

## Chapter 31 : Happy Days of Youth (II) (1846-1856).

Charles had ten years to prepare for office. In the meantime, he filled in. In June 1847, during his father's travels in the countryside, he led the Cabinet. During his father's stay abroad and his illness June 5, 1852, to April 12, 1853, he was formally prince regent, but matters of state were then handled by a caretaker government of 10 Swedish & 10 Norwegian ministers with alternating a Swedish & a Norwegian chairman. Charles' multitasking makes a complete depiction of his doings rather too messy. I confine myself to the "royal school" (=his military & civil career), his activities in his father's service & his cultural interests as a collector-patron-chancellor-poet-painter.

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After confirmation, Charles was enrolled as an officer volunteer. In the summer of 1843 as mentioned, he and Gustaf underwent basic weapons training in sabre, lance & gun. Then military drill and field exercises combined with personal tutoring and lectures at the war academy. After each exercise he was promoted: 1845 Lieutenant in Svea Royal Guards and Artillery Regiment. 1846 Colonel in ditto and in the Crown Prince's Hussar Regiment. 1847 Major General and Head of the Royal Guard Brigade. 1849 Master-General of the Ordnance. 1853 General. He was not a commissioned officer but he had the knowledge and experience of a reserve officer. He was a field officer, not a staff officer and a Charles XII admirer. Like him, he shared the life of the common soldiers and was supposedly loved for it. Outside the concrete battle situation he has however been judged as incompetent, as has his role model.<sup>1</sup>

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Charles was elected chancellor of Uppsala University April 15, 1844, and chancellor of Lund University May 2, 1844. He was to exercise the Uppsala office 1844-1859 & the Lund office 1846-1856. The posts were two unpaid individual agencies without a college or board, but it had a secretary for the daily business. Since the chancellor was a civil office, the 1809 form of government forbade Charles from holding it, but both his father and grandfather had held it so there was a precedent. Oscar I did not particularly like the idea of Charles as Chancellor, he had rather seen some experienced person, but gave in after being courted by Erik Gustaf Geijer at Uppsala University & Carl August Hagberg at Lund University, both with old ties to the royal house.<sup>2</sup> Charles' way of running the office remotely & without familiarizing himself with the errands caused such conflicts that he became the last Crown Prince in this office.

The office's authority was to appoint lower positions & issue opinions on higher such, which were then appointed by the Cabinet. During Charles' university studies 1844/46 the office was handled by the university's Chancellor. Charles then took over, but the errands were handled by a secretary. During the 1850s, Charles' right to hold office was questioned. Those defending him argued that since the office was unpaid, it was not a civil office in the sense of the law. The conflict came to a head in an appointment case in 1851. The Faculty of Law & the University Management recommended Knut Olivecrona as professor of law rather than Carl Axel Juel. Juel then sought Charles' advice and received from him an oral promise that he would support Juel's candidacy. Olivecrona then made a newspaper issue of the conflict and courted Oscar I & the ministers. Oscar saw his actions as an attack on the monarchy and favoured Juel. The

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<sup>1</sup> Wolke 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Eriksson 1954: ss. 79-85.

ministers, however, favoured Olivecrona. Oscar tried to delay the errand until a more compliant minister of education was elected, but had to give in. Another conflict occurred in 1854. That too a newspaper issue. On May 21 the following year, Charles visited Uppsala & gave the professors involved a personal rebuke. This was obscurely worded but could be interpreted as a protest against the fact that they had made a press issue of the matter, the so-called "chancellor attack". This attack also became a press issue.<sup>3</sup>

Charles' secretary of office was the lawyer etc. John Jakob Nordström (1801-1874), who supposedly shares blame.

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At the same time as the chancellor office, Charles was appointed chairman or 1<sup>st</sup> Honorary Member of the Uppsala Science Society. As such, he did not do any work, but during his studies he attended meetings and had some representation. Later however, he made some worthwhile scientific contributions:

Charles had become acquainted with Sweden through reading the governors' five-year reports, a mixture of annual chronicles and statistics. In 1845-1850 he continued in the same spirit with five statistical maps of Sweden's topology, legal division, agriculture, forestry and mining. His adjutant Christian Lovén also worked on a sixth map about population density. The information was requested from the prefectures, dioceses, etc. They were printed in a limited edition, distributed to interested parties and led to Charles becoming an honorary member of the Royal Geographical Society in London in 1850 & 1858 in the Kaiserlich-königliche geographische Gesellschaft in Vienna. He also received an honourable mention at the 1855 World's Fair in Paris. It was the first iteration of a Swedish national atlas.<sup>4</sup>

