

## Chapter 53 : Princess Margaretha of Sweden-Norway (1899-1977).

Princess Margaretha Sofia Lovisa Ingeborg of Sweden & Norway (1899-1977), later Princess of Denmark & Iceland, was born on June 25, 1899, at the villa Parkudden Djurgården in Stockholm. May 22, 1919, she married her half-cousin Prince Axel of Denmark & Iceland (1888-1964) and had two sons.

In adulthood Margaretha avoided all publicity, so most of the information about her is from her childhood and representation. There is a long biography (Buchwaldt & Rosvall 2013) - according to the authors something of a whodunnit, three short biographies (Swahn 1930: ss. 222-227; Ohlmarks 1979: ss. 120-121; Skott 1996: ss. 255-258) and a number of photos & features. Since Margaretha even forbade her friends and acquaintances to hold commemorative speeches or write obituaries, she was quickly forgotten. There are no letters, amateur pictures, interiors or even gossip. The recipients were asked to burn her letters, which they appear to have done. She wanted to remain anonymous and she has succeeded.

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Carl & Ingeborg had the ambition to be parents for real. The method was to prevent the children getting attached to their nanny, governess & teacher. The governesses changed and the teachers did not live in. Carl Jr: "The relationship between our parents and us children was more like that between friends - six comrades. Our upbringing was not strict but it was correct. By that I mean that we were told how we should behave in different situations. But they never forced us into anything."<sup>1</sup> It is also often pointed out that Ingeborg constantly wanted the children around her. Or to put it plainly: They would be monitored. Since Carl & Ingeborg alternated between their roles as comrade & educator, the children were always on edge. One could never know how the parents would behave from one moment to the next. Initiatives of your own invited criticism. Better to lie low.

Margaretha first went to kindergarten. Then the Princess School. This consisted of two age groups: Margaretha + three peers and the two year younger Märtha + a peer. The princesses KEPT a certain distance. For example, they did not eat together with the other classmates. Margaretha considered herself responsible for the siblings and both admonished, aided & scolded them when necessary. The teaching followed the curriculum for an eight-year girls' school + extra language teaching in English, German & Danish. French was neglected. The teachers changed, but three of them were Anna Atterling (?-?), Marit von Storage (1884-?) & Nancy Sörensen (?-?). Margaretha's three classmates were Stina Rålamb (1899-1991; m. Nordenfalk), Olga Aminoff (1899-1987; m. Löwenhielm) & Brita Steuch (1898-1972). These were the daughters of court employees and 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> hand acquaintances. The girls were inseparable for a few years & socialized even in adulthood. Rålamb left when two years remained and graduated at a public school. It is unclear how the other graduates were treated. Perhaps they were interrogated in the presence of some censor but information is lacking. On April 15, 1916, Margaretha was confirmed at the Royal Chapel by Archbishop Nathan Söderblom.

When 11, Margaretha received a toy stove, which was widely described as her & the sisters' first lesson in the housewife profession. In 1916/17, she attended *Sällskapet barnavård's education in baby care*, 1917/18 *Jenny Åkerström's household school*. Margaretha was cheery and liked dancing. Because mother Ingeborg acted as a chaperon, even taking her dancing

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<sup>1</sup> Møller 1990: s. 20.

partner if she suspected something inappropriate, it was not easy for her to manage her romances. At one of the family meetings she met Prince Axel of Denmark & Iceland (1888-1964). The engagement was announced on March 24, 1919.

There is a story that Mary of Teck, mother of the English heir to the throne Edward (VIII), during the half-year secret engagement, wrote Margaretha's mother about bringing the two together. Ingeborg is supposed to have told the doctor Emil Stangenberg, who told his family and someone in the family passed it on to journalist Margit Fjellman. Difficult to verify.

The wedding with Axel took place in Storkyrkan May 22 that year and they settled in a large villa Bernstorffshøj, in Gentofte outside Copenhagen, a wedding gift. Both Axel & Margaretha lost a lot of money when Landmandsbanken crashed in 1922. Axel was forced to take positions in the business sector and they lived a relatively frugal life. They travelled a lot. In 1930, they made a several-month Asian roundtrip to Japan as "trade ambassadors". Axel was also Denmark's representative in the International Olympic Committee, and Margaretha 1932-1958 attended all the Olympics. In 1929 she payed for a fencing prize - probably in the women's floret class, which was to be introduced at the 1932 International Championships in Copenhagen.

Margaretha made her first acquaintance with charity work as a flower girl at the charity bazaars of Swedish Crown Princess Margaretha and Soeur de Charité. In 1901, she gave her name to "the society Margaretha hemmet for the care of epileptic children with mental disabilities" and in 1914 she laid the foundation stone for the home itself in Knivsta. No other Swedish activity is known. In Denmark, she likewise gave her name to the sanatorium Margaretha gården near Hornbæk Nordsjælland, financed through a nationwide wedding gift. Here, too, she does not appear to have played any further role. Later she supported local associations. Information before the war is missing but in 1945 until her death she was chairman of *Gentofte Børnevenner* who dealt with child care and education in various forms: playhouses, care of mentally ill children etc. In 1946 she joined the Women's Voluntary Defence Service to mark her support for the movement.

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The image of Margaretha's person is fragmented. Biographies say one thing, incidental findings something else.

- According to incidental findings, she was a self-confident young woman with demands on herself from home to lead a Christian life and to do good. Family ideology was that the only difference between high and low was in the works: "Margaretha and her two sisters learned early on that humility always trumps book learning & birth. ... A princess should set a good example as to kindness, modesty and civic virtue. Everything else is secondary."<sup>2</sup>
- According to the biographies she, on the contrary, was shy, insecure & mother-bound which was hidden by etiquette & a handsome exterior. Her reserved way was interpreted as arrogance. She spent most of her time at home, in private and in social activities, supported her husband, long distances travelling, ambulated between the courts, had an extensive correspondence, talked a lot on the phone, attended family

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<sup>2</sup> Swahn 1930: s. 223.

holidays, balls, Nobel festivities and everything else that required charm, care, elegance & language skills.

She died on January 4, 1977, in Kongsted, near Faxe, Denmark. The cause of death was blood clot - probably caused by her smoking.