

Chapter 38 : Heir Prince, Author and Father (II) (1857-1872).

In the autumn of 1857 Oscar and his wife Sophie of Nassau moved into their palace at Gustaf Adolfs Torg. Oscar's brother Charles - prince regent since September 25, 1857 - was after all the conflicts not very keen to give Oscar a place in the spotlight so he had plenty of time to cultivate his literary and scientific interests. He submitted an anonymous contribution to the Academy's annual prize competition, a cycle of poetry about forgotten naval battles, which at a solemn ceremony on 20 December 1857 was awarded with a 2nd prize. It began with what appears to be Oscar's most familiar poem "The Baltic Sea". ("You blueish sea, that for millennia...") At a dinner the next day Oscar expressed his gratitude:

The waves beating the ship and the archipelago islets have been my youth's most beautiful music. My youth's dearest studies were of those revered and glorious memories of our country in its prime. I have wished to add my small contribution to this altar, as I have dared tune my weak lyre to sing of Sweden's naval memories. They have won me honourable attention from the Swedish Academy, which I hardly dared hope they would be deemed worthy. Receive therefore, gentlemen, my heart's artless, but heartfelt gratitude.¹

Oscar's oratory - a rhetorical machine - at first attracted admiration but later in life ridicule. I am therefore frugal with quotes. Oscar also devoted himself to Swedish landwar history (1859-65), translations - "Cid" by von Herder (1859) & "Torquato Tasso" by Goethe (1861) - poems, poetry, "mood pieces", short stories & essays on mixed subjects. Until 1907 six volumes.² Over 200 of his speeches are published. None of this has survived the passing of time. Around 1890 it was time for self-examination:

The really good speech is like a ship, carefully loaded with valuable goods. It perseveres in storms and high waves; it steers a safe course towards its presumed goal; it arrives with everything in good shape. May one never be tempted to sacrifice solidity of content for the superficial triumph of words. Such a victory does not last.³

In 1859, when Charles became King and Oscar Crown Prince, he deputized for his brother during his travels. Oscar himself also travelled extensively to get to know Sweden-Norway and its people. Oscar however was only crown prince of Sweden, not Norway. This was due to the Norwegian interpretation of their constitution. The succession was treated as unclear as long as Queen Louise was of childbearing age. In Norway, Oscar was only heir apparent. In practical terms, it meant that he did not become Norwegian viceroy. Attempts were made in 1862 and 1866 to change the Norwegian constitution to allow it, but were not successful. The people – both Swedes & Norwegians – were however curious about their crown prince and heir apparent and there was great commotion where ever he went. His first trip was to Öland in 1858. The second was to Gotland in 1859. In 1860 he made a third trip in Norway through Jotunheimen. There was speculation that these trips were a way to undermine his brother's popularity in the country. In such case, Oscar failed miserably. Charles' extrovert style was much more appreciated than Oscar's verbose speeches – over the head of most of them. Oscar also travelled extensively abroad with his wife & children to seaside & spa resorts and for representation. At the age of 32, he was still in good enough shape to March 23 in Nice stop a carriage of runaway horses from driving down a cliff for which he was awarded the French

¹ Hasselgren 1908: ss. 94-95.

² Almquist 1908.

³ Linck 1897: s. 113. [Ur Oscars anteckningsbok, omkring 1890.]

rescue medal. Oscar later placed great value on this medal because it was so honestly deserved. He was not particularly amused by hunting - he was a bad shot - but in 1863 he actually managed down an ibex though it took four shots.⁴ The stay in Nizza was allegedly to give his wife the opportunity to rest, but also gave him the opportunity to meet Italy's newly appointed King Victor Emanuel & study the French Navy, that, in the manner of the Americans, was replacing their old ships of the line with armoured steam.

In 1861 Oscar was (maybe) diplomatic envoy when Charles sought English support for his Danish policy. This is one of the murkier parts of Swedish history, and it is not altogether clear what took place. In 1863 he participated in the meeting at Bäckaskog, where Charles and Frederick VII promised to support one another in the event of war. After the meeting he travelled for several months with his family in Central Europe. Then the Dano-German War started. In the spring of 1864, Oscar was given command of a Swedish-Norwegian squadron in readiness in the event of a German invasion. However, the need did not arise and in June it was dissolved.