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Since Charles' two teachers, philosopher Boström & historian Carlson, later came to be known as monarchist "theorists", it has been assumed that Charles was influenced by their ideas. He listened to their Uppsala university lectures. Boström's Platon-inspired philosophy made his theory different from his practice. In theory, a sovereign king of God's grace was the best. In practice, you had to settle for a constitutional monarch. Boström did not publish anything about the theory and practice of the constitutional monarchy, but gave lectures. He exercised a great deal of influence by these being part of the law school curriculum. The course content was approximately as follows:

The contemporary state ideology (parliamentary democracy) is that the state is the people. According to Boström, the state and the people were, on the contrary, two separate entities, each with its own interests. The people had their own private interests and were represented by their associations (Estates, guilds, professions) and by their politicians. The state was impartial and responsible for the public good. This effectively meant that the officials (with the king as their chief representative) should be kept out of party politics and that the government (as officials) were the representatives of the king, not the people. Boström's philosophy led him to support

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<sup>3</sup> Frängsmyr 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Göransson 1992.

the Parliament of the Estates as a better alternative. Symbolically, he died during the last Estate based Parliament of 1865/66.

Boström's general philosophy of the state was not published until 1859. The sections concerning the monarchy are:

Chapter VIII (On the State Administrator or the Monarch),  
Chapter IX (On the Rights of the Monarch),  
Chapter X (On the monarch's organs)  
Chapter XI (On citizens and peoples of the State)  
Annex (Aphorisms in State Law with special regard to Sweden).

Boström's political science was already outdated when it came into being. European monarchies have roots in feudalism with mutual duties and obligations. A feudal monarch was often powerless and in the hands of his advisers. On the contrary, Boström's monarchies were autocracies of God's grace.<sup>5</sup> Neither a good fit for 19<sup>th</sup> century government.

Unlike Boström, Carlson supported constitutional reform. This meant supporting De Geer and later Oscar II, not Charles and his antiquated ideals. Nor Carlson has written anything about the theory and practice of the constitutional monarchy, the ideas must be extracted from his collected works, but through his political career they gained an impact:

- Carlson was a supporter of Geijer's *La longue durée*, and opposed activist policies. Progress should take its course and reforms should wait until "the right moment".
- Carlson's views on a constitutional monarchy were similar to those of political scientist Benjamin Constant. He saw it as a transitional form to English rule: The king was a mediator between special interests rather than a ruler.

"For C. as for Geijer, the life of the state is at the centre of the historical development and the main guardian of the state idea is the kingdom. The nature of progress therefore essentially depends on how the current bearer of the royal power is able to perceive his own position and the existing requirements, and understand to assert the interests of the state over the individuals and to bring together the various organized forces in society to a strong cooperation in the service of the state."<sup>6</sup> I.e. no autocracy, the king's role was to make partisan interests work together for the good of the country.

As Carlson later put it in his obituary over Charles: "When the time is right, history shall tell the tale of his life and his government in detail. For they both, of necessity, belong together. The memory of a king cannot be separated from that of his government. It belongs to him, if only by the simple act of will, to bring into reality, what many have thought, desired or prepared."<sup>7</sup> I.e. the king is, in the spirit of the time of freedom (1719-1772) reduced to legitimizing the politics of others.

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<sup>5</sup> Boström 1883: del 2, ss. 311-410 & del 3, ss. 157-163.

<sup>6</sup> Stavenow 1927.

<sup>7</sup> Carlson 1872: ss. 3-4.

In 1848, Charles also followed lectures in constitutional law by his secretary Johan Jakob Nordström. Nordström advocated a modified Estate based Parliament, with free elections within corporations, and a graded voting scale based on education & wealth. In particular, Nordström did not want some unicameral parliament & he saw the 1858 reform, that the Estates were allowed joint deliberations, as an ominous development. He was not nearly as hostile to De Geer's bicameral parliament, but advocated an alternative model: Chamber 1 based on class election. Chamber 2 based on general election. This would make it impossible for any party to reach a majority: parliamentarians, farmers and rabble rousers were nipped in the bud. Symbolically, during the last Parliament of the Estates in 1865/66, Nordström lost his seat to F F Carlsson who considered Nordström's fears unjustified. According to Carlsson, class voting was a legacy of the Parliament of the Estates, and would disappear as society split into ever smaller corporations & individuals with different interests.

