

History

THE SWEDISH FREEMASON LARS VON ENGSTRÖM AND HIS DESCRIPTION OF TRANSYLVANIA

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Abstract

This study highlights one of the oldest and most beautiful bridges between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Romanian Lands in the 18th century. The analysis concerns Count Lars von Engeström, freemason, rector of the University of Lund, diplomat, and envoy of the Kingdom of Sweden in Vienna within the Habsburg Empire. In this capacity, he was able to obtain valuable information about the uprising led by Horea, Cloșca and Crișan in Transylvania in 1784. It was a rebellion that shook the reign of Emperor Joseph II. For this reason, its retaliation was commensurate. Thus, recounting a dramatic episode from the pre-modern history of the Romanians, Lars von Engeström left to posterity a beautiful fresco of Transylvania. He spoke about ethnic and confessional diversity, about the Romanian Roma, about the people living here and their problems. There is no definitive information confirming that he actually visited Transylvania. Nevertheless, the famous Swedish diplomat remains the greatest Northern European scholar to write about this 18th century Transylvanian uprising which was unique in its intercontinental resonance and had significant repercussions in the Swedish press of that era.

Keywords: Lars von Engeström; Freemasonry; Transylvania; Romanity; Horea's uprising of 1784.

1. A Diplomatic Freemason and Scholar in the Service of his Nation

The biography of one of the most famous Freemasons of the 18th century, Count Lars von Engeström (1751-1826), is remarkable. The famous Swedish statesman and diplomat was, in fact, the only scholar in Northern Europe to write during the Age of Enlightenment about Transylvania and about Horea's uprising of 1784. As is well known, this dramatic moment in the history of the province had an intercontinental resonance (Edroiu, 1976), and Count von Engeström distinguished himself as its erudite chronicler.

But before this moment, which brought him closer to the Romanians and their history, the story of Lars von Engeström's life and work is marked by many significant stages. In 1793 he became an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, History and Antiquities. As diplomat and scholar, he was Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden between 1809-1824, and Rector of the Lund University between 1810-1824.

The Swedish authorities sent him to Vienna between 1782-1787, to Warsaw between 1788-1792, to London between 1793-1795, and again to Vienna in 1795. At the end of his diplomatic career, he was elected member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1810 (Cristea & Edroiu, 2001, pp. XI-XXV).

From his personal life we know that he was the son of Bishop Johan Engeström and Margaret Benzelstierna, daughter of Archbishop Jacob Benzelius of Bureätten. He also had seven brothers: Jacob, Jonas, Gustaf, Johan, Maria Beata, Ulrika and Adolph Engeström. After completing his law studies at the Lund University at the age of 19, he decided to work in the chancellery of King Adolf Frederik.¹

He initially worked at the Kingdom Archives for 12 years. He came here on the recommendations of his uncle, Secretary of State M. Benzelstierna, and of his brother Jacob von Engeström who at that time was a high official of the Kingdom of Sweden. Lars von Engeström was recommended to work in the archives as it was seen as a good gateway to a future career in the Royal Chancellery. Like his young colleague F. W. Ehrenheim, he showed great dedication to the service, and he maintained a keen interest for the Royal Archives throughout his life (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon)².

Then, having gained the confidence of the political authorities of the time, he was allowed to begin his diplomatic career. In 1782, as mentioned above, he was sent as an envoy to the Habsburg Empire in Vienna and then to Warsaw. He had to ensure that Poland would side with Sweden against Russia in the so-called Russian War of Swedish King Gustav III (1746-1792).

In November 1787, after five years at the Swedish embassy in Vienna, Count Engeström was appointed chargé d'affaires in Warsaw. This was an extremely important position as the Kingdom of Sweden's break with Russia became more and more imminent. Lars von Engeström skilfully penetrated the upper echelons of Polish politics. He also gained early access to influential Polish circles and played a prominent role not only in social life but also in Polish domestic polity (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

One of the reasons for his ample networking was that Lars von Engeström, as a renowned Freemason, was able to build up valuable relationships. One of his closest friends was Count I. Potocki himself, who was Grand Master of the Polish Freemasonry. With the outbreak of war between the Kingdom of Sweden and Russia in 1788, Count vom Engeström was given the task of organising resistance against the Russian influence in Warsaw mainly represented by the Russian foreign minister, Count Stackelberg (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

