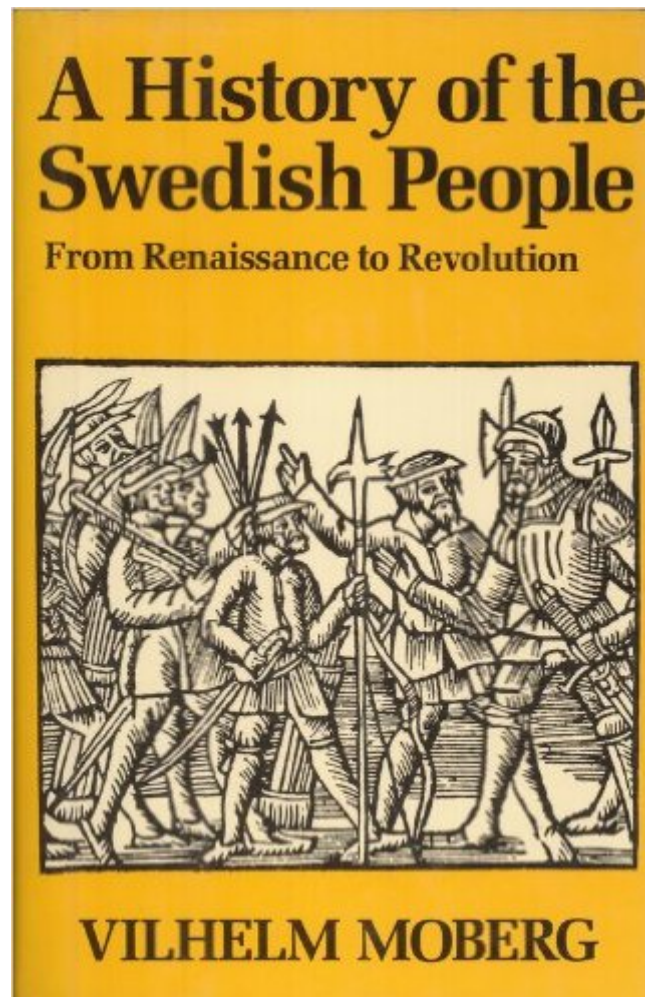


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A History Of The Swedish People: Volume II: From Renaissance To Revolution



Synopsis

In the second volume of his vivid history of the Swedes, Vilhelm Moberg brings his focus on the common people to bear on a period that included two dramatic revolts: the national insurrection under Engelbrekt and the last desperate attempt of the Smaland peasantry to retain their medieval liberties - a defiance bloodily crushed by King Gustav Vasa. Using a wide variety of local historical source materials, Moberg studies the ruthless monarch Vasa and his two tragic opponents: the psychopathic Christian II of Denmark and Nils Dracke, the leader of the Smalanders. Furthermore, he examines the enigmatic and wide appeal of the Swedish forest and investigates the origins of the Swedish hatred of Danes, which was implanted by propaganda through songs commissioned by Karl VIII's chancellery. Moberg's history has been widely hailed by the Swedish press as a masterpiece of popular history writing and has been an all-time best-seller in Swedish bookstores. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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The common man and woman in Sweden, like people everywhere, have had to contend with the great lords who taxed them unfairly and treated them as expendable cannon fodder in their numerous wars. For Sweden this included constant warfare with its neighbor Denmark. A war between these two Nordic neighbors seemed to break out every 50 years or so from 1400 to 1800. These wars, in part, were due to questions regarding whether Scandinavia would be ruled as a united kingdom from Denmark, or whether Denmark, Sweden, or Norway would each constitute an independent nation-state. Throughout these various wars and depredations, Moberg observes that it

was the forest that served as a refuge for the common Swedish peasant. There he could retreat from invading armies. Many of these armies were constituted of German mercenaries--bringing to mind the Hessians sent by England to fight the American colonists who were my ancestors. The forest also served as the proper venue for guerilla warfare where the peasants often had the upper hand when pitted against the King's soldiers. Moberg points out that it was only in Denmark where Scandinavians were reduced to serfdom, as the plains of Jutland did not offer the respite provided by the forests of Sweden or the mountains of Norway. In times of famine the forest was also a source of food. The Swedish peasant was able to use the membrane between the bark and wood of the tree as an ingredient for bread. These accounts of the forest as a refuge calls to mind what my grandmother once told me about the American Civil War--as told to her, in turn, by her own grandmother (my great-great-grandmother): "When the soldiers came they hid the cattle in the woods," said my grandmother.

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