

CHAPTER 3

The Burghers of Nyen as Creditors and Suppliers in the Great Northern War (1700–1714)

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During the Great Northern War, some of the burghers of the town of Nyen supported the Swedish crown in organising supply for the army and navy. Interestingly, this was mainly done at the same time as the burghers were forced to flee the war.

Before the war, Nyen had become an important Swedish town at the far end of the Gulf of Finland, located in the same place that Saint Petersburg is located today. In the last decades of the 17th century, timber trade prospered and the economic development in the town was rapid.¹ In 1703, Nyen was destroyed by the Russians and the merchants fled to different coastal towns in the north-eastern Baltic Sea region. As refugees, they played

¹ Kepsu 2019; Kepsu 2018.

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in many cases a crucial role in financing and supplying military units close to the front.²

Earlier research has pointed out the important role of private entrepreneurship in supporting military forces in early modern Europe. Since the end of the 16th century, states had paid private contractors and entrepreneurs to supply military services, even to raise and maintain fully equipped units. This was a consequence of rulers' limited power, even though early modern states are generally described as absolutist. In practice, powerful private individuals were necessary for a centralised power as allies in governing the state, particularly in peripheral border regions. Early modern rulers and governors tried to win over these local elites to support the state apparatus, including financing military units, which required economic power and wealth.³

However, earlier research has focused more on binding members of the landowning nobility to the state, and using them as military entrepreneurs who were responsible for recruiting, arming and officering their own troops, as well as organising their supply.⁴ The role of burghers as private financiers of war in Northern Europe is known to a lesser degree. In addition, earlier studies have mostly dealt with food supply and the billeting of soldiers, but to a lesser degree with credits.⁵

In this chapter, I analyse the burghers of Nyen as creditors for the Swedish army. The main question is how the crown used the burghers' extensive transnational networks and commercial competence to finance the Great Northern War. I will also discuss how this benefited the burghers themselves, who as refugees were in a vulnerable position. This gives an interesting perspective on the relationship between the private and public sphere, in particular

² Kepsu 2020.

³ Parrott 2012, especially pp. 2–3; Hårdstedt 2002, p. 56; Black 1998, pp. 88–89; Reinhard 1996, pp. 6–7; Parker 1996, p. 64. See also Kepsu 2014, pp. 60–61 with references.

⁴ Parrott 2012, p. 57; Black 1998, p. 89; Parker 1996, pp. 64–65.

⁵ See e.g. Hatakka 2019; Hårdstedt 2002.

in how the army could utilise civilian society in fulfilling its supply needs. The role of burghers in early modern state formation is also dealt with.

Nyen is not well known in historical research, nor are its burghers. Their arrival as refugees in Viipuri and Helsinki during the Great Northern War is, however, noted in the histories of those towns.⁶ Primary source material about the Nyen burghers is also scarce, as no private account books of the burghers have been preserved. However, some administrative documents, such as court records and correspondence between the burghers and crown's officials, have survived. To this study, the most important source material is the credit documents filed by the Chamber College (Sw. Kammarkollegium), located in the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm.⁷

Nyen and Its Burghers

The town of Nyen (Fin. Nevanlinna, also called Nyenschanz and Schanzdernie) was located at the mouth of the river Okhta, close to the place where the river Neva runs into the Gulf of Finland. The town was protected by the fortress Nyenskans, where construction began during the Ingrian War in 1611. Nyen was founded *de jure* in 1642, when it was granted town privileges.⁸

Even though the location of Nyen was ideal for Russian trade, transit trade was almost constantly characterised by various problems during the 17th century. The turning point came in the 1680s, when trade and commerce increased in the whole Baltic region. The final decades of the 17th century can be seen as an economic boom, as for the towns of the Swedish eastern Baltic provinces. The aims of the crown's derivation policy, which aimed

⁶ See in particular Aalto 2016. See also Ruuth 1906.

⁷ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96.

⁸ Jangfeldt 1998, pp. 18–19; von Bonsdorff 1891, pp. 361–363, 381–387.

to channel the transit trade between Russia and Western Europe via Nyen and Narva instead of Archangelsk, were partly fulfilled.⁹

Sawmills, shipyards and the timber trade were the base for the economic boom in Nyen, and timber exports increased greatly during the last decades of the 17th century.¹⁰ According to the Sound Toll Registers, which catalogue all maritime traffic in and out of the Baltic Sea via the Danish Sound, some 30 ships from Nyen sailed yearly through the Sound between 1681 and 1703. They were loaded with the so-called naval stores, or timber and other shipbuilding material, and sailed mostly to Amsterdam. In addition, ships also sailed to other Baltic ports, particularly to Stockholm and Lübeck.¹¹

The increase in trade would not have been possible without a great demand for naval stores in Western Europe during the time.¹² The Nine Years War (1688–1697), where the Netherlands and England fought against France, had also a favourable effect on trade in the Gulf of Finland. During the war, Dutch shipmasters, merchants, and technological experts moved some of their commercial activities to neutral countries in order to avoid French privateers.¹³ Some 15 Dutch shipmasters became burghers in Nyen in 1691–1696.¹⁴ With the help of Dutch capital and professionals, new fine-blade sawmills and shipyards were established along the Narva and Neva rivers.¹⁵ The Dutch interests in acquiring naval stores from ports around the Gulf of Finland continued even after the Great Northern War broke out in 1700.

The most powerful burghers in late 17th-century Nyen were of German or Baltic-German descent and closely tied together by marriages. Among the most influential families were Hueck, Luhr,

⁹ Kepsu 2018, pp. 62–64; Kung 2008.

¹⁰ Kepsu 2018, pp. 63–66; Åström 1988, pp. 30–31, 44–46.

¹¹ Sound Toll Registers (www.soundtoll.nl); Kepsu 2018, pp. 75–76; Kepsu 2017, p. 427.

