

# Supplied by the enemy: the Royal Navy and the British consular service in the Baltic, 1808–12\*

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## Abstract

Between 1808 and 1812 a Royal Navy fleet sailed the Baltic Sea pursuing objectives of crucial strategic importance. This article traces the efforts made to secure local food supplies to provide for the fleet and the ways in which officials overcame geographical and economic obstacles to do so. The fleet relied on private contractors being able to produce the necessary provisions, and on an efficient purchasing system. It also required diplomatic dexterity: between 1810 and 1812 Britain and Sweden were officially at war and yet the supply to the fleet continued. This article will also argue that the British consular service played a key role in managing these logistical arrangements. This was an institution growing in importance, a key player in ensuring the Navy navigated local impediments.

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A naval fleet relied on its logistics; navies, like armies, moved in accordance with their stomachs. Without food and water, ships were forced to return to port, hampering their operational effectiveness. During the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France two methods were used to maintain supplies for fleets on foreign stations. First, large deliveries of foodstuffs were sent from the victualling yards at Deptford, Portsmouth and Plymouth. In addition, local procurement of provisions was a well-tested means of obtaining supplies for a fleet in foreign waters. In the East and West Indies nearly all provisions were secured in this manner, with merchant contractors paid to supply the entirety of a fleet's victualling needs, known as 'sea provisions'. Between 1808 and 1812 Admiral Sir James Saumarez commanded a British naval fleet – at one point numbering 17,000 men, the second largest in existence at the time – that patrolled the Baltic Sea protecting neutral trade and enforcing a blockade on Denmark–Norway, Russia and north Germany. This fleet depended upon secure local supplies of perishable foodstuffs such as meat and weighty bulk supplies such as water. In the Baltic, the value of such provisioning increased from £29,144 in 1808 to £40,863 in 1809.<sup>1</sup>

The ability to obtain supplies locally rested upon the diplomatic situation in the Baltic. Procurement of food would be facilitated by friendly and hospitable nations who had the resources to supply the fleet. In 1807 Napoleon and Alexander of Russia signed the treaty of Tilsit, agreeing an alliance and divided Europe into two large spheres of influence. Only Portugal and Sweden remained outside the Napoleonic orbit, though both came under increasing pressure to join the Continental System that aimed at removing all British trade from Europe. Since the beginning of the

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<sup>1</sup> The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Record Office, ADM 110/61/461, victualling board to Navy board, 2 March 1810.

Napoleonic War the Swedish king, Gustav IV Adolph, had remained stridently Francophobe. The Russo-Swedish War of 1808–9 had been disastrous for Sweden, whose territories in Finland had long been an object of Russian desire. The Russian invasion of Finland resulted in the surrender of Sveaborg, discrediting a king already unpopular on account of his continued support for policies of enlightened absolutism.<sup>2</sup> Gustav IV Adolph's overthrow in 1809 by a conspiracy of army officers enabled French pressure to bear fruit. Sweden found itself in a difficult position. Vulnerable after military defeat (at the treaty of Fredrikshamn in September 1809 Sweden ceded Finland and the Åland Islands to Russia) and with an increasingly Francophile court, Gustav IV Adolph's replacement Charles XIII accepted the terms of the Continental System.<sup>3</sup> On 17 November 1810 the Swedish realignment was completed when Sweden declared war on Britain. Such a change prompted severe concern in the British government, and yet, this was a conflict that never materialized. This led to the curious situation of a 'phony war' where the two protagonists, officially at war, refrained from taking military measures against each other.<sup>4</sup> Count von Rosen, the governor of Gothenburg, was instructed by his government to give 'the strongest assurances . . . that it was by no means the intention of the Swedish government to follow up its declaration by any act of hostility'.<sup>5</sup> Such a situation was unprecedented.

The Swedish pacifistic instinct was rooted firmly in the nation's reliance on British trade. The Swedish government was well aware that British naval action could decimate its economy. Between 1801 and 1803, an average of 40–50 per cent of Sweden's iron, by far its most important export, went to England. Ingvar Andersson has commented that 'the maintenance of good relations with this country was therefore essential to Swedish economic life'.<sup>6</sup> The Swedes were dependent on British goodwill so that cargoes of grain, without which much of the Swedish population would starve, could cross over to Sweden from the German provinces. Christopher Fay, agent for victualling at Gothenburg, wrote in 1809 to the foreign office 'representing the distressed situation of his Country for want of Provisions'. The Navy was ordered to allow all vessels laden with provisions 'to proceed free and unmolested'.<sup>7</sup> Baron Lars von Engeström, the Swedish chancellor from 1809, determined that trade could not be broken off, admitting that the population relied on British salt.<sup>8</sup> As Martha Saumarez wrote succinctly of the Swedes to her husband: 'They stand between two fires either of which is likely to consume them'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> C. Esdaile, *Napoleon's Wars: an International History, 1803–15* (2007), p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> The most recent analyses of the Continental System are S. Marzagelli, 'Napoleon's continental blockade: an effective substitute to naval weakness?', in *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-Strategies 1805–2005*, ed. B. A. Elleman and S. C. M. Paine (2006), pp. 25–34 and L. E. Davis and S. L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: an Economic History since 1750* (Cambridge, 2006). The best and fullest analyses remain E. F. Heckscher, *The Continental System: an Economic Interpretation* (Oxford, 1922) and F. Crouzet, *L'Économie Britannique et le blocus continental* (Paris, 1958). Sweden's role in the Continental System is covered in C. A. Tiselius, *Göteborg under kontinentaltiden, perioden 1808–10* (Gothenburg, 1935).

<sup>4</sup> The term 'phony war' is Voelcker's (see T. Voelcker, *Admiral Saumarez versus Napoleon: the Baltic 1807–12* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 148.)

<sup>5</sup> Greenwich, National Maritime Museum (hereafter N.M.M.), YOR/16A, Saumarez to Yorke, 20 Nov. 1810.

<sup>6</sup> I. Andersson, *A History of Sweden*, trans. C. Hannay (1955), p. 302.

<sup>7</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/60/9, Barrow to Bagot, 26 Sept. 1809.

<sup>8</sup> 'Nous ne pouvons pas interrompre tout commerce avec l'Angleterre, continuait le ministre; en effet, l'article IV du traité de Paris nous autorise à recevoir de ce pays le sel nécessaire aux besoins de notre population et, comme conséquence, à vendre aux Anglais les produits suédois' (P. Coquelle, 'La mission d'Alquier à Stockholm', *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, xxiii (1909), 196–239, at p. 203).

<sup>9</sup> Voelcker, p. 137.

Economic self-interest was reciprocated: Britain gained much from a friendly and accommodating Sweden. It was a destination for the large British export trade to northern Europe, in particular the ports of Gothenburg and Karlshamn. However, Britain's interests in Sweden were predominantly strategic. Most importantly, the Swedes provided supplies to Saumarez's fleet, especially fresh beef and water. Britain and Sweden had fundamental economic interests that dictated conciliation rather than conflict. In addition, the victualling needs of the fleet became a key component in Saumarez's diplomatic decisions. With Denmark and Russia aggressively hostile to Britain, only Sweden could supply the provisions and shelter required by the British naval force to remain operational. The need to secure local provisions was a vital consideration in appeasing Sweden.