The later "royal school" consisted of study visits to the state apparatus - the departments, the Parliament & the Cabinet - and to get to know the Swedish and Norwegian politicians & they him. When speaking to them, Charles seems to have mixed his own views with his father's, which caused uncertainty as to his political position. The two major issues of the day were Scandinavia (=a union Sweden-Norway-Denmark) and the constitution (=preventing the monarchy from circumventing the Parliament). Regarding Scandinavia, Charles' idea was to adhere to the Swedish model: Frederick VII was to adopt his brother Oscar as heir to the throne. As regards the constitution, Charles' position was unclear. Two examples of this:

Hartmansdorff, Diary notes, 23.5.1849; RA. About the spirit that enlivened Carl on this occasion testifies the continuation of his [Carl's] messages: »Next Parliament the king turns conservative, soundly beats the mob ... ignores any Parliamentary reforms.»<sup>8</sup>

And the publicist etc. Sven Adolf Hedlund on Charles as king of an enlarged union: "Can one, asked Hedlund after having emphasized the necessity of the Union and all the circumstances that favoured it, gather with full confidence around the Crown Prince in this matter? Can liberal Swedish men assure the Danes that he is not only honest and open but also has "a sincere constitutional mind"? On this, Hedlund never receive a satisfactory answer. Carl dreams of autocracy, »and I would rather chop off my hand, than than support such dreams». Only if the Crown Prince comes to his senses is it possible to discuss the constitution in earnest, Hedlund said."<sup>9</sup>

Eriksson has given Charles' activities in his father's service 1846-1856 the following headlines: Eye to eye with the Estates of the Realm; Trial runs in the Propaganda Center; Behind the Scenes of the Parliament; Try-out as party leader; The crown of Denmark heralds & Between East and West. I summarize what illuminates Charles' personality & politics:

- Through his stately build and cocksure performance, Charles made a great impression on the environment This was exploited by the father, who allowed Charles to air ideas to see how they were received. Erikson summarizes: "If you look closer at the records of his political declarations [of this time], you usually find a mixture of truth, half-truth and lies."<sup>10</sup> In addition Charles took pleasure in shocking the environment.

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<sup>8</sup> Holmberg 1946a: fotnot 1, s. 189.

<sup>9</sup> Holmberg 1946a: s. 247.

<sup>10</sup> Eriksson 1954: s. 181.

- His father was eager to control public opinion. The task of doing so within the realm was left to Charles. He bought up, supported financially & forwarded news to Folkbladet, Folkets Röst, Morgonbladet (Nya Synglaset), Göteborgs-Posten, Söndagsbladet & Örebroposten (?). Possibly more. In exchange for publishing the court's propaganda, the newspapers were given access to police and society news. It was secretive business & Charles worked exclusively through fronts.
- Every three years the Parliament was in session. The Estate community was crumbling, which was good for vote fishing. The father sounded the mood through his political agents. Then started recruitment campaigns where the arguments besides persuasion could be audiences, royal dinners, handouts, offices & Orders. Charles played an important role in the general socializing.
- During the Parliament of 1850/51 Charles was so active that it became a newspaper issue. It was about the election of members of the committees, which were to be filled with reliable supporters. It went well as regarding the nobility and the priests. Less so in the burgher and farmer's Estates. In the newspapers, Charles was pointed out as the leader of the new "junker or court party". The Junkers (not only nobles) supported the king's one man rule (to be distinguished from autocracy) & were compliant with minor changes to the Parliamentary statutes as long as the Estates remained. The party discipline was poor and Charles had the role of whip.
- Faced with the risk that Denmark would be invaded by Prussia in 1848, there were Danish proposals for a merger with Sweden-Norway. Nothing came of this, but Charles was positive and was prepared for himself or his brother Oscar to be adopted by the childless Frederick VII. However, none of the great powers were interested in an enlarged Nordic union. The brothers seem to have discussed how it was to be run. It would have two chambers: Chamber 1 with an equal number of members from each country. Chamber 2 with proportional selection. Foreign policy, defence, customs, etc. would be decided at Union level. Internal autonomy would, however, be significant.
- During the Crimean crisis of 1853-56, King Oscar I conducted secret negotiations with England to retake Finland. Only the princes and his political agents were informed of what was going on. Charles was an intermediary, but seems not to have negotiated himself. The English were displeased by the secrecy, nothing seemed anchored in the government & parliament, but they played along. Charles contributed to the war effort by acting provocatively during the military exercises. However, the Russians folded before there could be any Swedish attack.