¹² Davids 2008, especially pp. 347–349, 362.

¹³ Müller 2019, pp. 54–56; Bruijn 2004, pp. 42–43.

¹⁴ Kepsu 2019, pp. 470–472; von Bonsdorff 1891, p. 495.

¹⁵ Kepsu 2018; Åström 1988, pp. 30–31, 44–46.

Frisius, Siliacks (Zilliacus), Blom and Pölck (Pölke).¹⁶ Most of them had settled in the town quite recently. Although the crown encouraged foreign merchants to settle in Nyen, many immigrants moved there through their personal networks as chain migration, in particular from Lübeck and Tallinn.¹⁷ In the Swedish Realm, the ‘imported burghers’, as Åke Sandström has called them, were important connections to the international market.¹⁸ The crown especially craved different kinds of specialists of trade and manufacturing.¹⁹ Another important but less noticed motive was the possibility to get credit from the foreign merchants, which was needed for financing the continuous wars.

The elite merchants in Nyen had an important position as mediators in the transit trade between the merchant houses in Western Europe and the raw material markets of North-Eastern Europe.²⁰ The rapid economic development during the last decades of the 17th century provided the burgher elite in Nyen with valuable trading connections, which in turn proved to be vital after the destruction of the city in 1703. Beside good transnational networks, they had commercial experience and they could communicate with the merchant houses in Amsterdam in Middle Low German.

To sum up, the merchant elite in Nyen was quite powerful at the time of the outbreak of the Great Northern War. It dominated both the economic and political sphere in the town. The elite was not as powerful as the top burghers in Riga, Tallinn or Narva, but clearly wealthier than the burghers in Finnish coastal towns like Viipuri (Sw. Viborg, Ru. Vyborg) or Helsinki (Sw. Helsingfors). According to Seppo Aalto, refugee merchants from Nyen who arrived in Helsinki after 1703 were superior to the local burghers

¹⁶ Kepsu 2019.

¹⁷ Kepsu 2019.

¹⁸ Sandström 2016, pp. 223–224.

¹⁹ Naum & Ekengren 2018, p. 107; Villstrand 1989, pp. 10, 17–19, 29.

²⁰ Kepsu 2019.

regarding both ships and networks, as well as capital and commercial competence.²¹

Even after the merchants of Nyen lost a major part of their real property along with their hometown, most of their private means seemed to have been invested in Amsterdam. Politically, they were also quite well integrated in the Swedish Realm and seems to have been relatively loyal towards the central government.²² Altogether, these factors made it possible for the Nyen merchants to support the crown by financing war costs and supplying military units during the Great Northern War.

The First Financial Agreements

Conquering Ingria was the main objective of Peter the Great during the Great Northern War, as he wanted Russia to get access to the Baltic Sea.²³ Russian troops had already invaded parts of eastern Ingria in the summer of 1700. In Nyen, the situation became even more threatening in September, when Russian troops initiated the siege of Narva. Some of the burghers chose to leave the town at this point, but many returned in 1701 when the military threat was temporarily decreased. In the autumn of 1702, the town was struck by panic when Russian troops lead by Czar Peter himself conquered the fortress of Pähkinälinna (Sw. Nöteborg, Ru. Oreshek/Shlisselburg). More or less all burghers remaining in Nyen left the town at this point.²⁴

There is not a lot of information on war financing from Ingria during the first years of the Great Northern War. Yet, the intensive trade between Nyen and Amsterdam came up for discussion at the beginning of the war. According to James Cavallie, Nyen was used as security in credit negotiations between Swedish Realm and the Netherlands in 1700. Dutch merchants trading with cit-

²¹ Aalto 2016, pp. 488–491.

²² Kepsu 2019, pp. 486–492.

²³ Scheltjens 2011, pp. 115–116; Jangfeldt 1998, p. 23.

²⁴ Kepsu 2020, pp. 133–134, 138; Kepsu 1995, pp. 110–111.

ies in the eastern Baltic provinces and willing to provide credit to the Swedish crown were to be given toll exemptions in Nyen and other ports in order to shorten the loans. These attempts were, however, unsuccessful.²⁵ It is likely that Dutch merchants regarded the geopolitical location of Nyen too insecure for a credit security.

Some attempts to acquire credit from private individuals were made at the beginning of the war. Otto Wellingk, governor-general for Ingria and Kexholm Province, was ordered to investigate if he could find any individuals who could give credit to the crown. As a pawn, they could receive some of the crown's manors or incomes in Ingria. Wellingk was advised to make contracts between the crown and the possible creditors; these contracts were apparently supposed to function as a model for similar agreements in the future. The central government in Stockholm had seemingly high hopes for credit, but Wellingk regarded them as unrealistic. According to him, difficult and turbulent times in the province had made people fearful and concerned, and therefore he feared that not many persons were ready to please His Majesty's will.²⁶

Even though only a few contracts were signed, at least one burgher from Nyen was involved in pawning of a manor. In 1702, Henrik Luhr, one of the most powerful merchants in Nyen, provided Lieutenant Axel Bure with 3,663 silver dalers and got the Porits crown manor in Järvisaari pogost in eastern Ingria as a pawn. Bure was not able to pay Luhr back, which meant that Porits passed on to Luhr. However, Luhr could not benefit from the manor, as it was conquered by Russian troops in the early autumn of 1702.²⁷

²⁵ Cavallie 1975, pp. 94–100. See also Frost 2000, p. 281.

²⁶ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Governor-General Otto Wellingk to Charles XII, 16 March 1700. See also Cavallie 1975, p. 70.

²⁷ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Skrivelser från Kammarkollegiet 1717, 1134:4, vol 92, The Chamber College to Charles XII, 13 May 1717. Henrik Luhr pleaded in 1717 to be compensated for the loss of his pawn manor. His undated petitions are attached to the letter from the Chamber College.

