

## Chapter 37 : Prince, Naval Officer & Bachelor (I) (1829-1857).

Oscar Fredrik, Duke of Östergötland, Prince of Sweden-Norway, later known as Oscar II, was born at Stockholm Castle on January 21, 1829, at 00:15 as the son of Crown Prince Oscar (I) of Sweden-Norway (1799-1859) & Josephine of Leuchtenberg (1807-1876). As 3<sup>rd</sup> in order of four brothers, Oscar never expected to be king but fate wanted differently. He was baptized on January 29 in what was later called Vita havet (the White Sea) and there were a number of speeches - both tributes from the Estates & acceptance speeches from King Charles John & Crown Prince Oscar. In the absence of royal relatives, he received the MPs as godparents. (His mother was not a princess of of the blood, but had received the title at birth as a favour of Emperor Napoleon.) Charles John emphasized that he chose the second name Fredrik after Charles XIII's youngest brother Adolf Fredrik (1750-1803) and that Oscar received the same ducal title as he. 128 gunshots were fired.

The day after, a deputation of Ostrogoth MPs showed up to let be known what they expected from their duke: "Early on the young prince shall, under the leadership of his high father and by his example, learn to respect the rights of the people and also learn that the exalted position he inhabits comes with great claims as to his virtue, extensive knowledge and sacrifice of personal happiness."<sup>1</sup>

There are seven longer biographies (Linck 1897; Rydfors 1897; Beyer 1901; de Maricourt 1906; Hallgren red. 1908; Hasselgren 1908; Strand red. 1908), 26 short biographies (Bergström 1874; SBHL 1876; Starbäck & Bäckström 1885: Part del 11, ss. 113-335; NFB 1888; de Fontenoy 1892: ss. 431-442; Almén 1893: ss. 206-261; Power 1897; SBHL 1906; NFB 1914; Böttiger 1918; Boëthius 1925: ss. 1-7,260-273; Lande & Gran 1945: ss. 146-147; Jansen 1949; Nerman m.fl. 1952: ss. 358-360; Hagberg 1953: ss. 196-203; Ohlmarks m.fl. red. 1956: ss. 466-513; Elgklou 1978: ss. 101-106; Nevéus 1992; Elgklou 1995: ss. 133-182; Skott 1996: ss. 71-90; Lagerqvist 1997: ss. 378-397; Liljegren 2004: ss. 106-107; Bratberg 2005 & 2009; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 65-75; Mardal 2015; Norlin 2015: ss. 93-104).

In addition, there are obituaries & memorials (33 memorials 1907/08; three national newspapers 1907-12-09). Oscar also appears in letters, diaries & memories (De Geer 1892; Dardel 1911; Edholm 1919; De Geer 1926 & 1929; Lindorm 1936; Lewenhaupt 1939; af Edholm 1944). Since Oscar's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the throne in 1897, his golden wedding in 1907 & his death the same year were so close in time, it is largely the same information on all these occasions. The specialist literature on his cultural and scientific interests and his policies is presented in their context.

I start by summarizing the longer biographies adding additional information. The focus is on Oscar's social and intellectual development, his attitude to the office and his political methods. The fate of the Union is treated extremely summarily. The Parliamentary politics not at all.

Oscar was confirmed in 1844, received a naval officer degree in 1845, came of age in 1847, married in 1857, crown prince in 1859, king in 1872 and died on December 8, 1907. This chapter about his childhood, youth & bachelor's years extends until the summer of 1857.

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<sup>1</sup> Rydfors 1897: ss. 6-7.

Until 1844 Oscar had the same upbringing as his two older brothers Charles (1826-1872) & Gustaf (1827-1852). His schooling began in early 1835. The main teacher was C J Boström (1797-1866; employed 1833-1837) and F F Carlsson (1811-1887; employed 1837-1846). Boström & Carlsson's pedagogy is described in Charles's biography. Since the syllabus was adapted to the two older brothers, Oscar reasonably did not profit as much from the teaching as they did, but seems to have managed. The descriptions of Oscar differ. As a child, he was lively except in official contexts when he kept a low profile. According to Carlsson, he was stubborn, questioned everything and was quite annoying.<sup>2</sup> According to other teachers, he was alternately troublesome & manipulative. The first lesson with his Norwegian teacher Otto Aubert, he wanted to be addressed as Prince Oscar, not simply Oscar, which attitude Aubert rewarded by slapping him. Oscar then changed his tactics, threw himself around Aubert's neck whenever he did something that appealed to him and thanked him in the most flattering way.<sup>3</sup>