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Charles had throughout school read Gothic and patriotic works. In particular, he admired Pehr Henrik Ling's monumental poem Asarna (1816 & 1833). However, his own attempts in the same vein failed. The Sworn Brothers (1848), Heidi, Gylfe's Daughter (1852) & A Viking Tale (1855) were privately printed and given away to friends. A Viking saga was submitted as an anonymous contribution to the Swedish Academy's competition, but was considered too unoriginal. Charles' artless love poems have a much better reputation. These were published in 1858, 1862, 1863 & 1865 and translated into Danish, English, German & French. The poems addressed to Hanna Styrell 1861-1872 are in the hundreds, but only a sample has been

published. Sometimes the inspiration failed and some poems are pure plagiarism. Reviews were measured. One collection of poetry was praised as "a paradigm of neat bookbinding".

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On May 7, 1853, until his death, Charles was chancellor of the Swedish Academy of Arts, attended its meetings, delivered solemn speeches, awarded prizes, and even exhibited his own production. The most prestigious award was the newly created medal for artistic merit "Litteris et Artibus". Initially the purpose was to replace his father, patron of the academy, during his illness of 1852/53.

Charles' authority at the Academy of Arts is unclear, but he had the power of appointment. His most important appointment was his chamberlain Fritz von Dardel in 1864 as chairman. He regarded the staff of the academy as court employees, and subordinated him. In addition, his words carried weight when he emphasized certain activities, for example in the installation speech:

We inhabit a glorious country, not glorious because of our sunshine but because of our seriousness and strength. Our history and our traditions are rich and poetic, full of noble memories that, with good reason, constitute our honour and our pride. For this reason, the history and nature of the fatherland becomes the main object of our art; they form the temple, in which the work of the artist shall be the worship of the lord of nature, the almighty.<sup>11</sup>

Over time, there were many Old Norse works by the professors at the Academy. Charles' reception piece, which all newly appointed members had to donate, was however a landscape painting of Uppsala from the north side. There is an account from the Nordic artists' meeting in Gothenburg June 15-18, 1869, of Charles' relations with them, in which he wanted to describe himself as "the crowned companion":

Here I for the first time saw King Charles as a focal point in the artistic circle. As such, he was far from impressive but all the more gracious. I always got the impression that his feeling of only being a dilettante put him on a lower step in relation to the great artists, than he could have occupied by right of his crown; However, if he remained absolutely passive during the negotiations, which he nevertheless attended, he was quite harsh in his criticism of the works on display. You will remember that when a highly regarded artist once painted an »ancient Nordic combat« and filled the plain with some not too successful corpses, the king asked to be allowed to paint the landscape. To his amazement, the artist regained the painting, but now with a large burial mound and without corpses, and with that message, that the king had put the fallen heroes to rest.<sup>12</sup>

Charles is said to have ended a number of long running conflicts at the academy. (Read: he bought their paintings and gave scholarships for paint & travel, but only to those who did not cause trouble). In a couple of cases also paid support. However, Charles' freedom of action was limited by his economy. He lacked a fortune of his own and the Estates were stingy. He

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<sup>11</sup> Nordensvan 1925: del 2, s. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Dietrichson 1901: del 2, s. 59.

also collected weapons and armour from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>13</sup>, artworks<sup>14</sup>, and paintings<sup>15</sup> which he exhibited at the castles in Stockholm's surroundings. The collection grew over time to about 1000 weapons, 2000 artworks & 500 paintings. The weapons are now in the Royal armoury. Part of the rest are at the National Museum. Charles' interest in weapons also resulted in a renewed production of Charles XI's bodyguard's uniforms, which until 1974 were used at the formal opening of the Parliament.<sup>16</sup>

His entire life Charles painted but without serious intentions. Like Prince Eugen, he mastered landscape painting, but not animals or humans. If the composition required them he asked others to do it.<sup>17</sup>

In his own art, he proved to be a talented dilettante. "A prince among landscape painters" he never set aside time for a solid artistic education. In his youth, he, like his siblings, learned drawing under the direction of the artist and lithographer Anders Lundqvist. He painted watercolours for Captain Berger, although he preferred oil. The summer picture from Uppsala (1853) has a soft, mild tone, approaching lithography in the treatment, is carefully executed, the trees are conventional, but the summer sky's white clouds are painted with a relatively full brush and enlivens the rather drab landscape.