Another problem for the crown seems to have been that the government had a very poor credit standing.²⁸ This fact made it difficult to loan money on the international credit market in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The Swedish crown did not have any long-term credit relations to international creditors and was in general regarded as an unsecure borrower. During the Great Northern War, the state made further attempts to get loans on the international market, but they were not very successful. Competition on the international credit market was tough, while Europe was also ravaged by the War of the Spanish Succession.²⁹

An interesting preserved document illustrates the attitude of the Nyen burghers towards financing the military when the war broke out. In a meeting held at Nyen courthouse in the end of January 1700, Governor-General Otto Wellingk discussed the building of new vaults in Nyenskans fortress with the town council and burghers of Nyen. The vaults were intended as a bomb shelter to protect both the inhabitants and their most valuable possessions. The crown hoped that the burghers would either build them on their own or finance the building project. After the Nyen burghers had discussed the matter, the town council answered by a written letter at the end of February, when the war had already broken out and the siege of Riga began.³⁰

In its answer, the town council declined in subservient terms to finance the vaults. By highlighting setbacks during the last few years, such as wrecking and seizing of ships, the burghers emphasised their poverty. According to them, their wealth was tied up in house building and merchandise, which made it impossible for them to cope with extraordinary fortification costs. The town council implied between the lines that the crown should

²⁸ Cavallie 1975, p. 70.

²⁹ Winton 2010, pp. 172–173.

³⁰ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Nyen town council to Governor-General Otto Wellingk 21 February 1700; Governor-General Otto Wellingk to Charles XII 10 March 1700. See also von Bonsdorff 1891, p. 377.

strengthen the defence of the town with its own resources. In that case, the burghers could for their part strengthen the town by building their own houses in stone.³¹ Clearly, the council regarded military protection and fortification to be the crown's responsibility. In fact, the town had repeatedly requested stronger fortifications from central government during the 17th century.³²

Otto Wellingk, who forwarded the letter to King Charles XII (Sw. Karl XII) along with his own comments, did not recommend that the burghers should be encouraged to build stone houses, since the town was not to be fortified. According to military plans, only the star fortress of Nyenskans was to be enlarged. In his letter, Wellingk confirmed the poverty of the burghers. He also pointed out that most of the merchants were young and at the beginning of their careers.³³ However, both Wellingk and the town council mentioned an interesting fact: the merchants were trading mostly by credit, which they received from foreigners.³⁴ This proved to be essential in later financial contacts between the Nyen merchants and representatives of the crown.

Charles XII did not give up and ordered Otto Wellingk to discuss the matter once more with the burghers of Nyen. They were to be persuaded by fair means (Sw. *'gode ock lämpa'*). Wellingk assembled the burghers in May 1700, just before the governor-general himself was appointed as commander of the Finnish troops about to march to reinforce the besieged Swedish army in Riga. His persuasions did not change the burghers' stand in Nyen.³⁵

³¹ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Nyen town council to Governor-General Otto Wellingk 21 February 1700. On shipwrecks and privateering of ships from Nyen, see Kepsu 2018.

³² Kepsu 2019, pp. 474–475.

³³ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Governor-General Otto Wellingk to Charles XII 10 March 1700.

³⁴ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Nyen town council to Governor-General Otto Wellingk 21 February 1700, Governor-General Otto Wellingk to Charles XII 10 March 1700.

³⁵ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Governor-General Otto Wellingk to Charles XII 24 May 1700. Wellingk's appointment is mentioned

It seems that the town council had a positive attitude towards the building project, but the burghers in general were against it because of their poverty. Persuasion did not have an effect on the insistent burghers.³⁶

In general, the Swedish crown had difficulties in getting credit from wealthy merchants in its cities and in this way binding them to the war effort. The crown paid 6% interest, but normal trade probably yielded a much greater profit.³⁷ In addition, repayment from the crown was quite insecure. Because trade connections to Western Europe were still functioning more or less normally, it was more profitable to focus on trade than to lend money to the crown.

According to the Sound Toll Registers, the number of merchant ships departing from Nyen and sailing through the Sound was at a normal level during the first years of war. During the last decades of the 17th century, around 30 ships on average had departed yearly from Nyen. In 1700, when the Russian attack in Ingria started at the end of the sailing season, 55 ships sailed from Nyen. The number dropped to 18 in 1701, when most of the leading merchant families lived as temporary refugees in Viipuri, but returned to 36 ships in 1702. In 1703, the year of Nyen's destruction, only one ship passed through the Sound.³⁸

In Narva and Tallinn, the downfall in trade seems to have been far heavier than in Nyen. In Viipuri, on the other hand, the numbers of departing ships actually increased. After the losses of Nyen and Narva, Viipuri became the centre for transit trade in the

in RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Lieutenant Colonel Johan Stael von Holstein to Charles XII 21 May 1700.

³⁶ RA, Livonica II:192 (mf. FR 89), Nyen town council to Governor-General Otto Wellingk 9 May 1700.

³⁷ Cavallie 1975, pp. 125–135.