2. The Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790

The Russo-Swedish War lasted from 1788 to 1790. The conflict was actually initiated by King Gustav III himself for domestic political reasons. At that time King Gustav III faced strong opposition from the nobility and the Riksdag (parliament), and he felt that in case of war even his opponents would have to support him (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

Certain Western powers, including Britain, Prussia, and the United Provinces, were alarmed by Russia's numerous victories in the Russo-Turkish War of 1787-1792. Consequently, they advocated for a conflict in Northern Europe to divert the attention of Russia's Catherine II from the southern theater of operations (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

Therefore, at the instigation of the Western powers, Gustav III concluded an alliance with the Ottoman Empire in the summer of 1788. At the same time, a tailor of the Royal Opera House in Stockholm was ordered to prepare Russian military uniforms. These were to be used during an exchange of fire at Puumala, a Swedish outpost on the Russian-Swedish border (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

¹ Adolf Frederick (1710-1771) was King of Sweden from 1751 until his death. He was the son of Christian August of Holstein-Gottorp and Albertina Frederica of Baden-Durlach. Between 1727-1750 Prince Adolf Frederick was Prince of Lübeck and Administrator of Holstein-Kiel during the minority of his nephew, Duke Karl Peter Ulrich. He became Peter III of Russia. In 1743 he was chosen as heir to the Swedish throne by the Hut faction in order to obtain better terms in the Peace of Turku with Empress Elisabeth of Russia, who had chosen her nephew as her heir. Adolf Frederick became king on 25 March 1751.

² See Lars von Engeström's biography: <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/mobil/Artikel/16158>.

This fake attack, which caused a scandal in Stockholm, gave King Gustav III an excuse to declare war on Russia. The original Swedish plan was to launch a naval attack on Sankt Petersburg. As one Swedish army advanced through Finland, a second army, accompanied by a Swedish flotilla, would move along the coast of the Gulf of Finland. Then a third army, embarked on the Swedish fleet, was to land at Oranienbaum and march on towards Sankt Petersburg (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

The Russian Baltic fleet, commanded by Samuel Karlovich Greig, met the Swedish fleet in the battle of Hogland on 17 July 1788. The battle was tactically indecisive and prevented the Swedes from landing. The news of this strategic failure increased the unpopularity of the war in Sweden and the revolt of the Finnish officers. For its part, Denmark declared war on Sweden in order to honour its alliance treaty with Russia (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

A Norwegian army briefly invaded Sweden, but after several battles it was decided to sign the peace of July 1789 thanks to the diplomatic intervention of Great Britain and Prussia. This led Denmark to declare its neutrality in the Russo-Swedish conflict. At sea, the Russian and Swedish fleets met again in Öland on 25 July 1789. The battle was again undecided. Ground operations in Finland were reduced in intensity (Svenskt Biografiskt Lexicon).

In addition, Gustav III's opponents wielded considerable influence, compelling the king to heavily rely on his navy. In 1790, Gustav III devised a new landing plan, this time near Vyborg, but the Swedish fleet suffered defeat in the Battle of Reval on May 13th.

Under these conditions, the Swedish fleet retreated to Vyborg Bay, where the Russian fleet under Vasili Yakovlevich Chitchagov blockaded it for a month. On 4 July 1790 the Swedes broke the Russian blockade in the gigantic battle of Vyborg Bay, but the price they paid was high. They lost 7 ships of the line and 3 frigates to only 2 Russian ships. Part of the Swedish fleet retreated to Sveaborg for repairs, while the rest took up a defensive position. On 9 July, an impetuous Russian attack ended in disaster in the battle of Svensksund. The Russians lost 7,400 men and more than half of their ships of the line (a third of their entire fleet).

This great Swedish victory forced Russia to negotiate peace, which the Grand Chancellor signed on 14 August 1790 the Treaty of Värälä. The two countries thus returned to their pre-war situation. All in all, the Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790 was almost insignificant for the rulers of the two countries. Catherine II found all this a minor distraction as most of her ground forces were engaged in the war against the Ottoman Empire. She was also more concerned with the revolutions in Poland and France. For King Gustav III, war was the ideal way to solve his internal problems.