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As crown prince, Oscar was active in a number of associations and committees. Although his brother prevented him from playing a political role, the sheer amount of his activities caught the public eye:

- Oscar occasionally stood in for Charles as prince regent but was badly informed. He insisted on being briefed during the cabinet meetings, which led to friction and criticism for him being overzealous. He continued his anonymous contributions to the press debate. Topics varied between defending the Bernadotte dynasty and the trivial. The articles, letters to the editor, etc. were written by fronts who were instructed to continue until the opponent gave in. However, he completely avoided taking a stand on the issue of representation.
- Oscar's military career continued. In 1857 he was appointed commander of the Royal Guards, in 1858 vice admiral & lieutenant general and in 1859 first adjutant of the King's staff. In 1860 he served as chairman of the Exams Regulations Committee and in 1863 chairman of the Committee for the fortification of the Capital. 1858-1866 he was inspector of the navy training camp, 1866-1872 inspector of military schools, 1865-1872 chairman of the military society where he lectured on war science & ?-? member of the Naval Society of Karlskrona. In 1860 he led the Swedish-Norwegian squadron which transported Charles to the coronation in Trondheim, in 1861 he led a Swedish-Norwegian training squadron & in 1864 a Swedish-Norwegian contingency squadron in the event of a German invasion. Oscar's ideal was to take the fight to the enemy through a powerful high-sea fleet. In 1866, when the navy was split into the navy and the archipelago artillery, he marked his dissatisfaction by resigning from the post of inspector of the navy training camps.
- 1865-1872, he was chairman of the executive committee of the Swedish Red Cross (The association of volunteers for the care of wounded and sick in the field, as it was then called). At the first SRK meeting May 24, 1865, he clarified his views on the subject:

⁴ Oscar, kronprins. [Om gemsjakt i Alperna.] Svenska jägareförbundets nya tidskrift, årg 2, 1864, s 158-164.

Only those divorced from reality can dream of eternal peace while passions still rage; For as long as hatred and envy still divides mankind and creates conflicts between individuals and families, between states and between peoples; there will be war. Should we let us selves ignore it, look the other way, do nothing? No! That is for cowards and those lacking heart! We do what is possible. What we can not prevent, we must relieve. This is the feeling that has gathered us all into this room to found this association.⁵

During the Franco-German War, the association contributed through the collection of bandages etc. to the care of the wounded. At the same time, the Norwegian Red Cross (NRK) was formed but as a separate organization.⁶

- Oscar was very active in the academies & similar societies: (Honorary) member of the Academy of Sciences, Literature, History & Antiquities, the Academy of Free Arts, the Academy of War Sciences & the Musical Academy. In his speeches at the Academy of Fine Arts, he did not unexpectedly promote Nordic works of art such as Molin's Bältesspännaren (two wrestling males). After his brother Gustaf's death in 1852, he was appointed president of the Science Society of Uppsala & 1858-1860, he was responsible for the continued publication of *Archives to Enlighten on the History of Swedish Wars and War Establishments*. Within the Swedish Academy of Literature he 1859-1865 published his most ambitious work, on the rescue of Swedish Pomerania 1711-1713. On May 29, 1868, he was awarded an honorary doctorate of law at Lund University. Until 1900 he also received honorary doctorates from the universities of Bologna, Leiden, Munich, Oxford, Vienna & Cambridge.
- Oscar also participated in conferences: Natural Sciences (1863) & Economy (1867). In particular, he was interested in geographical research. From 1861 he supported Sweden-Norway's Polar expeditions to Spitsbergen & Greenland and Sven Hedin's Asia expeditions. Actually, some of Spitsbergen is named after him.⁷
- What was most talked about was his commitment to the academy of music. At the time there was a struggle between professional artists who made a living from their profession and economically independent amateurs. Oscar was 1874-1872 elected president of the Academy in an attempt to settle the dispute, which he actually seems to have succeeded in. He also reformed the academy's music education on the model of the Paris Conservatory and worked for a quality improvement of church music. In his speeches, he advocated a patriotic art based on Swedish folk music.⁸
- Oscars probably greatest contribution was to the business community. He opened exhibitions and participated in the organizing committees for arts, crafts, agriculture & industry exhibitions in Sweden & abroad: Karlstad (1862), London (1862), Stockholm (1866) & Paris (1867). He spent two months in Paris. In addition to overseeing the exhibition, he made study visits to the newly established French Red Cross, and to the Paris Conservatory of Music.