Despite the importance of supply to a fleet's operational effectiveness, there have been few studies of how victualling arrangements were conducted in specific theatres, and their relation to economic and diplomatic contexts. Isolated pieces on victualling exist, for example by Christian Buchet and by D. D. Aldridge, although these are concerned with earlier periods.<sup>10</sup> More recently N. A. M. Rodger and Christopher Hall have written in general terms on victualling, but have been limited by the sheer scope and breadth of their respective works.<sup>11</sup> This article will trace the local victualling arrangements made in the Baltic between 1808 and 1812, placing the logistical challenges firmly in the economic and diplomatic contexts in which they existed. Central to these arrangements was the British consular service in the Baltic. 'Bottom up' approaches to international history have gained increasing currency in recent years.<sup>12</sup> The absence of scholarly works on the consular service is notable; the only general study being D. C. M. Platt's *Cinderella Service*.<sup>13</sup> British consuls tend to be removed from most diplomatic histories, overshadowed by the actions of foreign secretaries and ambassadors. Studies of consular services in specific areas at specific times are rare things indeed, though this is beginning to change. There have been recent notable exceptions: for instance, Leos Müller's work on the Swedish consular service and Gunning's work on the consular service in the Aegean.<sup>14</sup> The British consular service in the Baltic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is little known. The work that does exist focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in line with Platt's assertion that the history of the British consular service 'extends simply' to Canning's Consular Act of 1825. Scholarship covering the roles, functions

<sup>10</sup> C. Buchet, *Marine, économie et société. Un exemple d'interaction: l'avitaillement de la Royal Navy durant la guerre de sept ans* (Paris, 1999). D. D. Aldridge, 'The victualling of the British naval expeditions to the Baltic Sea between 1715 and 1727', *Scandinavian Econ. Hist. Rev.*, xii (1964), 1–25, at pp. 21–4. For a review of victualling in the English Channel during this period, see M. Steer, 'The blockade of Brest and the victualling of the Western Squadron, 1793–1805', *Mariner's Mirror*, lxxvi (1990), 307–16.

<sup>11</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *Command of the Ocean* (2004), p. 366. C. D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War 1803–15* (Manchester, 1992), p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> This is particularly true for scholars working on the Cold War; see, e.g., P. Steege, *Black Market, Cold War: Everyday Life in Berlin, 1946–9* (New York, 2007); W. Loth, *Stalin's Unwanted Child: the Soviet Union, the German Question and the Founding of the G.D.R.* (Basingstoke, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> D. C. M. Platt, *Cinderella Service: British Consuls since 1825* (1971).

<sup>14</sup> L. Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs and Commerce: the Swedish Consular Service and Long-Distance Shipping, 1720–1815* (Stockholm, 2004). See also L. Patrizio Gunning, *The British Consular Service in the Aegean and the Collection of Antiquities for the British Museum* (Aldershot, 2009); J. Dickie, *The British Consul: Heir to a Great Tradition* (New York, 2008).

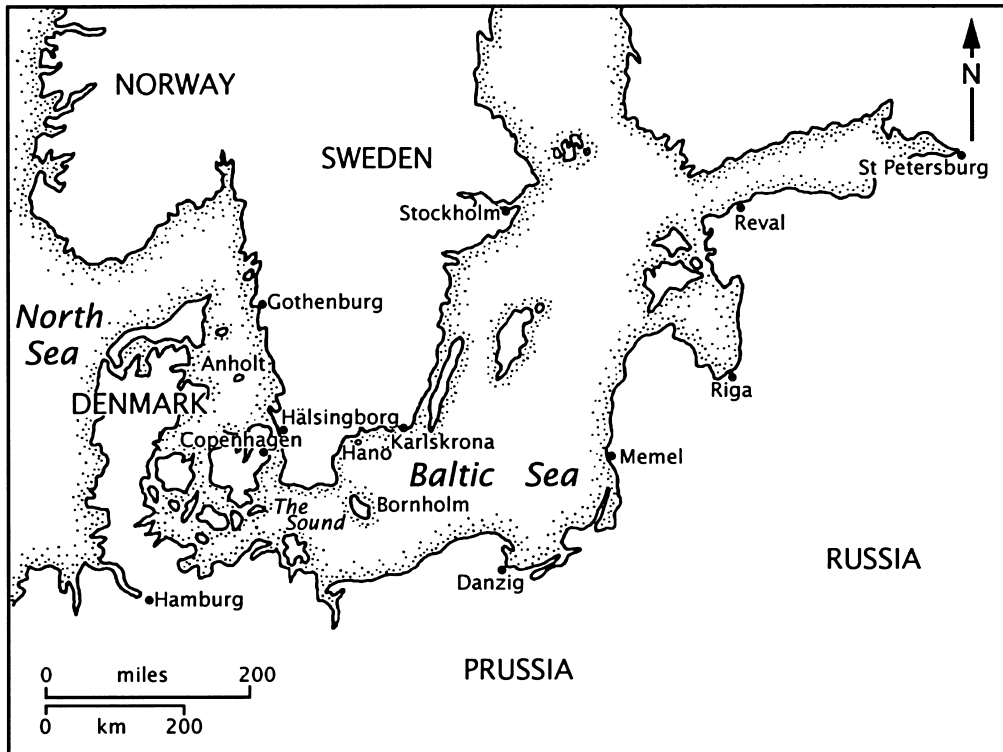


Figure 1. The Baltic in 1808

and significance of the British consular service during the eighteenth century is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>15</sup>

Nelson had complained when stationed in the Baltic in 1801 of the difficulties of finding supplies at a suitable price: 'it must be noted that the lowest price & best provisions must both combine', he urged. In 1801, such a combination was not always in evidence: 'such iniquity, I fear, has been going on in Denmark that the victualling must look out before they pay the horrid bills'.<sup>16</sup> The inclusion of an agent victualler with the fleet in 1808 suggests that the victualling board had paid attention to Nelson's experiences. Smithson Waller was appointed as agent victualler in April 1808 and his previous experience of Baltic victualling was of considerable advantage to the fleet.<sup>17</sup>

The system for local procurement was simple: first, a bill of exchange for the necessary amount would be drawn upon the victualling board in favour of one or more merchants. This would then be charged against the agent victualler at that port or, where none was present, against the consul or naval commander who organized it.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Platt, *Cinderella Service*, p. 5. For other studies of the 19th-century consular service, see P. D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers in China 1843–1943* (Oxford, 1988); J. E. Hoare, *Embassies in the East: the Story of the British and their Embassies in China, Japan and Korea from 1859 to the Present* (Richmond, 1999). R. A. Jones, *British Diplomatic Service, 1815–1914* (Ontario, 1983) also makes brief mentions of consuls.

<sup>16</sup> R. J. B. Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: the Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (2005), pp. 395–6.

<sup>17</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 111/187, 1 Apr. 1808.

<sup>18</sup> As laid out in a general memo, 24 July 1808 (N.M.M., MKH 112).

The said official would then request the bill of exchange to be charged as an imprest against him and seek reimbursement from the victualling board which, according to the relative currency values, would then (if all was correct with the receipts and invoices) approve the payment. In April 1808 Saumarez, Waller and a merchant named Krok met in London and planned the provisioning effort for 1808. Saumarez wrote to his wife a week later that he was sure ‘we shall have occasional supplies from the different ports of Sweden, principally Gothenburg’.<sup>19</sup> Krok had tendered for a contract from the victualling board to supply fresh beef to the Navy ‘in the Sound, the Danish Belts, or the Baltic’, detailing the prices. For each pound of beef, 6d would be charged; if live oxen were needed payment would be by weight ‘by mutual consent’. Beef or live oxen would be ‘received on board some English Ship of War laying between Copenhagen and Elsenore’. For each 1,000 pounds of beef delivered, a bill would be received within thirty days.<sup>20</sup>

Waller was insistent that this price would be considered very reasonable, ‘especially as the price of black cattle in Sweden has always advanced by 30% in consequence of the great consumption last year of the English fleet, and by the army in Zealand; as likewise because of the great quantity which will be required for the Swedish troops which are at present assembling throughout the Country’. In this he hinted at the great problem facing Baltic provisioning: the arrival of the Baltic fleet in any town or city would (at the very least) double the population of that town. The consequent rise in prices for all goods, in particular scarce commodities such as beef, was a constant obstacle. Rear-Admiral Samuel Hood wrote to Saumarez in July 1808, emphasizing this point: ‘the communication is very difficult across the Belt and . . . a mixture of 10,000 French, 16,000 Spanish and 4,000 Dutch are in . . . Jutland, and about 25,000 Troops in Zealand; . . . everything is at a very high price, particularly meat of every kind.’<sup>21</sup> The arrival of a fleet merely added to demand. Waller also mentioned a seasonal factor, that cattle were always dearer in spring ‘than generally they are in autumn’. He pointed out that Krok had been a good servant of Britain the year before, stating that he, ‘last year, during the battle of Copenhagen, supplied Captain Fraser of the *Vanguard* with beef – and also Mr Kennedy the Commissary General for the English Army in Zealand, both which Gentlemen can affirm that his prices were always lower than those at which others delivered’.<sup>22</sup>

Supplies were obtained from various ports around Sweden, with beef, for example, coming from Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Ystad and Karlskrona. Between 20 April and 10 May, the *Centaur* received deliveries of fresh beef at Helsingborg, sometimes as much as 3,300 pounds at a time.<sup>23</sup> Saumarez reported in August 1808 that ‘it was common to receive fresh beef’, and that at the time he had ten live oxen on board the *Victory*.<sup>24</sup> A ‘general memo’ sent around in July 1808 laid out the number of oxen each ship was allowed to take on board at any one time. ‘The Commander in Chief’, read the memo: having given directions to the Agent Victualler to contract for the supply of Fresh Beef at the different Ports on the coast of Sweden . . . When any ship arrives off Ystad and is in want of Live Bullocks, she is to hoist a white flag at the Main and fire one gun, when a supply agreeable to the following proportion with fodder will be sent to her.