3. Further Diplomatic Missions and Family

On several occasions in this tense wartime context, Lars von Engeström strongly expressed his disgust and fear of Russia. He saw it as a constant threat to the external and internal freedom of small neighbouring states. He was particularly sympathetic to Poland, which at the time was fiercely defending itself against Russian aggression. Gustav III's war against this country became a veritable national crusade for the Count of Engeström (Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-126).

When King Gustav III of Sweden was assassinated in the Stockholm Opera House in 1792, Lars von Engeström was recalled to Sweden. On this occasion, the government of King Gustav IV Adolf (Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-126) appointed him Chancellor of the Court and at the same time a member of the Committee for General Affairs of the Kingdom.

It was not long before he fell out of favour with Gustav Adolf Reuterholm, who held a powerful position in the government, because of the latter's intransigence. In 1793, Count Engeström was removed from political office and sent to London as Sweden's envoy. He remained there for two years, after which he was appointed ambassador to Vienna. He never

took up the post, however, as the Austrian government declared him *persona non grata* because of his sympathies for France. Lars von Engeström was repeatedly suspected of Jacobinism and accused of being sympathetic to French culture and people (Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-126).

Between 1796-1798 he decided to remain in Germany without a diplomatic appointment, and between 1798-1803 he was sent to the Prussian court. After that, he received no further government commissions and moved to his estate in Prussian Poland. He had acquired the estate through his marriage to Rozalia Drya-Chlapowska in 1790.

In 1876, Elof Tegnér decided to publish two volumes of Lars von Engeström's memoirs, which became very popular at the time (Tegnér, 1876). The diplomat began his memoirs by emphasising that 'I entered the service with a firm determination to earn my way to the highest dignity in the kingdom, and that by hard work, for I was not prepared for intrigues'³ (Tegnér, 1876, our translation).

Among other things, these notes show the enthusiasm with which Count Engeström devoted himself to the leadership of Lund University, where he was Rector. He established several new departments, but also supported the existing ones, such as the department of Natural History. He was also a great promoter of academic activity, showing complete empathy and openness towards both teachers and students. Despite his many efforts, he did not succeed in creating a secure material and economic base to ensure the development he so strongly promoted (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 11).

Teachers' salaries were generally very low and there were no fixed stipends fees for new positions. For this reason, academic life during Count Engeström's reign was often described by many as a "brilliant mess". The university's most famous professors, such as Tegnér, who later published his memoirs, were forced to leave for financial reasons.

Lars von Engeström showed great esteem and respect for the scholars and scientists of his time. He tried to support young writers as much as he could and offered scholarships to those with a vocation for teaching. To others he facilitated the publication and distribution of literary and scientific works. He also took a keen interest in archaeological research.

In this respect, he established cordial relations with great names in the field such as J. Hallenberg and N. H. Sjöborg from Lund (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 15). They were concerned with the supervision and preservation of the Swedish nation's antiquities. Because of his passion for archaeology and history, Count von Engeström commissioned E. G. Geijer (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 20) to write a comprehensive history of the Kingdom of Sweden as early as 1812. In fact, Lars von Engeström had been collecting vital sources on the country's past since his days at the Kingdom Archives.

During his many missions, he devoted a great deal of time to organising and studying older diplomatic documents and preserving those acquired on the spot. He also sought to promote the publication of historical documents of importance for his country's past (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 31). One of his closest collaborators was J. G. Liljegren, who was both a scholar and an archivist.

He was given a privileged place at the Kingdom Archives and the Royal Library by the Count of Engeström. While there, he was responsible for cataloguing and preserving important works and manuscripts. With Liljegren's assistance, Lars von Engeström made significant contributions to Swedish archival history. Together they saved entire collections of documents from destruction, which later became part of the national archival heritage (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 45).

³ The original form of the Swedish text is: "Jag gick in i tjänst med en fast beslutsamhet att förtjäna min väg till den högsta värdigheten i riket, och det genom hårt arbete, för jag var inte förberedd för intriger."

Lars von Engeström's last years in Sweden were marked by political adversity, serious illness and family difficulties. Of his four children, three daughters died young, while his only son, Gustaf Stanislaus von Engeström, caused him many disappointments. His frivolity left him with enormous debts, which were eventually paid off by Lars von Engeström himself.

