

Chapter 6 : The Bernadotte Candidacy (June 21 - August 21 1810).

The 1810 election is easiest to understand based on the fact that Sweden after the loss of Finland was squeezed between its two heir enemies Denmark & Russia. Napoleon even wanted to create a new Kalmar Union Denmark-Norway-Sweden, with Sweden as a vassal state of Denmark. This was too indigestible for the Swedes, who proved themselves willing to choose anyone as heir to the throne, as long as he was not a Dane.

The election was between the two candidates of Denmark and France: Prince Frederick of Augustenburg and Marshal Jean Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo. The advocates of Prince Frederick emphasized his legitimacy. The advocates of the Prince of Ponte Corvo based themselves on his personal qualities of energy & competence. However, since the Swedes did not wish to submit to either Denmark or France, the election was also about how free the two candidates stood from their respective rulers.

The literature on the choice of heir came in three instalments: The self-experienced (Engeström 1810 & 1876: part 2, ss. 158-178; Mörner 1810, 1829 & 1853; Scott 1827a; Ernouf 1868; Alin ed. 1899a; Alin 1899b: ss. 12-59; de Suremain 1902: ss. 162-196). Wide archive studies (Crusenstolpe 1837a: ss. 171-229 & 1861: part 1, ss. 462-477; von Schinkel et al. 1852: part 5, ss. 172-279; Ahnfeldt ed. 1883: vol 1, ss. 285-396; Ahnfeldt & van Suchtelen 1887: part 1, ss. 137-179; Alin ed. 1899a & 1899b: ss. 12-59; Boëthius 1904 & 1906; Fröding 1905: ss. 185-204; Coquelle 1907; Barton 1921: ss. 250-301; Rising 1943: ss. 1-40). “The final version“ (Waldén 1935; Thomasson 1937; Holm 1964; Weibull 1971 & 1991: ss. 9-25; Karlbom 1979; Mörner 1987; Wennberg 1994; Mörner & Mörner 2000; Torstensson ed. 2009; Berggren 2010: ss. 31-36).

There is also an account of the Swedish-Danish-Norwegian diplomacy of 1807-10 (Sather 2015).

The description below follows three tracks: The political background; what the MPs in Örebro knew about Jean's person & what entered into the decision. I start with the “standard version“ devoid of anecdotes, speculation & foreign policy.

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The Swedes are the Frenchmen of the North.
Unknown, 18th century.

Like all monarchs with some form of self-preservation, Gustaf IV (1778-1837) hated Napoleon & joined the enemy side. After the defeats in the Pomeranian War 1805-1807, the Dano-Norwegian War 1808 & the Finnish War 1808-1809 he was deposed of on March 13, 1809 by a coup d'état & on March 29 he abdicated in favour of his son Prince Gustav of Vasa (1799-187). This was not supported by the Parliament however. The crown instead went to his uncle Duke Charles (1748-1818). On December 24, King Gustaf IV and his son left Sweden to never return. They played a political role from exile, however.

In the meantime, work was ongoing on drafting a new constitution with severe checks on the royal powers. This was first done as a one-man committee - the so-called Håkanson's proposal - completed at the end of April, then in a parliamentary committee with all the

estates represented. On June 5, the constitution was approved by the Parliament. On June 6 it was accepted by Duke Charles at a plenum in the Hall of State & he left it as Charles XIII. He probably took an oath, but there is no information on the matter. What is there is, is that with “many heartfelt tears” he accepted his role. The coronation itself - a small affaire - took place in Storkyrkan on June 29.

The Founding Fathers of 1809 have been much publicized, while the men of action are more obscure. One of these men was Lieutenant Colonel Georg Adlersparre (1760-1835) who commanded the Värmland Regiment - the military branch of the coup d'état. Adlersparre and his soldiers - those who could be trusted - did not arrive in Stockholm until March 22. On the same day, he presented his plan - the so-called Tibble program. “In short, this was about eliminating the former king's supporters from the government and increase it by two clergy, two burghers and two peasants, after which Duke Charles, supported by the troops and the Stockholm burghers, would proclaim himself king. He would then prove his right to the throne before the Estates, which he would charge to appoint a heir to the throne by French or Danish descent“.¹ Now things did not proceed that harshly.

