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FATEFUL MÉSALLIANCE


THE DANISH-MUSCOVITE TREATIES OF 1493–1523 IN POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE**

Abstract

In 1493, King John of Denmark entered into a formal treaty with the grand prince of Muscovy, which was later renewed and discontinued only with the fall of King Christian II. The treaty generated frequent embassies to Copenhagen and Moscow. The treaty was clearly aimed against Sweden and posed a serious strategic problem there. It also provides a backdrop to the diminished Swedish political trust in the Oldenburg kings. Several medieval papal bulls prohibited Latin Christians from contact with infidels and schismatics. This papal embargo represented an over-arching policy that all within the Latin Christian community were expected to observe. The need for trade required degrees of embargo and in effect, the embargo only prohibited trade and interactions with infidels that may harm the Christian community – especially arms trade and offensive alliances. The Danish-Muscovite alliance was a clear breach of this embargo. Earlier studies have not, however, appreciated the significance of this alliance in the larger international context. This article studies the role of Muscovy in the conflicts between Sweden and Denmark from 1493 to 1523. How did the Oldenburg kings utilise the treaty to pursue their strategic goals? What were the Swedish repercussions? Did the Oldenburg kings publicly acknowledge their Muscovite liaison? How did the larger Latin Christian community react? What does this treaty tell us about political change in early sixteenth-century Northern Europe?

Keywords: papal embargo, Muscovy, Denmark, Sweden, secret diplomacy, foreign policy, Kalmar Union

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INTRODUCTION

In 1493, the Danish King John of Oldenburg entered into a treaty with the Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III. The treaty represented an offensive alliance where Prince Ivan pledged military help against the Swedes while King John agreed to assist the grand prince against Lithuania¹. The Danish-Muscovite alliance was renewed in 1506 and 1514–1516 following the deaths of Ivan III and King John². It lasted until the deposition of Christian II in 1523 and represented the beginning of a recurrent pattern of anti-Swedish policies in the North³. However, the finer points of the alliance of 1493–1523 have just recently been illustrated by Carsten Pape. He has clarified the diplomatic exchanges and identified 22 Russian embassies to Copenhagen and 28 Danish ones to Muscovy⁴. Today there is general consensus about the bellicose anti-Swedish character of the Danish-Muscovite treaty. However, it has not always been so. In Danish historiography, the character of the treaties has only gradually been acknowledged. From Arild Huitfeldt (1652) to Henrik Behrmann (1815) the rumours of the alliance were mainly treated as hateful propaganda spread by the Swedish ruler Sten Sture the Elder and the obnoxious Swedes⁵. In 1835, the Danish historian Ferdinand Henrik Jahn acknowledged the treaty as an offensive alliance directed against Sweden and the grand duke of Lithuania. He argued that King John did not try to keep the treaty secret – only its true contents⁶. In 1864, Carl Ferdinand Allen agreed but stated that the offensive alliance was justified in the light of ‘irregularity, self-interest and sickly desire for

¹ Carsten PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties, 1493–1523: Texts, Contexts, Diplomacy*, Aarhus 2022; *Sverges traktater med främmande magter*, D. 3: 1409–1520, ed. Olof S. RYDBERG, Stockholm 1895, pp. 701–702. See also Waldemar WESTERGAARD, *Denmark, Russia, and the Swedish Revolution, 1480–1503*, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 16: 1937, no. 46, p. 133; Erik TIBERG, *Moscow, Livonia and the Hanseatic League, 1487–1550*, Stockholm 1995, p. 159.

² E. TIBERG, op.cit., pp. 158–159; C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 11.

³ Walther KIRCHNER, *A Milestone in European History: The Danish-Russian Treaty of 1562*, *The Slavonic and East European Review. American Series*, vol. 3: 1944, no. 2, p. 43; Georg LANDBERG, *De nordiska rikena under Brömsebroförbundet*, Uppsala 1925, p. 306; C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 9. Frederick II and Ivan IV entered into another treaty in 1562, and others followed during subsequent centuries.

⁴ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, passim; idem, *Comprehensive Register of Danish-Muscovite Diplomatic Missions 1493–1523*, https://www.academia.edu/48965631/Comprehensive_Register_of_Danish_Muscovite_Diplomatic_Missions_1493_1523_final_version [accessed online 22 February 2023].

⁵ Arild HUITFELDT, *Den anden Tomus eller Part aff Danmarks Rigis Krønike angaaende dend høylofflige Oldenborgiske Stamme*, Copenhagen 1652, p. 1008; Henrik BEHRMANN, *Kong Christian den Andens Historie*, Bd. 1, København 1815, p. 169.

⁶ Ferdinand H. JAHN, *Danmarks politisk-militaire historie under unionskongerne. Fra Kong Oluf og Dronning Margarethe, indtil Kong Hanses død*, København 1835, pp. 360–361.

power' among the deceitful Swedes⁷. Still in 1907, the Danish church historian Lindbaek tried to defend King John against accusations made by the Swedish councillor Hemming Gadh in a letter sent to the Roman Curia four hundred years earlier⁸. The Swedish historian Gottfrid Carlsson, however, argues that the accusations of the king's relations with the Russians presented in this letter can all be confirmed by other sources⁹. The posture of denial among early Danish scholars serves to illustrate the controversial nature of the Danish-Muscovite treaties.

Today, the true contents of the Danish-Muscovite alliance are well known. As Pape points out, however, few modern scholars elaborate on the significance of the alliance and some standard works of the period do not even mention it¹⁰. Waldemar Westergaard, on the other hand, connects the very dissolution of the Kalmar Union with the Danish-Muscovite treaty and argues that the conflict between King John and Sten Sture largely hinged on the Russian question¹¹. I concur with this view but argue that the Muscovite alliance was also contrary to the religious discourse within Latin Christendom. As Janus Møller Jensen argues, it was established during a period when the crusading ideology against infidels and heretics was still at the centre of the religious discourse¹². Furthermore, during these very years, anti-Russian sentiments increased in the Baltic region. Building on earlier works, Anti Selart points to an increasingly negative attitude towards the Russians, and a renewed emphasis on the 'Russian threat' towards the end of the fifteenth century, following Muscovy's warlike posture on the Livonian border and its aggressive attitude towards the Hansa¹³. Thomas Lindkvist also emphasises similar and increasingly negative attitudes towards Muscovy in Sweden at this time¹⁴.

From an ideological point of view, military cooperation with Muscovy was theoretically possible after the Lutheran Reformation, which dismissed crusade

⁷ Carl F. ALLEN, *De tre nordiske Rigers Historie under Hans, Christiern den Anden, Frederik den Første, Gustav Vasa, Grevefeiden, 1497–1536*, Bd. 1, København 1864, pp. 133, 196–197, 204–205.

⁸ Johannes LINDBÆK, *Pavernes forhold til Danmark under kongerne Kristiern I og Hans*, København 1907, pp. 120, 123. See also Gottfrid CARLSSON, *Hemming Gadh. En statsman och prelat från Sturetiden. Biografisk studie*, Uppsala 1915, p. 156.

⁹ G. CARLSSON, op.cit., pp. 156–157.

¹⁰ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, pp. 12–13.

¹¹ W. WESTERGAARD, op.cit., p. 131.

¹² Janus MØLLER JENSEN, *Fra korstog til religionskrig? Korstogstanken i Skandinavien 1400–1600*, [in:] *Konge, adel og militærmagt 1400–1600*, ed. Knut ARSTAD, Oslo 2004, p. 38.

¹³ Anti SELART, *Political Rhetoric and the Edges of Christianity: Livonia and its Evil Enemies in the Fifteenth Century*, [in:] *The Edges of the Medieval World*, ed. Gerhard JARITZ, Juhan KREEM, Budapest 2009, p. 68.

¹⁴ Thomas LINDKVIST, *Crusading Ideas in Late Medieval Sweden*, [in:] *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, ed. Tuomas M. S. LEHTONEN, Kurt V. JENSEN, Helsinki 2005, pp. 259–261.

indulgencies altogether¹⁵. The Reformation was not introduced in Denmark until 1536 and played no part in the decision. Even so, Møller Jensen argues that the crusading ideology survived the Reformation. It found a new place within the framework of the Lutheran confession as a perceived responsibility of worldly princes to wage war against heretics¹⁶. The pre-Reformation context makes the Danish-Muscovite alliance very interesting to study in its contemporary discourse. Earlier studies conclude that the alliance was contrary to papal doctrine, but seldom appreciate the implications of it. It is hardly meaningful for historians to moralise over events half a millennium distant. But it is relevant to study to what extent the treaties contravened the moral borders, as they were expressed in religious and political discourse. I will examine the alliance in respect of papal policy, the receptions and discourse in Sweden and Northern Europe, and how the Danish kings justified it.

LATE MEDIEVAL CROSS-RELIGIOUS POLITICAL ALLIANCES

There are a few examples of cross-religious political alliances from this period. Pape demonstrates that Muscovy was repeatedly used as a factor in the conflicts between Latin Christian polities. During the period 1488–1493, Emperor Friedrich III and Archduke Maximilian attempted to form an alliance including Muscovy, against the Jagiellonian dynasty ruling in Poland, Lithuania and Bohemia. The Swedish Regent Sten Sture took part in the negotiations and Pape argues that the purpose was to broker a lasting peace between Sweden and Muscovy. These negotiations even involved the idea to put the Habsburg archduke on the Swedish throne¹⁷. However, the plan was short-lived. When the grand prince forcefully closed the Hanseatic *Kontor* in Novgorod in 1495, Maximilian again argued that Muscovy was a great Christian enemy

¹⁵ Kurt V. JENSEN, *Korstogstanken i dansk senmiddelalder*, [in:] *Danmark og Europa i senmiddelalderen*, ed. Per INGESMAN, Bjørn POULSEN, Århus 2000, p. 58; J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, p. 40.

¹⁶ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, pp. 35, 41–43. See also Madis MAASING, *Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians in Late Medieval Livonia*, [in:] *Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region*, ed. Cordelia HESS, Jonathan ADAMS, Berlin 2015, pp. 351–352, 356.