<sup>19</sup> Suffolk Record Office (hereafter S.R.O.), SA 1/3/1/2, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 18 Apr. 1808.

<sup>20</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/6/23–4, Smithson Waller to Saumarez, 4 Apr. 1808.

<sup>21</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/6/34, Hood to Saumarez, 24 Apr. 1808.

<sup>22</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/6/23–4, Smithson Waller to Saumarez, 4 Apr. 1808.

<sup>23</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 51/1824, log of the *Centaur*, 20 Apr.–10 May 1808.

<sup>24</sup> S.R.O., SA 1/3/1/2, Saumarez to Martha, 18 Aug. 1808.



Line of battle ships were to receive thirty oxen, frigates twenty and sloops twelve.<sup>25</sup> There was a continuous supply of bills of exchange from Waller during 1808.<sup>26</sup>

Local provisioning was quicker, provided better quality victuals, and removed the longer periods of storage as the provisions were transported. Above all it was cheaper, always a concern for the victualling board, with no costs for transport and freight. Krok's contract of 1808, for instance, spoke of a price of 6d per pound of beef, delivered at Gothenburg.<sup>27</sup> This works out at £7 12s per tierce (a tierce being 304 pounds). The price of beef in Deptford at this time was substantially higher, at £9 6s 8d per tierce, and even though it had dropped by 1809 to £8 2s 9d the contract to supply in the Baltic was still significantly cheaper.<sup>28</sup> The victualling board's desire to contract locally was a rational policy, especially when the transport costs from Deptford to the Baltic are taken into account.

Long-term contracts, organized in advance, were cheap and reliable. The Baltic commanders did not have the opportunity to play the market to secure the best price as could commanders on other stations. Admiral Lord Keith had that luxury during his time in the Mediterranean in 1800. Aware of the benefit that derived from competition, he claimed:

on the subject of Fresh Beef and Live Cattle, I agree with you that any one individual, intrusted [*sic*] exclusively with the supply, may impose upon the Government; and I am well assured that the first article can be obtained at a lower price at Leghorn than the price that it at present costs . . . it is therefore my determination to resort to a fair and open competition, in order that the Public may be supplied on just and reasonable terms.<sup>29</sup>

He worried that the price of beef (8d per pound) was too dear.<sup>30</sup> To secure a price of 6d per pound in a less agriculturally productive region, outside a competitive market, was a remarkable achievement.

That said, supplies bought at short notice could be prohibitively expensive. On the rare occasions when the Baltic fleet became needy, it was the merchants' turn to manipulate a desperate Navy. In November 1809, Saumarez's need for spirits, always the most popular of victuals, was great as he waited for the transports to arrive. In 1809 809,600 pints of spirits were required to maintain the official ration for the entire fleet, of which only 538,720 were transported, a considerable deficit.<sup>31</sup> Saumarez wrote a forceful letter to the victualling board, complaining of 'the Squadron under his command being very much in want of a supply of Spirits'. As a result, he had found it necessary to direct Robert Gamble, the purser of the *Victory*, to purchase between

<sup>25</sup> N.M.M., MKH 112, general memo, 24 July 1808.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 111/188, 25 July 1808, 19 Aug. 1808 and 6 Sept. 1808.

<sup>27</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/6/23–4, Smithson Waller to Saumarez, 4 Apr. 1808.

<sup>28</sup> *Accounts relating to Navy and Victualling Contracts, and Pay of Shipwrights, 1790–1823* (Parl. Papers, 1823 (417), xiii), p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> N.M.M., KEA/L/23, pp. 264–6, Lord Keith to James Yeo, agent victualler in the Mediterranean, 27 Apr. 1800. Keith was an assiduous player of the market. Earlier in 1800 he commented that 'at present I am far from thinking that the Beef is supplied on as low terms as it could be procured . . . but I shall hereafter endeavour, when opportunity will admit, to obtain full information on the subject, and guide myself accordingly' (N.M.M., KEA/L/23, pp. 260–1, Keith to the commissioners for victualling His Majesty's Navy, 25 Jan. 1800). In April he wrote to the British vice-consul at Savona, complaining that 'the beef which you have found on board the *Audacious* appears to me to be charged at a high price, and even exceeds that at which you told me you could provide it'. He ordered that no more be purchased for any of the ships under his orders (N.M.M., KEA/L/23, p. 192, Keith to Mr. Alberte, British vice-consul at Savona, 11 Apr. 1800).

<sup>30</sup> N.M.M., KEA/L/23, pp. 64–6, Lord Keith to James Yeo, agent victualler in the Mediterranean, 27 Apr. 1800.

<sup>31</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 111/191–3.

4,000 and 5,000 gallons, 'on the lowest terms he could procure the same, and enclosing a voucher for four thousand three hundred and thirty Gallons of Rum at Seven Shillings and six pence per Gallon'.<sup>32</sup> This was an inflated cost. In Deptford a gallon of rum delivered to the victualling board cost 3s 11½d at its highest in 1809 and 2s 8d at its lowest. To be charged more than double this was extortionate. Such was the cost of victualling inefficiency. This was a rare occurrence and the only example this author has found of Saumarez paying well over the odds for provisions. For the most part, as the regular supplies of beef that arrived at the fleet showed, the use of local merchants was a well-trying and useful facility.

Supply depended on good relations with private merchants and contractors. How did the merchants themselves fare? The seller of the spirits mentioned above was carrying on a lucrative trade. Certainly, as shipowners knew well, government contracts were solid and often profitable investments. Krok complained in early 1809 that the victualling board had left him with severe losses, and he had been left overstocked. However, in 1811, he once again offered to supply the Baltic fleet with beef and vegetables: clearly contracting with the British state was an advantageous route to wealth. The board devolved the decision on Krok's offer to Saumarez, keen to avoid a situation such as in the winter of 1808/9, when more beef had been arranged than was necessary. Copying the letter to Saumarez, they requested that he make arrangements for the supply of live oxen and vegetables 'as he may deem most expedient, and acquaint Mr Krok therewith'.<sup>33</sup>

There were risks inherent in contracting. John Lindegren, the consul at Karlskrona, suffered from some loss when operations beyond his control took the fleet away from provisions he had hastily arranged, leaving him severely out of pocket. In early 1810, he wrote complaining of 'the suffering I have been subjected to by the failure of an undertaking I engaged in by your request and for account of HM Ships under your command then in these roads'. In order to supply the needs of the ships under Captain Barrett's command with bullocks, spirits and rice, Lindegren begged Barrett to 'consider that great expense, trouble and exertion could not possibly be avoided'. The livestock was purchased at numerous and distant places and was consequently very dear. The spirits and wine, 'not being within the line of my business, I was obliged to contract for with several persons which naturally occasioned loss of time and left no profit to me'. The collection of these different items at Karlskrona 'attended a great trouble and still greater expense, particularly bringing down the goods, and the loading of the crafts'. The vessels were about to be loaded and sent on their way to the British ships, about twelve miles from the town, 'when most unfortunately a thick fog came in over land, which rendered the further progress of the vessels utterly impossible'. The convoy which the Royal Navy was covering had in the meantime made sail, and it became necessary for the *Minotaur* to proceed after it. The vessels transporting the provisions out to the fleet 'had no other alternative [but] to return . . . with the whole of their cargoes which are now laying very heavily on my hands'. Lindegren assessed his loss 'to the fairest calculations' at £400, and he asked Barrett to plead to the victualling board for restitution.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 111/193, 29 Nov. 1809.