Discussions about a military coup or equivalent had begun already in 1807 in connection with the defeat in the Pomeranian War. The timing is unclear, but King Frederick VI of Denmark-Norway (1768-1839) had been asked if he was willing to succeed King Gustaf IV. The proposal was for a “Greater Scandinavian“ union of three independent states. Frederick refused to deal with a junta of rebels. Alternative two was a “small Scandinavian“ union with Norway. The military governor of Norway - the Danish Prince Christian August of Augustenburg (1768-1810) - had in April 1808 put down a Swedish attack by Adlersparre among others. In the autumn negotiations were held on a ceasefire. At the same time, a Union proposal was discussed in secret: The Norwegians would first draw up their own constitution, then the Prince would have himself proclaimed king of Norway and heir to the Swedish throne. The Norwegians were given a copy of the Swedish Constitution so that their own would not differ too much.

Christian August was not willing to break his oath of allegiance to Frederick VI, so he ended up being sworn in on January 24, 1810, as only heir to the Swedish throne under the name of Charles August. If he had any other plans - it has been rumoured that he intended to declare himself vassal to Frederick VI - they disappeared with his sudden death on May 28, 1810, in a brain haemorrhage. Meanwhile, the “Gustavians“ of the Riksdag planned a counter coup. The two Scanian counts Eric Ruuth and Jacob De la Gardie wanted to replace Charles August with Prince Gustav of Vasa, but could not mobilize sufficient support for their cause. Charles XIII refused. The “restoration“ was supposed to have taken place on the anniversary of the previous coup d'état, on March 13 1810, but had to be cancelled. After that, the Gustavians were weakened to the point that they were unable to assert themselves at the elections in Örebro later that year.

As Charles XIII's health was poor - he was on November 24, 1809, bedridden several weeks on account of a cerebral haemorrhage - everyone was anxious for a rapid election of his successor. The first proposal was to follow the order of succession and choose Charles August's brother Frederick (1767-1841) as Crown Prince. He had two sons, which ensured the succession. However, it was decided to secure Napoleon's approval before the plan was put into effect. For safety's sake (?) two separate couriers were sent to Paris. As is known,

¹ Brusewitz 1918.

one of them - Baron Lieutenant Carl Otto Mörner (1781-1868) - contacted Bernadotte. It seems a well daring move for a mere Lieutenant but Mörner was at the time also an MP for the nobility & there was a tradition that noble officers acted as kingmakers: The Finnish army in conjunction with the election of Adolph Frederick in 1743, the Anjala League in 1788 and the coup d'état of 1809.

According to Mörner's own account, he had supported the election of a Frenchman as heir to the throne since the Norwegian campaign in 1808, preferably Bernadotte, but had not done anything concrete to bring it about. In 1810 he was stationed in Uppsala, where he belonged to a clique of Francophile officers, artists and academics under the direction of the physician Pehr von Afzelius (1760-1843). His future brother-in-law, the secretary of state baron Gustaf af Wetterstedt (1776-1837), was also a member. On June 20, 1810, the last chance to make good his convictions, Mörner was in Paris helped there by his brother-in-law giving him a courier mission.

Given the consequences of Mörner's actions, posterity has suspected a plot. There is a version of the story that Wetterstedt, who was responsible for the courier post, knew of Mörner's intentions and helped him along. Perhaps, but perhaps Wetterstedt only thought Mörner wanted to recuperate after a long illness. Mörner himself claimed that the courier mission was a side issue. He was in Paris because a former fellow student, the French officer and cartographer Pierre Lapie (1779-1850), had a conduit to Napoleon's private secretary General Gérard Duroc, and thus could probe Napoleon's position on the election of Charles August's brother as heir to the throne.² The trigger appears to have been a letter from Lapie that had Mörner had received May 31, and contained rumours of a planned assault against Crown Prince Charles August, at that time already dead in a stroke, which rumours Mörner wanted to know more about. Thus, yet another reason for the Paris visit.³