¹⁷ Carsten PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling mellem Sten Sture og Ivan III. Om Sveriges plads i Habsburgernes russiske diplomati 1488–93*, *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Bd. 108: 2013, H. 1, p. 7; Kari TARKIAINEN, *Moskoviten. Sverige och Ryssland 1478–1721*, Helsingfors 2017, p. 47; Kurt FORSTREUTER, *Preussen und Russland im Mittelalter. Die Entwicklung ihrer Beziehungen vom 13. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (Osteuropäische Forschungen, Bd. 25), Berlin 1938, p. 56; Elke WIMMER, *Livland – ein Problem der Habsburgisch-Russischen Beziehungen zur Zeit Maximilians I?*, [in:] *Deutschland, Livland, Russland. Ihre Beziehungen vom 15. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert. Beiträge aus dem Historischen Seminar der Universität Hamburg*, hrsg. v. Norbert ANGERMANN, Lüneburg 1988, pp. 53–110.

who committed atrocities in Livonia¹⁸. The Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus also entered an anti-Jagiellonian alliance with Ivan III in 1482, which was annulled with his death in 1490, as the Jagiellonian King Vladislaus II ascended the Hungarian throne¹⁹. In 1514, Emperor Maximilian also entered into another anti-Jagiellonian alliance with Vasili III, but it was abandoned as soon as the situation changed again in Central Europe²⁰. Elke Wimmer argues that in his role as German king, Maximilian I was obliged to protect Livonia, and a Muscovite alliance was a poor choice in this respect. It was in his role as emperor and head of the Habsburg dynasty that he pursued the Muscovite anti-Jagiellonian alliance²¹. Following the argument of Philip Gorski and Vivek Swaroop Sharma, well into the early modern period consolidating European states were still run as a kind of ‘family states’ according to dynastic strategies rather than the ‘reason of state’²². For the Oldenburg kings, this was certainly also the case and Muscovy thus largely became a means to an end in the geopolitical struggles of the time.

Alexander Baranov concludes that despite all the anti-Russian polemics, the policy of the Teutonic Order in Livonia towards the grand prince was quite pragmatic. The Land Master of Livonia Johann Waldhaus von Heerse (1470–1471) even planned for an alliance with Novgorod to wage a preventive war against Pskov and Moscow. The pragmatic policy is further illustrated by plans for a crusade in 1473, only months before a peace treaty with Muscovy was renewed in 1474. The Land Master of Livonia Bernd von der Borch (1471–1483) had fairly peaceful contacts with the grand prince. However, a project for an alliance was abandoned at his death in 1483²³. The profound reason behind the pragmatic policy of the Teutonic Order towards the Russians was its increasingly difficult strategic situation, fearing Polish attacks on Prussia as much as Russian attacks on Livonia. In 1517, as a result, the Grand Master of the

¹⁸ Madis MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians at Imperial Diets before the Livonian War*, *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, vol. 29: 2021, no. 1, pp. 43–44.

¹⁹ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, pp. 9–11; K. FORSTREUTER, *op.cit.*, pp. 56–58.

²⁰ M. MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians*, p. 42; Maike SACH, *Hochmeister und Großfürst. Die Beziehungen zwischen dem Deutschen Orden in Preussen und dem Moskauer Staat um die Wende zur Neuzeit*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 190–238; Hans UEBERSBERGER, *Österreich und Russland seit dem Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 1: 1488–1605, Wien 1906, pp. 76–79.

²¹ E. WIMMER, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

²² Philip GORSKI, Vivek SWAROOP SHARMA, *Beyond the Tilly Thesis: “Family Values” and State Formation in Latin Christendom*, [in:] *Does War Make States? Investigations of Charles Tilly’s Historical Sociology*, ed. Lars B. KASPERSEN, Jeppe STRANDBJERG, Cambridge 2017, pp. 102–103.

²³ Alexander BARANOV, *Zwischen Bündnis und Konfrontation. Der livländische Ordensmeister Bernd von der Borch und Großfürst Ivan III. von Moskau (1471–1483)*, [in:] *Akteure mittelalterlicher Außenpolitik. Das Beispiel Ostmitteleuropas*, hrsg. v. Norbert KERSKEN, Stephan FLEMMIG, Marburg 2017, pp. 134–136, 143–144.

Teutonic Order briefly entered a treaty with the grand prince of Muscovy, directed against Poland-Lithuania²⁴. It is doubtful whether these alliances were publicly known or condemned by the Church. Baranov argues that to openly ally with the schismatic Russians would have greatly damaged the position of the Order as a defender of the Christian faith²⁵.

In February 1526, however, in a move to create leverage against the Habsburg Empire, French King Francis I allied with Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire. The alliance triggered a Turkish offensive that ended with the Christian defeat at Mohács in 1526. The actions of Francis produced protests even from the French nobility, caused widespread European outrage and damaged his reputation as a pious Christian king²⁶. The infamous alliances with the Ottoman Empire and Muscovy were all western initiatives. In Eastern Europe, Muscovy largely became a means to an end in the geopolitical struggles. As Pape points out, King John could not have been unaware of the analogy between his anti-Swedish project and the earlier anti-Jagiellonian alliances²⁷. Such cross-religious alliances were always aimed toward the frontier polities bordering the target of the embargo. Even though there were other contemporary examples of short-lived Western-Muscovite treaties, the established papal ban and the risk of international bad-will nevertheless meant that the contents of King John's alliance with Muscovy must be kept secret.

INFIDELS AND HERETICS IN PAPAL DISCOURSE

Recent studies of embargoes during the crusades have established new perspectives on perceptions of religiously constituted otherness. At the Lateran Council in 1179, the papacy issued a perpetual embargo on trade and contact with infidels and heretics, including non-Latin Christians. The recurrent papal bull *In Coena Domini* became a pastoral tool that proclaimed excommunication and anathema against anyone who provided the enemies of Christendom with arms or military support of any kind²⁸. Medieval theologians even claimed that wicked Christians who supported or supplied the infidels were

²⁴ M. SACH, op.cit., p. 424; K. FORSTREUTER, op.cit., pp. 72–78; Anti SELART, *Switching the Tracks: Baltic Crusades against Russia in the Fifteenth Century*, [in:] *The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Norman HOUSLEY, London–New York 2017, p. 100.

²⁵ A. BARANOV, op.cit., p. 144.

²⁶ De Lamar JENSEN, *The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy*, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 16: 1985, no. 4, pp. 451–470; M. MAASING, *Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians*, p. 356; Charles OMAN, *The History of the Art of War in the Sixteenth Century*, Uckfield 2017, p. 10.

²⁷ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, pp. 42, 49.

²⁸ Stefan K. STANTCHEV, *Spiritual Rationality: Papal Embargo as Cultural Practice*, Oxford 2014, pp. 164–165.

even ‘worse than Saracens’²⁹. Stefan Stantchev argues that the increased ecclesiastic intervention in the secular spheres of society became a manifestation of ‘spiritual rationality’. The papal embargo was based on a religious mapping of space and functioned as an export control system against targets outside Christendom and heretics within. It constituted a ‘pastoral staff’ that aimed to prevent contamination of the Christian herd. It was a moral as much as a legal discourse, which regulated the symbolical relationship between Latin Christians and others³⁰. Centuries of papal proclamations that trade with infidels was a crime eventually made the whole concept self-evident. Fifteenth-century documents clearly expose the continuous papal concern with fear of contact between the papal flock and others. The embargo was also an integral part of renaissance political discourse and applied well into the early modern period³¹.

As a result of the Northern Crusades a persistent East-West polemic rhetoric gradually developed, where the Latin realms bordering the Russian polities were depicted as the *Antemurale Christianitatis* against heretics in the East³². A large part of the Hansa trade in Northern Europe did however hinge on the westward commerce in Russian goods, and it was hardly possible to stem this flow. The result was an embargo of degrees on all goods or services of military utility for the infidels³³. As early as 1229, the pope informed all Swedish clergymen of the ban against trade with infidels in arms and all goods of military utility³⁴. The ban was repeated in letters to the Northern European clergy and the contents – later repeated by Pope Clemens V in the bull *Multa mentis* – were of common knowledge in Northern Europe throughout the Middle Ages³⁵.

²⁹ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 49.

³⁰ S. K. STANTCHEV, *Spiritual Rationality*, pp. 1–13; idem, *The Medieval Origins of Embargo as a Policy Tool*, *History of Political Thought*, vol. 33: 2012, no. 3, p. 399.

³¹ Idem, *Spiritual Rationality*, pp. 178, 189.

³² M. MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians*, p. 36; Anti SELART, *Livonia, Rus’ and the Baltic Crusades in the Thirteenth Century*, Leiden 2015, pp. 309–311; idem, *Political Rhetoric and the Edges of Christianity*, pp. 55–69; Juhan KREEM, *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals: The Mentality of the Teutonic Order in Livonia at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*, *Crusades*, vol. 12: 2013, p. 240; Paul W. KNOLL, *Poland as “Antemurale Christianitatis” in the Late Middle Ages*, *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 60: 1974, no. 3, pp. 381–401; Jukka KORPELA, *Die schwedische Ostgrenze von Nöteborg bis Kardis 1323–1660. Kirchengrenze, politische Grenze oder Kulturgrenze? Eine Region des Ost-West-Gegensatzes?*, [in:] *Nordosteuropa als Geschichtsregion*, hrsg. v. Jörg HACKMANN, Robert SCHWEITZER, Lübeck 2006, p. 286.

³³ Martin N. SKOOG, *Munitions for Muscovy: Breaching the Arms Embargo in the North 1400–1600*, [in:] *Economic Warfare and the Crusades*, ed. Stefan K. STANTCHEV [forthcoming].

³⁴ Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Svenskt Diplomatariums huvudkartotek, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sdhk> (hereinafter cited as SDHK), no. 463.