Carlsson introduced essay writing as an educational method. Probably this is why Oscar already when thirteenth was a good stylist with a detailed and graphic style. He had a talent for music and he and Gustaf were taught by the composer Adolf Fredrik Lindblad (1801-1878) according to the Logier method, which consisted of students competing with each other on their respective pianos, in their case on their respective organs, combined with theory of harmony. Later in life he both composed & wrote poetry. As a teenager Oscar was long, thin, with a predisposition for "hip sickness", reserved in his manner & strikingly tired. The latter was interpreted as an effect of the demanding teaching. On May 15, 1844, he was confirmed in the Castle's chapel by the archbishop. His religious beliefs are little known, but they were in no way dogmatic. Like his teacher Boström, he believed in a personal God, denied the existence of hell and believed that grace could be earned by hard work.

In 1844, Charles & Gustaf left school for Uppsala University and the last 1.5 years Oscar was supervised by the professor of aesthetics Gustaf Reinhold Rabe (1813-1870). Rabe had a doctorate in Roman eloquence and exercised a profound influence on Oscar's intellectual development. On February 5, 1846, Oscar passed the baccalaureate exam in front of the minister of education Silfverstolpe, the Norwegian prime minister in Stockholm Krogh, Uppsala professors Sellén & Winqvist and his teachers Rabe & Carlsson. Since he had already been interrogated in mathematics for his naval officer's degree, it sufficed with Latin, history, geography & statistics. He then spent two months in Uppsala with his brothers. He returned there in 1847, 1848 and 1850 in the company of his brother Gustaf. There were many breaks. The effective duration appears to have been two terms.

In Uppsala, Oscar listened to lectures in literary history (Atterbom), Latin writers (Sellén), the Palatinate (Carlson), the origins of the Swedish Constitution (Winqvist), finances (Juel), certain parts of the Criminal and Civil Code (Boëthius) & public culture (Hwasser). In addition, he received individual instruction in philosophy (Boström), aesthetics (Atterbom), Italian (Böttiger), public law (Boëthius) & mathematics (Malmsten). Oscar kept careful notes, he was particularly interested in Carlson's lectures on the pfalzic warrior kings. He attended the meetings of the Science Society where he was 1<sup>st</sup> Honorary Member and he devoted himself to writing. With such a schedule, there was little student life but he socialized in official circles. Oscar's isolation may also have been due to the political mood of the time: "The student meetings and the Scandinavianism had brought the academic youth a higher

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<sup>2</sup> Petersson 1990.

<sup>3</sup> Hadenius & Nevés 1960: s. 12.

conception of their importance than they reasonably possessed; The Germans then broke into Denmark and encouraged active politics. Then came the revolutionary year of 1848. Every continental rebellion was greeted by the immature students as harbinger of the freedom and happiness to come.”<sup>4</sup> There is a record that Oscar in 1848 despite the fact that he formally studied at Uppsala University for that reason spent as little time there as possible. In addition:

”He was” - according to a depiction from this time [1846/47] - ”more than reasonably present at the balls, dances, soirees, gatherings, brunches, lunches, dinners, nachspiels etc. of the high and higher society”.<sup>5</sup>

However, he did not favour hunting, horse riding, ”country life” or like. He was a man of the world and a bookworm in the Swedish university tradition. The soirees were singing nights where everyone was supposed to contribute. In 1848 Oscar had 1<sup>st</sup> court singer Isak Albert Berg (1803-1886) as a teacher. Oscar was a strong and good sounding tenor well into his 70s.

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In 1832, Oscar was enrolled as a volunteer at the Royal Guards on horseback but received his military training in the navy. It is not clear whether he badgered his father into it or whether his father wanted to spread the sons between the branches. Oscar's younger brother August also received his military training in the navy. Oscar's naval studies were led by the captain of the Norwegian Navy Wolfgang Wentzel Haffner (1806-1882), who was also the brothers' mathematics teacher. Oscar received lessons in everything that belonged to the naval officer profession - spherical geometry, weapons theory, etc. In the summer of 1839 he was acting cadet on the frigate Gothenburg during a 14-day introductory trip Dalarö-Visby-Karlskrona and back with his father. In the summer of 1840 he was acting naval officer in the Stockholm archipelago on the command vessel Hulda. The schedule included navigation, target shooting & bomb throwing with interruptions for play, fishing & raspberry picking. In 1842, however, it was for real. Oscar embarked Gothenburg on the Norwegian cadet corvette Örnén for exercises in the Kattegat & Baltic Sea. He was half sick for real, half seasick, had the night watch and stood by the rails and threw up. His fellow cadets claimed that despite this he was happy. Maybe he was. In 1843, it was similar service in the North Sea on the frigate af Chapman, a peculiar mixture of canon drill, manoeuvring, studies, dancing and song evenings. The first day, a sailor fell from the rig and killed himself.