Count Engeström's Polish-born wife was unhappy in Sweden, so he decided to resign his post and move to his wife's home country. When he left, he said goodbye to all his colleagues from Lund University in a familiar and touching way, embracing each of his professors. He died at his Polish estate in Jankowice (a few kilometres west of Poznan) and was buried in a church chapel at Ceradz.

He was remembered by his contemporaries as a scholar of unusually tall and imposing stature, giving a strong impression of manhood and power. He had handsome features, a good-natured and straightforward manner, but was often irascible and harsh. Many remembered him as a particularly pleasant conversationalist, but not easy to bear in moments of anger (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 60).

In the exercise of his duties, Count Engeström was subject to much criticism, especially in the last years of his life. Many considered him despotic, capricious and lacking in objectivity. Others, younger subordinates saw him as a great personality whom they revered for his culture and scholarship.

4. Count Lars von Engeström's Collections and Library

It was on the basis of these qualities that Lars von Engeström compiled not only his memoirs, but also his literary collection, which covered practically all fields of research, especially history, using letters and documents from his extensive archive. To these were added other sources that highlighted his outstanding education in fundamental fields such as international law, statistics, geography and political economy (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 72).

During his extensive travels, he seized every opportunity to enrich his collections. He constantly added books, as well as maps, engravings and art works, to his vast library, which became a reference center in Northern Europe. Many of these rare publications he acquired in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, Poznan and Hanover (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 90).

Before departing the Kingdom of Sweden permanently, Count Lars von Engeström made many arrangements for his personal library collection. According to his will, all new acquisitions were to be maintained in good condition and made accessible to those interested in utilizing them for the advancement of the kingdom's culture and history. He also requested that the library be placed under the supervision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the librarian obligated to submit an annual report on their activities (Tegnér, 1876, pp 102).

After nearly 60 years as a private library, Engeström's library became state property. In 1864, Count Engeström's grandson obtained permission to sell the house and to donate the collections to the Royal Library and National Museum in Stockholm. However, due to space constraints, the approximately 15,000 books and manuscripts that arrived at the Royal Library had to be accommodated in rented premises. The books, which had been greatly reduced in number by the sale of duplicates, were then incorporated into the rest of the library's holdings. The manuscripts were kept as a separate unit (Tegnér, 1876, pp. 119).

Of all his personal manuscripts, the most valuable for the pre-modern history of Romania is his diplomatic correspondence from his time as ambassador in Vienna. It is this correspondence that provides valuable information not only about the Horea, Cloșca and Crișan rebellions of 1784, but also a veritable fresco of Transylvania and its realities in the second half of the 18th century.

This fresco was painted with great erudition by the Count of Engeström. If we look at Transylvania through his eyes, we will discover many truths told with detachment and

objectivity. Thus, here, we find the necessary motivation to reflect further and delve deeper into all that occurred in this province during the Age of Enlightenment and Reason.

5. The Romanity of Romanians and Count Lars von Engeström's Description of Transylvania

The diplomat Count Lars of Engeström was one of the first Swedes to emphasise, in the fourth quarter of the 18th century, the Romanity of the Transylvanian Romanians and the Latinity of their language. A century before, between 1656-1658, the Swedish pastor and diplomat Conrad Iacob Hildebrandt had passed several times through Transylvania, providing valuable data about the people he encountered and the events he witnessed (Mehediñi-Beican, 2012). Yet Engeström's remarks provide the perspective of an enlightened scholar and Freemason concerning the origins and history of peoples, as well as the significant importance attributed to education and schooling.

The Viennese diplomatic correspondence of Count Lars von Engeström is kept at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm (Fond Lars von Engeström). This collection contains 312 and 382 pages of archive documents signed by Lars of Engeström himself. They include minutes and reports from the years 1784 and 1785 (Cristea & Edroiu, 2001, pp. 6-7). Among all these sources, it is worth mentioning the report of 11 May/5 April 1785, in which the Count of Engeström speaks about the Latinity of the Romanians and regarding the rest of the population, specifically the other ethnic groups residing in the multiethnic province of the Great Autonomous Principality of Transylvania under Habsburg suzerainty (Cristea & Edroiu, 2001, pp. 6-7).

The renowned diplomat points out and highlights the important fact that Transylvania, like Hungary, was not inhabited by a single nation, but by several peoples of different origins, distinguishing themselves by their own mother tongue. The Transylvanian nations were of two kinds: the rightful masters forming the privileged nations and the tolerated nations. The privileged nations were the Szeklers, Hungarians and Saxons (Germans), and the tolerated nations were the Romanians, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Poles, Russians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Slavs and Gypsies (Cosma, 2018; Cosma, 2015).