³⁵ SDHK, no. 815, 971, 1649, 2042, 6128, 7041, 40734; *Finlands medeltidsurkunder*, Bd. 1–8, ed. Reinhold HAUSEN, Helsingfors 1910–1935 (hereinafter cited as FMU), no. 4135. See also S. K. STANTCHEV, *Spiritual Rationality*, pp. 44–45, 71, 122, 164–165; Alexandra KAAR, *Eine*

After the conversion of the last ‘pagan’ polities in Lithuania around 1390, the papal policy of embargo continued to apply to the Orthodox Russians. They were vilified in Western discourse and often placed on par with the Turks³⁶. In 1428, a church council in Riga attacked those who provided the ‘faithless Ruthenians’ with arms and military support. A council in Riga in 1437 further decided that the bull *Multa Mentis* should be spread to all priests around the Baltic Sea and be read to the laity twice a year³⁷. The Council of Basel in 1431 included Russians among the enemies of Christians. This view was further strengthened by Novgorod’s refusal at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1439 to submit to the papacy and to be included in the Latin Church³⁸. Even though early sixteenth-century European-Muscovite relations seem characterised by a degree of contingency, Alexander Filyushkin points out the ‘anti-European’ image of Muscovy effectively cemented by the Livonian War of 1558–1583³⁹. Throughout the late sixteenth century, worldly powers largely observed the anti-Russian embargo which testifies to its profound position within western Christian society, despite the Reformation⁴⁰.

During the late fifteenth century, the preaching of crusades against Muscovy became a central theme in Northern European politics⁴¹. During the first reign of Sten Sture the Elder (1470–1497), Swedish plans for crusades against the schismatic Russians were repeatedly discussed⁴². In 1483–1484, on the instructions of Pope Sixtus IV, money was collected for a crusade in the North⁴³. His successor, Pope Innocent VIII (1484–1492), fervently promoted the crusades and tried to coordinate the different crusading frontiers of Europe, including the North⁴⁴. In February 1485, Innocent VIII admonished the Swedish Archbishop Jacob Ulvsson to persuade the Danish king to make war against

Frage des Seelenheils. Wirtschaft, Krieg und das Handelsverbot gegen die Hussiten in Böhmen (1420–1436) (PhD diss., University of Vienna), Wien 2017, p. 146.

³⁶ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, pp. 39–40; M. MAASING, *Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians*, pp. 376–377; Alexander Filyushkin, *Livonian War in the Context of the European Wars of the 16th Century: Conquest, Borders, Geopolitics*, Russian History, vol. 43: 2016, no. 1, p. 11.

³⁷ S. K. STANTCHEV, *Spiritual Rationality*, pp. 164–165, 172.

³⁸ Anti SELART, *Schismatiker, Vereinigung der Kirchen und das Geld. Livland und die Union von Florenz (1439)*, Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung, Bd. 36: 2009, H. 1, pp. 1–31; M. MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians*, p. 40.

³⁹ A. Filyushkin, op.cit., pp. 18–19.

⁴⁰ M. N. SKOOG, *Munitions for Muscovy*.

⁴¹ Janus Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades, 1400–1650*, Leiden 2007, pp. 132–135.

⁴² K. V. JENSEN, op.cit., p. 57.

⁴³ J. LINDBÆK, op.cit., p. 112.

⁴⁴ J. Møller Jensen, *Denmark and the Crusades*, p. 136.

‘Russians and other infidels’⁴⁵. Amid this call for a crusade, a conflict broke out between Riga and the Teutonic Order, and the Swedes entered into an armed treaty with the city⁴⁶. In response to the discord in Livonia, in June 1487, the pope issued another bull calling on Sweden, Prussia, and Livonia to organise a crusade against the Russians⁴⁷. In May 1488, the pope appointed the Bishop of Reval, Simon van der Borch, as his representative to make peace in Northern Europe in order to organise a crusade against the Russians. The pope threatened to condemn anyone who tried to hinder the preparations⁴⁸. In response, Sweden and the Teutonic Order entered into a year-long armistice ‘in mutual aid and defence of the Christians against the cruel and evil Russians’⁴⁹.

In 1489–1490, the papal ecclesiastic Anthonius Mast preached in Stockholm for a crusade against Muscovy. On this occasion, Sten Sture was lauded by Pope Innocent for his piety and the hospitality received by Mast in Stockholm. As Tore Nyberg points out, the papal rhetoric of Russian tyranny and heresy transformed, in advance, any future war against the Russians into a holy war⁵⁰. In Sweden, Mast issued several thousand letters of indulgences and collected more than 10,000 guilders which testify to the earnest zeal among the Swedish commoners. Møller Jensen argues that Mast possibly also preached in Denmark before he arrived in Sweden⁵¹. These efforts demonstrate that the pope was by no means indifferent to policies in the North. He expressed a clear ambition to unite the northern Latin Christian polities against the schismatic Russians.

⁴⁵ *Acta Pontificum Danica. Pavelige aktstykker vedrørende Danmark 1316–1536*, Bd. 6: 1513–1536, ed. Alfred KRARUP, Johannes LINDBAEK, København 1915 (hereinafter cited as APD VI), pp. 549–550.

⁴⁶ *Sverges traktater*, pp. 396–402; *Monumenta Livoniae antiquae. Sammlung von Chroniken, Berichten, Urkunden und anderen schriftlichen Denkmalen und Aufsätzen, welche zur Erläuterung der Geschichte Liv-, Ehst- und Kurlands dienen*, Bd. 4, Riga 1844, p. XCIV.

⁴⁷ SDHK, no. 42947; FMU, no. 4135.

⁴⁸ *Acta Pontificum Danica. Pavelige aktstykker vedrørende Danmark 1316–1536*, Bd. 4: 1471–1492, ed. Alfred KRARUP, Johannes LINDBAEK, København 1910 (hereinafter cited as APD IV), pp. 422–224; K. V. JENSEN, op.cit., p. 57.

⁴⁹ FMU, no. 4185, 4199. See also C. PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling*, p. 21; J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, p. 137; Tore NYBERG, *Papst Innocenz VIII. und Skandinavien*, *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, vol. 22: 1984, pp. 126–127; Carl G. STYFFE, *Bidrag till Skandinaviens historia ur utländska arkiver*, D. 4: *Sverige i Sten Sture den äldres tid, 1470–1503*, Stockholm 1875 (hereinafter cited as Bidrag IV), p. LXXXVI.

⁵⁰ Tore NYBERG, *The Shield of the Kalmar Union to the East: Sweden and the Crusade against the Russians, 1495–1497*, [in:] *Fighting for the Faith – The Many Crusades*, ed. Kurt V. JENSEN, Carsten S. JENSEN, Janus MØLLER JENSEN, Stockholm 2018, pp. 224–225; J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, p. 140; Karin HAGNELL, *Sturekrönikan 1452–1496. Studier över en rimkrönikas tillkomst och sanningsvärde*, Lund 1941, p. 317.

⁵¹ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, pp. 138, 141.

Other examples testify to the internalisation of the papal discourse in fifteenth-century Sweden. When the Swedes asked Pope Sixtus IV to grant the rights for the first Nordic university in Uppsala in 1477, they argued that the Swedish realm was ‘encircled by schismatics, here at the end of the world’, and a university would serve as a Christian bulwark in the struggle for the true faith⁵². In the late fifteenth century, the Stockholm magistrate also restated the perpetual ban on the export of arms to Russian lands, ‘on the penalty of life and property.’ In 1475, two local burghers were even tried in court, accused of selling arms to the Russians⁵³. The anti-Russian discourse was thus well-established in Sweden at the time.

In the midst of the plans for a new crusade in the North, the Danish royal family sought to undermine the Swedish leadership at the Roman Curia. The anti-Russian discourse became entangled with political conflicts in the North and even brought an excommunication on Sten Sture. King John’s mother, Queen Dorothea, ruled Sweden from 1457 to 1464 and was deposed together with her husband King Christian I. For many years she struggled to reclaim her forfeited dowry land fiefs in Sweden and eventually brought the matter to the Roman Curia⁵⁴. Danish efforts in Rome were however crossed by the Swedish agent Hemming Gadh who managed to acquire counter-bulls that urged Danish and Swedish bishops to settle the matter. In July 1490, the pope commanded the archbishop of Trondheim and the bishop of Ösel to investigate the issue between Sten Sture and Queen Dorothea. According to the pope, Sten Sture informed him that unless the conflict could be resolved then war would surely follow, which would prevent the Swedes from waging war against the Russians⁵⁵. The letter coincided with a crusade congress in Rome, which decided that all war between Christian people must be avoided to facilitate a crusade, where the northern realms were included⁵⁶. The pope feared that the queen dowager’s personal interests may ruin the fragile situation in the North, and even labelled her a disturber of the peace⁵⁷. Despite this, in 1512 her successor, Queen Christina kept pursuing the very same issue at the Roman Curia to discredit the Swedish political leadership⁵⁸. On the very day of his death, 25 July 1492, Pope Innocent VIII admonished the Danish and Swedish bishops

⁵² Claes ANNERSTEDT, *Uppsala universitets historia*, Bihang 1: *Handlingar 1477–1654*, Uppsala 1877, p. 6.

⁵³ *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1474–1483 samt burspråk*, ed. Emil HILDEBRAND (Stockholms stadsböcker från äldre tid, Ser. 2:1), Stockholm 1917, pp. 37–38, 496.

⁵⁴ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, pp. 8, 21, 31, 33; J. LINDBÆK, *op.cit.*, pp. 98, 102.

⁵⁵ APD IV, p. 510.

⁵⁶ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, p. 32; J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, p. 49.

⁵⁷ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, p. 140; J. LINDBÆK, *op.cit.*, pp. 102–103.

⁵⁸ J. LINDBÆK, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

to solve the issue with the queen's dowry. He further lifted the excommunication of Sten Sture in consideration of the Swedish ambition to attack the Russians as soon as a firm peace with Denmark was achieved⁵⁹. According to Carl Gustaf Styffe, Pope Innocent VIII was aware of the recent Russian incursions in Finland and even named the parishes attacked on the Carelian Isthmus. It was due to this information that he lifted Sten Sture's excommunication⁶⁰. Pope Innocent clearly struggled to unite the Nordic realms against the Russians. Even though a sequence of renaissance popes was of questionable character, the papal doctrine about heretics remained firm.