³⁸ Sound Toll Registers. The number of departures shows variations also during peaceful years in the registers. For Nyen, yearly departures varied from 13 to 62 in the period 1681–1703.

eastern Gulf of Finland, and refugees from Nyen settled in the town also boosted trade in Viipuri.³⁹

Trade in Narva and Riga was affected by the Russian offensive, followed by sieges in both towns. The Privy Council (Sw. Riksråd) and the Chamber College pointed out that there were major obstacles in trade on these locations, which has resulted in loss of income, particularly from the profitable licence toll in Riga (Sw. *licent*). The financial situation overall was considered alarming. Because of the war, incomes in the state budget had decreased while expenses had risen.⁴⁰

However, some credit arrangements involving traders from Nyen were made. They were arranged through personal networks, not through the crown. In July 1704 Christian Hueck, one of the most wealthy and powerful burghers in Nyen, advanced 1,500 dalers to the town of Tallinn. In the document, it is stated that the means would be used for the fortification of the town. Like the Swedish crown, Tallinn offered an interest rate of 6%.⁴¹ Apparently, the town council accumulated private means in order to protect the town. The military situation in the eastern Baltic provinces was threatening since Dorpat had surrendered to the Russians a couple of weeks earlier and Narva was under siege.⁴²

It is very likely that the loan was organised through the family network. Christian Hueck, a member of Nyen town council, had already migrated from Lübeck together with his brothers in the middle of the 17th century. Some of his brothers had settled in Tallinn and become very influential. Christian Hueck's brother Wendel still lived in Tallinn, as did his nephew Johann, who later became burgomaster in the town.⁴³

³⁹ Kepsu 2020, pp. 135, 144.

⁴⁰ Historiska handlingar I p. 116, The Privy Council and the Chamber College to Charles XII 25.2.1701.

⁴¹ TL, Fond 230:1, BB 45, Bond of Christian Hueck 7.7.1704.

⁴² Kujala 2001, p. 219.

⁴³ Möller & Luther 1981, pp. 89–90.

Organising Credits and Military Supply in Viipuri and Helsinki

By far the most prominent burgher from Nyen who financed the Swedish war effort was Johan Henrik Frisius. His father, Heinrich Frisius, was one of the town's many German migrates. He moved to Nyen from Rostock in the mid-17th century and in 1662 became the vicar in the German church of the town.⁴⁴ Johan Henrik became a burgher in 1691, but court records from Nyen show that he had already been involved in trade a few years earlier.⁴⁵ His position was strengthened by his marriage in 1696 to Catharina Barckman, who was the daughter of a former elite burgher, Daniel Barckman, and a widow to Diedrich Blom, a relatively powerful merchant with a background in Lübeck.⁴⁶

At the beginning of the 1690s, the burghers of Nyen were involved in a heavy increase of timber trade and shipbuilding. Johan Henrik Frisius was amongst the first to invest in ships. Together with his brother-in-law Detleff Jochims, he founded a shipyard just outside Nyen along the Neva river. In addition, he owned parts in at least eight ships.⁴⁷ Frisius travelled to Amsterdam and Paris and managed to become wealthy before the outbreak of the Great Northern War. His private means were apparently invested abroad, mostly in Amsterdam.⁴⁸

Frisius arrived to Viipuri in 1702 with his stepchildren, merchant Didrik Blom Jr and Catharina Blom, who later married Christian Hueck's son Johan Hueck. During the first years in Viipuri, Johan Henrik Frisius and the other refugee merchants from Nyen focused on trade. Until around 1708, merchant ships

⁴⁴ Mäkelä-Alitalo 2014; Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d. (www.frisenheim.se).

⁴⁵ See for example KA, Town Court of Nyen 1687, n:1, pp. 285–288; Town Court of Nyen 1688, n:2, pp. 225–229, 231–234; Town Court of Nyen 1690, n:4, pp. 248–250, 252–254.

⁴⁶ Mäkelä-Alitalo 2014; Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d.

⁴⁷ For shipping and shipbuilding in Nyen, see also Kepsu 2018; Küng 2009.

⁴⁸ Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d.

could sail quite safely in the Baltic Sea, and the flow of goods was more or less normal.⁴⁹ In Viipuri, a refugee network started to develop between the former merchants from Nyen. A young merchant, Jobst Dobbin, later one of the wealthiest burghers in Hamina (Sw. Fredrikshamn), worked as Frisius's merchant's apprentice (Sw. *köpgesäll*) and lived in his house.⁵⁰

Frisius seems to have quite quickly reached an important position in the town. He also organised business possibilities for other merchants in Viipuri. Just before the siege in Viipuri in 1706, when the Russians tried to take the town, Frisius made a contract with some merchants on salt trade. He had ordered a large quantity of salt, which he sold forward to other merchants. One of them was Jacob Danneberg, who belonged to the old elite in Viipuri. He had ordered a hundred barrels of salt from Frisius but did not receive it since he would not agree to all of Frisius's transaction terms.⁵¹ It is possible that there were some controversies between Frisius and Danneberg.

As the war went on, difficulties in trade became more evident. However, fortification works opened new business possibilities. After the loss of the Ingrian fortresses Nyen and Narva, Viipuri was once again a border stronghold. After the siege in 1706, fortification works intensified even more.⁵² Financing military units and fortification works was, however, problematic. The Swedish military administration, which was based on the allotment farm system and static budgets, worked excellently in peacetime, but faced difficulties when the outbreak of war raised the expenditure to another level.⁵³ The new governor and commander-in-chief, Georg Lybecker, solved the problem by starting to use burghers in organising supply for the army. His main companion was Johan

⁴⁹ Ericson Wolke 2011, pp. 86–87.

⁵⁰ KA, Town Court of Viipuri 1707, x:43, pp. 27–28; KA, Lower Town Court of Viipuri 1707, x:83, pp. 36–37.

⁵¹ KA, Lower Town Court of Viipuri 1707, x:83, pp. 34, 36–37, 65, 67–68, 149, 153–154.

⁵² Ruuth & Halila 1974, pp. 403–405, 412–414; Ruuth 1906, p. 472.

⁵³ See e.g. Frost 2000, pp. 281–282, 316–317.

