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Arne Jönsson, ed. *The Works and Correspondence of Axel Oxenstierna: Second Series, Thirteenth Volume: Letters from Sir James Spens and Jan Rutgers.* Stockholm: Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in co-operation with the Swedish National Archives, 2007. 642 pp. No price listed (cloth), ISBN 978-91-7402-367-1.

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Moving from the Northern Periphery towards the Center of European Politics

Sweden's Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna (1583-1654) has long been overshadowed both by the monarchs he served–the redoubtable King Gustavus Adolphus and the irrepressible Queen Christina–and by such other contemporary state ministers as George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, The Count Duke of Olivares, and Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin. While, in part, this relative obscurity stems from Sweden's peripheral place in broader European historiography, it also reflects the challenge of coming to grips with the immense archival material Oxenstierna accumulated and preserved. Yet the task is extremely fruitful, for Oxenstierna was a figure who played a pivotal role in European politics for more than four decades, not only by the reshaping of the Swedish kingdom but also by serving as the most significant Protestant statesman in the last half of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

During the last decade a number of different scholars have made important contributions that not only illuminate Axel Oxenstierna as a minister, magnate, and man, but also help place him in a series of broader contexts. For example, Gunnar Wetterberg elegantly brought together printed sources and current scholarship to produce the first complete biography of the chancellor, which has recently been joined by a shorter one in German by Jörg-Peter Findeisen.[1] Lotte Kurras has also produced a beautiful and erudite edition of Oxenstierna's Album Amicorum, and the classicist James Dobreff edited part of the correspondence of the superintendent of churches in Livonia, Hermannus Samsonius, to Axel Oxenstierna.[2]

Above all, in 1999 the Royal Archives and the Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities resurrected the project of publishing Oxenstierna's letters and papers, which had gone dormant in 1977. Within this project, Helmut Backhaus created a database of Oxenstierna's correspondence to be permanently available on the web, and Backhaus and others began to edit further correspondence for publication both on the web, and, eventually, as books. Series 1, which includes letters from Axel Oxenstierna to others, will be completed with a volume of selected letters from 1636 to 1654. Series 2, which includes letters to Oxenstierna, will be extended by new volumes of letters from Swedish diplomats including Carl Marinus in Zürich, Lars Skytte in Portugal, and Johann Adler Salvius in Hamburg and at the Westphalian peace conferences. Backhaus had even raised the possibility of a third series, to contain household and familial papers and correspondence, but, alas, this seems to have been abandoned as the project is now described as "completed," despite the substantial body of vital sources remaining in the archives. Note also that since the initial web publication of these volumes, Sweden has reorganized its public archives, meaning that the Oxenstierna project's web address has changed.[3]

The volume under review is the first book to be produced by the Oxenstierna project; strikingly, the editorial language has been changed from Swedish to English. Its editor, Arne Jönsson, improves upon the already high editorial standards established by earlier editors in the series. He provides brief biographies of Sir James Spens and Jan Rutgers, and offers both sketches of their activities in Swedish service, and concise but complete English summaries of the letters. He also adds to the habitually substantial indices included in previous volumes by providing biographical notes for every person mentioned in the letters.

The two correspondents in this volume both occupied central positions in Swedish diplomacy during Gustavus Adolphus's reign. James Spens's letters cover two periods when he served as the Swedish representative in London (from 1613-1620 and 1623-26), when he served Charles I as an ambassador in 1627-28, and when he resumed Swedish service until his death. No humanist, his

letters are mostly couched in a rough and ready Latin; he even writes in Scots on a few occasions when pressed for time. Spens's relationship with the Swedish monarchy predated Gustavus Adolphus's reign, however. Apparently trying to restore his family's fortunes after political troubles and a failed attempt to colonize the Isle of Lewis, Spens had raised troops for Karl IX (Gustavus Adolphus's father). In the first period of Spens's London service for Gustavus Adolphus, news of the Jülich-Cleves crisis and the Defenestration of Prague, among less prominent events, forms a backdrop to more routine business of complaints by English merchants about Swedish mistreatment and the payment of loans. Correspondence from the second period focuses much more upon negotiations among the British, Swedish, Danish, and Dutch to form a Protestant alliance. Then, in 1627, when Spens worked for Charles I, the king sent him to present Gustavus Adolphus with the Order of the Garter and to try to get him to end his war with Sigismund of Poland. Instead, Gustavus Adolphus convinced Spens once again to raise troops for Sweden.

Jan Rutgers, on the other hand, was educated in Leiden by such luminaries as Joseph Justus Scaliger and Daniel Heinsius; he writes in elegant Latin, even when describing the credit difficulties of gunpowder merchants. Then, in 1613, the ambassador Jacob van Dijck recruited him into Swedish service. In this position he was sent three times to Holland, above all to arrange loans to pay ransom money for the fortress of Älvsborg, as a treaty with Christian IV of Denmark required. He was then sent to Bohemia to explore an alliance with Frederick V, and fled with Frederick to Bratislava after the defeat at White Mountain. Until his death in the summer of 1625, Rutgers shuttled among Sweden, Holland, and various Baltic cities, often attempting to block Christian IV's attempts to lead a Protestant Union while attempting to convince others that Sweden's war against Poland was really a fight for the Protestant cause.

Unsurprisingly, historians have studied this correspondence to explore the origins of Sweden's engagement in the Thirty Years War, and historians with these interests will profit from Arne Jönsson's editorial labor. However, the correspondence has much more to offer beyond such classic subjects of high diplomatic history. For example, as Steve Murdoch has recently shown, Spens's letters reveal much about the nature and complexity of Scottish exile networks.[4] Scholars of northern late humanism will also be interested in the possible political implications of Rutgers's attempts to procure Gustavus Adolphus's and Axel Oxenstierna's patronage for such figures as Daniel Heinsius and Phillip Cluverius, while economic historians might find both Spens's and Rutgers's dealings with merchants of interest. In addition, Rutgers and Spens both participated not only in the negotiations that would bring Sweden into the center of European politics, but in the broader conscious project to reshape the Swedish realm to suit its new status.

In short, this is an admirably edited volume containing fascinating material that should interest not only historians of Sweden and the Holy Roman Empire, but also a broad group of scholars of early modern history and culture. Historians owe a considerable debt to Arne Jönsson for such a thorough and useful edition. It is only to be regretted that the project of editing Oxenstierna's papers has once again come to a halt.

Notes

[1]. Gunnar Wetterberg, *Kanslern: Axel Oxenstierna i sin tid*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2002); and Jörg-Peter Findeisen, *Axel Oxenstierna: Architekt der schwedischen Großmacht-Ära und Sieger des Dreißigjährigen Krieges* (Gernsbach: Casimir Katz Verlag, 2007).

[2]. Lotte Kurras with collaboration from Werner Taegert, eds., *Axel Oxenstiernas Album amicorum und seine eigenen Stammbucheinträge: Reproduktion mit Transkription, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets, Historie och Antikivitets Akademien, 2004); and James Dobreff, ed., *Hermannus Samsonius to Axel Oxenstierna: Latin Correspondence from 1621 to 1630 with Linguistic and Historical Commentaries* (Lund: Centre for Language and Literature, Lund University, 2006).

[3]. "Oxenstiernaprojektet," available at http://www.statensarkiv.se/default.aspx?id=8359&refid=4095, accessed April 18, 2008. Many of the older volumes of Axel Oxenstiernas Skrifter och Brevväxling remain available for purchase from the Royal Academy. For a list see: http://www.vitterhetsakad.se/publikationer/kap11.htm#oxenstierna accessed 18 April 2008.

[4]. Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603-1746* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 251-279.

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