In 1492, the Land Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia invited the Swedes to an anti-Russian alliance. This was probably due to the recent Russian construction of the fortress of Ivangorod, facing Narva on the eastern shore of the Narova. When the agreement was confirmed in 1493, Bishop Magnus of Åbo wrote to Sten Sture that if it pleased the pope, the Swedish realm now had an opportunity to finally bring the Russians under the Roman Church. In this way, the Russian threat against Finland would finally be eliminated⁶¹. In March 1495, the Swedish Council of the Realm also invited representatives of the archbishop of Riga and the Teutonic Order to Stockholm to discuss the defence against the Russians⁶². It was amid this anti-Russian discourse and plans for a crusade, that King John instead chose to secretly ally with the Muscovite prince.

When the Muscovite army invaded Finland in the autumn of 1495, the conflict was quickly perceived as a religious war⁶³. On 22 June 1496, on request from Hemming Gadh, Pope Alexander VI issued Sten Sture with a crusading bull against the Russians⁶⁴. In the bull, the pope ordered the archbishop of Uppsala and the bishop of Åbo to give complete absolution to those who took

⁵⁹ APD IV, pp. 467–468.

⁶⁰ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, pp. LXXXV, CLXVI.

⁶¹ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, no. 107; C. PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling*, p. 19; FMU, no. 4488.

⁶² SDHK, no. 33212; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, no. 124; FMU, no. 4601; *Liv-, est- und kurländisches Urkundenbuch*, Abt. 2, Bd. 1: *1494 Ende Mai – 1500*, hrsg. v. Leonid ARBUSOW, Riga–Moskau 1900 (hereinafter cited as LECUB II:1), no. 164.

⁶³ *Svenska medeltidens rimkrönikor*, D. 3: *Nya krönikans fortsättningar eller Sturekrönikorna. Fortgången af unionsstriderna under Karl Knutsson och Sturarne, 1452–1520*, ed. Gustaf E. KLEMMING, Stockholm 1867–1868, pp. 126–127; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, p. CLXXXVI.

⁶⁴ FMU, no. 4682, 4793; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, no. 159; idem, *Bidrag till Skandinaviens historia ur utländska arkiver*, D. 5: *Sverige under de yngre Sturarne, särdeles under Svante Nilsson, 1504–1520*, Stockholm 1884 (hereinafter cited as *Bidrag V*), p. 274. T. LINDKVIST, op.cit., p. 260, erroneously claims that Gadh's work in Rome was on behalf of Archbishop Jacob Ulvsson. G. CARLSSON, op.cit., pp. 10–62, clearly demonstrates that he was a political agent of Sten Sture in Rome.

part in the crusade against the schismatic Russians, 'who burn churches, desecrate Christ, rape and murder both maidens and old women, and devastate the land'⁶⁵. The crusade bull thus cemented the religious character of the war.

During the subsequent Livonian-Muscovite war of 1501–1503, Pope Alexander VI granted the Teutonic Order a plenary indulgence for three years in aid of the war against the Russians in Livonia. This was later confirmed by Pope Julius II, who also issued a new indulgence for the war against the Russians and Tartars in Livonia in 1507 and 1510⁶⁶. This coincided with the spread in German-speaking parts of Europe of a propaganda narrative of events in Livonia in 1492–1506, called *Eynne Schonne Hysthorie*, which enforced the picture of Russians as un-Christian and evil barbarians⁶⁷. In September 1513, the pope issued a further crusading bull against the Turkish Sultan Selim I, 'who attacks Poland and Hungary with his allies the Tartars and the Muscovite'. He demanded that all inhabitants of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, especially the clergy, should support his legate Cardinal Tamás Bakócz in his effort to sell indulgences for the crusade⁶⁸. In this bull, the Russians were – somewhat unfairly – lumped together with the Ottomans⁶⁹. The formula nevertheless illustrates the official papal stance towards Muscovy and defined the limits of Latin Christendom.

PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES IN SWEDEN AND NORTHERN EUROPE

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Swedish kings launched several crusades against the Russian polities. The borders were regulated at the Peace of Nöteborg in 1323, albeit uneasy relations continued with repeated Russian incursions in Finland. In the fifteenth century, there were several reciprocal raids. In the summer of 1475, the Finnish lords complained of how the Rus-

⁶⁵ *Acta Pontificum Danica. Pavelige aktstykker vedrørende Danmark 1316–1536*, Bd. 5: 1492–1513, ed. Alfred KRARUP, Johannes LINDBAEK, København 1913 (hereinafter cited as APD V), pp. 155–156.

⁶⁶ Stuart JENKS, *Documents on the Papal Plenary Indulgences 1300–1517 Preached in the Regnum Teutonicum* (Later Medieval Europe, vol. 16), Leiden 2018, pp. 458–501, 519–520.

⁶⁷ M. MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians*, p. 44; K. TARKIAINEN, op.cit., pp. 43, 47, 227; Friedrich BENNINGHOVEN, *Russland im Spiegel der livländischen Schonnen Hysthorie von 1508*, [in:] *Rossica externa. Studien zum 15.–17. Jahrhundert. Festgabe für Paul Johansen zum 60. Geburtstag*, hrsg. v. Hugo WECZERKA, Marburg 1963, pp. 11–35; Matthias THUMSER, *Antirussische Propaganda in der „Schönen Historie von wunderbaren Geschäften der Herren zu Livland mit den Russen und Tataren“*, [in:] *Geschichtsschreibung im mittelalterlichen Livland*, hrsg. v. Matthias THUMSER (Schriften der Baltischen Historischen Kommission, Bd. 18), Berlin 2011, pp. 133–153; J. KREEM, op.cit., pp. 239–242.

⁶⁸ APD VI, p. 28.

⁶⁹ M. MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians*, p. 43. The cooperation between the Russians and Turks was also emphasised at German imperial diets.

sians – ‘the enemies of God and Christendom’ – pillaged, burned, killed and tortured the population in Finland⁷⁰. In 1479–1482, the Swedes also fought an open war with the Russians. Contemporary German narratives provide ghastly details. The continuation of *Detmar’s Lübeck Chronicle* states that Novgorod and its allies burned, robbed and shamefully devastated large swathes of land in Finland, cut the breasts off women and disembowelled the men. Shortly thereafter, the Swedes laid waste to Novgorod lands⁷¹. The *Sture Chronicle* ascertain the devastation in Finland, and further adds that the punitive expedition to Novgorod refused to accept the Russian pleas for peace, ‘because the Russians never keep their word’⁷². Even though peace was concluded in 1482, small-scale Russian incursions into Finland continued⁷³. In a petition from March 1490, the common people in northern Finland decried how Russian parties came to trade with reference to the peace treaty, but then returned to burn, maim, torture, murder or enslave the Finns, forcing them to pay tribute. They further added that this had been going on for 80 years⁷⁴. The Swedes, and especially the Finns, thus had fresh experiences of Russian conflict by the time of the Danish-Muscovite alliance in 1493.

According to Kari Tarkiainen, the Muscovite Grand Prince Ivan III (1462–1505) had expansive ambitions in the Gulf of Finland. This was the reason why he only accepted short-term peace treaties with Sweden, Livonia and the Hanseatic cities. He wished to pressure the Swedes for a settlement about the perpetual border dispute in Karelia, where Swedish settlers gradually acquired additional territories beyond the demarcation agreed upon in Nöteborg in 1323, most importantly the castle of Sankt Olofsborg built in Savolax in 1477⁷⁵. Because of Swedish fears of a Danish invasion, their policy towards

⁷⁰ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, pp. 133–135; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, pp. XXXIX–XLI.

⁷¹ *Scriptores rerum Svecicarum medii aevi*, vol. 3, ed. Eric M. FANT, Claes ANNERSTEDT, Uppsala 1871–1876, pp. 238–239. The contemporary author of the *Brunswick Chronicle* seems to mix up places when he describes similar grisly Russian atrocities in Livonia in 1479, which he claims prompted the Swedish military campaign against the Russians, see *ibid.*, p. 337. Similar details about Russian atrocities committed in Livonia around 1500 are also given in the *Schonen Hysthorie*, see F. BENNINGHOVEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 26, 29.

⁷² *Nya krönikans fortsättningar eller Sturekrönikorna*, pp. 168–170.

⁷³ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, pp. CLXV–L.

⁷⁴ FMU, no. 4286; *Sverges traktater*, pp. 465–470. For the Russian slave trade, see K. TARKIAINEN, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

⁷⁵ K. TARKIAINEN, *op.cit.*, p. 41; J. KORPELA, *op.cit.*, p. 273; John LIND, *Om Nöteborgsfreden og dens grænser*, *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, Bd. 70: 1985, pp. 305–336; Jarl GALLÉN, *Nöteborgsfreden och Finlands medeltida östgräns*, vol. 1, Helsingfors 1968; C. PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling*, pp. 10–12. Ivan III entered a number of short-term treaties with Sweden in 1468–1491.

Muscovy aimed to keep the *status quo* and reach long-term peace agreements⁷⁶. Thus, the Swedes threaded carefully in the consecutive peace treaties with the Russians. Unless a large international crusade could be organised, they struggled to avoid conflict and keep the *status quo*.

The author of the *Sture Chronicle* emphasises how the Danes reinforced their position in the south, while the Swedes had to please the Russians in the east, 'constantly being trapped between two fires'⁷⁷. Already by 1493, Sten Sture knew that King John was preparing for war and he continued to receive reports of military preparations during the following years⁷⁸. Amid this situation, the chronicler tells of 'a wicked rumour' that the king had allied with the Muscovite, which even included the name of the Danish envoy and his itinerary. The chronicler – no doubt a cleric – then speaks directly to King John: 'You know what trust you may place in Russians. Do you want to harm Christian men? If you use the Russians against the Swedes, God will avenge such a crime'⁷⁹. The chronicler also attributed the wreckage of King John's warship *Gribshunden* in 1495, to God's will, because the king wished to separate Finland from Sweden with the aid of the Russians. The chronicler also warns that the king will reap additional misfortune unless he 'converts' again⁸⁰. In a similar tone, Bishop Magnus of Åbo lamented the threats to the realm in March 1497: on one side are the cruel Russians who burn, plunder, murder and destroy; on the other side, foreign lords (no doubt referring to King John) try to force themselves into the realm; on the third side, the Devil sows discord among Swedish men (referring to the civil war in Sweden)⁸¹. Such rhetoric clearly placed the treaty within the discourse of papal embargo and aimed to enforce the limits of Latin Christendom.