Henrik Frisius, but also other Nyen burghers, like Matthias Pylse (Pülse, Pylss), participated. Still, Frisius was the key to all deliveries and credits. The other burghers advanced means only if Frisius guaranteed the loan.⁵⁴

Frisius also organised means to fortification works in Viipuri. He continued to support the fortress until the bitter end of Viipuri as a Swedish town. In addition, Carl Dobbin from Nyen organised means and supply just before the second siege of the town in 1710. This was very important, since the Swedish defence system in general was based on strong fortresses. However, the fortresses in the eastern part of the realm were in bad condition and difficult to defend. Even though Swedish fortresses had been strengthened during the reign of Charles XI (Sw. Karl XI), the main emphasis was on the newly captured provinces, in particular Scania.⁵⁵

Because of strategic choices and the crown's limited resources, the local governors and military commanders had no other option than to rely on the burghers. When Russian troops had already occupied the outskirts of Viipuri, Lieutenant Colonel Lorentz Stobæus – later ennobled as Stobée – sent a letter to General Quartermaster Magnus Palmqvist and pointed out in harsh words that the crown's fortification funds were exhausted. As communication lines were broken, Stobæus had not received any answers on his letters to Stockholm.⁵⁶ Frisius broke through the siege and left the town when surrender was evident. Interestingly, he made an agreement with the other burghers where he took all the claims to the crown on his responsibility.⁵⁷ This arrangement strengthened his position towards the crown, and probably allowed Frisius to continue with his supply business.

⁵⁴ Hjelmqvist 1909, pp. 107–108.

⁵⁵ Sundberg 2018, p. 42; Kepsu 2014, pp. 77–80.

⁵⁶ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Johan Henrik Frisius's claims.

⁵⁷ Ruuth & Halila 1974, pp. 424–425, 434; Ruuth 1906, pp. 477–478, 484.

Altogether, the support of the Nyen burghers was substantial before and during the siege of Viipuri. Before the siege of the town started in 1710, Johan Henrik Frisius had claims of around 82,000 silver dalers.⁵⁸ According to Frisius himself, as well as many later historians, the activity of Frisius encouraged the brave resistance in Viipuri. Antti Kujala states that Frisius was among the crown's most reliable income sources in Finland during the Great Northern War, because of his excellent networks to the Netherlands and Hamburg. Without Frisius and other burghers like Pylse and Dobbin, the fortress would most likely have surrendered much earlier.⁵⁹

After the fall of Nyen, some burghers fled to Helsinki. Initially, Henrik Luhr became the most influential merchant from Nyen in Helsinki. He managed to escape to Helsinki in the autumn of 1702 after dramatic incidents. His ship *Tre stjärnor från Nyen* was almost wrecked outside Nyen, but eventually he managed to reach Helsinki along with his ship, loaded with salt and tobacco.⁶⁰ The Nyen refugee community in Helsinki was quite large, in 1708 about 10% of the total adult population in the town.⁶¹ Besides Luhr, other important traders from Nyen fled to Helsinki, most notably Berend Dobbin, Jobst Hueck, Jürgen Pölck and Casper Everding.

In addition, Jochim Donner, the schoolmaster from Nyen's German school, fled to Helsinki. He taught the children of the

⁵⁸ Ruuth 1906, pp. 477–478, 484.

⁵⁹ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Chamber College memorandum, 13 July 1714; Kujala 2001, p. 248, 256; Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d. The Russians captured some of the burghers from Nyen after the surrender of the town in 1710. Quite many families settled in the Russian Viipuri and were during the following decades important in trade and city administration. Among the prisoners of war was also Friedrich Wittstock, who was appointed, not surprisingly by Frisius, burgo-master in Hamina after the war. See Kepsu 2020, pp. 137–143.

⁶⁰ Kepsu 2020, pp. 133–134, 138–140.

⁶¹ Aalto 2016, p. 456.

Nyen elite but started later to build a new career as a merchant. It is also important to mention Henrik Luhr's sister Anna Luhr. As a widow to the Nyen merchant Conrad Siliacks, she had taken care of family affairs in Nyen. Their daughters Christina, Maria and Anna Elisabeth were married to Jobst Hueck, Jürgen Pölck and Casper Everding, and formed a base to the network of Nyen burghers in Helsinki.⁶²

Former Nyen burghers in Helsinki were also connected to the merchant families who resided in Viipuri. The most important link was Henrik Luhr, who was a brother-in-law to Johan Henrik Frisius. During the first years after the fall of Nyen, Luhr partly resided in Stockholm, which presumably provided both him and the Nyen refugee network important connections to the central government.⁶³ Like in Viipuri, the Nyen burgers in Helsinki seem to have mostly focused on trade during the first years in the town. They were active in timber trade, in particular Henrik Luhr and Jobst Hueck.⁶⁴

It is not clear when the Nyen burghers in Helsinki got involved in supplying the Swedish army, but deliveries to the crown soared when Frisius arrived after the surrender of Viipuri. While in Helsinki, Frisius continued to supply the army using other burgers in Helsinki as subcontractors. His contacts to the credit market in Amsterdam were valuable for the Swedish crown. The Netherlands were officially neutral in the war, but it was important for the merchant houses in Amsterdam to secure the import of naval stores from the ports of the Gulf of Finland. Helsinki became an important centre for the Swedish–Dutch timber trade in 1710, when Viipuri as well as Tallinn and Riga were conquered by Russian troops. This made it possible for the burghers in Helsinki to quite successfully organise supply and to fulfil the enormous needs of the army.

⁶² Kepsu 2020, pp. 138–141; Möller & Luther 1981, pp. 83–84, 92–99; Donner 1891, pp. 4–13.

⁶³ Aalto 2016, pp. 478–479.

⁶⁴ Aalto 2016, pp. 363–364; Kuisma 1992, pp. 137–138.