As long as they were at sea, Oscar was (almost) treated like any cadet. The port visits were another story. He was welcomed by official deputations and there were celebrations. Since it was impossible to maintain incognito, Oscar did not even try, but wore the Order of the Seraphim pinned to the cadet uniform, invited notables to dinner at the officer's mess and received the praise of various crowds of landlubbers.<sup>6</sup> In 1844, in the capacity of 5<sup>th</sup> class cadet, he accompanied the frigate Josephine on an expedition to Gibraltar & Tangier. At sea he was (almost) treated as the cadet he was, in port he both behaved and was treated according to his rank: He was accompanied by the companion Johan Gabriel Eketrä (1808-1889) in case of need.

On June 18 and 19, 1845, he underwent the examen for a naval officer's degree. The board was led by the head of the Department of Marine defence Baron Carl August Gyllenranat

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<sup>4</sup> Linck 1897: ss. 33-34.

<sup>5</sup> Hasselgren 1908: s. 74.

<sup>6</sup> ”De unga prinsarne”. Aftonbladet, 1843-08-24, s. 2; Aftonbladet, 1843-09-01, s. 3.

& Norwegian Prime Minister Fredrik Due. The board's opinion was that Oscar “had answered the questions in a clear and consistent manner, proving that he knew the marine sciences and was competent to exercise command.”<sup>7</sup> On July 19 he was appointed second lieutenant in the Swedish & Norwegian Navy and in the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Grenadier Regiment (I4). There was a debate about his competence. As a cadet, Oscar had tended to skip those part of the that did not amuse him and there had been a lot of representation in the ports. ”It was *the prince* who went to sea, not the *cadet*.” There was a fear among the naval commanders that it would continue in the same vein. If he was given a high command later in life, it was not certain that he would be able to exercise it.<sup>8</sup>

After his appointment, he served as platoon commander during a manoeuvre and as ”ship commander” of the cannon dinghy Valhall in the archipelago fleet. The following year, June 4, 1846, he served as first lieutenant on the frigate Eugénie & lieutenant in the Grenadiers. The frigate was part of a Swedish-Norwegian training squadron that practised cruising in the Baltic for three months. Oscar also visited the court of Saint Petersburg, where Nicolai I's eldest daughter got married. On October 11, Eugénie continued on a long journey to the Mediterranean and was not back until June 23, 1847. Oscar's servant wrote a diary about the trip, which was later published.<sup>9</sup> The route was Copenhagen-Gibraltar-Piraeus-Athens-Smyrna-Alexandria-Cairo-Naples-Rome-Pisa-Florence-Genoa-Toulon- Portsmouth-London and back. It was no naval service but an educational round trip. Oscar & his entourage toured, climbed the pyramids, feasted and made courtesy visits to royals and other notables. The visit to the Pope was later much talked about:

Being on a visit to Rome, he made arrangements for an interview with the Pope. He was received at the Vatican with all the pomp and ceremony in the case of visits from reigning monarchs. As he approached the Throne Room the venerable Pontiff came to meet him and extended his hand in greeting.

A Catholic Monarch would have bent his knee and kissed the proffered hand; Protestant Royalties who had previously visited him had bowed low before him. King Oscar, however, who is about six feet four inches in height, entered with head erect, seized hold of the Holy Father's hand, shook it heartily, and then, stooping down, threw his arms around the fragile form of the Pope and imprinted three sounding kisses on his withered cheeks, just in the same manner as he is accustomed to do when visiting brother monarchs, whose sovereignty is of a temporal instead of spiritual nature.

The horror of the prelates and courtiers in attendance on the Pontiff can be more easily imagined than described. The Pope himself, however, was much amused and took a great fancy to this Anak [giant] of European monarchs.<sup>10</sup>

The event is undated - it may also have taken place during his visit in 1888 - and possibly the story is apocryphal. It is, however, what one can expect from an 18-year-old prince. The official literature consistently downplays Oscar's high spirits in favour of his royal dignity.

After his return, Oscar was appointed captain-lieutenant in the Navy & captain in the army (1847). Further appointments were to Captain & Major (1850), Commander & Lieutenant-Colonel (1853), Commander & Colonel (1855), Rear-Admiral & Major General (1856), Head

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<sup>7</sup> Linck 1897: s. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Najaden, 1846-04-21; Dagligt Allenda 1846-04-?; Aftonbladet, 1846-05-02.

<sup>9</sup> H-n red. 1869.