In Paris, Mörner sought out Lapie with whom he June 20 & 21 discussed Bernadotte's suitability as heir to the throne. They also discussed alternative candidates. Lapie too preferred Bernadotte. Now it was only for Mörner to present the proposal. On June 22 he was granted an audience with the Swedish consul-general Elof Signeul, who knew a person in Bernadotte's circle of friends, general and writer Count Philippe de Grimoard (1753-1814). Grimoard arranged a meeting on June 25. Bernadotte was cautiously positive about Mörner's proposal but wanted to anchor it first. On June 26, Bernadotte informed Napoleon & on June 27, he was visited by Mörner's former commander general Count Fabian Wrede (1760-1824), who Mörner had told the plot on condition of a vow of silence. Wrede was in Paris as a Swedish diplomatic envoy to congratulate Napoleon on his marriage to Marie Louise of Austria a few months earlier. He wanted to check whether Bernadotte understood what he was getting into and emphasized what spoke against the candidacy - religion, language & his conflict with Napoleon. Bernadotte responded by claiming to be a protestant on mothers side, acknowledged the other difficulties, but felt that regardless of Napoleon's position, the candidacy was "his fate". On June 29, Mörner left Paris with a letter from Wrede about Bernadotte's candidacy. The next day, Wrede also left, but seems to have made a break on his way home. On July 12 Mörner arrived in Stockholm where the letter caused general commotion. Mörner spoke to a number of people who were positive about the candidacy, but wrote to Signeul that due to the resistance of the state council, Napoleon's support was

² Karlbom 1979: s. 174; Mörner 1987.

³ Thomasson 1937.

required for Bernadotte to be elected.⁴ On July 18 he was ordered to his residence in Uppsala and told to stay there.

Mörner's role as kingmaker has over the years been examined in detail, but the only uncertainties are at what point he stuck to Bernadotte as a candidate and why he was not dismissed by Signeul, Wrede & others as a political adventurer. According to Karlbom et al the most likely reason was that there was considerable Swedish support for Bernadotte as Crown Prince (given of course that he was allowed to stand) and that everyone was aware of this. Mörner just lit the fuse. Karlbom has identified several influential Bernadotte admirers with the common ground that they had spent long periods in France:

It seems less than useful to regard the Bernadotte's candidacy as the work of a single man. Regardless of how one wishes to evaluate the efforts of the individual, at least four people appear in Sweden at an early stage in the early summer of 1810 as ardent supporters of the idea of appointing Bernadotte as Crown Prince: In addition to C. O. Mörner also Thure Funck, G. W. af Tibell and Gustav Mörner.

It is also not difficult to find a common denominator for these early Bernadotte followers. They had all, as well as Gustaf af Wetterstedt, for long periods lived in France and knew French conditions in detail.⁵

Already on June 4, the Danish envoy in Stockholm was able to tell us: "General Tibell has handed the king a memorial, in which he proposes to the king to offer the succession to Ponte Corvo." And on July 2, thus 10 days before Mörner's return, the Russian envoy reported: "There has even been talk of a French general, namely of Bernadotte."⁶

That all these nobles and dignitaries preferred someone outside the Holstein-Gottorp family was commented on in an anonymous report to the English Ministry of Foreign Affairs from late 1811:

I think it is necessary to send some information in advance about the intrigues, who first put one of the generals of the French Revolution on the Swedish throne. A Swedish count has openly spoken about them before the Battle of Jena. The hatred of several Swedish nobles towards King Gustaf III did not end with the murder of this great king. Their vindictiveness has persecuted his descendants in the second and third ranks. Without being a prophet, Bonaparte declared years ago that he could end the house of Gottorp whenever he so found for good. Several years ago, Bernadotte's wife had also declared that she would not be at peace until she became queen, and Bernadotte's own course of action has shown that he has had his eyes fixed on Sweden. After the Battle of Jena he accompanied Murat and Soult when 1,300 Swedes were attacked and captured. He showed great interest in them and even suggested to his higher brothers in arms that they should be allowed to return to Sweden. However, since Murat and Soult did not want to consent, Bernadotte treated the prisoners with noticeable courtesy, regretted their fate, defended them and offered them support, and later showed himself very friendly to all Swedes he met and received in the friendliest manner all of their nationalities, who introduced themselves to him.⁷

⁴ Schinkel m.fl. 1852: del 5, s. 262.

