

Chapter 61 : Crown Prince of Sweden-Norway (III) (1881-1907).

Gustaf was already deputizing for his father while attending university. There are three references concerning his time as Prince Regent of Sweden, all part of official tributes (Åsbrink 1918: ss. 49-126; Essén red. 1933a: ss. 19-31; Hildebrand 1945: del 1, ss. 95-108). In addition there is fragmentary information from newspapers, letters, diaries etc. It is difficult to extract anything about Gustaf's person from the data. Åsbrink gives his official schedule - almost without comment. Essén & Hildebrand are not as detailed but have the same impersonal "statistical" approach. Hildebrand's book title "Gustaf V as regent and man" raises hopes that are not fulfilled. The book is more about the Sovereign than about the man. When questioned Hildebrand explained that during the work on the book - it took him seven years - he had met Gustaf several times for feedback but Gustaf had refused to answer his questions:

The reason why I have not dared to follow the king's personal development from his youth into adulthood is simply that I have lacked material. Except for the letters to the father during the Union crisis that I was able to invoke in the first volume, there is no further exchange; His almost daily correspondence with Queen Victoria during her stay abroad has been burned at her request and King Gustaf has otherwise never been an interested letter writer. It has therefore been easier to judge him as a mature man, tested in the school of life.¹

Hildebrand² focuses on Gustaf's Norwegian experience. These have a dramaturgy - a beginning, middle and end - and are therefore easier to depict than his everyday life below.

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Gustaf's first session as prince regent was from March 23 to April 8. 1877. Until 1907, he filled in 27 times while his father was abroad, in Norway or ill. The deputy-ships were initially so short - one or two weeks - that he could not influence over the decisions. Later he got to grips with certain matters, participated in the councils and also gave speeches to the Parliament.

His first experience as a royal host was at the visit of Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia in June 1877. July/August 1878 he hosted Napoleon III's son Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (1856-1879; "Lou-Lou" - the godson of his grandmother Josephine. Gustaf and Lou-Lou were peers, got on well, were approximately in the same situation - Lou-Lou was the claimant to the French throne - and they allegedly exchanged experiences. Gustaf is also said to have been impressed by his meetings in 1879 and 1885 with the English Crown Prince George (V) (1865-1936). Lundebeck³ has much speculation about how Gustaf was affected by these two - unverifiable though.

An additional experience was giving speeches to audiences. Oscar II's speech was grandiose - a kind of rhetorical machinery. Gustaf's were brief and to the point in the military way. Prior to the educational trip, a number of farewell speeches were held which Gustaf was expected to reciprocate. Oscar II had written the return speeches himself, but no one seems

¹ Hildebrand 1945: del 2, s. VII.

² Hildebrand 1945: del 1, ss. 109-506.

³ Lundebeck 1952: ss. 207-211,267-275.

to have been satisfied with Gustaf's delivery. It was not theatrical enough. Åke Ohlmarks⁴ has collected a number of Gustaf's letters, speeches and opinion pieces 1872-1949 and analysed the style. The judgment is that the speeches - when read in sequence - are perceived as boring because the points are driven home by repetition, not by striking formulations. Ohlmark's analysis becomes a frequency dictionary of watchwords. However, Gustaf was good at summarizing complicated processes.

January 10, 1877, Gustaf was elected 1st Honorary Member of the Swedish Academy of Sciences but was not very active. His maiden speech was on April 28, 1880, at a dinner for Baron Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, just returned from his discovery of the Northwest Passage.⁵ Contrary to the speeches that Ohlmarks had published - a kind of political communiqués - this speech was both personal and laudatory. Gustaf obviously adapted to the situation and was more personal in smaller company where his dry humour and enthusiasm got to flourish. In 1878 he became 1st Honorary Member of the Academy of Music, 1897-1907 its preses, then its patron. In this capacity he spent much time with the Stockholm singer elite. The opera singer countess Mathilda Grabow is often cited as a favourite. In 1881, King Oscar II sought to have him appointed Chancellor. However, the candidacy was rejected on the same grounds as Oscar II's own - that a member of the royal house could not hold a civil office.

Emperor William continued to invite Gustaf to his larger military manoeuvres. In 1884 he was appointed honorary colonel in the Neumark Dragoon Regiment N:o 3 and in 1892 honorary lieutenant general in the Prussian Army. In 1908, he became Admiral à la suite of the German Navy (=allowed to wear their uniform). Victoria was in the same manner (through her mother) appointed Colonel à la suite in the Pomeranien Fusilier Regiment N:o 34 and Emperor William General in the Swedish Army. Similar honours were exchanged with England, Russia, Austria and Denmark.