According to Seppo Aalto, the merchants from Nyen had an exceptional ability to get means and to turn money into goods and goods into money.⁶⁵ In addition, the connection between the Nyen network and the armed forces was strengthened by the fact that many former Nyen merchants held positions in the army's commissariat. Besides Frisius, who was appointed commissary general (Sw. *överkrigskommissarie*) in 1710, Lars Malm served also as a commissary general, while Frisius's stepson Didrik Blom was appointed field commissary (Sw. *fältkommissarie*) in 1711.⁶⁶ Consequently, the Nyen network focused more and more in crown deliveries, as normal trade became more difficult.⁶⁷

One of the most successful operations for the burghers was supplying the Swedish navy in Helsinki during the winter 1711–1712. In the autumn of 1711, the naval high command ordered parts of the Swedish naval squadron, ironically still called 'the Nyen fleet' (Sw. *Nyenska eskadern*), to stay the winter in Helsinki. As a fleet-in-being operation, the purpose of the squadron was to control the Gulf of Finland and to block the Russian navy to the far end of it. This prevented Russian marine operations in the Baltic Sea and secured the Finnish coast and above all Stockholm.

Usually, the squadron returned to the navy's main base in Karlskrona in Blekinge for the winter before the northern parts of the Baltic Sea were covered by ice. However, in 1711 the naval strategic situation in the Gulf of Finland was threatening for the Swedes. The Russian navy had been expanded quickly under the strict command of Peter the Great, and already consisted of numerous vessels waiting for a chance in what earlier had been Nyen. Staying in Helsinki during winter meant that the Swedish navy was operational immediately after the ice broke up.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Aalto 2016, pp. 488–491. See also Kujala 2001, p. 256.

⁶⁶ Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d.

⁶⁷ Kepsu 2020, pp. 144–145.

⁶⁸ Ericson Wolke 2011, pp. 113–173, in particular pp. 122, 158–159; Kujala 2001, pp. 254–256.

Johan Henrik Frisius agreed to organise the supply for the naval squadron. There was a great demand for both victuals and cash. A document by the Chamber College states that Frisius supplied and fitted out very promptly the naval squadron (*'mycket prompt utrustat och providerat Kongl. Majts. Escadre wid Helsingfors'*).⁶⁹ Other burghers in Helsinki, many with a background in Nyen, took part in the supply operation. Jobst Hueck delivered 2,389 silver dalers in cash for the squadrons needs at the beginning of March 1712.⁷⁰

A year later, Frisius and his merchant contacts were again given the responsibility to supply the naval squadron, which indicates that the supply of Nyenska eskadern in 1712 was successful. In the spring of 1713, Russian troops, in particular their galley fleet, increasingly threatened southern Finland. This time, however, the Swedish naval squadron had not stayed the winter in Helsinki but returned to the main base in Karlskrona in late autumn 1712. The fleet was expected to arrive in Helsinki as soon as the ice melted.⁷¹

The supply of the army and navy units in Finland was for all practical purposes privatised to Frisius in spring 1713. Former Nyen merchants were active in the supply operation. War commissioner Frisius was the main organiser, while Nyen burghers in Helsinki delivered grain. Source material in Stockholm reveals that Jobst Hueck delivered 750 barrels of barley and 400 barrels of rye to the crown magazine in Helsinki. The prize was fixed at 9 copper dalers for barley and 8 copper dalers for rye (3 and 2½ silver dalers, respectively). Hueck appealed three years later for the crown to liquidate his claim, in total 3,880 silver dalers, including

⁶⁹ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Chamber College memorandum, 13 July 1714.

⁷⁰ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 24, State Treasury memorandum, 23. November 1716.

⁷¹ Aalto 2016, pp. 496–501; Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d.

interest.⁷² Initially, the grain was expressly reserved to the Swedish navy.⁷³ Later, grain was stored to Helsinki also for the army as a preparation for the anticipated Russian offensive according to orders from Governor Johan Creutz.

Jochim Donner, the former schoolmaster turned merchant, was also involved in supplying the armed forces. Like Hueck, Donner delivered grain (170 barrels of barley, 70 barrels of rye) to the crown magazine in Helsinki in May 1713, just a few days before the battle of Helsinki. Compared to Frisius and Hueck, his claim was at this time modest, in total 696 silver dalers.⁷⁴

The efforts to store grain proved to be in vain. The decision to order the 'Nyen fleet' to Karlskrona for the winter had been a mistake. The Russian army attacked Helsinki in a surprising amphibious operation. Hundreds of galleys with some 17,000 men, including Peter the Great himself, appeared outside the town and caused major concern amongst the townspeople. When Russian troops managed to get a foothold in the outskirts, the town along with the crown magazine was set on fire. Ironically, Johan Henrik Frisius was one of the four men who made the decision to burn down both the magazine and the grain that had after energetic efforts only just been stored there.⁷⁵

Before the Great Wrath

After the destruction of Helsinki, supplying the armed forces in Finland became a more difficult task. The naval squadron,

⁷² RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 24, Jobst Huecks claims.

⁷³ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 24, State Treasury memorandum 23 November 1716.

⁷⁴ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 8, Jochim Donners claims.

⁷⁵ Aalto 2016, pp. 500–501. The other men in charge were Major General Carl Gustaf Armfelt, Governor Johan Creutz and burgomaster and Quartermaster (Sw. *proviantmästare*) Henrik Tammelin.

which arrived just a day too late to prevent the Russian attack to Helsinki, still had to be supplied. However, the magazine had went up in flames and the port of Helsinki was lost.⁷⁶ This increased the chronic Swedish military problem.

The Swedish army was not prepared to fight a defensive warfare. Even though food and victuals were occasionally stored in fortresses and magazines for garrison troops, a systematic supply system with strategically located magazines was introduced only in the mid-18th century. Therefore, no distinctive magazine supply system existed for war on home soil at the time of the Great Northern War. During the 17th century, the Swedes had almost entirely fought in enemy territory, where the armed forces were sustained mainly by contributions and plunder. During the Great Northern War, this was also the case for the main army, which in 1702–1708 could supply itself moving around in Polish territories.⁷⁷ Finland, however, was poor and could not support a large army.

