

Die schwedische Regierung verfügte in der betrachteten Periode über keinen konkreten Aktionsplan zur Verhinderung von Hungersnöten. Infolge der staatlichen (Un-)Tätigkeit konnte in den Ostseeprovinzen im 17. Jahrhundert noch keiner Hungerkrise vorgebeugt werden. Es fällt jedoch auf, dass Gutsbesitzer und Bauern am Ende des Jahrhunderts eine große Anzahl von Beschwerden in dieser Angelegenheit eingereicht haben und offenbar damit rechneten, dass der Staat ihnen Beistand leisten werde. Allerdings wurde die Hoffnung auf reale staatliche Unterstützung nicht erfüllt. Auch während der großen Hungersnot waren die Gouvernementsregierungen in erster Linie bestrebt, die Ordnung aufrechtzuerhalten. Das Verhältnis zwischen Staat, Krongütern und Bauernschaft sollte unverändert bleiben. Der Regierung kam es nach wie vor in erster Linie darauf an, die Pächter im Rahmen des Pachtvertrags dazu zu verpflichten, auf die beste Art und Weise für das Gut und die Bauern zu sorgen. Die Rolle des Staates beschränkte sich lediglich darauf, Anordnungen zur Erhaltung der bürgerlichen Lebensgrundlagen zu treffen und seine Überwachungsfunktion auszuüben. Bis zum Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts war die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung in den schwedischen Ostseeprovinzen noch nicht so weit fortgeschritten, dass der Staat sich verpflichtet gefühlt hätte, sich an der Ersetzung der durch die Missernten entstandenen Schäden oder an der direkten finanziellen Unterstützung zu beteiligen.

#### SUMMARY

*Did the Swedish State Offer  
Hunger Relief in its Baltic Provinces  
during the Seventeenth Century?*

The main aim of the present article is to examine whether the Swedish state showed any interest in dealing with the peasants' subsistence problems in its Baltic provinces and what solutions it offered in cases of famines. This would provide an additional point of view for understanding the significance of the provinces of Livland and Estland for the Swedish crown and the state's functions in those provinces.

By the end of the seventeenth century the Swedish government had not taken any concrete steps to institutionalize hunger relief resources for the peasantry. The state started to show some interest in peasants' subsistence problems only in the last two decades of the century. In the 1680s, five-sixths of all possessions in Livland and over half of possessions in Estland went back into the hands of the crown as a result of the great *reduktion*

of estates. The leaseholders' commitment to protect the peasantry of the manor against hunger and ruination was strictly stipulated in the crown lease contracts and other instructions. Here the state's motivations were purely financial. The issues of the leaseholders' will and capacity to support their peasants came up on the agenda most acutely during the three successive catastrophic crop failures from 1695–97. Despite the government's rigid position that all leaseholders of the crown manors had to assist their peasants in cases of crop failure, thousands of peasants still starved to death and thousands of farmsteads were abandoned during the Great Famine of 1696–97.

However, even during the events of the Great Famine the Swedish government did not implement any rapid solutions. By the end of the seventeenth century, there was still no functioning system for collecting reserves of corn in the provinces that could guarantee a supply of corn during times of shortage. The crown estates could only apply to loan extra grain from the state granaries built for the upkeep of the garrisons. These were situated in Riga, Dünamünde, Kokenhusen, Dorpat, Pernau, Reval, Narva and Arensburg, and the grain stored there was mainly received from the state taxes of the provinces. However, parcelling out grain to the manors from these stores was rather complicated and time-consuming. Furthermore, the peasants in need did not receive corn aid from the crown granaries as a direct subvention, but on a loan basis. Due to the social order of the manor economy, no peasant could apply for a loan by himself but only the leaseholders could do this (no loan was given out to the private manors).

This all proves once again that the Baltic provinces had, first and foremost, a purely political, financial and economic importance to Sweden. As a military state, Sweden placed military needs ahead of civil ones as far as the provinces were concerned. Thirdly, early modern European governments did not regard famine as a matter of economic policy, and the Swedish crown thus did not feel itself responsible for starvation amongst the peasantry. In the framework of the manor economy, as it was accepted in the Baltic provinces, the landlord should have maintained his serf peasantry. As a result of all this one can conclude that in the Baltic provinces no famine crises were prevented by the action of the state during the seventeenth century.