⁵ Hasselgren 1908: ss. 145-146.

⁶ Saeter 1965: s. 4.

⁷ Nathorst 1907.

⁸ Morales 1939; Danell 1948.

- As pointed out earlier, Oscar was a good dancer and participated in all the castle, Amarant & Innocence balls that were held in the capital. He also organized his own balls, soirees and dinners. In 1864 he bought a property in Scania, which was named Sofiero and served as a summer residence. This was rebuilt in several stages and was not ready until 1876.

Oscar's broad interests later, when king, came in handy. He had a well-deserved reputation for knowing everyone & everything.

In 1858 and 1861, attempts were made to appoint Oscar as one of the 18 members of the Swedish Academy. The attempts are said to have foundered on their brother's jealousy.⁹ Upon Charles' accession on 8 July 1859, Oscar also tried to be elected as Charles's successor as University Chancellor. There was some support for him personally, but the candidacy was rejected on constitutional grounds - as a member of the royal house he was not allowed to hold a civil office. Charles' protests against the Nomination Committee's decision - that the office because it was unpaid was not civil but royal – were in vain.¹⁰

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Since Oscar both at the Royal Castle School and at the University had the philosopher C. J. Boström as teacher, he is believed to have been influenced by his idealistic Platon-inspired philosophy: The world we live in is but a pale reflection of the ideal world. The following paragraph from 1871 is usually cited as evidence:

The savage listens enchanted to the voices of the tones, though he cannot grasp them, and the art of tone also exerts a powerful influence on the educated man. The child slumbers at his mother's lullaby, moving from this happy little world to even happier dreams. Young boys and girls find in poetry and singing the most beautiful expressions of first love, in sweet memory for life, however deep the wounds. To the sound of music, the warrior approaches death looking it in the eye, chest exposed, courage implacable. The temple unveils, the Jacobs ladder sounds and prayers ascend to heaven. The monarch, the statesman, the warrior, the peasant, the lady of the world and the servant, the millionaire and the beggar, *all* unite to praise and worship *Him* who is the Creator, the Atonement, the Consummator. And finally, when the weary wanderer goes to rest, music follows him even on the last journey, a farewell offering: when the dust is lowered into the grave, the soul ascends to eternal bliss listening to the harmony of the spheres.¹¹

With that attitude, there was no reason for him to appreciate the naturalism of recent times, nor did he. Oscar & the Royal Academies fought against the "evil and destructive forces" of time as best they could. Most famous of "Oscar's men" has become the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy Carl David Wirsén (1842-1912; secretary 1883-1912). This should not be understood as Oscar being reactionary, back to nature or even conservative. He seems to me like a pragmatic Bismarck-lookalike who acted under the aegis of his royal image. In everything but art - the constitutional discussions, industrial and

⁹ Michanek 1979: ss. 70-71.

¹⁰ Frängsmyr 2005: ss. 109-110.

¹¹ Linck 1897: s. 113-114. [Ur kronprins Oscar festtal i Arvfurstens palats den 2 december 1871 efter musikaliska akademiens sekularfest.]

social policy, the natural and military sciences - Oscar was voluntarily or involuntarily at the forefront of development.

The Franco-Prussian War did not come as a shock to Oscar, but he had believed that the French would fare better. In 1871 he was in London where he met both the overthrown Napoleon III & the German crown prince Wilhelm (II). Napoleon was seriously ill & blamed his setbacks on the military & public opinion – the public had been incited by the press to support this uncertain war. It is unclear if Oscar knew of Marx but he did a study visit to the London slums - walked around East End with a discreet entourage of three plain-clothes police officers & hoped that something like this - "an abyss of social hatred and dissolution" - would never affect Sweden.¹²

¹² Steckzén 1959: ss. 262-276.