<sup>33</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 111/198, 26 March 1811.

<sup>34</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1444, Lindegren to Barrett, 18 Jan. 1810.

The victualling board demanded a full statement of account, which was then sent. The account specified the exact amount of loss sustained by Lindegren at £689 2s 2½d.<sup>35</sup> Six months later, he was awarded compensation for his losses:

we have ordered the Bill of Exchange, amounting to the sum of £550, which you state to have authorized Mr John Lindegren to draw upon this Board, in consideration of the losses he had sustained in the purchase of sundry quantities of Provisions, for the use of His Majesty's Ship *Minotaur*, but which were not supplied to the said ship, on account of her being obliged to proceed to sea:- to be accepted and a perfect Bill to be made out in discharge thereof; and to return our best thanks for the trouble you have taken on this occasion.<sup>36</sup>

There were inevitable risks with contracting. If the fault was with the Navy a merchant could expect compensation. As their acquaintances in the shipowning industry would no doubt have told them, the British government had a vested interest in looking after its contractors. A government contract was the most dependable means of achieving steady profits. For the government the use of local contractors provided a quicker, more reliable and cheaper supply of certain foodstuffs. Despite diplomatic difficulties, local contractors continued to be used in the Baltic: both contractor and government found this advantageous.

As the case of Lindegren implies, the duties of a consul at the turn of the nineteenth century were manifold. A manual published half a century later noted that 'it is almost impossible to define the duties of a Consul, so numerous are they'.<sup>37</sup> Their immediate concern was maritime affairs: the protection and regulation of British shipping and seamen in foreign countries. While initially in the sixteenth century consuls were merely leading merchants who became figureheads for mercantile interests in foreign cities, during the seventeenth century they began to be appointed by the state; the consul as a public servant dates from 1649.<sup>38</sup> The functions of consular activity remained the product of individual circumstances and tastes but by the late eighteenth century they had much in common with the modern state official, directly concerned with the political interests of Britain overseas. A consul's role was thus both economic and political. Sweden's active economic expansion during the seventeen-twenties and thirties can be traced to the growth of the Swedish consular service. Until the seventeen-eighties, southern Europe was the major area of consular deployment in accordance with Sweden's offensive commercial policy in that region. The independence wars in North and Latin America resulted in a number of consulates being established in these regions.<sup>39</sup> The same was true of Britain as its economic interests became tied to the Baltic trade: by 1790 there were forty-six British consular stations, eleven of them in northern Europe.<sup>40</sup>

As political representatives in the Baltic, consuls were part of a wider intelligence network which also encompassed admirals such as Saumarez, Baltic merchants and friendly Swedish officials. Political events, changing political sympathies and contracting were all discussed. One typical letter from a consul stated that 'a person in whom I believe a considerable degree of confidence may be placed, arrived here three

<sup>35</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1444/5, Lindegren to Barrett, 18 Jan. 1810.

<sup>36</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1517, victualling board to Saumarez, 4 Sept. 1810.

<sup>37</sup> E. W. A. Tison, *The British Consul's Manual: Being a Practical Guide for Consuls, As Well as for the Merchant, Shipowner, and Master Mariner In All Their Consular Transactions* (1856), p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> Platt, *British Consuls*, pp. 1–7.

<sup>39</sup> Müller, pp. 18, 41.

<sup>40</sup> Platt, *British Consuls*, p. 10.



days ago from Zealand and gave me a great deal of intelligence'.<sup>41</sup> News spread quickly across the Baltic. For example, on 1 June 1810, Saumarez passed on intelligence of the death of the heir to Charles XIII before it was even announced by the court. He wrote:

I have received the important information that the adopted heir apparent to the Crown of Sweden, who on his return to Stockholm last Monday from Heilsenburg, had fallen off his Horse supposed in a fit of apoplexy and died upon the spot. I enclose the copy of the intelligence of this melancholy event transmitted to one of His Majesty's Consuls at Gothenburg, also received it from Mr Fenwick, Consul at Hälsingborg.

Such information was valuable in keeping Britain ahead of the diplomatic game. The death of the heir apparent was not announced officially until 28 June 1810 when Saumarez wrote to Charles Yorke, the first lord of the admiralty from 1810 until 1812, reporting the 'Prince Regal of Sweden's Death as announced by His Majesty's Consul at Gothenburg'.<sup>42</sup> In September 1811, he was able to report to Yorke the intention of Bonaparte to attack Colberg and that the king of Prussia had ordered a strong body of troops for the defence of that fortress (under Blucher). He was also able to give a detailed list of weaponry and armaments available to the garrison and the number of Prussian troops.<sup>43</sup>

The intelligence network was particularly useful for gauging the opinion of Sweden, both its state officials and its people. Intelligence matters were kept out of the public admiralty files. Informants made the position of each nation clear. Saumarez confirmed to Yorke in 1810, at a crucial phase of the Swedish move to war, that 'from the last reports I have received, the Government will studiously avoid a rupture with England, and they are in great dread of an attack from Russia'.<sup>44</sup> Information from John Smith, the consul at Gothenburg, confirmed 'the very considerate manner in which Sweden appears to put in force the Decrees against Colonial Produce and other Merchandize', prompting Saumarez to forgo responding with hostile measures against the Swedes.<sup>45</sup> Consuls also provided information on the Baltic Sea, so that Britain would know when convoys could start up again: 'Ice has been loosening and is now driving about the Sound at the impulse of the wind and currents'.<sup>46</sup> Again, on 14 March 1811, Fenwick wrote that 'the Belt and Sound are now quite clear of ice'.<sup>47</sup> This was not only to help naval commanders but was also part of their economic role as organizers of the vast Baltic trade.

Consuls had specific economic roles. They collected information on prices, market situations and business opportunities and forwarded it to the necessary state authorities. They assisted the subjects of their government in handling contracts with local authorities and informed them of risks. Müller gives the example of consuls frequently representing absentee shipowners at court when a ship or cargo was declared a prize. Their 'semi-diplomatic' status might directly affect the security of commerce and shipping. The consular service was, in his words, a 'mercantilist institution' as much as a diplomatic one.<sup>48</sup> In keeping abreast of local information and intelligence, which

<sup>41</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/58/121, Fenwick to Charles Bagot, 2 Oct. 1808.

<sup>42</sup> N.M.M., YOR 16/1/6, Saumarez to Yorke, 1 June 1810, 28 June 1810.

<sup>43</sup> N.M.M., YOR 16/55, Saumarez to Yorke, 2 Sept. 1810.

<sup>44</sup> N.M.M., YOR 16/10, Saumarez to Yorke, 27 Aug. 1810.

<sup>45</sup> N.M.M., YOR 16/26, Saumarez to Yorke, 26 Nov. 1810.

<sup>46</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/61/7, Fenwick to Hamilton, 23 Feb. 1810.

<sup>47</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/62/18–20, Fenwick to Smith, 14 March 1811.