As for the Romanians, Count Lars von Engeström indicates that they were of Roman descent, tracing their origins to the colonists dispatched to Dacia by Emperor Trajan following the conquest of the country. Regarding the language spoken by the Romanians, Count Engeström notes that it bears similarity to Latin, which proves their genetic link to the Romans (Cristea, 2001, pp. 143-170).

Despite their noble origins, in Engeström's description, most Romanians are depicted as serfs (*iobaggiones*, *coloni*), predominantly working on the estates of the Hungarians, but also on those of the Saxons and Szeklers, unable to depart without the consent of their masters.

Count Engeström's description of the Romanians is not lacking in physical features: 'Romanians are not very tall, but they are sturdy, strong and well-built, they have black hair and burning black eyes, they are agile, courageous, presumptuous, vindictive, enterprising, superstitious, because they are ignorant and therefore fanatical as soon as it comes to faith [...]'⁴ (Cristea, 2001, pp. 143-170, our translation).

In this account, it is easy to see the emphasis that the famous diplomat places on the idea of Romanianness, on the origins of the Romanians, on their national characteristics, but also on the need for enlightenment through culture as a solution to ignorance and superstition. In 1785, when Count Engeström advocated for the Latinisation of the Romanians in

⁴ The original form of the Swedish text is: "Rumänerna är inte särskilt långa, men de är robusta, starka och välbyggda, de har svart hår och brinnande svarta ögon, de är smidiga, modiga, övermodiga, hämndlystna, driftiga, vidskepliga eftersom de är okunniga och därför fanatiska så fort det handlar om tro [...]"

Transylvania, the cultural movement known as the famous ‘Transylvanian School’ [Școala Ardeleană] was in its mature phase.

As early as 11 October 1754, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church Bishop Petru Pavel Aron signed the founding decree for the establishment in the Central-Transylvania town of Blaj the first systematic and modern schools, having Romanian as the teaching language. These schools, which Bishop Aron considered to be ‘fountains of the gifts’, formed the first Enlightenment core of the Romanian culture (Câmpeanu, Dörner & Varga, 2008).⁵

This primary phase of founding schools was followed by the phase of elaboration and affirmation of the national ideology promoted by the ‘Transylvanian School’. This marked the historical and philological victory of the Latinist movement, based on the significant contribution of the four leading figures of the Transylvanian School: Samuil Micu (1745-1806), Petru Maior (1756-1821), Gheorghe Șincai (1754-1816) and Ioan Budai Deleanu (1760-1820).

The great representatives of the ‘Transylvanian School’ authored significant works written not only in the Latin language, the ‘lingua franca’ of the time, but also in the vernacular Romanian language, approaching the first systematic grammar books of the Romanian language (Samuil Micu, *Elementa linguae Daco-Romanae sive Valachicae*, 1780; Petru Maior, *Ortographia Româna și Latino-Valachica una cum Clavi qua Penetralia Originationis Vocum Reserantur* [Romanian and Latin-Valachian spelling], 1819, the translation into Romanian of the Gospel (Gheorghe Șincai, *Biblia din Blaj* [The Blaj Bible], 1789; Samuil Micu, *Biblia* [The Bible], 1795), the first Romanian ABC (Gheorghe Șincai, *Abecedar* [Abecedarian]) and school books of geography, logic, philosophy (Samuil Micu’s *De obște gheografie* [Geography for the people], 1795; *Loghica adecă Partea cea Cuvântătoare a Filosofiei* [Logic, i.e. the eloquent part of philosophy], 1799; *Legile Firei, Ithica și Politica sau Filosofia cea Lucrătoare* [Laws of nature and politics or working philosophy], 1800), a Romanian-Latin dictionary (Samuil Micu, 1806)⁶, Romanian history books (Gheorghe Șincai, *Hronica Românilor și a mai multor Neamuri în cât au fost ele Amestecate cu Românii, cât Lucrurile, Întâmplările și Faptele Unora față de ale Altor nu se Pot scrie pre Îñteles, din mai multe Mii de Autori, în Cursul a Treizeci și Patru de Ani Culese* [Chronicle of the Romans and other nations]⁷, 1811; Petru Maior, *Istoria pentru începutul Românilor în Dachia* [History for early Romanians in Dachia], 1812), church history (Petru Maior, *Istoria Bisericii Românilor atât a cestor Dincoace, Precum și a celor Dincolo de Dunăre* [The history of the Romanian Church both on this side and on the other side of the Danube], 1813), dictionaries (Ioan Budai Deleanu, *Lexicon Românesc-Nemțesc și Nemțesc-Românesc* [German-Romanian and German-Romanian lexicon], 1818), translations of law books (Ioan Budai Deleanu’s translations into Romanian: *Rândueala Judecătorească de Obște* [Judicial order for the people], 1787; *Pravila de Obște asupra Faptelor Rele și Pedepsirea lor* [The public law on evil deeds and their punishment], 1788; *Carte de Pravilă ce Cuprinde Legile asupra Faptelor Rele* [Book of laws for bad deeds], 1807; *Codul Penal* [Penal code]; *Codul civil* [Civil code], 1812).