⁵ Karlbom 1979: s. 192.

⁶ Andgren, 1933: ss. 123-124.

⁷ Anonym 1811. I: Scaevola red. 1885: s. 135.

But even if the above is true, only a small part of the Swedish nobility was of that opinion. It seems more likely that Bernadotte's war record was the deciding factor. He had in the same way as Charles August defeated Swedish troops. Such a man was respected. The Swedes' actions are also more understandable if one considers that they wanted to replace Charles August with someone with similar qualifications. Like Charles August, Bernadotte had a long semi-civilian career behind him. On the issue of Norway, where Charles August, through his loyalty to Denmark, had been a disappointment, Bernadotte was an even better choice.

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June 1, 1810, Charles XIII had decided on the brother of the late Crown Prince Charles Augustus, Prince Frederick Christian II of Augustenborg (1765-1814), King Frederick VI's brother-in-law. However, because they did not know much about him, he was invited to Stockholm to introduce himself. But he never appeared. On July 10, a courier was sent to formally offer him the candidacy and obtain his consent. On June 17, the French government publication *Journal de l'Empire* recommended King Frederick VI of Denmark (1768-1839) or the pro-Russian duke Peter I of Oldenburg (1755-1829) who was Queen Charlotte's cousin. On June 20, the Swedish minister in Paris Gustaf Lagerbielke informed Napoleon that Charles XIII intended to recommend Charles August's brother Prince Frederick. On June 26, Napoleon learned that Bernadotte had been asked. On June 29, after Mörner left Paris, also Lagerbielke learned that Bernadotte had been asked.

Napoleon wanted to replace Bernadotte with someone else and made several suggestions to Lagerbielke until 19 July. Lagerbielke rejected all but Marshal Masséna with a similar background to Bernadotte. On 19 July, Bernadotte asked Napoleon if he was to refuse his candidacy, but Napoleon asked him to remain.⁸ In the meantime, Prince Frederick accepted. Not the easiest thing when it turned out that even his own King Frederick VI intended to stand.

The election of the successor took place at an extraordinary session of Parliament, as the last ordinary session it took place in Örebro. The reason for the choice was the central location & that the statutes of election stipulated that no foreign envoys could be present within 150 miles (100 km). The persons concerned - King, Minister, Parliament & court - arrived July 21-23 but the actual work only began on July 30.

On July 24-27, King Frederick's envoy presented his masters candidacy. On July 29, Prince Frederick's envoy arrived with an oracular reply, which Charles XIII interpreted as him accepting his candidacy. Formally thus five candidates, but only Prince Frederick & Bernadotte were discussed in earnest.

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According to the Foreign Minister Lars von Engeström (1751-1826) Bernadotte initially had a majority, but gradually lost support. According to a preliminary vote on August 5:

470 MPs attended: Nobility 205; Clergy 54; Burghers 94; Peasantry 117.⁹ Results

⁸ Barton 1921: s. 273.

⁹ Förteckningar över riksdagsmän 1810. Örebro stadsarkiv. <orebro.se> (2017-01-01).

of the vote were: Nobility: 88 for Bernadotte, 109 for Prince Frederick & 50 à 60 who intended to vote for the court's candidate. Clergy: 2/3 for Bernadotte. Burghers: 37 for Bernadotte & 15 for Prince Frederick. Peasantry: Almost unanimously for Bernadotte.¹⁰ The Nobility was thus divided: One side wanted a “Swedish Napoleon“. Another side hated the very idea. It ended in a compromise: A Bernadotte who hated Napoleon.

