
Two further volumes of J. R. Paas’s monumental undertaking, The German Political Broadsheet 1600-1700, have appeared, bringing this important scholarly project more than half way toward its close. (The completed work will comprise a projected ten volumes with an additional index volume.) With Volumes 5 and 6, Paas provides the scholarly community with an exemplary bibliography and full reproductions of German political broadsides from 1630-1632. While the Thirty Years’ War itself represents a high point in the production of German Flugblätter in the seventeenth century, the entry of the Swedish king Gustav II Adolph into the war and his brief but highly successful military career in this conflict, which includes the years covered in these two volumes, constitute a zenith of broadside production in German-speaking lands.

The broadsides reproduced in Volume 5 represent a new phase of the war in which the Protestants, previously always reacting defensively, for the first time were able to take the offensive. At the end of the 1620’s the Protestant side can be said to have been in disarray. The treaty of Lübeck signed in 1629 by the emperor and King Christian IV of Denmark signaled the end of the Danish monarch’s disastrous involvement in the war as leader of the Protestant North. At the diet of Electors in Regensburg in 1630, the important Saxon and Brandenburg Electors were not present, although Elector Johann Georg I’s representatives proposed a meeting of the Protestants in Leipzig for early 1631, an event which is today known as the Leipziger Convent or Kurfürstentag, and is depicted by a half-dozen broadsides. In 1629 Emperor Ferdinand issued the Edict of Restitution, calling for the re-Catholicization of all lands in Protestant hands since 1552. Ferdinand’s heavy-handed approach, however, also caused dissent among the Catholics, his most outspoken opponent being Elector Maximilian I of Bavaria. In face of the impotency of the German Protestant princes to organize and act against the empire, leadership of the Protestant cause had to come from outside — which it did in the person of the young Swedish king. Of the 316 broadsides presented in Volume 5, fully a third directly feature Gustav II Adolph, treating his rather inconspicuous landing in Peenemünde in July 1630 — shrewdly timed to coincide with the centenary celebrations of the Augsburg Confession (itself featured in approximately ten broadsides) — his taking of several cities, the foreign mercenaries — primarily Scots — in his army, his numerous victories, and the like. Some
satirical broadsides present a contemporary political view of the situation, such as those portraying the Swedish king as a physician for Protestant Germany. In many senses the entire volume can be seen as dealing with Gustav II Adolph in one form or another since his presence in the arena of war fundamentally changed all aspects of that period of the conflict.

His major opponent, Johannes Tserclaes, otherwise known as Count of Tilly, also figures prominently in the political broadsides of this period. Roughly thirty broadsides focus on the battle of Breitenfeld, the first major Protestant victory of the Thirty Years' War, when Gustav II Adolph defeated Tilly in the autumn of 1631. Another twenty or so broadsides lampoon Tilly's dispersed troops in the aftermath of this decisive battle. An additional dozen items focus on the punishment of Catholic figures for their sins, while seven others satirize the vanquished imperial commander, showing messengers on horseback trying to locate Tilly after the Battle of Breitenfeld.

Since the early months of Gustav II Adolph's incursion into the German war involved securing allies among the German Protestant princes, several of the broadsides focus on Lutheran Saxony and Calvinist Brandenburg, which had initially rejected his overtures. Roughly twenty-five broadsides feature the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I, ranging from portraits, birthday verse and calls for an alliance with Sweden, and ultimately proclaiming the Saxon-Swedish alliance, which occurred only after the sack of Magdeburg in May 1631. Roughly thirty broadsides thematize the destruction of this city, ranging from depictions of the siege, battles, and fire to the elderly Tilly, who, unable to court the chaste maiden (a word-play on the name, "Magd"), simply raped her. Several broadsides depict Tilly as a cat, dying from having devoured a mouse (Magdeburg), while a chained fox (Johann Georg I) tells of an approaching lion (Gustav II Adolph).

The highly polemical nature of these broadsides is most evident in the approximately twenty-five items which have the so-called "Saxon Confect" as their theme. After the destruction of Magdeburg by troops Tilly no longer could control, the Saxon Elector Johann Georg I saw that an invasion of his lands was likely, and warned his foe of the dangers of taking Saxon "sweets", telling Tilly to "watch out for his teeth". Ignoring the metaphorical admonition, Tilly invaded Saxony, capturing Merseburg and occupying Leipzig. These broadsides celebrate the Saxon-Swedish alliance, depicting a variation of the scene in which Johann Georg I and Gustav II Adolph adorned with allegorical virtues defend a table set with symbolic sweets from the greedy hands of Tilly.

Relatively few broadsides focus on themes other than Gustav II Adolph and the immediate concerns of the Thirty Years' War as it began to affect Saxony and central German-speaking lands. Many of these still have some connection, however indirect, to the main theater of war. For example, the