In this difficult situation, the crown had to rely even more on Frisius and other merchants. Commander-in-chief Georg Lybecker took the initiative. He was once again in charge of the Finnish army and had used Frisius and other merchants already in Viipuri. In practice, supply of the armed forces in Finland was privatised to Johan Henrik Frisius. He obtained means and goods in his own name and sent the receipts to authorities in Stockholm. Letters written to Charles XII by Lybecker and his successor, Major General Carl Armfelt, show that Frisius was responsible for purchases

⁷⁶ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Chamber College memorandum 13 July 1714.

⁷⁷ Kuvaja 2013, p. 49; Frost 2000, pp. 281–282, 315–317. On magazines in Finland, see Hatakka 2019. During the Norwegian campaigns 1716–1718 magazines played, however, a central role in supplying the Swedish troops, see Florén, Dahlgren & Lindegren 1992, pp. 200–210.

for both the army and the navy until the Battle of Napue/Storkyro in February 1714.⁷⁸

According to Armfelt, who took command in August 1713 when Lybecker was dismissed, the army would have perished without the efforts of Frisius. He organised provisions like grain and dried meat, but also other important necessities like tobacco, salt and horseshoes. He was assisted by Commissary General Lars Malm, who focused on the administrative and fiscal aspects, while Frisius travelled around and took care of purchases. Frisius discussed with the burghers in Ostrobothnian towns and with their help managed to improve the clothing of the troops.

The key to Frisius's success was his credit. Armfelt described how repressive methods do not function in order to supply the army, as they usually made the common people to hide or deny their possessions. Frisius, in turn, managed through his accountability to acquire whatever there still was to be had in the country, even though it demanded a lot of travelling along the coasts and the countryside.⁷⁹

The navy was also satisfied. Frisius organised its supply, and the navy was surprised by the good quality of the goods, which kept the crew in good health. During the autumn of 1713, however, Frisius's means were out, and in January 1714 he planned to travel to Stockholm in order to receive payments from the crown.⁸⁰ In addition, it was more and more difficult to get loans from other merchants, like the Nyen burghers. Most of them had at this point fled to Stockholm and probably pressured Frisius to repay his

⁷⁸ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Major General Carl Armfelt to Charles XII 19 January 1714; Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d.

⁷⁹ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Major General Carl Armfelt to Charles XII 19 January 1714; Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d.

⁸⁰ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 14, Major General Carl Armfelt to Charles XII 19 January 1714; Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d.

earlier loans.⁸¹ However, Armfelt convinced Frisius to stay with the army for a few months more. Frisius's travel to Stockholm was also delayed by the Battle of Napue/Storkyro in February 1714, where Russian forces won a decisive victory. Before the battle, Frisius promised one month's salary to all soldiers and officers. It greatly improved the morale of the troops, but it was not enough to prevent a military defeat.⁸²

Frisius got regularly in trouble with his creditors because the crown had difficulties in liquidating his claims. He wrote continuously to the central government in Stockholm and pleaded in subservient words to get at least some of his loans repaid. In other case, he would lose his creditworthiness and not be able to organise cash and necessities to the armed forces. Frisius struggled with this problem during the whole war.⁸³

In 1715, for example, he applied the State Treasury (Sw. Statskontoret) to liquidate at least some of his claims, altogether 16,500 silver dalers, in order to keep his creditworthiness. Frisius stated that he had financed the Finnish troops both with his own means and by providing credit. However, in 1715 he was in Stockholm, where he discussed his financial situation in the Chamber College. Frisius declared his loyalty to the king and assured that he would continue to supply the army. In addition, he did not prefer to be repaid at the expense of the Finnish troops, while this would make his attempts to supply the army even greater.⁸⁴

Interestingly, Frisius's motives as a supplier and creditor have been presented in different ways in earlier research. The debate is a part of the discussion of whether burghers who supported states should be considered patriots or mere war profiteers.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d.

⁸² Hornborg 1953, pp. 203–213; Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d.

⁸³ Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d.

⁸⁴ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Skrivelser från Kammarkollegiet, 1134:4:89, Chamber College to Charles XII 18.3.1715. However, the State Treasury did not recommend Frisius's proposal.

⁸⁵ Hårdstedt 2006, pp. 133–135; Hårdstedt 2002, pp. 261–264, 282. See also the introduction chapter in this book with references.

Antti Kujala has doubted that Frisius was motivated by patriotic reasons, even though military commanders and Frisius himself highlighted this aspect to the central government in Stockholm. According to Kujala, Frisius profited from the interest the crown had to pay him.⁸⁶ Yet, Jakob Jakobsson and Anna Gutterp have pointed out that Frisius did not always receive his claims with interest. In addition, his merchant activities were seriously disrupted, which on several occasions almost ruined him.⁸⁷

Frisius's patriotism is difficult to evaluate. He was indeed very loyal to the crown, but, at the same time, financing the war effort and organising supply to the armed forces was a way to continue business in a situation where the political situation made normal trading difficult. Credits and supply were probably not very profitable for Frisius in pure economic terms. In this case, David Parrott's emphasis on profit as the principal motivation for offering credit and services to the state is not adequate.⁸⁸ In fact, many scholars have pointed out that there was not much profit in supporting the state. Seppo Aalto notes that war supplies were not a gold vein for the burghers in Helsinki, but they prevented them from falling into poverty.⁸⁹ And, as Martin Hårdstedt has pointed out, the crown paid quite low prices for deliveries to the army.⁹⁰

It is also possible that Frisius became so deeply involved in supporting the crown that it was difficult for him to return to his previous life as a merchant. However, Frisius gained a lot of social status through his hard work for the crown. He was

⁸⁶ Kujala 2001, p. 256. See also Aalto 2016, p. 489.