Prince Frederick has since been described in such denigrating terms that the choice of Bernadotte seems obvious. However, his defeat seems to have been mainly due to his civilian background being dismissed by the Swedish military junta around Charles XIII who did not consider him “powerful” enough. Prince Frederick, was for example more interested in school issues than in military life.¹¹

The decision process was that Charles XIII & his cabinet on August 6 supported Prince Frederick. Bernadotte had a good reputation and was a great commander but...

“foreign religion; no knowledge of the country's customs, organization, language, the latter particularly difficult to remedy at the age of 46; the impossibility, at least for a long time, to communicate with the people, he would one day be destined to govern;“ [Further arguments were that Sweden as an ally of France would be forced into the continental system, that this would lead to a war with England & that Bernadotte would surround himself with a horde of Frenchmen.]¹²

After this “sekreta utskottet” (the parliamentary committee) (12 members, three from each of the Estates) discussed the matter, voted on the options and on August 10 recommended Prince Frederick. Bernadotte was considered to have great merits “But the committee finds almost insurmountable obstacle to his election, less in the religion he professes, than in the language he does not speak. A Swede wants to understand and be understood by his king.”¹³ There were dissenting opinions in both the Government and the Parliamentary committee but these were in the minority.

Here the Bernadotte candidacy would have ended - the support of the Parliament was not strong enough because of the resistance of the nobility - if Mörner's letter of emergency to Signeul from mid June had not borne fruit. Engeström had already at the beginning of the month received an anonymous letter - apparently from Signeul- in which he claimed that Bernadotte had Napoleon's support.¹⁴ In the evening of August 10, he received another letter in which the former French consul in Gothenburg Jean Fournier (1761-1818), just arrived in Örebro, asked to see him. Engeström conferred with the two secretaries of state Wetterstedt (Mörners brother-in-law) & Hans Järta (1774-1847) if this was appropriate - political envoys were not allowed in the city - but they judged Fournier to be a private citizen.

The next morning, on August 11, Fournier appeared for a meeting with Engeström. He submitted an introductory letter from Signeul about his sincere intentions & an oral message from Bernadotte where he affirmed in diffuse terms - there are several versions - that: (1) Bernadotte was Napoleon's candidate. (2) If elected he would pay some of Sweden's debts with his own money & obtain a larger government loan for the rest. (3) Because of his

¹⁰ Crusenstolpe 1837a: s. 181.

¹¹ Boëthius 1904: ss. 30-34; Boëthius 1906: ss. 15-16.

¹² Alin 1899a: s. 153.

¹³ Alin 1899a: s. 183.

¹⁴ Alin 1899a: s. 201.

private wealth he need not receive pay. As proof that he was Bernadotte's envoy, Fournier handed over a portrait of Bernadotte and two portraits of Bernadotte's family - one to Engeström, later one each to Fabian Wrede & Balzar von Platen. Fournier also pointed out that his passport was signed by the French Foreign Minister himself.

Both before, under & after opinions were divided if Fournier was telling the truth about his role as Bernadotte's personal envoy. He could just as well have been hired by the Paris-Swedes.¹⁵ For this spoke both Signeul's activism & that Örebro Tidning August 2-11 published a six-issue anonymous series about Bernadotte, attributed to the Paris-Swedes & politician Thure Funck (1767-1824). The latter afterwards even claimed that he had been the one who suggested Mörner to go to Paris.¹⁶ A biography about Fournier landed in a compromise:

As soon as the Swedish minister in Paris, Lagerbjelke, had been informed by letter from Örebro of Fournier's message, he rushed to the prince of Ponte Corvo to hear how the matter was. The prince then declared that he had not given Fournier any proper mandate, but had authorized him to communicate the opinion, which was held in Paris, of his (the prince's) person, and the arrangements, he would make, in the event that the election fell upon him. But he would not have wanted these arrangements as presented by Fournier, they were too subordinate, too little worthy of the attention of the Estates, but could it be his majesty and the country of any use, he very much wanted to ratify Mr. Fournier's promises. This was interpreted as the Prince not disowning Fournier.¹⁷