In 1494 Sten Sture's agent Henrik Lule provided information about the secret Russian-Danish treaty acquired through a defected interpreter in Narva. When Sten Sture reported this to the Swedish archbishop, the archbishop demanded that Lule should provide proof to substantiate the claims. If it could be proven that the king promoted such a scheme it should be brought up at the

⁷⁶ C. PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling*, pp. 10–12; W. WESTERGAARD, op.cit., p. 133; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, pp. XLI, CLXIX; F. H. JAHN, op.cit., pp. 567–569; FMU, no. 3733, 4475.

⁷⁷ *Nya krönikans fortsättningar eller Sturekrönikorna*, p. 94. See also K. HAGNELL, op.cit., pp. 319–325.

⁷⁸ C. PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling*, p. 14; F. H. JAHN, op.cit., pp. 372–374.

⁷⁹ *Nya krönikans fortsättningar eller Sturekrönikorna*, pp. 118–119: 'Konungh haniss jak sigher tiik för santh / gör tw thz wysseligha säther tw panth / tw weesth hwath troo som ryzer halla / wiil tw moothe cristne män ath falla / gudh hämpness öffuer tiik och tyna / on tw mothe Swerige dragher tolke lina.'

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁸¹ FMU, no. 4742.

next Danish meeting and made publicly known in Rome and elsewhere. But not until certain proof of this could be obtained⁸². The archbishop's rhetoric appear resolute, but it was hollow, and the king denied the thing altogether in his correspondence with the Swedes.

The Danish-Muscovite alliance and the Russian-Swedish war soon became intertwined with the political struggle within Sweden. There were rising tensions between the Regent Sten Sture and a faction within the Council of the Realm headed by the archbishop. Pape defines a division where Sten Sture saw the benefits of the Russian alliance earlier proposed by the emperor, while Archbishop Jacob Ulvsson felt responsible for the defence of Finland against the heretic Russians. Pape also assumes that the group of bishops in the council forced the negotiations with Livonia leading to the anti-Russian alliance in 1493⁸³. This is, however, an overestimate of the piousness of the Swedish archbishop. When Hemming Gadh acquired a crusading bull against the Russians in 1496, Møller Jensen argues that the bull may even have been used against the Danish king, and the Danes managed to intercept it on its way to Sweden⁸⁴. When Gadh managed to acquire a second bull, later the same year, he used the papal documents as a political tool and entered remarks that King John had become an ally with the heretic Russians. When the bull finally arrived in Sweden, the Swedish archbishop refused to make it publicly known, including the remarks about the king's Muscovite liaison⁸⁵. Gadh later claimed that the archbishop already knew of the secret Russian alliance and did not want to cause damage to the king⁸⁶. The archbishop even suggested that the Swedes should cede a part of Finland to make peace with Muscovy. Apparently, he was prepared to overlook the Danish-Muscovite alliance as long as it would help to topple the Swedish Regent Sten Sture, whom he had grown to hate⁸⁷. As the Russian-Swedish war came to a close in the spring of 1497, a civil war broke out in Sweden between Sten Sture and the faction headed by the archbishop. Sten Sture besieged and imprisoned several bishops, but in late summer, King John arrived in Stockholm with a strong army. He defeated Sten Sture and was himself crowned Swedish king. The Oldenburg dynasty achieved its desired goal and the Kalmar Union was restored.

⁸² *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, D. 18: *Nya handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, Bd. 8, Stockholm 1833, pp. 12–15; LECUB II:1, no. 119; Martin N. SKOOG, *I rikets tjänst. Krig, stat och samhälle i Sverige 1450–1550*, Lund 2018, p. 201; K. HAGNELL, op.cit., p. 321.

⁸³ C. PAPE, *En ukendt diplomatisk udveksling*, p. 20.

⁸⁴ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, p. 47; T. NYBERG, *Papst Innocenz*, pp. 89–152.

⁸⁵ C. F. ALLEN, op.cit., p. 181; J. LINDBÆK, op.cit., p. 120.

⁸⁶ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag V*, no. 274.

⁸⁷ M. N. SKOOG, *I rikets tjänst*, pp. 256–259. The archbishop even tried to persuade the king to execute Sten Sture in 1497.

In spite of the Swedish six-year peace with Muscovy, however, the Russians made new incursions in Finland in 1499–1500⁸⁸. The unsolved Russian question proved to be the factor that decided the fate of John as king of Sweden. As Swedish-Danish relations were increasingly strained in March 1501, a meeting with the king was held in Stockholm. During the proceedings, a Russian legation unexpectedly arrived and read out loud the demands of Ivan III in the presence of King John and the Swedish council. With reference to the alliance entered with King John eight years ago, the grand prince demanded territory in Finland as compensation for the war. This was an embarrassment to the king, who denied that he had made such promises⁸⁹. The problem was the new Muscovite demands. The Russian-Swedish peace treaty of 1497 stipulated ‘the borders of old’, whereby the Swedes meant the *status quo* before the war. The Russians, on the other hand, claimed this meant the border of 1323 that was established in Nöteborg⁹⁰. Several historians argue that the original treaty of 1323 did not include specified territorial delimitations⁹¹. In 1501, the Russian claims did, however, include several districts colonised by the Finnish during the fifteenth century. The cession of these areas is not explicitly stated in the Danish-Muscovite treaty and it is uncertain what John actually promised Ivan⁹². However, as Styffe points out, the Russians would hardly have promised to attack Finland without an expected reward⁹³. The Muscovite legation also confirmed the persistent rumour that King John had promised his daughter, Elisabeth, in marriage with Prince Vasili to strengthen the alliance⁹⁴. Allen claims that the Muscovite pursued this idea as late as 1500, but points out that this would have been a scandal throughout Latin Christendom. King John sought to postpone a definite answer and found a way out by marrying Elisabeth to Margrave Joachim of Brandenburg⁹⁵.

Even though the treaty was probably known to some Swedes already by 1494, Westergaard argues that the revelation in 1501 of the contents of it

⁸⁸ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, p. 65; C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 197–198; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, p. CCXLVI.

⁸⁹ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, no. 180; *Sverges traktater*, pp. 468–469; E. TIBERG, *op.cit.*, p. 67; C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 174–175.

⁹⁰ C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 197–198; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, p. CCLXI; K. HAGNELL, *op.cit.*, pp. 320–321.

⁹¹ J. KORPELA, *op.cit.*, pp. 270–278; J. LIND, *op.cit.*, pp. 305–336; J. GALLÉN, *op.cit.*, *passim*

⁹² C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 156.

⁹³ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, p. CCLXI.

⁹⁴ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, no. 180; *idem*, *Bidrag V*, no. 131; G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, p. 76; F. H. JAHN, *op.cit.*, p. 567; C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, p. 13.

⁹⁵ C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 198–199, 335; Joseph HAMEL, *England and Russia: Comprising the Voyages of John Tradescant the Elder, Sir Hugh Willoughby, Richard Chancellor, Nelson, and Others to the White Sea*, London 1854, p. 72.

proved enough 'to fan the Swedish rebellion into fresh flame'⁹⁶. The contents were not public knowledge until this point, and the treaty could now be communicated as no mere rumour, but a fact. Sten Sture openly presented the case for the Swedish commoners, that King John bought the friendship of the Muscovite by promising large parts of the Swedish realm⁹⁷. Michael Venge argues that Sten Sture's rhetoric against the king was exaggerated and polemic but certainly contained some truth⁹⁸.

In Vadstena in August 1501, a number of Swedish nobles, including Sten Sture and the future Regent Svante Nilsson, sent a letter to the Danish Council of the Realm where they decried that the king would not defend them against 'the cruel Russians who daily murdered Christians in Finland'. They denounced their allegiance to the king, because of the proofs provided by the Muscovite envoys that the king 'had entered into a treaty with the cruel and schismatic Russians, called them into Finland and thus was the cause of the gruesome devastation in this land'⁹⁹. When the Swedish rebellion gained momentum, a succession of Swedish nobles denounced their allegiance to the king. In July 1502, the governor of Viborg, Erik Turesson, wrote to the king: 'I sit here facing infidels and Russians, the enemies of Christendom. I have asked you many times for relief in arms and munitions, but since I do not receive any help from you against the cruel Russians, I now denounce my allegiance'¹⁰⁰. The Danish-Muscovite treaty really comes to the fore in this letter. The Swedish council also struggled to make the alliance known abroad. In 1502 the Swedes wrote to Duke Magnus of Mecklenburg and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and told them of how King John 'has become the ally and brother with the schismatic Russians' and that he was the architect of the devastation in Finland. They also included a copy of the articles and paragraphs presented by the Russian envoys in Stockholm in 1501¹⁰¹. The Swedes concluded the letter to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order: 'No prince within Christendom can justly punish us for refusing to suffer this injustice, which is against all rights

⁹⁶ C. F. ALLEN, op.cit., pp. 198–200; W. WESTERGAARD, op.cit., p. 133.

⁹⁷ C. F. ALLEN, op.cit., pp. 198–200.

⁹⁸ Michael VENGE, *Københavnstraktaten 1493 og de dansk-russiske forbindelser i 1500-tallet*, [in:] *Danmark og Rusland i 500 år*, ed. Svend A. CHRISTENSEN, Henning GOTTLIEB, København 1993, p. 14.

⁹⁹ *Missiver fra Kongerne Christiern I.s og Hans's tid*, Bd. 2: *Missiver fra Brevskrivere uden for den danske Kongefamilie*, ed. William CHRISTENSEN, København 1914, pp. 165–167; C. F. ALLEN, op.cit., pp. 194–195.

¹⁰⁰ *Missiver fra Kongerne Christiern I.s og Hans's tid*, Bd. 2, pp. 174–176.