⁸⁷ Jakobsson & Gutterp n.d. See also Jakobsson & Gutterp 2013. Teemu Keskiarja and Eirik Hornborg also highlights the patriotic aspect in Frisius's activity, see Keskiarja 2019, in particular p. 88; Hornborg 1953, pp. 110–111, 203–204.

⁸⁸ Parrott 2012, pp. 241–250.

⁸⁹ Aalto 2016, p. 491.

⁹⁰ Hårdstedt 2002, p. 253. However, Hårdstedt's research deals with the Finnish War 1808–1809.

ennobled and after the war appointed governor of Kymenkartano and Savonlinna Province (Sw. Kymmenegårds och Nyslotts län).⁹¹

In the autumn of 1714, most parts of Finland were occupied by the Russians. At the same time, Frisius returned from Stockholm to the Finnish troops, which were retreating to Västerbotten. He continued to supply the Finnish attachments until the end of the war, and again during the catastrophic campaign to Norway in 1718, when thousands of soldiers froze to death in the mountains.⁹²

There is not a lot of knowledge of the activities of the other former Nyen burghers regarding the years of the Great Wrath (1714–1721). At least Henrik Luhr, Jobst Hueck, Jochim Donner, and Carl Dobbin resided in Stockholm, where they constituted a tight network.⁹³ However, the years in Stockholm have not yet been properly studied and it is not clear to what degree they participated in supplying armed forces. Documents in the Chamber College archives imply that it continued. In 1718, Henrik Luhr delivered wood, some of it intended for brewing, to a royal purchase deputation (Sw. Upphandlingsdeputationen) in Stockholm.⁹⁴

Financing and Supplying War through Improvisation

Burghers with a background in the town of Nyen took part in financing and supplying the Swedish army during the Great Northern War, in particular regarding military units in Finland from 1708 to 1714. The former Nyen burghers spread around the coastal towns from Viipuri to Stockholm and became more and more involved in deliveries to the crown.

It is evident that above all Johan Henrik Frisius had extraordinary skills in supplying and financing armed forces, even though

⁹¹ Mäkelä-Alitalo 2014.

⁹² Hornborg 1953, pp. 225–272; Jakobsson & Guttorp n.d.

⁹³ Möller & Luther 1981.

⁹⁴ RA, Kammarkollegiet, Försträckningar och leveranser efter 1680 Serie A, 522:95–96, vol. 30, Henrik Luhr's claims. Henrik Luhr's son Jürgen applied for the claim to be liquidated in 1734.

commanders-in-chief Lybecker and Armfelt probably exaggerated his importance to support his efforts to receive payments in Stockholm. Frisius became deeply involved in state administration by war financing efforts, and acted more and more as a crown servant, while his personal trade faded, especially after the loss of Helsinki in 1713. His merchant skills were, however, of great benefit in his efforts to supply the army. Frisius used his personal networks, both to the West European merchant houses and to local merchant partners, not the least those from Nyen.

The former burghers from Nyen were essential in providing supply for the armed forces in Viipuri and Helsinki. After Finland was occupied by the Russians in 1714 the Nyen network seems to have faded, but it became relevant after the Treaty of Uusikauunki (Sw. Nystad) in 1721. When Frisius was appointed governor in Southeastern Finland, he recruited former Nyen burghers to key positions, in particular to Hamina, the new Swedish centre for Russian transit trade.⁹⁵

During the Great Northern War, the loss of the eastern Baltic provinces, in particular the Russian conquest of Ingria, transformed Finland once again to a border region. Since the Treaty of Stolbova in 1617, Finland had had a protected strategic position, the Russo-Swedish War 1656–1658 exempted. Thus, a functional supply organisation for wartime troops in Finland was lacking. In addition, the fortresses in Finland were in decay. This was problematic not only for their military capacity but also for supply reasons. The fortresses were centres where grain, victuals, ammunition and weapons were stored.⁹⁶

Therefore, the armed forces in Finland had to be supplied with ad hoc solutions. Governors, military commanders and war commissioners had to improvise to provide food, clothes and ammunition. This proved to be more or less impossible, since Finland was relatively poor, with forest as its main natural resource. It could not support a large army for a long period, even though

⁹⁵ Kepsu 2020, pp. 141–145.

⁹⁶ Mickwitz & Paaskoski 2005, pp. 17–18.

the activity of burghers and other suppliers eased the situation.⁹⁷ These problems also became evident for Peter the Great after the Russians had occupied Finland. As Christer Kuvaja has shown, the Russians supplied their troops in Finland mainly with commodities from Russia, transported by the Russian galley fleet.⁹⁸

In general, the case of the Nyen burghers as suppliers and creditors strengthens earlier analyses that the state in many ways tried to use private individuals with economic power and transnational networks to support the state apparatus. In wartime, merchants were particularly important when the situation required improvisation. The absolutist early modern states, like the Swedish Realm, often referred to as power states, were relatively effective in recruiting troops but not in supplying them. In Northern Europe, where resources were scarce, merchants could find a way to profit in supplying military units and financing the war. However, profit margins were not high, and repayment was insecure and time-consuming. Therefore, it seems that burghers were not particularly eager to support the state until the military situation was more or less desperate and normal trade did not function properly.

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⁹⁷ The relative poverty of Finland and Northern Europe in general has been emphasised by many scholars; see e.g. Perlestam 2018, pp. 44–48; Kuvaja 2013, pp. 48–49; Hårdstedt 2002, pp. 36–37; Frost 2000, pp. 281, 315–317.

⁹⁸ Kuvaja 2002; Kuvaja 1999, pp. 276–278.

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