Over the years the king's colour treatment became clear and hard, he painted quickly and impulsively, lacked neither feistiness nor touch, but patience and intensity. Painting was for him a refreshing occupation, he never tired of Swedish landscapes, even painted some Norwegian fjords with snowy mountains. "Most of all he liked our coniferous forests with large stones, waters, marshes etc.", Boklund noted. Scholander referred to the King's landscapes as "marked by a clear and true Nordic atmosphere and a striking cohesion of the whole". He avoided difficult compositional problems, made limited demands on himself, and the lack of skill was not least revealed in him hiring others to help him out. [In 1856 professor J C] Boklund for a time gave him two regular lessons a week, stood behind him, while he painted, sometimes took over the brush, assisted with the composition - even painted landscapes according to the king's wishes.<sup>18</sup>

It is unclear how large Charles' production was. Konnebäck has made an inventory and found 99 paintings 1844-1872 with a peak in the production 1868/69. No artistic development can be discerned but the format becomes larger over time.<sup>19</sup> The paintings were often given away and now appear on auction sites. Some are in the National Museum's collections. Those online, about twenty, are painted 1853-1872 and are a representative selection in the spirit of the Düsseldorf School. In 1865, 22 works were photographed and published in a private printing.<sup>20</sup> Some of these were also published as engravings in *Illustrated Tidskrift*, possibly engraved by Charles himself.

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<sup>13</sup> N.N. 1863.

<sup>14</sup> Falke 1871.

<sup>15</sup> N.N. 1873.

<sup>16</sup> von Schreeb 1951.

<sup>17</sup> Widman 1991: ss. 57-60.

<sup>18</sup> Nordensvan 1925: s. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Konnebäck 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Lamm 1865.

Regarding the quality of the paintings, he exhibited some of them in Paris in 1865 and received a gold medal.

Charles also painted watercolours in the gothic manner, churches and castle ruins, pale moons and worn-out skies, allegedly of psychological interest.

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His father was anxious to get Charles married and after an unsuccessful attempt in 1846/48, Charles June 19, 1850, married Princess Lovisa of the Netherlands (1828-1871), with whom he had two children: Lovisa (1851-1926) & Carl Oscar (1852-1854). Charles already had a reputation as a local stallion, but that was exaggerated (see appendix). He met a lot of woman - both nobles, burghers, peasants, maids, shop assistants & actresses - courted ladies-in-waiting, worshipped some from afar, wrote love poems, risqué letters & boasted to the circle of friends about his alleged conquests. His friend and officer Henrik Gyllenram summarized the whole attitude as "Being the first in the bad, thus worse than everyone else, competes with being the first in the good, better than others. [But everything was so exaggerated that the audience should reasonably have understood that it was made up.]"<sup>21</sup>

Also otherwise Charles in his teens and early twenties was strikingly immature, puppy-like, exuberant & physically uncoordinated. He played amateur theatre but was not good at it. His speeches and declarations were excellent, though. He stuttered at school, but it passed. He never became as long-winded as his brother Oscar, but his improvised poetry was feared. He received all his closest acquaintances (all soldiers) in a comrade's Order, where they amused themselves by unsophisticated means. There are a couple of episodes from 1847 where he receives his guests by throwing snowballs at them, rubbing it in and actually managing to fall over when dancing polka with the adjutant's wife. The Swedish colours were defended at all times and in all weathers. An English embassy official who claimed that it took four Swedes to vanquish a Briton was forcibly taught about his error of judgement. Things were wild for a long time. "The champagne flows, as do the toasts and above all the singing. A roar of the first order echoes through our facility. Some shout for order, others sing their heart out, break chairs or run around like possessed."<sup>22</sup> Charles' much talked about midsummer & barn dances were more of the same.

But after the marriage it calmed down.

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<sup>21</sup> Eriksson 1954: s. 139. [Brev från Henrik Gyllenram till Cecilia Bååth-Holmberg. Omkring 1890.]

<sup>22</sup> af Edholm 1844: del 1, s. 107.