¹⁰¹ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, p. CCLXXVII, no. 191, 220: '[...] woe he yn vorbunth vnd broderschop myt den affgesneden Ruyssen tho ewigh tidh teghen vnss Cristen luyden vorbunden yss, [...]']

and Christian laws¹⁰². In 1506, the Swedish Council of the Realm further utilised the anti-Russian discourse, in a letter to the city of Danzig where they asked for the discharge of a cargo of saltpetre which had been arrested there. They argued that the goods should be released because they had been bought for the defence of Viborg against the Russians¹⁰³. The Swedish commoners also seem fully aware of the alliance. In May 1507, the peasantry in Småland proclaimed that because of King John's alliance with 'the murderous and heretic Russians to the detriment of Sweden, they would never again trust the word of him or his children'¹⁰⁴.

In 1506, further Oldenburg schemes produced a papal interdict against Hemming Gadh, and the new Swedish Regent Svante Nilsson (1503–1511)¹⁰⁵. In February 1507, Gadh appealed to the Roman Curia and explained that the Swedes denounced their allegiance to the king because he was a deceitful tyrant and an impious Christian, who tried to eradicate the true Christian faith in Sweden by allying with the schismatic Russians and promising them large swathes of Swedish land. In order to cement this agreement the king had also promised his daughter to the Russian prince¹⁰⁶. In spite of Gadh's efforts, the tide had turned in Rome. While King John's efforts in Rome were largely thwarted during the papacies of Innocent VIII and Alexander VI, the Danish kings established excellent relations with the following popes: Julius II (1503–1513) and Leo X (1513–1521)¹⁰⁷. They were decidedly in favour of the Oldenburg kings irrespective of the persistent rumours of their Muscovite liaison. Subsequent papal bulls seriously damaged the Swedish political leadership.

However, the Russian-Danish alliance was not only perceived as a problem in Sweden. Livonian authorities clearly acknowledged the religious discourse and repeatedly denied safe conduct for Russian emissaries bound for Denmark¹⁰⁸. Madis Maasing studies to what extent the Livonian polemic of Russians reached the West before the Livonian War broke out in 1558, and especially, what depictions were presented at the imperial diets of the Holy Roman Empire. He demonstrates, that even though Russians were, for instance, discussed as possible allies against the Turk, their depiction as evil enemies of Christen-

¹⁰² Ibid., no. 220: 'Wy hapen ok geyn Cristelike vorsten kan vnss dair ynne straiffen, dat wy vnrechtferdigh saken nicht lyden wolden, dat teghen Goth, allen rechten vnd Cristelike gheloue yn vorschreuen saken, [...]'

¹⁰³ SDHK, no. 43641; FMU, no. 5208.

¹⁰⁴ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag V*, no. 131.

¹⁰⁵ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁰⁶ APD V, p. 469 (no. 4093); C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, p. 388.

¹⁰⁷ J. LINDBÆK, *op.cit.*, pp. 110, 118–119, 126, 137.

¹⁰⁸ C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, pp. 18–20. *Akten und Rezesse der livländischen Ständetage*, Bd. 3: (1494–1535), bearb. v. Leonid ARBUSOW, Riga 1910, no. 23, § 21.

dom persisted throughout the period¹⁰⁹. Others identified the mercantile problems implicated by the alliance. In 1494, Ivan III closed the Hanseatic *Kontor* in Novgorod and expelled the Germans. Even though the Russian-Danish treaty only speaks of enmity against Sweden and Lithuania, the Hanseatic cities suspected that King John influenced the Russian decision to close the *Kontor*¹¹⁰. Westergaard directly links this action to the treaty of 1493 and a Russian ambition to attach the westward trade directly with Denmark¹¹¹. There were even fears and rumours of a joint Danish-Muscovite attack against Livonia¹¹². The city of Reval sought concerted action by the Hansa and Erik Tiberger assumes that the burghers of Reval had some intelligence about the treaty and its general stipulation about mutual free trade¹¹³. In April 1495, the Hanseatic diet enforced the ban on all trade with the Russians in goods that may ‘harm Christendom’¹¹⁴. At the diet of the Wendish cities in Lübeck in 1496, the cities further declared themselves willing to come to Livonia’s aid against the Russians, according to the papal crusading bull issued to the Swedes¹¹⁵. Due to further Russian incursions into Livonia, in 1499, the Land Master Wolter von Plettenberg sought an offensive treaty with King John against the Muscovite¹¹⁶. According to Gottfrid Carlsson, King John assured von Plettenberg that he was prepared to enter an anti-Muscovite alliance but presented unattainable conditions¹¹⁷. In 1502, von Plettenberg became aware of the true relations and admonished the Danish king not to ally with the enemies of the Teutonic Order¹¹⁸. In 1508, Lübeck, Danzig and other cities expressed renewed fears that

¹⁰⁹ M. MAASING, *Livonia and Depiction of Russians*, p. 53.

¹¹⁰ *Hanserecesse*, Abt. 3: *Hanserecesse von 1477–1530*, Bd. 3, bearb. v. Dietrich SCHÄFER, Leipzig 1888 (hereinafter cited as HR III:3), p. VI; Marina BESSUDNOVA, *Die Schließung des hansischen Kontors in Novgorod im Jahre 1494 im Kontext der Beziehungen des Großfürsten von Moskau zu Maximilian von Habsburg*, *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, Jg. 127: 2009, p. 72, finds the explanation that Danish pressure actually made Ivan III close the Hanseatic *Kontor* unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the rumours thereof shaped the opinion among polities in Northern Europe at the time.

¹¹¹ W. WESTERGAARD, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

¹¹² E. TIBERGER, *op.cit.*, pp. 49, 69–70.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹⁴ HR III:3, no. 520; Leopold K. GOETZ, *Deutsch-Russische Handelsgeschichte des Mittelalters*, Lübeck 1922, p. 335. On several occasions, the Hansa used embargoes as a weapon directed against different European regions and polities, see Philippe DOLLINGER, *The German Hansa*, London 1970, pp. 67, 72, 77, 110–111, 195, 300; Nils-Henrik M. VON DER FEHR, David HARBORD, *On the Enforcement of Trade Embargoes by the Merchant Guilds*, MPRA Paper, no. 88431: 2018, pp. 17, 20–21, 24, 30–33.

¹¹⁵ HR III:3, no. 595–597.

¹¹⁶ C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, p. 200.

¹¹⁷ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

¹¹⁸ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, p. CCXLVIII; LECUB II:1, no. 335, 354.

a staple would be established in Copenhagen and a corresponding in Ivan-gorod, which would facilitate a direct westward Russian trade and spell the demise of the Livonian transit trade in Russian goods¹¹⁹. This may also be the explanation for why Lübeck finally joined Sweden in the war against Denmark in 1510. The Hanseatic cities continued their complaints about the increasing Danish trade in Narva and Neva, especially when King Christian II renewed his alliance with Vasili III, and managed to obtain far-reaching Danish commercial privileges in Russian lands¹²⁰. Apprehension among the Hanseatic cities increased when news came of Danish cooperation with the Fuggers in an attempt to monopolise the Russian trade by acquiring both the old *Kontor* in Novgorod and a new one in Ivangorod¹²¹. In April 1515, the Polish Archbishop of Gniezno, Jan Łaski, also proposed a Swedish-Polish alliance against Muscovy¹²². Even though the anti-Russian papal discourse is repeated in several sources, many reactions to the treaty focused on the threat to the established trade system in the Baltic region.

DANISH JUSTIFICATIONS

Why did the Oldenburg kings ally with the Muscovite and how did they justify this in light of the papal discourse against heretics? In the Recess of Kalmar in 1483, the divided Swedish Council of the Realm formally agreed to accept John of Oldenburg as king of Sweden. However, by perpetually delaying the ratification of the recess, Sten Sture effectively prevented King John's ascent to the Swedish throne¹²³. From the general scholarly perspective, King John eventually lost his faith in a diplomatic solution and the persistent Swedish defiance motivated his decision to ally with the Muscovites¹²⁴. Allen even argues that the Swedish obstinacy, in itself, justified the alliance¹²⁵. I will, however, argue that the Muscovite treaty has older roots and more far-reaching repercussions in Nordic history.

Maasing argues that in the fifteenth century, it became *à la mode* to compare political enemies with the enemies of Christendom¹²⁶. King John's father, Christian I, was keen to use this discourse against the Swedes. In letters to the pope of 1456, he described ceaseless attacks on his lands by infidels and

¹¹⁹ E. TIBERG, op.cit., p. 154.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 154–157; C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, pp. 33–34.

¹²¹ Thomas ESPER, *Russia and the Baltic 1494–1558*, *Slavic Review*, vol. 25: 1966, no. 3, p. 468.

¹²² C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag V*, no. 436.

¹²³ W. WESTERGAARD, op.cit., p. 132; K. HAGNELL, op.cit., p. 319.

¹²⁴ See, for instance, Esben ALBRECHTSEN [et al.], *Dansk udenrigspolitik historie*, Bd. 1: *Konger og krige. 700–1648*, København 2001, pp. 197–198.

¹²⁵ C. F. ALLEN, op.cit., p. 196.

¹²⁶ M. MAASING, *Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians*, p. 356. See also A. SELART, *Political Rhetoric and the Edges of Christianity*, pp. 55–69.

Russians which was the excuse why he could not take part in the new crusade against the Turks¹²⁷. Simultaneously, he referred to the Swedish King Karl Knutsson as the ‘Turk of the North’ and accused him of having allied with the Russians. On these grounds, the pope accepted the deposition of Karl and the coronation of Christian as king of Sweden in 1457. In 1463, King Christian further assured Pope Pius II that he would surely have gone on a crusade against the Russians unless the Swedish Archbishop Jöns Bengtsson Oxenstierna’s rebellion prevented his pious act¹²⁸.