At a joint meeting of the King-Cabinet-Committee the same day, the committee presented its report. Engeström asked for a respite in order to take a position on Fournier's assertions. Not very wise of him me thinks. Meanwhile Wrede made contact with Mörner, who had a leaflet printed with Fournier's offer and which Wrede had distributed in "hundreds" of copies to the MPs and their entourage.¹⁸ The press campaign was noted abroad but denied in the official Post- och Inrikes Tidningar.¹⁹

Örebro Tidning had, as mentioned, printed a long review of Bernadotte's background, advancement & battlefield merits.²⁰ Also an excerpt from the book "Le Guide du jeune militaire" (1802) about him being a military role model.²¹ Two anonymous contributions were published about why he was the better choice. One of the contributions "Reflexions regarding the succession" was by Mörner:

The Prince of Ponte Corvo, former Bernadotte, was born in 1763. As a hero he has defeated nature's own power. As a Statesman, he has contributed to the welfare of France, without any self-interest. As Victor, he has been a Guardian Angel [to the Swedes] in Hanover. As a friend of Humanity, he shall also be blessed by Swedish

¹⁵ Holm 1964.

¹⁶ SBHL 1906: del 2, s. 372; Karlbom 1979: s. 180.

¹⁷ Fröding 1905: ss. 198-199.

¹⁸ Schinkel m.fl. 1852: del 5, s. 275; Mörner & Mörner 2000: s. 25,99.

¹⁹ Upsala Tidning 1810-08-13. I: Ahnfelt red. 1883: del 1, s. 364.

²⁰ [Thure Funck & Jean Bernadotte.] Strödda anteckningar hörande till Prinsens av Ponte Corvo (Marsalken Bernadotte) historia. Örebro Tidning, nr 35-40, 1810-08-02 till 1810-08-11.

²¹ d'Anglesy 1802: ss. 371-383; Insämt. General Bernadotte. Örebro Tidning, nr 45 & 46, 1810-08-23 & 1810-08-25.

prisoners of war. As a private citizen, he is moderate in his way of life, without all excess and vain splendour, and in the same way raised his 11-year-old well-behaved son. If it was objected that he was not born in a high position, then I answer, that the successive steps he had been compelled to take in order to reach his current position has familiarized him with the Estates, and proved that whatever comes he will be up to it. Yes, he is of low birth, but of high merits, tempered by life.²² [Etc.]

Charles XIII hesitated. He did not want to take a position on Bernadotte's attempt to buy the throne of Sweden, but believed that Napoleon's support of the Bernadotte candidacy put the matter in a completely new position. On August 13, Engeström & Wetterstedt, tried to force a decision through his Adjutant General Charles de Suremain (1762-1835), Suremain has in his memoirs given a very vivid portrait of how Charles XIII hesitates between Bernadotte's personal merits, political suitability & simple background. The next day he referred the matter back to the committee for further consideration. In the meantime, the support for Bernadotte had increased so that on August 15 he had a clear majority in the Parliament. On 16 August, the committee, now in favour of Bernadotte, reconvened. The most heartfelt justification for this *volte-face* came from Anders Bengtsson of the Peasantry:

I've heard: that the French Emperor wishes us well, and thus with satisfaction would see his brother's brother-in-law, the Prince of Ponte Corvo, elected successor to the Swedish throne; that this prince, like our eternally missed Charles August, gradually ascended from obedience to command and thence gathered the experience which, although for a regent indispensable, princes can very rarely acquire; that his war glory shines doubly beautiful because of his name and humanity. His strict discipline has mitigated the horror, even if he could not avoid the misery. I have yet heard of other benefits from his election such as his considerable private wealth, which could become of much importance to our oppressed state, his propensity to protect and encourage trade and industries, etc.

As to his religion he is more Lutheran than Catholic. As to the language he is no worse off than all these German princes that have been bestowed on us and who are still remembered and missed.