<sup>48</sup> Müller, pp. 20–1.

involved military movements, food prices, and diplomatic and political sympathies, consuls played an essential role in obtaining local provisions. They advised on prices and quantities. Charles Fenwick had been a consul in Denmark: at the outset of war with the Danes in 1807 he had crossed the Sound and taken up residence at Hålsingborg, where he stayed on in a private capacity. In June 1810 Fenwick wrote of the temporary difficulty that exists in procuring oxen for the use of the squadron and of their extravagantly high price, both of which circumstances I am very sorry to learn. I am aware from experience that a large number of oxen cannot be procured at a short notice, although when a sufficient time is given a regular and efficient supply may be depended on.<sup>49</sup>

Consuls also kept an eye on the provisioning efforts of the enemy, often an excellent means of detecting future troop movements. In 1810 Fenwick wrote that the 'Swedish Government has contracted for a large quantity of Provisions for the Fleet at Carlsrona which it is reported will be equipped for service in spring'.<sup>50</sup> He spoke of reports outlining the movement of 20,000 French soldiers over the Little Belt: 'Provisions are ordered by the Danish Government for them, at the rate of half a pound of Beef, one pound and a half of Bread, a Bottle of Beer and a Glass of Brandy for each man'.<sup>51</sup> Fenwick's ear was always close to the ground: one letter of 18 February 1808 stated that 'the Bakers at Elsinore have now got orders to provide the Government with as much Biscuit as they can get ready, and it is presumed that it is for the French, for the Danes are not used to this kind of Bread'.<sup>52</sup>

During the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, consuls became a vital part of the provisioning process. Keith's Mediterranean fleet in 1800–2, for example, rested upon local supplies, particularly in the first half of 1800, when there was a general scarcity of various foodstuffs as a result of uncertainty over supplies from England. The agent victualler in the Mediterranean, James Yeo, noted that he had had 'no intimation of any Victuallers coming out from England'.<sup>53</sup> The purchase of local provisions was very important for the fleet's continuing operational viability. Keith wrote early in 1800 that this was the usual practice: 'I have authorised the Consul, to whom I believe it has been usual to grant the privilege (providing it is done by him on as reasonable terms as by others) to furnish the supplies', although he still insisted on being kept abreast of developments 'as my chief object will on all occasions be the promotion of the public interest'.<sup>54</sup>

Consuls dealt with advertisements, contract negotiations and payment, mediating all the arrangements. The merchant James Touch reported that 'all the Bills given at Syracuse were sent to me by the Vice Consul, and I have given him cash for the same, without any difficulty'.<sup>55</sup> They assisted in the arranging of standing contracts, using networks of merchants. Where this failed, they could be gained through advertisements:

As it's my intention that the Fresh Beef furnished, in future, for the use of His Majesty's Ships at Leghorn and Naples, is to be supplied by contract; I will be obliged by you inserting an advertisement to the following effect in the Florentine Gazette, and carrying the same to be posted up at the customary places in Leghorn for public information. Advertisement – 'Persons willing to enter into contract for supplying Fresh Beef at Leghorn and Naples for the use of

<sup>49</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1389, Fenwick to Saumarez, 14 June 1810.

<sup>50</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/61/80–1, Fenwick to Smith, 27 Nov. 1810.

<sup>51</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/58/67–8, Charles Fenwick to George Canning, 13 March 1808.

<sup>52</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/58/51–2, Fenwick to George Canning, 28 Feb. 1808.

<sup>53</sup> N.M.M., KEI/L/2, p. 76, Yeo to Keith.

<sup>54</sup> N.M.M., KEI/L/23, pp. 260–1, Keith to the commissioners for victualling His Majesty's Navy, 25 Jan. 1800.

<sup>55</sup> N.M.M., KEI/L/1, Touch to Keith, 27 Feb. 1800.

Table 1. Provisions under the charge of John Udney

	In public store	From <i>Telemachus</i> transport
Biscuit		543 bags
Beef	3,306 8 lbs pieces	87 pieces
Pork	7,680 8 lbs pieces	96 pieces
Suet	1,960 lbs	
Vinegar	1,042 gallons	16 gallons
Flour	2,4410 lbs	47 hogsheads
Pease	442 bushels and 2 gallons	54 bushels
Oatmeal	549 bushels and 2 gallons	54 bushels

Source: N.M.M., KEI/L/2/40, 16 May 1800.

His Britannic Majesty's Ships being in want thereof, are required to address their proposals, sealed up, to the Right Honourable Keith KB, Commander in Chief &c on and before the 15<sup>th</sup> of next month. The Beef is to be delivered at a fixed price per pound . . . and Bills for the supplies are to be drawn monthly at the current rate of Agio and Exchange'.<sup>56</sup>

Keith arranged for supplies of cattle to be organized through British consuls at Florence and Leghorn (Livorno). The victualling board responded, approving 'the manner in which you procured Cattle at Leghorn for the service of the fleet'. They also approved 'of your having obtained, thro' the medium of the British Minister at Florence, one hundred of the best bullocks of that country, and of your having selected the British Consul at Leghorn as the person most proper for conducting such concerns, in future'.<sup>57</sup>

Additionally, stores were delivered into the charge of consuls.<sup>58</sup> John Udney, the British vice consul at Leghorn, was particularly important. An 'Account of Provisions at present Existing in the Publick Store belonging to the British Government at Leghorn, under the charge of John Udney British Vice Consul there' gives a taste of the wide-ranging supplies and deals he was involved with overseeing (see Table 1). Some local supplies were secured using the patronage of local governors and Deys. This involved much consular legwork. The British vice consul in Tetuan, Hibil Sarlasty, organized water for the fleet. Lord Keith wrote to him: 'will you wait on the governor and request that my fleet, now very large, may take water at Mazari, Mazah, and any other places where we can get it'.<sup>59</sup>

At various ports around the Baltic, consuls would have responsibility for organizing and arranging the local provisioning. In Karlskrona, Vice Consul Lindegren supplied passing British ships with fresh beef. Two further consuls were present in the Baltic. The aforementioned Charles Fenwick, residing at Hälsingborg, was an able consul. In 1812, Saumarez wrote in warm tones about Fenwick's service:

His Majesty's Service having derived considerable benefit from the zeal and exertion of Mr Fenwick late Consul at Elsinore, in the intelligence he has from time to time communicated to me during my command in the Baltic, and who in facilitating thro' Sweden the conveyance of

<sup>56</sup> N.M.M., KEI/L/24, p. 299, Keith to Philip Felicely, 24 Apr. 1800.

<sup>57</sup> T.N.A.: PR.O., ADM 111/154, 14 Jan. 1800.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., N.M.M., KEI/L/2, pp. 179–80, Keith to Nelson, 3 Apr. 1800.

<sup>59</sup> N.M.M., KEI/L/23/1, Keith to Hibil Sarlasty, 22 July 1799.

persons employed in the service of Government, I beg leave to recommend him to your Lordship for any remunerative [*sic*] as his Services may be found deserving of.<sup>60</sup>

John Smith, consul in Gothenburg, became more important in the victualling process after the Swedish declaration of war in November 1810, when he stayed on in a private role.<sup>61</sup> He was less competent, however, and was often criticized by the victualling board for having irregular accounts. Smith spent much of 1810 concocting excuses proclaiming his innocence or alternatively simply ignoring the board altogether. It was perhaps not surprising that the victualling board wrote to Smith 'relative to the propriety of taking this Business out of your hands, and committing it to some other person more disposed to pay attention to our Instructions'.<sup>62</sup> For the most part, their consuls in the Baltic were normally both reliable and competent.

In early 1809 the agent victualler Smithson Waller was removed from service, the admiralty 'not deeming Mr Waller's service to be any longer necessary', and he returned to his position as purser on the *Prince of Wales*.<sup>63</sup> Since the bulk of the provisioning in the Baltic had been organized by the consuls, the admiralty saw Waller as redundant and local provisioning became an exclusively consular task. It was the consuls who would face the first diplomatic strains between Britain and Sweden. The armistice between Sweden and Russia – following the overthrow of Gustav IV Adolph on 13 March 1809 – began the process by which Sweden was slowly reeled into the Continental System.<sup>64</sup> One observer wrote to Lord Mulgrave in August 1809 'that the Ruler of France is grasping all the shores of Europe, and without doubt intends by them to form a Maritime Confederice similar to that of the Rhine, each to furnish a contingent of Ships, or Men, by which means he will obtain Seamen for his purposes'. Sweden, he stated, 'is lost to us'.<sup>65</sup> Gustav's hatred for Napoleon had made him Britain's strongest ally in Europe, and his removal from power increased the ambiguity surrounding relations with Sweden. The new regent, the elderly duke of Södermanland (later Charles XIII) was merely a figurehead for more ambitious ministers.

These developments left Saumarez concerned for the supply of his fleet, as he wrote, 'supposing Sweden to become an enemy, or a neutral power & shutting her ports against our ships of war'.<sup>66</sup> British ships were temporarily forced to leave Swedish harbours. A hostile Sweden would mean no more local procurement of provisions. Later that year, on 17 September 1809, the treaty of Frederikshaven was signed between Sweden and Russia, ending the war between them very much on Russia's terms. Sweden joined the Continental System and ordered British ships out of Swedish ports, albeit in a non-confrontational manner. John Smith at Gothenburg, however, made it clear to Saumarez that this would not affect supplies heading towards the Royal Navy. 'I am further desired by the Governor [von Rosen]', he wrote,

<sup>60</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/63/42, Saumarez to Wellesley, 29 Jan. 1812.