After his humiliating defeats at the hands of the Swedes – foremost the Dalecarlians – at Hällaskogen (1464) and Brunkeberg (1471), Christian was determined to seek revenge¹²⁹. In a letter written shortly after his death in 1481, one of the former Danish royal secretaries informed Sten Sture of a plan laid out by the king during his travel to Italy in 1474. The plan envisaged an alliance between several European princes including the grand prince of Muscovy, where Sweden should be attacked on all fronts at once. The pope should excommunicate the whole Swedish realm and place the Swedish Church under interdict. An anti-Swedish trade embargo should be enforced in the Baltic region. A Muscovite army should occupy Finland, a Scottish army was to attack Sweden through Norway, while German and Polish forces should attack Stockholm from the sea and by land. No pardon should be given and all Swedish nobles should be either executed or exiled. All males in the province of Dalecarlia should be exterminated and this district repopulated with Scots. The walls of Stockholm should be razed, the burghers banished and the town repopulated with foreigners. The secretary added that if Christian had lived for two or three more years, he would have realised this plan¹³⁰. Styffe concludes that it is uncertain whether these plans were ever considered in a treaty. On the king’s deathbed, they were however dictated to his son John, and as things transpired, much of it came true during the reigns of John and Christian II. Sten Sture relayed the information to several cities in the Baltic region, of which copies survive in Lübeck and Reval¹³¹. To my knowledge this political testament of Christian I have earlier only been considered by Styffe.

¹²⁷ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, p. 46.

¹²⁸ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, p. 135; idem, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, pp. 48–49, 57–58. This theme became widespread in Danish rhetoric. As late as 1573, Danish propaganda argued that the Danish pious ambitions for crusades had frequently been thwarted by the quarrelsome Swedes.

¹²⁹ Martin N. SKOOG, *Det andra slaget vid Hällaskogen 1464. Om krigföring och taktik i det senmedeltida Sverige*, *Collegium Mediaevale. Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Research*, vol. 28: 2016, pp. 105–144; Erik LÖNNROTH, *Slaget vid Brunkeberg och dess förhistoria*, *Scandia. Tidskrift för Historisk Forskning*, vol. 11: 1938, no. 2, pp. 159–213.

¹³⁰ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag IV*, no. 55.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. XXXIII–XXXIV.

The ruthless – even genocidal – plan shows Christian’s unbridled hatred towards the Swedes. It also provides a logical backdrop to the Danish-Muscovite alliance of 1493, as King John simply carried out the final wishes of his father. The treaty of 1493 clearly speaks of a military alliance against ‘our common enemy, the Swedes’ who are characterised by John as ‘the infidel rebels who have occupied my Swedish realm’¹³². By constructing the Swedes as ‘infidels’ he utilised the very same moral construct that *ipse facto* condemned the Muscovite liaison he had entered. Apparently, these promises were one of the original reasons why the Russians invaded Sweden in 1495. Westergaard emphasises that a treaty between a Latin Christian king, and the ‘heretical’ Russians, ‘was too startling an event to publish to the world’ at the time¹³³. Møller Jensen further argues that the Danish-Russian negotiations were not kept secret, but their true contents surely were¹³⁴. In a letter exchange between the Danish and Swedish councils in 1496, the Swedes asked why Russian envoys so frequently visited Denmark¹³⁵. The Danes simply referred to the peaceful settlement of old border disputes between Norway and Russia¹³⁶. Unconvinced, the Swedes demanded that King John ‘should prove himself a Christian prince’ and abstain from any Russian treaty. King John, who wished to win the hearts of the Swedes, portrayed himself as a broker of peace. During the war in 1495, he claimed to have sent an envoy to persuade the Muscovite to withdraw from Finland, but Sten Sture sent the envoy back to Denmark. According to King John, Sten Sture was thus to blame for the continuation of the ongoing war. Allen treats the king’s claim at face value, even though it is more than likely that the king instigated the war with his Muscovite alliance¹³⁷.

The Danish political offensive continued during King John’s war with Svante Nilsson. In 1504, papal excommunications were issued against several Swedish political leaders, including the deceased Sten Sture¹³⁸. In 1505 in Kalmar, representatives of the Danish and Norwegian Councils of the Realm ruled that the Swedes had committed high treason against the king – a verdict later confirmed by German King Maximilian I in imperial *praemunire* against the Swedes¹³⁹. On this occasion, King John massacred a number of Kalmar

¹³² F. H. JAHN, *op.cit.*, pp. 569–570.

¹³³ W. WESTERGAARD, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

¹³⁴ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, p. 142.

¹³⁵ W. WESTERGAARD, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

¹³⁶ K. HAGNELL, *op.cit.*, pp. 321–322.

¹³⁷ C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, p. 137; F. H. JAHN, *op.cit.*, p. 571.

¹³⁸ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, pp. 111–112, 155–156. Papal interdicts against Svante Nilsson and Hemming Gadth were renewed in 1506.

¹³⁹ *Sverges traktater*, no. 569a–569e; *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, D. 20: *Nya handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, Bd. 10, Stockholm 1835, p. 133; G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, pp. 121–122, 150, 162.

burghers, in line with his father's earlier wishes¹⁴⁰. After the Kalmar verdict of 1505, the Muscovite alliance again became of great relevance. The Swedes were well aware of the subsequent Danish trips to Muscovy, where Danish emissaries tried to persuade the grand prince to put pressure on Sweden¹⁴¹.

In 1506, upon the death of Ivan III, King John renewed the alliance with his successor Grand Prince Vasili III¹⁴². Vasili granted that '[...] we should be united with you, as our father was, in fraternity and friendship, against all enemies'¹⁴³. King John replied to confirm the amicable alliance, flattering the grand prince: 'O prince, our brother, father-in-law, and parent!'. In his reply, the king related his travel to Sweden in the winter of 1501, and wrote that the Swedes 'obstinately opposed us, just as the Jews did Christ'. The rebellious Swedes still occupied his Swedish kingdom 'contrary to the law of God, contrary to justice, and contrary to the fidelity they have sworn to us'. Therefore he was compelled to ask the new grand prince 'Our brother and confederate to bear in mind the iniquity of our rebellious subjects'¹⁴⁴. In spite of corresponding with a 'heretic', King John shrouded his policy in a religious veil where he even took on the role of Christ himself.

Allen acknowledges that it was considered bad for a Christian prince to ally with the schismatic Russians. The king's strategy to curb this persistent rumour was to claim that he was merely trying to bring the misled Russians back to the Roman Church. He, thus, pretended to take up the ambition of the failed Ferrara-Florence Council of 1439. This was the official explanation the king offered in a letter to his nephew, King Jacob IV of Scotland. King John further instructed the Scottish king to relay the story of his pious efforts to Pope Julius II, King Louis XII of France and King Henry VII of England¹⁴⁵. Pape points out that the Roman Curia seems to have 'bought the spin', which would explain why the pope did not reproach King John. Pape, however, also argues that the king's professed ambition to convert the Russians may actually have been sincere¹⁴⁶. This is doubtful, however. Venge, for instance, points to the fact that the king seems to have lost much of his interest in Muscovy as soon as he attained the Swedish crown in 1497. The Muscovite treaty was a means to an end. Venge further argues that the Danes hardly viewed the Russians other

¹⁴⁰ G. CARLSSON, *op.cit.*, p. 122; C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag V*, no. 38.

¹⁴¹ C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, pp. 21–22; M. VENGE, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁴² C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, p. 22.

¹⁴³ *Missiver fra Kongerne Christiern Is og Hans's tid*, Bd. 2, pp. 212–214; J. HAMEL, *op.cit.*, pp. 77–78.

¹⁴⁴ J. HAMEL, *op.cit.*, pp. 79–80.

¹⁴⁵ C. F. ALLEN, *op.cit.*, pp. 369–370; C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁶ C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 157.

than strange, foreign and barbaric, and the alliance was hardly something they boasted about¹⁴⁷.

During the war with Denmark, the Swedes struggled to avoid a new war with Muscovy, while the Danish king repeatedly tried to incite new Muscovite attacks. In October 1504, Erik Turesson reported to the Swedish Council of the Realm that his emissaries had recently returned from Novgorod with a signed twenty-year peace treaty with the Russians. He added that the Russian-Danish friendship was not as strong as before, and it was not advisable to enter into any treaty with Livonia that might jeopardise the firm Swedish peace treaty with Muscovy¹⁴⁸. In 1509, Danish emissary David Cochran, however, managed to persuade Vasili III to cancel the peace treaty of 1504 concluded with Sweden and renew his claims of territories in Finland¹⁴⁹. Even though the Swedes managed to renew their peace with Muscovy in March 1510, a few months later Cochran proclaimed in Narva that he would try to incite the Russians to attack Finland once more¹⁵⁰. Even though the peace between Sweden and Muscovy lasted, several letters from the reign of the Swedish Regent Sten Sture the Younger (1512–1520) talk of new Russian raids into Finland and express the general feeling of being squeezed between Denmark and Muscovy¹⁵¹. While the Swedes struggled to maintain peace with Muscovy, Danish emissaries repeatedly tried to incite the grand prince against Sweden.

In spite of the secret Danish-Muscovite treaty, King John used the 'Russian threat' as an argument for political demands made to the Roman Curia. In 1510, he asked the pope to appoint his secretary Erik Valkendorf as the archbishop of Trondheim, because northern Norway was very exposed to attacks from the Russians¹⁵². King Christian II repeatedly also referred to crusade motives to motivate his policy in the North¹⁵³. In 1517, he asked the pope that the estates of the Roma monastery in Estonia should be put under the domain of the bishop of Reval. He argued that this was safer for the monastery because of the violent incursions of the schismatic Russians in Livonia¹⁵⁴. In parallel with the political alliance, King John also provided the Muscovites with weapons. In January 1508, captive Danish seamen claimed that the king sent a large ship to the grand prince of Muscovy, loaded with guns, armour, gunpowder,

¹⁴⁷ M. VENGE, *op.cit.*, pp. 12–13, 17–19.

¹⁴⁸ FMU, no. 5075; C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 60.

¹⁴⁹ C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, p. 23; FMU, no. 5369.

¹⁵⁰ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag V*, no. 297; FMU, no. 5464. See also C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 66.

¹⁵¹ FMU, no. 5894, 5896, 5912, 5913.

¹⁵² APD V, p. 436 (no. 4207).

