse for his electoral ambitions on Tory policies which must keep the bulk of his forces in the Netherlands. What is undoubted is that these August days of 1712 in Bremen fundamentally characterized Hanover's northern policies for the next three years, and they explain the scheming dilatoriness with which George afforded the Danes Norris's assistance in 1715.⁹⁰

In other important respects 1712 was a year of consequence for northern affairs, for Stenbock's Mecklenburg campaign that autumn, after his breakout from Stralsund with an expeditionary force brought

from Sweden,⁹¹ was to inflame the situation in Holstein as in 1700: for the first time Britain, half-heartedly resuming her Travendal guarantorship, found herself confronting Russia as a supporter of Denmark. Stenbock's campaign was also to induce another symptom of the bitter jealousy between Hanover and Prussia over the Lower Saxon Circle. If it may be claimed that the Danish presence in Bremen underscored Hanoverian policy, Hanover's distrust of Berlin was of hardly less importance, and here again the policies pursued by the Tory government in London hardly favoured George's interests.

After Poltava, Britain and Hanover both took steps in acceptance of the new influence Russia must now wield in the west. Charles Whitworth, who had represented Britain at Petersburg since 1704, was now promoted ambassador and Czar Peter recognised as Emperor as well as Czar.⁹⁴ Yet Whitworth had had frequently to complain to the Russians about commercial abuses, especially dishonest hemp-packaging at Archangel, and also the abduction of British merchant-seamen there; and with the fall of the great hemp port of Riga to the Russians in 1710, their sharp practices, combined with the increasing dislocation caused by the Swedish privateers, had proved sufficient by 1714 to bring about a British dockyard crisis.⁹⁵ Obviously Hanover had not felt the consequences of a Russian engrossment of the east Baltic's staple trades in any comparable way to Britain, but when she entered into a 12-year treaty of friendship with Russia in 1710, much as Hanover would have then liked an expression of Russian support for her final acquisition of Bremen and Verden, she would not give any kind of military undertaking to Russia such as Kurakin was then seeking.⁹⁶ Quite apart from her troops still being committed against France, Hanover was continuing to profess her guarantorship of Travendal, however inconsistently, and George expressly did this in 1711 when he was criticised by his future kingdom for making a loan to the Danes to help them restrain Swedish troops in north Germany in accordance with the neutrality rulings of the previous year.⁹⁷ For all that, the facts of the case were that Russia had now forced Prussia, which had so far pursued a tightrope policy of neutrality in the Great Northern War, into an offensive alliance. This included a Russian recognition of Prussian claims on Elbing in Polish Prussia, and with the benefit of hindsight we can see that this was the curtain-raiser for the Czar's assurance of Stettin to Prussia in 1713; of much greater consequence for the west.⁹⁸ From the Czar's action over Elbing it is not difficult to deduce that he was now treating Augustus

of Saxony-Poland as a mere satellite; and for Hanover the swift renewal of a Dano-Russian alliance before the end of 1709 must mean that unless she moved closer to Russia than she was prepared to do in 1710, it would be the Danes who could expect Russian support for their aims on Bremen and Verden, not the Hanoverians.⁹⁹

It is not surprising that by the autumn of 1711 Hanover's policy of trying to realise her Lower Saxon Circle ambitions by peaceful means was becoming increasingly untenable. Now Russian troops, released from the war with the Turks by the Pruth settlement, were moving into north Germany to fight the Swedish foe alongside the Danes and Saxons; but of even greater consequence for Hanoverian Lower Saxon Circle policy was that Denmark and Mecklenburg, under Russian auspices, were bargaining over the future of Rostock and Wismar.¹⁰⁰ It was probably this, quite as much as the likelihood of war being visited on Mecklenburg for the second time in Bernstorff's personal experience – he had been 26 in 1675, the year of Fehrbellin – which explains his journey to the Czar at Carlsbad to plead euphemistically for 'the peace of the Empire'. To a self-confessed '*mecklenburgische Gutsbesitzer*', and the acknowledged champion of the duchy's exiled nobility against the Mecklenburg duke,¹⁰¹ it was positively ominous to be told by the Czar that the duke

should rather be the gainer than suffer anything by the present invasion.

The spearhead of 'the present invasion' was broken by the Swedes before Stralsund, but a year later Stenbock's expeditionary force, which took Rostock and inflicted a great defeat on the Danes and Saxons at Gadebusch, only some 15 miles from Bernstorff's ancestral estates at Ratzeburg, brought devastation to the duchy.¹⁰³ All the 'war-lord' implications of the Swedish presence within the Empire's bounds were being terribly realised for the north German states, and Stenbock put the final spur to reawakening the Great Northern War in north Germany, when in early 1713 he sought the shelter of the Holstein-Gottorp fortress of Tønning, thus breaching Holstein-Gottorp neutrality and bringing Danish troops into the ducal sovereignties in Holstein. It was now that Britain, with Stenbock besieged in Tønning but blockaded at sea by only a negligible Danish force, considered sending a force of 12 warships, 3 frigates and 2 bomb vessels to smash the Danish blockade and help Stenbock's supplies. This force remained designated between

March and August, when it was discharged: the Dutch would not act with Britain in accord with 1700, and the Czar was threatening the seizure of merchants' effects at Archangel and Moscow if the Maritime Powers made any such move.¹⁰⁴