<sup>61</sup> Voelcker, p. 106.

<sup>62</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1558/4, victualling board to Smith, 2 Oct. 1810.

<sup>63</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 2/156/107–8, admiralty to victualling board, 25 Apr. 1809.

<sup>64</sup> The immediate cause of the overthrow was the ever volatile Gustav's accusations of cowardice towards many leading aristocratic families, and a new tax five times the rate it had been in 1800 (see Voelcker, p. 77).

<sup>65</sup> Yorkshire, Mulgrave Castle, Mulgrave Archive 21/283, John Gooch to Lord Mulgrave, 15 Aug. 1809.

<sup>66</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1248, Saumarez, 'Strategic situation in the Baltic'. There is some doubt as to the authorship of this memorandum, though Voelcker argues that it is 'almost certainly' a fair copy of Saumarez's proposals for the coming year (see Voelcker, p. 86).

to request that you will not permit any of the Boats of the Fleet to come up to the Town or above the Fortress, except a Flag of Truce, nor officers to appear in their uniforms . . . with regard to supplying the Ships with Fresh Beef &c I have not had an opportunity to arrange but as far as I can see it will go on, though not ostensibly for the use of His Majesty's Fleet.<sup>67</sup>

So began the secret state-sanctioned provisioning of the Baltic fleet.

The Swedes ensured that supplies to the British fleet would not be stopped. Aware of the importance Saumarez placed on them, Baron von Platen, a former Swedish naval officer, then a councillor of state, was deputed to explain that discreet provisioning would continue. He wrote to Saumarez in 1809 detailing the gratitude of the Swedes, and their plans for future provisioning:

At the conclusion of the peace, hard as it is, we can not yet deny that in a high degree we are indebted to you, for our existing as a state . . . For the first moment I am authorised to say that no alteration will take place in what was before mentioned to Mr. Foster and he probably will have advertised of our ports and oxen to so brave an ally to so successful a protector for so many sails as your Exc. judges it fit to send in into them for the remaining of the harvest.

He remarked that there were sheep and 'greens' at Gotland and predicted that 'proper steps' would be taken by the governor. He stated that 'the best way might be to send a small vessel with an advertisement, and then a little after let the fleet proceed' into a nearby harbour. Platen was confident that the governor would exert all possible means in this regard.<sup>68</sup>

Local provisioning that had occurred in 1808 continued as normal throughout 1809. Writing the following year, Saumarez noted that:

this summer is likely to prove more inactive than any former one – every account from Russia states their fleet to be dismantled, and the Swedes are not disposed to give us any employment. They testify upon every occasion their sense of gratitude at the moderation by which I uniformly acted towards them, and they continue to allow the usual supplies of fresh provisions to be sent to the squadron, although not with the approval of the Government.<sup>69</sup>

Captain Thomas Harvey of the *Majestic* described being provisioned at Karlskrona as usual. 'After having compleated [*sic*] the *Majestic* water during which time I embarked cattle and vegetables for the Belt Squadron', he wrote: 'while at Carlskrona I had provisions at different times taken out of *Majestic*'.<sup>70</sup> Diplomatic developments had not affected the supply to Saumarez's fleet.

In 1810 Sweden's adoption of the Continental System began greatly to concern officials. Charles Fenwick, reporting the peace treaty between France and Sweden in January 1810, outlined its main points. 'The most important provisions of this Treaty are stated to be, the total exclusion of British Trade from the Ports of Sweden without an exception of Colonial Produce; and that Sweden shall break off, all her connexions, with Great Britain'.<sup>71</sup> Supplies to the Baltic fleet would therefore be interrupted. In May the admiralty wrote to Saumarez urging him to ensure that his ships kept an ample supply of water on board: it was not known how long they might be without Swedish hospitality.<sup>72</sup> The British government still hoped that conflict could be

<sup>67</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/9/248, John Smith to Saumarez, 16 Nov. 1809.

<sup>68</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1129, Platen to Saumarez, 22 Sept. 1809.

<sup>69</sup> S.R.O., SA 3/1/2/1, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 24 June 1809.

<sup>70</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/9/265, Thomas Harvey, *Majestic*, to Saumarez, 9 Oct. 1809.

<sup>71</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/61/5-6, Fenwick to William Hamilton, 23 Jan. 1810.

<sup>72</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 2/1370, admiralty to Saumarez, 8 May 1808.

avoided. In May 1810 they wrote to Saumarez leaving it to his judgement and discretion whether to commence hostilities.<sup>73</sup>

Sweden declared war on Britain on 17 November 1810. The threat to British supplies was clear, but the Swedish authorities went out of their way to ensure that the British knew that provisions would not be affected. To all intents and purposes, nothing would change. Here we can see the benefits of Saumarez's conduct throughout the period as commander-in-chief in the Baltic. Ever courteous, his relaxed and understanding conduct towards Sweden paid dividends between 1809 and 1812. Meanwhile, Swedish resentment of the French was becoming more pronounced. Admiral Krusenstjerna highlighted Swedish disillusionment with their French allies:

Our *friends* the French and Danes express their friendship to us with unremitting zeal in capturing and robbing from our merchant vessels, whilst our *enemies* the English let them pass unmolested from one port to another. We did not suffer by one hundred times as much from these two nations, the time we were at war against them, as we do now when they call themselves our friends and allies.<sup>74</sup>

Conversely, as von Rosen commented, 'Admiral Saumarez' ways of thinking and attitude regarding Sweden are quite the same as they so far have been. He protects our trade, lets our ships sail with or without convoys and licenses, [and] allows exports of colonial merchandise'.<sup>75</sup> This was a deliberate gamble on the part of Saumarez, hoping that his policy of appeasement and compassion would lead Sweden to reciprocate. So although Sweden made official noises banning the British from their ports and ending the supply to the fleet, confidentially it was made clear that von Rosen understood the measures to be 'contrary to the sentiments of the Swedish government'. As he continued:

They are to be acted upon in the most modified manner, and only confined to the sequestration of British Produce, that I shall abstain from any offensive measures against Sweden . . . It is added that in consequence of the early communication made by the Swedish Governor in Gothenburg, it is expected that very little loss will be incurred to the British Merchants, having had time to make the necessary arrangements.<sup>76</sup>

In February 1811, Fenwick wrote to Saumarez, stating that despite the war, 'matters appear to continue pretty nearly what they were, and it is the opinion that no alteration will take place with regard to us, or at least not for the worse'. Jean Baptiste Bernadotte had entirely devoted himself to his adopted country, proving himself to be more loyal to Sweden's interests than to Napoleon's.<sup>77</sup> Sweden's entry into the war had always been hesitant, forced reluctantly into the Continental System by a domineering Napoleon. What followed was the peculiar situation of two states at war freely and happily trading provisions, albeit discreetly. British naval commanders were to send a flag of truce with the boats sent for water or fresh provisions and under protection of a parley to procure the supplies they required. As George Foy wrote, 'it is desired that for [provisioning] the admiral may fix on Carlsrona, to the Governor of which place orders are already issued to grant every facility to the English that circumstances may

<sup>73</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 2/1370, Croker to Saumarez, 11 May 1810. For a fuller analysis of this letter, see Voelcker, p. 17.

<sup>74</sup> J. Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord de Saumarez* (2 vols., 1838), ii. 245.

<sup>75</sup> Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket (hereafter K.B.), Von Rosen Papers, Ep.E.10.11 fo. 109, 8 June 1811. The author is grateful to Tim Voelcker for his transcripts of these letters.

<sup>76</sup> N.M.M., YOR 16/26, Saumarez to Yorke, 20 Nov. 1810.