The philological masterpiece of the *Transylvania School* is the so-called *Lexicon of Buda*, published in 1825 as the first quadrilingual dictionary of the Romanian language: *Lesicon românescu-lătinescu-ungurescu-nemțescu quare de mai multi autori, in cursul’ a trideci, si mai multoru ani s’au lucratu* [Romanian-Latin-Hungarian-German lexicon that has been worked out by several authors during 30 or more years].

⁵ See also the syntheses: Fugariu, F. (Ed.). (1983). *Școala Ardeleană*, vol. I-II, critical edition, notes, bibliography and glossary by Florea Fugariu, introduction by Dumitru Ghișe and Pompiliu Teodor. București: Edit. Minerva

⁶ The original form of the title of the dictionary is “Dictionarium valachico-latino-germanico-hungaricum”.

⁷ English translation: ‘The chronicle of the Romanians and of other peoples insofar as they were mixed with the Romanians, as the things, events and facts of the one regarding the other cannot be written as if everyone understands them, from several thousand authors, gathered over the course of thirty-four years’.

6. Enlightenment and Swedish Freemasonry

Count Engeström's connection with ideas such as the origin of a people and his preoccupation with the idea of the enlightenment of the people highlights above all the specific cultural environment of the country of origin in which he consolidated his professional vocation. At the time, Sweden was ruled by an enlightened despot, Gustav III (1746-1792).

Unlike his predecessors, who had been put on the throne by foreign interests, Gustav III considered himself a Swede, spoke the language of his people, knew its history and felt connected to his homeland (Hurdubețiu, 1985, p. 179; Lagerqvist, 2003, pp. 107-124). His reforms were inspired by close associates who were educated in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Cultural life, the study of history, literature and theatre were all encouraged by the monarch. The arts and sciences also flourished during his reign, due to the contributions of eminent scientists such as Linnaeus, Emanuel Swedenborg, Carl W. Scheele and Olaf Dalin.

The University of Lund, founded in 1666 and headed by Lars von Engeström, was a milestone in the academic life of the Kingdom of Sweden. By 1760 there were around 200 students and the 'curriculum' emphasised the importance of studying philology, theology, law, medicine, classical languages, architecture and history.

Count Engeström's preoccupation of founding a large personal library, as well as his concern for archives and sources fundamental to his country's past, reveal an enlightened spirit, similar to other high dignitaries of the Swedish Freemasonry, which during Lars von Engeström's time was in full consolidation and recognition abroad.

The Grand Lodge of Sweden was formed in 1760 and was recognised as the National Grand Lodge by the Grand Lodge of England in 1770 (Bergroth, 2010, pp. 7-17). This organisation brought together great minds who, through their work, contributed to consolidating the unity of the elite, spreading national values, a liberal spirit of thought and the idea of enlightening the mind through culture and science.

Lars von Engeström therefore remains the high dignitary of Swedish Freemasonry who was closest to the Romanians in Transylvania at a delicate moment in their history. His erudition demonstrated his profound understanding of the realities of Central and Eastern Europe and was able to take the pulse of the times.

With his high academic education and diplomatic vocation, he created the most interesting bridge between the Kingdom of Sweden and Transylvania. Thanks to him, historical research continues to seek answers to sensitive questions.

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