The Maritime Powers, in the year of Utrecht, were obviously receding from their obligations to Sweden of 1700, and this was again shown, in the case of Britain, when Görtz, the ever-resourceful Holstein-Gottorp minister, devised a plan whereby Holstein-Gottorp and Prussia might jointly take Sweden's possessions in north Germany into sequestration until such time as a decision could be reached about their future status. To give fuller effect to this, Prussia invoked Travendal by looking to Britain for support, but Whitehall failed to respond. In reality it was the Swedes themselves, by refusing to concur in Görtz's scheme, who damned it and left the road open to Russia, in September 1713, to exploit the situation to her own advantage by forcing the Swedes to surrender Stettin to Prussia.¹⁰⁵ This was a spectacular advance for Russian influence in north Germany, and was followed in June 1714 by the Czar's formal guarantee of Stettin to Prussia.¹⁰⁶ To Hanover it must now have been apparent, with her strained relations with the Danes and only her friendship treaty with the Russians, that she was perilously isolated. In addition, her rivalry with Prussia had been given new emphasis, at least for Bernstorff, when Prussian troops marching to the support of Holstein-Gottorp reached the area of Lenzen, close to that of Gartow on the Hanoverian shore of the Elbe. The ownership of this latter district, or at least its *Landeshoheit* or *superioritas territorialis*, was a contentious issue between Hanover and Berlin, but it touched Bernstorff particularly closely because he owned 3 village properties close to Gartow.¹⁰⁷

The vituperative rivalry between Hanover and Prussia, which it would take all Stanhope's perseverance in 1718–1719 to overcome in the interests of his 'Northern Peace Plan', stemmed from Westphalia. The territorial adjustments of 1648 within the Lower Saxon Circle were such that even a web of dynastic marriages between Hanover and Berlin could not overcome their intrinsic tensions.¹⁰⁸ Brandenburg had then been confirmed in Magdeburg, Halberstadt, and Minden, all of these lying within the Circle. But in 1681, like the other Circles of the Empire, that of Lower Saxony was assigned legal responsibility for raising contingents for the Emperor's armies, and it was now that Brandenburg opted out of her membership out of her anxiety not to

offend France. It was with the amalgamation of Brunswick into the electorate of Hanover in 1706 that Hanoverian policy may have definitely become orientated towards a dominance of the Lower Saxon Circle, for Brunswick carried with it one of the Circle's original co-directorships, the others being vested in Bremen (duchy and city) and Magdeburg.¹⁰⁹ However, in 1712 Brandenburg-Prussia re-entered the Circle's politics by making a military showing in protest at the Danish march into Bremen.¹¹⁰ Hanover could scarcely quarrel with this action in itself, but simultaneously, in accordance with the fashionable projects of sequestering Sweden's north German possessions, Prussia and Saxony planned a military road running from Crossen in Silesia across northern Saxony to Quedlinburg and Nordhausen, this latter being a long-standing member of the Lower Saxon Circle. Charles XII did not accept a scheme which seemed no less cynical than most of the others current,¹¹¹ but that this threatened impingement on the Circle, followed as it was by the Prussian movements round Lenzen in 1713, deeply concerned Hanover seems confirmed by discussions between Prussian and Hanoverian representatives at Alt-Landsberg in November 1714. These were preparatory, a 'Punctuation', for a north German settlement once the Swedish presence had become history, and during the talks the Hanoverians demanded of the resistant Prussians that Brandenburg cede to Hanover Wernigerode, a town which forms the apex of a western pointing triangle based on Quedlinburg and Nordhausen, which could be an Upper Saxon Circle bridgehead invading its neighbour's bounds. The Alt-Landsberg 'Punctuation' may contain such reciprocities as Bremen and Verden for Hanover, Stettin for Prussia and even Prussian acceptance that, with Stettin gained, the Gartow *Landeshoheit*, with rights to fortify the area, might pass to Hanover, but in the circumstances in which it was devised it was no less a parley.¹¹²

By November 1714 George I had been in his new kingdom some two months, and the smoothness of the dynastic change must even now have been convincing him that loyalty to the principle he embodied broadly transcended British party differences. Tory concern for the Established Church had not proved to be, as George had suspected, mere political expedience covering an active allegiance to the Stuarts.¹¹³ Yet for all that, Tory policies at Berlin, where British and French representatives were working together to obtain some respite for Charles XII, were but an extension of the Utrecht partnership in a particularly sensitive quarter

for Hanover. George I, an implacable enemy of France, could have had no illusions that Louis XIV intended, if opportunity knocked, to exert pressure on Hanover from Berlin,¹¹⁴ and here again Stanhope would have his work cut out to associate Britain with this nascent Versailles-Berlin axis. With the Hanoverian accession British foreign policy, at least in all respects where it touched upon northern Europe, would be largely conducted from George's 'German Chancery' in London.

And as regards the great instrument to which George was now heir, the Royal Navy, was its assistance against Sweden likely to be afforded readily to the various interested powers in the circumstances I have outlined? On the evidence I adduce below, Bernstorff was designedly vague, though occasionally letting fall portentous hints, about the role British warships might play in the Baltic in 1715. Whether for Dane, Prussian, or Russian, hints and generalities must suffice, and this policy by no means owed everything to the restraints of the Act of Settlement. At a time when Görtz, for Holstein-Gottorp, was canvassing the Czar with the advantages for Russian commerce of a canal system through Holstein to the North Sea (starting on the Baltic shore at Kiel), and when the Mecklenburg duke had high hopes of his duchy becoming a great northern entrepôt for trade from Astrakhan and the Levant, with a western outlet by way of the Schwerin lakes and Dömitz on the Elbe,¹¹⁵ commercially ambitious Hanoverians could thankfully reflect that they were now united with a power which had just endowed herself afresh with an Atlantic empire. Until the start of the next Baltic trading season approached, as approach it must, the potential of this maritime inheritance in its widest sense could work for Hanover as a counterpoise to all the shifts of her harassing contenders.