

THE "DE GORTZ" DALERS OF SWEDEN

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<http://www.moneta-coins.com/photopost/showgallery.php?cat=582>

The "de Gortz dalers" had almost as interesting and adventuresome career as the Swedish monarch during whose reign the coin was first minted. It is difficult to relate the history of these unusual coins without saying something about the Swedish king under whose auspices the coin was first struck.

Charles XII was only 15 years old when he ascended to the throne of Sweden in 1697, but was soon to prove himself one of the military geniuses of modern times. His reign was taken up almost entirely by the Great Northern War which marked Sweden's attempt to gain Poland as a possession and to become the supreme power in the Baltic area. Unfortunately for Sweden, at this time Russia was also striving to establish itself as the supreme power in the Baltic under the leadership of Peter the Great.

On November 30, 1700 Charles led 8000 Swedish soldiers to a decisive victory over a much larger Russian army at Narva, a small city in what is now Estonia. The Great Northern War had begun. Instead of pursuing the Russians, Charles then turned west and invaded Poland. By 1707, after many military successes, Charles controlled practically all of Poland. The following year he took the fateful road to Moscow, the nemesis of both Napoleon and Hitler in later years. On July 8, 1709 he was disastrously defeated by Peter's army at Poltava, a large city in the Ukraine. Sweden's star had begun its descent. With his army defeated and disbanded, Charles

found refuge in Turkey where he persuaded the Porte to declare war on Russia.

After much intrigue, betrayals, and broken treaties involving Charles, the Porte of Turkey, Peter the Great, and other rulers of Europe, the King of Sweden returned to his bankrupt country in 1714. He was shot in battle on December 11, 1718 near Friedrichshall during a military expedition to Norway. He was succeeded by his sister, Ulrica Eleanora.

The monetary system was rather confusing during this time. It consisted of a three level monetary system on a double standard. There was the "Kupper Mynt" (copper coin) and there was the "Sylf Mynt" (silver coin) which was abbreviated S.M. The Ore was the lowest unit of the Swedish monetary system. Eight Ore Sylf Mynt equalled one Mark S.M., four Marks S.M. equalled one Daler S.M. and three Daler S.M. equalled one Riksdaler (a crown-sized silver coin). The Kupper Mynt standard was like the Sylf Mynt standard: eight Ore K.M. equalled one Mark K.M., four Marks K.M. equalled one Daler K.M. The difference was it took nine Daler K.M. to equal one Riksdaler. Interestingly enough the Sylf Mynt (silver coin) was often made in copper (in fact many if not most copper coins were Sylf Mynt). About the only redeeming feature of the system was that the coins had their intrinsic value of metal in them, though even this caused problems. The Swedish government thought it would be more profitable for them to turn out a few high value copper coins instead of many low value copper coins. These of course turned out to be very large in size and weight, the largest being a 10 Daler piece that weighed approximately 20 kilograms (about 44 pounds). This coinage was known as copper plate money. Due to the precarious financial conditions in Sweden caused by the Great Northern War, the government was forced to recall all silver coins. Large issues of paper money were produced in their place.

In 1715 a series of copper tokens having the value of 1 Daler S.M. was begun in order to help provide some circulating coin and to help the government raise money needed for war. These are known as the "de Gortz Dalers", named after the Minister of Finance, Baron de Gortz, who first suggested issuing them. The tokens were equivalent to a piece of copper plate money weighing about two kilograms (slightly under four and a half pounds), yet weighed less than six grams and were only 23 millimeters in diameter.

The first issue pictured the Swedish crown (similar to that appearing on the modern 10, 25 and 50 Ore coins of 1942-1950), the date 1715 appeared below the crown.

The reverse simply read "1./DALER/S.M.".

A second issue came out the following year picturing Svea seated (looking remarkably like Britannia). The inscription PUBLICA FIDE (Public Trust) appeared around the figure of Svea. The date, as on the all issues of the series, was below the figure on the obverse. The reverse of the 1716 issue was the same as that of the 1715 issue.

A third issue of the "de Gortz Dalers" appeared in 1717. This pictured a warrior with a sword and shield. The inscription read WETT OCH WAPPERN (Reason and Arms). The reverse inscription 1./DALER/S.M. was enclosed in a shield, the shield being surrounded by emblems of war and peace.

There were six issues of the "de Gortz Dalers" for 1718. The first (Fig. 4) also pictured a warrior, this time with a lion standing beside him. The inscription reads FLINK OCH FARDIG (Agile and Ready). The reverse, as on the rest of the coins to be minted in this series, had the denomination enclosed in an ornamental oval, the ornamentation varying from issue to issue. This issue was ornamented with emblems of war and peace, similar to the 1717 issue. The remaining five issues of 1718

pictured various Roman Gods: Jupiter, Saturn (looking very much like Father Time with a scythe and infant), Phoebus (Apollo), Mars and Mercury. The name of the god appeared above the figure of the god.

The "de Gortz Dalers" continued to be struck for a limited time after the death of Charles. The final issue of the series pictured Hope and was dated 1719 (Fig. 10). It was similar to the previous issues. Though most of the "de Gortz Dalers" had a mintage of three to nine million, there were only one and a half million of the 1719 pieces minted.

Unlike most other copper Swedish coins of the era, the "de Gortz Dalers" were minted in Stockholm rather than the Avesta mint which was closer to copper supplies. Another difference was that there was no indication of which king under whom they were minted, nor was there any indication of their national origin.

When these coins were first issued many people, especially those in the rural areas, would not accept them. They thought the coin may of been of pagan issue, perhaps left over from Viking days. They were apparently pressed into service however, as today many specimens show extensive wear.

Like Charles, the "de Gortz Dalers" had a brief career. Starting in 1719 and until 1721 they were recalled and restruck as Ore K.M. or 1/2 Ore S.M.

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