<sup>10</sup> de Fontenoy 1892: ss. 433-435; Ström 1908: s. 388.

of the Royal Guard Brigade (1857) and Vice Admiral & General (1858). The official literature on Oscar praises his competence but is difficult to assess. As a naval officer, he was a scholar rather than a sea dog.

1848-1856 Oscar each year served 3-6 months in the Navy: summertime sea duty & representation in the ports; wintertime committee work. In 1848 he spent three months at Eugénie and also served at Skeppsholmens naval station. In 1849 he commanded the Swedish brig Nordenskjöld, in 1850 the Norwegian corvette Nordstjernen. In 1849/54 he was a member of three committees concerning the Stockholm Naval Station, the Archipelago Fleet and the naval officer training. In 1851 he commanded the Swedish corvette Lagerbjelke. In 1852, during a manoeuvre, he was squadron commander for a battalion of cannon dinghies, 1853 & 1854 flag captain (chief of staff) for a squadron of four Swedish & two Norwegian warships under Admiral von Krusenstjerna, in 1854 he also commanded a steamship squadron. In 1855 he commanded parts of the archipelago fleet. In 1856, he visited France and England, the signatories of the "November Treaty" - a Crimean War-induced defence union against a Russian attack on Sweden-Norway. Afterwards Oscar incognito visited France, England, Holland & Germany in a marriage errand which the following year was completed.

During the reign of Oscar, there were rumours of plans 1848-1853 that he would be adopted by the Danish king Fredrik VII in order to, in a Scandinavian spirit, gather Sweden-Norway-Denmark under the same crown. If this was the case, the proposal fell in 1853 with the Danish Act of Succession which, in accordance with the Treaty of London of 1852, made Prince Christian (IX) (1818-1906) the Danish heir to the throne. Further rumours alleged that it was Oscar's brother Karl who put obstacles in the way.<sup>11</sup> Other rumours put it the other way round. He is also supposed to have been offered Greece (1862), Poland (1863) and Spain (1870). Nothing of this has been confirmed.

Oscar's 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the succession changed with the death of his brother Gustav in 1852 and the death of his nephew Carl Oscar in 1854 to a 2<sup>nd</sup> place. In the autumn of 1857, his father Oscar I's health was so poor that he de facto abdicated. In 1859, Charles XV became King and Oscar (II) Crown Prince.

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While prince Oscar wrote marine technical & debate literature: His first article was about the Battle of Eckenförde fjord April 5, 1849 (1849). Later articles were about the Archipelago Fleet's landing troops (1849), a criticism of the Balzar von Platen archipelago fleet (1851) and a proposal for a drill regulation for the Norwegian Navy's landing troops (1855). Oscar supported the idea of a powerful high-sea fleet rather than an archipelago defence, but never spoke in public of it. Instead, he published through fronts and exercised a private influence within the family. Oscar had in varying degrees mastered Danish, Norwegian, Latin, German, French, English, Italian and Spanish. He helped out in his father's office, where his language skills were welcome. The father was often in Norway, and Oscar accompanied him.

In early 1856/1857, Oscar's activism became a matter of both the press and the Parliament. He was accused of exceeding his authority: For example, his critique of the disciplinary problems at Karlskrona Naval Base, for trying to prevent his brother Charles's appointment to viceroy

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<sup>11</sup> Hasselgren 1908: ss. 59-60.

of Norway while trying to acquire the post himself and for trying (in an unknown manner) to influence the Constitutional Committee on the "prince regent issue". This with Norway seems to have been an attempt to acquire an area of responsibility of his own. His future "in-laws" (the prince and queen of Nassau) were anxious that he should have a proper position so that their niece would not be married to "a princely idler". A proposal was prepared for him as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy - similar to that of Charles being Command-in-Chief of the army, but by then the criticism of Oscar was so harsh that it was never presented.<sup>12</sup> He was depicted both as "a cowardly and inept naval officer, an egotistical and cold calculating machine" & a schemer.

There were also conflicts surrounding Oscar's appanage. This, according to some, should be given to the king as a lump sum and he in turn distribute it as an allowance to children and other relatives. This would make it easier for the Parliament to bargain. The objection to this was that the princes would then be subordinate the king, not the Parliament. Oscar was therefore given a personal appanage, even though it was regarded as too high. Was he really in need of his own palace & court?<sup>13</sup>

Oscar then retired to private life and devoted himself to the family, the war sciences and art. There is a memoir draft from 1871 in which he bitterly complains about his treatment.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Aftonbladet, 1857-05-15.

<sup>13</sup> Aftonbladet, 1856-11-04; 1856-11-24; 1857-02-19; 1857-02-28; 1857-03-12; 1857-03-26; 1847-04-03.

<sup>14</sup> Michanek 1979: ss. 42-45.

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