<sup>77</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1664, Fenwick to Saumarez, 22 Feb. 1811, unsigned 'for fear of accidents in crossing the sea', but in Fenwick's hand.



allow'.<sup>78</sup> Consul Smith was relieved to hear of these developments: 'I am very happy to learn the Possible Intentions of our Government towards this Country and as far as my Information leads, Sweden is equally well inclined, notwithstanding the demonstrations it has been obliged to adopt'.<sup>79</sup>

Sweden was indeed well inclined to continue provisioning British ships. Bernadotte would certainly have known of the importance of Britain to the Swedish economy. Krusenstjerna wrote that Sweden hoped 'to preserve the harmony and good understanding, that exist between both Nations – intentions, which for the benefit and prosperity of both Nations it has been an object for His Swedish Majesty's earnest wishes and most studious endeavours to insure in the British Government'.<sup>80</sup> There were considerable loopholes of which British fleets could take advantage, despite Sweden's theoretical hostility. Earlier in 1810, as Sweden moved towards a more hostile stance, Count von Rosen had written that 'ships flying the English flag are not allowed, unless suffering from substantial damage at sea and needing assistance, to enter a major port'. The wording – particularly the use of the phrase 'major port' – was a loophole taken advantage of many times, with merchant and warships making use of the island of Fotö, just north of Vinga outside Gothenburg. This served as a vast smuggling centre managed and staffed by Britons and protected by Saumarez's fleet.<sup>81</sup> After a discussion on board the *Victory* between Saumarez and Major-General Johan Tawast, the military commander-in-chief at Gothenburg, Saumarez reported that:

He was instructed to communicate to me in the most *confidential manner*, that it was the earnest wish of the Swedish Government to keep on the most amicable terms with Great Britain and that it was not intended under any circumstances to commit any acts of hostility whatever; that the supplies of water and fresh provisions for the use of the squadron should be facilitated both at Hanö Bay and Gothenburg; for which purpose the Picquets should be withdrawn from the points the most convenient for the articles to be received.

In their discussion, Tawast had added that 'the appearance of any hostile measures was only intended for Demonstration, and in order to elude the Vigilance of French Spies, who might be dispersed in the Country'.<sup>82</sup> Saumarez had replied that it was Britain's inherent wish to remain upon amicable terms. He gave orders to allow the coasting trade of Sweden to continue unmolested, and stated that this policy 'might be extended to the Ports in Swedish [Pomerania]'.<sup>83</sup> The conflict between Sweden and Britain remained a pretence. Saumarez's promise not to undertake hostile measures against Swedish commerce was taken for granted. His conduct towards the Swedes had always been respectful, kind and honourable, despite provocation. Saumarez was aware that British prevention of Swedish coasting trade must involve them 'in the deepest ruin', and thus it had always been avoided.<sup>84</sup> He wrote with relief that 'the usual supplies are continued and places pointed out where they can be most readily received'.<sup>85</sup>

The Swedish authorities allowed the British to set up a victualling base on Hanö, a small island south of Karlshamn in southern Sweden. This had originally been

<sup>78</sup> T.N.A.: PR.O., FO 73/65, George Foy to Smith, 9 May 1811.

<sup>79</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1719, Smith to Reynolds, 2 May 1811.

<sup>80</sup> K. Sandberg, 'England, Sverige och Hanobukten 1810–12', *Historia 01, Högskolan i Vaxjö Docent Larssons uppsättsseminarium den 5 juni 1978*, Karlshamn Kommun, p. 20.

<sup>81</sup> Voelcker, p. 108.

<sup>82</sup> T.N.A.: PR.O., ADM 1/12/13–15, Saumarez to admiralty, 23 May 1811 (author's emphasis).

<sup>83</sup> T.N.A.: PR.O., ADM 1/12/13–15, Saumarez to admiralty, 23 May 1811.

<sup>84</sup> Voelcker, p. 109.

<sup>85</sup> N.M.M., YOR 16/43, Saumarez to Yorke, 28 May 1811.

suggested by a Mr. Berridge, one of Fenwick's contacts, back in June 1810. Anticipating the Swedish declaration of war, the idea was to establish a depot for oxen at the island beyond the reach of French influence.<sup>86</sup> During 1810–11, Napoleon's Continental System was enforced more rigorously than at any time. Hanö Bay was already the anchorage for convoys returning to Britain, chosen because of its natural advantages as the place where merchantmen from different ports assembled. Fresh water could also be obtained there.<sup>87</sup> In 1810 Hanö Bay was again designated as the rendezvous point, the last convoy being ordered to sail on 15 October.<sup>88</sup> It was here that the economic war in the Baltic was won. Sir John Ross recounted that ships would collect there until they had accumulated to 'about 500', when they would set sail. As he commented, 'the tyrannical decrees of Buonaparte were thus rendered null and void on this part of the continent'.<sup>89</sup>

A slaughterhouse was built on the island: on 7 July, the log of the *St. George* states that they 'employed carpenters on shore Building a slaughterhouse'.<sup>90</sup> On 18 July the captain 'sent the butchers on shore to slaughter bullocks' and on 6 September they 'received fresh beef and vegetables'.<sup>91</sup> It is hard to measure the exact amounts involved since the masters of vessels did not always record deliveries of fresh beef. However, as a guide, between 12 June and 29 September 1810, the *St. George* received 36,081 pounds of beef. The complement of the *St. George* was 738 men; this amount of beef would be enough to supply their rations, as given in the standing orders, for twelve weeks.<sup>92</sup> It is not clear exactly where the beef came from, though previously the British had secured beef from Karlshamn and it had been carried back to the fleet on small boats. Water was easily available on the island. On 6 June 1811, 'hands were sent on shore to prepare the wells for watering'.<sup>93</sup> The log of the *Victory* mentioned that the crew were on shore digging wells.<sup>94</sup>

The British settlement was perfectly well known to Bernadotte and the Swedish authorities but was kept secret from the French. This was state-sanctioned supply, in direct contradiction of the terms of the Swedish-French alliance. The Swedish authorities had issued an order in May 1811 forbidding any 'strangers' to go into the neighbourhood of Karlshamn, in order to conceal any contacts between the British fleet and the shore. By these means it was hoped the French would not find out about the secret provisioning. In a fascinating letter, Fenwick outlined his thoughts on that the Hanö base:

I regret that the Swedish Government have made complaints respecting the publicity of the supplies to the Fleet, but as I do not perceive that those sent from the neighbourhood of Hanö Bay have been noticed by the public Prints, I trust that the measures adopted there to prevent observation will prove efficient. From what I have had an opportunity of seeing, I consider it next to impossible for any unauthorised Foreigner to become acquainted with what is going

<sup>86</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1389, Fenwick to Saumarez, 14 June 1810.

<sup>87</sup> A. N. Ryan, 'The melancholy fate of the Baltic ships in 1811', *Mariner's Mirror*, 1 (1964), 123–34, at p. 123.

<sup>88</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1310, admiralty to Saumarez, 3 May 1810.

<sup>89</sup> Ross, ii. 196. There was some exaggeration on Ross's part: the majority of convoys numbered between 30 and 150 vessels, though they could on rare occasions reach 300 (see Baltic convoy lists, T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 7/791–3).

<sup>90</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 51/2345, log of the *St. George*, 7 July 1810.

<sup>91</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 51/2345, log of the *St. George*, July–Sept. 1810.

<sup>92</sup> Each seaman was given 4 lbs of beef per week. A complement of 738 would thus use 2,952 lbs of beef per week (T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 51/2345, log of the *St. George*, 12 June–29 Sept).

<sup>93</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 51/2345, log of the *St. George*, 6 June 1811.