Convinced that Sweden under the sceptre of him and his growing son, will be feared by its neighbours, will live in peace and freedom, I now give the Prince of Ponte Corvo my vote as heir to the throne, and ask that this may entered into the protocol.²³

The report was handed over to the State Council, which on August 17 also recommended Bernadotte - not so much for his merits as for the strong opinion against Prince Frederick. However, some hopes were placed upon him:

The name of the Prince of Ponte Corvo is already of great importance in laying the foundations of the hope, that he can safeguard the kingdom's independence and inner calm. The independent mind, he on several occasions shown, promises from him a greater resistance, and even opposition to the exaggerated claims of Emperor Napoleon, than we can expect from any of the other prince. His family relations with the Imperial family could put him in a position to procure advantages for the kingdom, impossible for others. *Through him one might dare hope, though I do not find any*

²² Insänt. Reflexioner angående tronföljden. Örebro Tidning, nr 41 & 43, 1810-08-15 & 1810-08-18.

²³ Alin 1899a: s. 210.

*reliable reason for it, Norway to become united with Sweden, something I do not think will happen through the Duke of Augustenburg.*²⁴ [My emphasis.]

Charles XIII had it recorded that he supported the decision, but under duress:

His Majesty graciously declared, that after all the utterances of the members of the State Council on this subject, that his individual inclination were still to support his durchlaucht (highness) the Duke of Augustenburg, and that it would be exacting for His Majesty to alter his previous decision; But the reasons given by both the Parliamentary committee and the State Council were so substantial that he was forced to acknowledge them. The Duke of Augustenburg would not receive the offer of heir of the kingdom, and as his Majesty considered it his duty, as king and as father of his people, to promote the general welfare, the sanctioned this almost unanimous decision to propose his princely Highness, Johan Baptist Julius Bernadotte, Prince of Ponte Corvo, as heir to the Swedish throne.²⁵

On August 21, the Parliament approved Bernadotte's nomination. There is an aber in all this. Why such enthusiasm for a candidate you had not even met? The explanation is probably that Bernadotte fit well into the Swedish "system": Energetic & competent, but without any power base of his own & therefore forced to negotiate with the Estates to get something done.

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Prince Frederick's candidacy thus appears to have failed through King Frederick VI's own incompetence. He himself had no prospects, but blocked his brother-in-law's candidacy & somewhat unexpected gave Jean the advantage. If Charles XIII had not accepted the Bernadotte candidacy, there would have been no heir at all to the throne. According to Coquelle (1907) Napoleon had anticipated such an outcome, and his real plan was to then offer the Swedes his godson Eugène or his brother Lucien.²⁶ Now Charles XIII unexpectedly accepted a French parvenu. On September 8, Napoleon commented on Jean's prospects in a conversation with the Austrian diplomat Metternich:

Napoleon: Do you know Bernadotte any closer, and what do you think of him? *Metternich:* I know him only from socializing and consequently cannot allow me any judgment on him. *Napoleon:* He's an Ace! At least I've always judged him that way. But he's going to have trouble holding on. The nation expects everything from him. It is as if he were God Father himself doling out bread. But I don't see any talent for governing in him. He's a good soldier, that's all. I am, however, delighted to be rid of him. I could not wish better than to see him leave France. He's one of these old Jacobins with his head backwards, in the manner of them all. And that's not how you keep the throne. If you see him again, feel him out a little and you will have the same understanding of him as I do; either way it was not in my power to deny him this. A French marshal on Gustav Adolf's throne is one of the best pranks you can play England.²⁷

So what happened that made all Napoleon's predictions fail?

²⁴ Alin 1899a: s. 225.

²⁵ Alin 1899a: s. 246.

²⁶ Coquelle 1907: ss. 291-295.

²⁷ Resumé av ett samtal mellan Metternich och Napoleon. Paris, 1810-09-08, del 1. I: Ahnfeldt 1887: s. 175; Lindqvist 2009: s. 331.