¹⁵³ K. V. JENSEN, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁵⁴ APD VI, pp. 179–180 (no. 4607).

copper, lead, casts for culverins and cannon, other military supplies, and four Scottish master cannon-founders. The Swedes struggled to make these things publicly known in letters to foreign princes, 'for you, good lords, may well consider how Christian such actions are'¹⁵⁵. The prohibition to transfer arms or military artificers to infidels and heretics represented the very core of the papal embargo¹⁵⁶.

Upon the death of King John in 1513, the Muscovite-Danish treaty was renewed by Christian II in 1514–1516¹⁵⁷. Christian II also renewed the Oldenburg attempts to regain power in Sweden, and Venge states that the whole point of the renewed alliance in 1516 was to persuade the Russians to attack Finland¹⁵⁸. Up until this point, the Swedish-Danish conflict was a *public war* centred on political matters of sovereignty and suzerainty. In 1517, however, the domestic dispute between the new Swedish Regent Sten Sture the Younger (1512–1520) and the newly elected Archbishop of Uppsala Gustav Trolle erupted into a conflict where the archbishop was besieged and imprisoned. There were even rumours that Trolle wished to invite Christian II, the Russians and other enemies into the realm¹⁵⁹. The Swedish estates stood behind Sten Sture, however, and encouraged him to ask the pope to defrock the archbishop¹⁶⁰. This provided Christian II with the opportunity to transform the conflict into a religious war. Already during the siege of Stäket in 1517, the Danish archbishop threatened Sten Sture with a papal ban, and King Christian II was defeated outside Stockholm in an attempt to relieve Gustav Trolle¹⁶¹. In 1519, the pope ordered the Danish bishops to hold a trial against Sten Sture. Unsurprisingly, they ruled that he was a heretic and the whole Swedish realm was eventually placed under papal interdict – just as Christian I originally intended¹⁶². The papal embargo applied equally against all heretics which gave Christian II an opportunity to assert his dynastic claims in a pious crusading shroud¹⁶³. In the winter of 1520,

¹⁵⁵ FMU, no. 5306; C. PAPE, *The Early Danish-Muscovite Treaties*, p. 66. For another Russian attempt to hire military artificers in Denmark, see C. G. STYFFE, Bidrag IV, no. 180.

¹⁵⁶ M. N. SKOOG, *Munitions for Muscovy*.

¹⁵⁷ C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, pp. 28–29.

¹⁵⁸ M. VENGE, op.cit., p. 14.

¹⁵⁹ C. G. STYFFE, Bidrag V, no. 447.

¹⁶⁰ *Handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia*, D. 24: Nya handlingar rörande Skandinaviens historia, Bd. 14, Stockholm 1840, p. 98; Sven TUNBERG, *Handlingar till Sten Sture d. y:s historia 1515–1518* (Historiska Handlingar, D. 28:2), Stockholm 1931, pp. 63–77.

¹⁶¹ *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker 1514–1520. Jämte utdrag ur de förlorade årgångarne 1520–1524 samt stadens kopiebok 1520–1522*, ed. Johan A. ALMQUIST (Stockholms stadsböcker från äldre tid, Ser. 2:5), Stockholm 1933, pp. 157–158.

¹⁶² Carl C. SJÖDÉN, *Stockholms borgerskap under Sturetiden med särskild hänsyn till dess politiska ställning. En studie i Stockholms stads historia*, Stockholm 1950, pp. 168, 171; Lars SJÖDÉN, *Kalmarunionens slutskede. Gustav Vasas befrielsekrig*, D. 1, Uppsala 1943, pp. 38–39.

¹⁶³ S. K. STANTCHEV, *Spiritual Rationality*, p. 199.

the invading crusader army – consisting of Danes, French, Scots and Germans – nailed copies of the papal ban to church doors along the route to Stockholm¹⁶⁴. The papal interdict paved the way for the infamous ‘heretics trial’ and the Stockholm Bloodbath in November this year¹⁶⁵.

In 1519, in preparation for the invasion, the Danish envoy to Moscow was instructed to ask the grand prince to lend troops to conquer Finland. King Christian II’s captain Søren Norby also offered to go to Muscovy with a letter and to lead the expected Russian army into Finland¹⁶⁶. This was, however, probably difficult to publicly justify because of the crusade character of the invasion. Even after the fall of Christian II, Norby continued to cooperate with Muscovy. Hard pressed by the Swedes in Finland in 1523, he wrote to Vasili III to ask for military aid and along with 150 men he finally sought refuge on Russian territory¹⁶⁷. During the following years, Norby also cooperated with the Muscovite in his intensive privateering in the Gulf of Finland¹⁶⁸.

Møller Jensen argues that the creation of the Kalmar Union meant that the border with Russian lands became a matter for Danish kings, and to contemporaries, this border was a crusade frontier. Around 1400, the first ruler of the Kalmar Union, Queen Margaret, argued that the Union was a bulwark against the many heretics in the North – an argument that was repeated throughout the century¹⁶⁹. When the Swedish Council of the Realm petitioned the Danish council about the recurrent Russian attacks in Finland in 1501, they also reminded them that this ‘concerns both Christendom and the king’s own realm’¹⁷⁰. When the Swedish subjects did not comply with the Oldenburg policy, however, the Danish kings did not hesitate to hurl excommunications or wield the crusade weapon against them. This aspect of the Danish-Swedish conflict illustrates the *Realpolitik* pursued by Christian II.

Juhan Kreem rightly emphasises that not every war against Muscovy was a crusade¹⁷¹. Selart further argues that even though still a prevailing concept

¹⁶⁴ John H. LIND, Carsten S. JENSEN, Kurt V. JENSEN, Ane J. BYSTED, *Danske korstog. Krig og mission i Østersøen*, København 2006, p. 349; Olavus PETRI, *En svensk cröneka*, ed. Jöran SAHLGREN, Uppsala 1917, p. 317.

¹⁶⁵ M. N. SKOOG, *I rikets tjänst*, pp. 251–268; J. H. LIND, C. S. JENSEN, K. V. JENSEN, A. J. BYSTED, *op.cit.*, pp. 348–351.

¹⁶⁶ C. G. STYFFE, *Bidrag V*, no. 492; M. VENGE, *op.cit.*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶⁷ C. PAPE, *Comprehensive Register*, pp. 36–37; FMU, no. 6129; M. VENGE, *op.cit.*, pp. 16–20.

¹⁶⁸ T. ESPER, *op.cit.*, p. 472; Lars J. LARSSON, *Sören Norby, Moskva och Grönland*, Scandia. Tidskrift för Historisk Forskning, vol. 45: 1979, no. 1, p. 70; A. FITYUSHKIN, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁹ J. MØLLER JENSEN, *Denmark and the Crusades*, pp. 133–134; *idem*, *Fra korstog til religionskrig*, pp. 45, 47. See also Eric CHRISTIANSEN, *The Northern Crusades*, London 1997, pp. 183–198; T. LINDKVIST, *op.cit.*, p. 258.

¹⁷⁰ *Missiver fra Kongerne Christiern I:s og Hans’s tid*, Bd. 2, pp. 165–166.

¹⁷¹ J. KREEM, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

during the fifteenth century, crusades increasingly became figurative and a means to legitimise rather than to motivate wars against infidels¹⁷². Nevertheless, the anti-Russian rhetoric endemic to Northern Europe prevailed, and the age-old papal anti-Russian embargo was enforced for another century. Both were effectively ignored in the Danish-Muscovite treaty, while a domestic Swedish conflict was utilised to create a crusade simply because it was within King Christian II's means to do so. In a letter of complaint of 1521 to the pope, Christian II even accused the papal legate Johannes Archimboldus of instigating the rebellion in Sweden and of being responsible for the Stockholm Bloodbath, of which events he also fabricated a fictional story¹⁷³. The Oldenburg kings clearly used papal bulls very effectively in their pursuit of power in Sweden, while simultaneously being allied with the Muscovite grand princes. One may admire the truly Machiavellian character of their policy, even though the publication of *The Prince* was some years in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have contrasted the policy pursued by the Danish kings with the political and religious discourse of the time and studied how it was perceived by contemporaries, especially in Sweden. During the medieval period of the papacy's ideological dominion, there was a general consensus that military support to the Russians and other heretics imperilled the very salvation of Christian souls. I interpret the Danish decision for a Muscovite alliance as a function of superordinate and subordinate policies. The Danish kings were expected to observe the papal anti-Russian embargo and appear as pious Christian rulers, but they also pursued fervently a dynastical claim to the Swedish throne. In the clash of ideologies, the temptations of *Realpolitik* and expediency easily trumped the papal doctrine, pious ideals and the limits of the Catholic faith.

It only gradually became clear to contemporaries that the Danish kings allied with Muscovy. It was never considered proven that it was a military alliance, however, which was the central point. As long as the Danish kings could present the alliance as a peaceful treaty to settle border disputes, trade agreements and a pious attempt to convert the Russians, it was neither questioned nor condemned by the wider Latin Christian community. The Danish-Muscovite alliance was a cause for concern first and foremost for the polities bordering Muscovy, especially for Sweden which was its primary target. Instead of being reproached, the Danish kings persuaded the papacy to hurl anathemas against the Swedish leadership, through which it was effectively discredited.

¹⁷² A. SELART, *Switching the Tracks*, pp. 100–101.

¹⁷³ APD VI, pp. 333–337 (no. 4831).

This situation is reminiscent of conflicts today, where the degree of support from the international community often determines the ability of besieged states to endure. Perhaps, and most importantly, the alliance seems to indicate the weakening power of the renaissance papacy in the North. Papal unwillingness to reproach the Danish-Russian liaison may even have contributed to the rapid Swedish approval of the Lutheran Reformation in 1527.

As a general tendency, those polities and realms which did not share borders with an object of the papal embargo – in this case, Muscovy – seem most inclined to breach it. Especially if it lay within their strategic interest to antagonise the neighbouring polities who enforced the embargo, and especially when this did not incur great strategic risk. Sweden had a long-contested border with the Russian polities, while it incurred no cost for Denmark to make promises to Muscovy. The Russian alliance was at the core of the Swedish discourse of dissent against the Oldenburg kings, and eventually, it likely became a contributing factor in the dissolution of the Kalmar Union.

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