<sup>94</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 51/2934, 11 July 1811.

on, unless it were communicated by the Natives, and this is pretty well provided against, by the precautions taken by Baron Hakanson, the Governor of Blekinge.<sup>95</sup>

George Foy was asked by Engeström in November that year to find out from Saumarez how long he proposed keeping any part of his fleet at Hanö, or in that neighbourhood, since numerous business agents wanted to go there to deal with their personal affairs.<sup>96</sup>

Discussions between the British and Swedish were furtive and illicit. Von Rosen agreed that secret meetings must be arranged, with Saumarez rowed to an island by officers disguised in plain clothes.<sup>97</sup> It is certain that the French suspected the Swedes were not acting as an ally should. Fenwick wrote to Smith in December 1810 about the arrival of the French minister, Baron Alquier, in Stockholm. Alquier reported that Fenwick's stay in Sweden was for the purpose of facilitating the supply of provisions to the fleet 'and for other services incompatible with the interests of France', and demanded his expulsion.<sup>98</sup> The Danes, too, suspected something. In a letter from Krusentjerna to Saumarez, he reported the Danish complaints about the friendly relations between Britain and Sweden: 'the Danish Government has given very ample demonstrations to our Government against the communications which pretend to exist between the British ships of war and the Swedish Coast, also of the supplies which contrary to the treaty are furnished the British ships'.<sup>99</sup> There were French spies around: no doubt they did hear of the provisioning operations going on in Hanö. Foy wrote to Saumarez in August 1811 stating that spies were present, some on packet ships from Britain, 'to expose this Government in the Eyes of the French', and to delve into the secretive provisioning operations. They were not helped by the late Swedish consul in London on whose passports or certificates the spies were admitted into Gothenburg. Baron Engeström urged the British authorities to be 'more circumspect in regard to the persons they admit on board the Packets for Sweden'.<sup>100</sup>

There then followed games of half-truths and deception, while Royal Navy ships continued to be supplied at Hanö. In May 1811, Sweden made a token gesture to confiscate shipping that was Prussian in origin. Saumarez wrote to the admiralty, pointing out that:

The Swedish Government intends by no means to give offence to the British . . . If any other Vessels are detained than Prussians it is merely a demonstration to appear as having adopted the Continental System, but on no account to confiscate the Property which lies equally safe in our possession as on board the Ships, and which most likely will be restored in a very short time.<sup>101</sup>

Alquier was under no illusion as to Swedish loyalty, and complained to the Swedish authorities about their failure as allies. His main complaint was about General Tawast (the commander of the Swedish west coast army) visiting H.M.S. *Victory* in May, nominally to discuss a cartel for the exchange of prisoners. Alquier reported that the English consul had been present at the meeting and had signed a contract to provision the English fleet. Alquier complained that Tawast 'promised him from five to six hundred oxen, of which fifty are already delivered. Therefore Sweden is feeding the enemies of France . . . The Swedish were also supplying the Island of Anholt where

<sup>95</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1837, Fenwick to Saumarez, 19 Aug. 1811.

<sup>96</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1957, Foy to Saumarez, 16 Nov. 1811.

<sup>97</sup> K.B., Ep.E.10.11 fo. 120, 26 July 1811; Ep.E.10.11. fo. 123, 7 Aug. 1811.

<sup>98</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., FO 22/61/72–3, Fenwick to Charles Smith, 16 Dec. 1810.

<sup>99</sup> Sandberg, p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1866, Foy to Saumarez, 30 Aug. 1811.

<sup>101</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/12/7–8, Saumarez to admiralty, 15 May 1811.

the English fleet were anchored'.<sup>102</sup> He went on to complain of the convoys that came and went between England and Sweden. Von Rosen denied that Consul Smith was on the *Victory*, which, in Tim Voelcker's words, 'enabled him to avoid answering all the other points, which were indeed true'.<sup>103</sup> Von Rosen added that Saumarez had started to get supplies from Jutland and prayed that this would develop so that 'we could be spared from being the suppliers' and therefore avoid French criticism. Sweden remained officially at war with Britain, and made token gestures to its French allies. Von Rosen confiscated ten oxen which were bound for the fleet and asked that this might appear in the papers, 'so that I, poor sinner, may for once shine with continental fervour in the annals of Europe'. Saumarez had been warned in advance so as 'not to be cross'.<sup>104</sup> Given the benefits to the Baltic fleet of the provisioning, it is certain that he was not too upset. By the end of 1811, the British could be forgiven for thinking the Swedes were not their enemy at all. In November 1811, Saumarez, concerned by the condition of H.M.S. *St. George*, suggested that the ship winter at Vinga. By this time there was no political objection to this suggestion.<sup>105</sup>

The British fleet in the Baltic had faced a series of obstacles to maintain its supply of fresh beef and water. That these were overcome is testament to the skill and professionalism of the British commanders, the opportunism of Baltic merchants, and the acquiescence of Swedish government officials. Sweden, forced into war with Britain in 1810, had fundamental national interests that discouraged recourse to military action. Vital to these operations was the group of British consuls employed in the Baltic region, who navigated economic complications and diplomatic barriers. The consular service played many vital roles in the early nineteenth century, none more important than provisioning arrangements. The support of the British fleet in the Baltic meant that crucial strategic objectives were secured. As an example of the success with which the protection of trade was managed, Admiral Dickson's accounts between 25 June and 9 November 1809 point to fifteen separate convoys passing through the Belt, numbering 2,210 ships in total, without any losses.<sup>106</sup> The naval protection afforded to Baltic merchants, the use of an entrepôt and neutral flags, combined with the rather liberal attitudes of continental custom officials, meant that in 1810 British trade was once again entering the Baltic, albeit at a much lower level than in peacetime.<sup>107</sup> The Danish privateering war had been undermined. As Fenwick commented in 1811:

The vigilance of your cruisers and the formidable convoys sent thro' the Belt have completely disheartened the Danish privateers who making few or no prizes now will be all ruined. The government is also thereby deprived of the large revenue which it last year obtained from the amount of goods condemned.<sup>108</sup>

The blockade of the Russian fleet in port continued, while Russian exports were endangered. Britain was able to procure small (but crucial) quantities of naval stores,

<sup>102</sup> 'Il lui à promis cinq à six cents boeufs, dont cent cinquante ont déjà été livrés. Donc la Suède nourrit les ennemis de la France . . . les Suédois approvisionnent également l'île d'Anholt, où mouille la flotte anglaise' (Coquelle, p. 226).

<sup>103</sup> Voelcker, p. 153.

<sup>104</sup> K.B., Ep.E.10.11 fo. 120, 26 July 1811; Ep.E.10.11 fo. 123, 7 Aug. 1811 (quoted in Voelcker, p.153).

<sup>105</sup> Ryan, p. 126.

<sup>106</sup> T.N.A.: P.R.O., ADM 1/9/249, 'A list of convoys that have passed within the limits of Rear Admiral Dickson between the 25<sup>th</sup> day of June and the 9<sup>th</sup> November, off Sproe', 9 Nov. 1809.

<sup>107</sup> In 1811 British exports to northern Europe were valued at £2,235,000. In 1812 this rose to £5,460,000 (see B. R. Mitchell, and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 311).

<sup>108</sup> S.R.O., HA 93/6/1/1787, Fenwick to Saumarez, July 1811.

but Russia's main export trade was decimated. These measures eventually forced Russia into retreating from the Continental System. Indeed, the choice for Russia was clear. On 31 December 1810, Alexander released an 'ukaz' – a tsarist declaration of law – effectively increasing the tax on goods coming by land (predominantly French), but reduced them on those coming by sea (mostly British and colonial goods, albeit under American, Prussian and other neutral flags). Napoleon's declaration of war on Russia in 1812 was directly related to the tsar's 'ukaz' of 1810, encouraging what were nominally neutral, seaborne (but in practice British) goods into Russian ports.

From 1812 onwards the British-led coalition against Napoleon grew to include Russia, Prussia, Austria and Sweden, with Britain as paymaster and wielding an increasing military presence on the continent. In addition, its Navy continued to serve around the globe. On the other side of the Atlantic, British forces would once again feel the benefit of being supplied by the enemy. In federalist New England, as in the Baltic, coastal regions provided ample water and oxen for the British fleet. A naval officer stationed there wrote: 'the people are willing enough to supply us with whatever we want'.<sup>109</sup> This, however, was merely playing on regional dissatisfaction and disloyalty. The illicit supply that transpired in the Baltic was all the more remarkable since it resulted from deliberate, state-sanctioned policy. The British fleet's flagrant and widespread flouting of the terms of Sweden's French alliance to secure provisions was unprecedented. Both nations had fundamental interests that were pursued in spite of such inconveniences as binding treaties and declarations of war.

<sup>109</sup> *New England Blockaded in 1814: the Journal of Henry Edward Napier, Lieutenant in H.M.S. Nympe*, ed. W. M. Whitehill (Salem, Mass., 1939), p. 41.

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