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Gustaf had since childhood followed his father and mother at art, industrial and agricultural exhibitions, railway ceremonies, unveiling of monuments, "national tours", study visits and events of all kinds. This continued during his Crown Prince tenure, but there are few details. As Crown Prince, he had to take what his father avoided: agricultural meetings, garden and dog exhibitions. 1887-1907 he was honorary chairman of the Swedish General Export Association. As such, he seems to have helped the association to participate in foreign exhibitions - but not the World's Fair in Paris the Revolutionary Jubilee of 1889. Four monarchies officially refused to participate: Germany, Sweden, Turkey & Montenegro. January 24, 1888, the Swedish Factory Association refused. The Norwegians, however, participated unofficially.

1881-1883 Gustaf was chairman of the planning committee for a combined art and industry exhibition in Stockholm. Things did not work out but 1894-1897 he was chairman of its continuation - the central committee for the 4th General Art and Industrial Exhibition, located in Stockholm. July 1-3, 1897, he also chaired the Fourth Nordic Maritime Conference on the shipping industry.

Because the military education was so strongly associated with sport and public health, Gustaf also put in work there. 1897-1907 he was chairman of the Swedish Central

⁴ Ohlmarks 1982.

⁵ Sjöberg red. 1881: ss. 43-45.

Association for the Promotion of Sport & from 1903 patron of the Swedish Gymnastics and Sports Association's National Federation (RF). Balck (1918) gives Gustaf the honour of several pioneering achievements in Swedish sport: The organization of the 1891 Gymnastics & athletics celebration which was the breakthrough event for Swedish competitive sports; The Nordic [winter] Games 1901-1926; The Swedish Olympic Games 1900 (Paris), 1904 (Athén), 1908 (London) & 1912 (Stockholm).

As mentioned Gustaf was a prolific hunter. In 1886 and 1889 he shot three bears: 1886 a female in her den & the kid trying to escape. 1889 a lone male.⁶ 1900-1907 he was chairman of the Swedish Hunting Association. He is said to have contributed to the hunting legislation of 1912, on a sustainable game population. The Hunters' Association compiled a long wish list which Gustaf did his best to make the Parliament accept.

1890-1907, Gustaf was chairman of the jockey club, but he was not an outstanding rider. Only three horse racing prices are found 1878-1880.

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Gustaf's continued military career is a not entirely transparent mix of honorary positions, study visits, management practice & inspection activities. January 21, 1881, he was appointed major, March 24, 1882, lieutenant colonel, and July 14, 1882, full colonel. April-July 1882 he served periodically as battalion commander and October 1883 one week (?) as head of one of the General Staff's statistical sections. It appears to have involved intelligence activities based on defence attaché reports & open sources. In the following summer he commanded Livregementets dragoner during the field exercises in Scania. December 28, 1884, he was appointed major general and commander of Svea Livgarde, January 1, 1889, commander of the 4th [army] division and general commander of the 4th Military District. As major general, he was chairman of the 1885-1887 Committee for new Drill Instructions and the 1888-1892 Flag Committee (concerning the union emblem on the national flags). January 16, 1892, he was appointed lieutenant general. January 16, 1896, he became inspector of the military schools. December 22, 1898, he was finally appointed full general, the army's highest position in peacetime, and also admiral. He received the same Norwegian positions but honorary. He also each year attended various large and small field exercises where he sometimes commanded. Sometimes not. As a general, he was the supreme leader of the army's major autumn manoeuvres. However, these did not include Norwegian troops who had stopped participating in the joint exercises in 1875.

The contemporary military judgment of Gustaf's capacity was that "He shall in his command have revealed a steadfast, for his surroundings very beneficial calm in conjunction with good judgment, impartiality and a desire to independently get to the bottom of the issues".⁷ The corresponding civil judgment was that he "proved able to easily get to grips with everything and make up his mind"⁸ & "Contrary to a large number of other majors, he kept his calm and commanded without shouting, a rarity."⁹ There were limits, however. During his political crises Gustaf seems several times seems to have been in a state of total dissolution.

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⁶ L I Hallgren. Kronprinsens björnjagter i Dalarna. Vårt land. I: Dalpilen, 1894-11-16, s. 6 & 1894-11-23, s. 6.

⁷ Hildebrand 1945: del 1, s. 95.

⁸ SBHL 1906.

⁹ Fleetwood 1968: s. 185. [Under en bataljonsövning på Ladugårdsgårde 1882.]

Gustaf's first visit to Norway was in connection with his father's coronation in Trondheim June 17, 1873. His second visit was February 3-8, 1877, when he took an oath to comply with the Norwegian Constitution. There was no provision for such an oath, but Oscar II thought it best so. Further visits were in 1878, 1880, 1882, 1883 and 1884. On March 19, 1884, he was "viceroy" for a week of Norway in conjunction with the governmental crisis over the introduction of a Norwegian parliamentary majority rule. 1885-1905, he opened the Parliament as his father's representative. From 1893 he alone visited Norway. Since there from 1873 was a 2nd Norwegian prime minister in Stockholm (minister of the Union; a diplomatic function), most of the Union politics was conducted there. On extraordinary occasions, the Swedish Prime Minister went to Kristiania, but as a rule it was only Gustaf & his entourage. As his father's representative and rapporteur, he participated in the negotiations on the formation of the government, etc. However, he did not have an independent role.¹⁰ The atmosphere was at times agitated, as at this event 1899-03-11:

Gustaf: I try to take everything as calmly as I can, but sometimes I feel quite down and lonely because at the moment everyone, both right and left, is dissatisfied and furious of me personally and of course also of Sweden. But I have a clear conscience and I stand by everything I have said and decided ... I ask Dad not to be at all worried, with God's help, it probably goes well! If need be He will show me the right way, for without Him we will not be able to do anything! I feel the full weight of the great responsibility, which rests on me, Daddy knows enough, but I am in good spirits and will always try to do my best.¹¹

Gustaf: In my letter the day before yesterday, I did not mention a thing that occurred Saturday evening outside the castle, when I came home from the Military Club. But now that it has appeared in all the newspapers, especially in the left-wing press, which, however, really emphasizes their disapproval of what has happened, I think I should tell you that it is indeed true that I was received by a couple of hundred people who were screaming, beeping and making all manner of noise. It was mostly students and other youth, some had fortified themselves and were half drunk. After the demonstration had continued for a while, the guards stepped out and arrested a couple of them, after which the others were dispersed. I personally care not the least about such nonsense.¹²

NYT: There was a popular demonstration here yesterday evening against the Crown Prince, Prince Gustaf, Duke of Vermland, who was recently appointed Regent on account of the illness of his father, King Oscar II. The Prince was returning from the Military Club when he met a crowd of people [70 students] who hooted him, and pelted him with snowballs. The crowd was dispersed by the police and several arrests were made. The Norwegian papers condemn the demonstration. ... Prince Gustaf, whose official title is Duke of Vermland, is especially objectionable to the Norwegians. This is partly due to their bitter opposition to the continuance of the union with Sweden, under which, they claim, Norway is deprived of its proportionate share in the Government. It is mainly due, however, to a saying attributed to the Crown Prince at a public meeting in Stockholm [1894] that the only way to end the long standing quarrel between the two Scandinavian countries is by force, and that he

¹⁰ Jansen 1931.

¹¹ Söderberg 1951: ss. 62-63. [Brev från Gustaf till Oscar II, odaterat, omkring 1899-03-12.]

¹² Hadenius 2007: s. 65. [Brev från Gustaf till Oscar II, odaterat, omkring 1899-03-14.]

would not object to lead the Swedes against the headstrong Norwegians. This frank declaration almost brought on war, as the Norwegian Storting, or Parliament, promptly refused to pay its share of the Crown Prince's allowance.¹³

57 of the Storting's members (27 percent) cancelled their invitation to Gustaf's supper the following week. This, as well as the demonstration, was explained by Gustaf's decision in the Council of February 15 that Norway at the forthcoming peace and disarmament conference in St Petersburg could not be represented by a separate representative. (The Norwegian Prime Minister in Stockholm won a small victory however in that the Union's correspondence with abroad should henceforth be signed "H.R.H.'s Governments" and not "H.R.H.'s Government" or the equivalent.)

Regarding Gustaf's warlike statement, this was a quote from "Skånska Aftonbladet" July 1893 [alt. mars 1894] where Gustaf in what he believed to be a private conversation with the journalist Klas Rydberg [alt. Ryberg] undiplomatically expressed his professional opinion that given the condition of the Norwegian armed forces, it would be "a military walk" to conquer the country. The Storting responded by withholding its appanage until he denied the insult.¹⁴ Gustaf refused, but Rydberg wrote a remorseful letter that the article was based on hearsay and the Storting gave in.¹⁵ However, it had not forgotten.

The demonstration was part of the so-called consular battle. The background was that the Union should have a common foreign policy. The head of a diplomatic mission (the consul) could be Swedish or Norwegian but represented the Union. From 1836 they were appointed by a joint body for Sweden-Norway. The Foreign Minister was Swedish. From 1891, Norway wanted a parallel diplomatic organization under the leadership of a Norwegian foreign minister. In 1895, Sweden threatened war if Norway did not give in. The countries then negotiated. Both sides were intransigent. Gustaf long time belonged to the warring side.

In the last months of the union, Gustaf began to rethink its future. Weibull places the moment of the reversal to Gustaf's visit to Norway March 11, when he realized how "consular friendly" even his Norwegian friends & court was.¹⁶ It had the consequence that Gustaf presented a compromise on a separate consular services but common foreign minister during one of his father's illness periods April 5. But nothing came out of it.¹⁷ On April 26 he was back in Norway. There is an often quoted letter about the mood there:

The situation here is absolutely hopeless and it is impossible to talk to any one person. They are all as bitten by a mad dog and will not hear me out or take reason. All sides demand that I sanction [=approve] (the not yet submitted consular law), whereupon I only have replied, that I neither want to nor can say anything, until the question is submitted to me for a ruling. I can do nothing but 'keep quiet'. The mood is polite but cold and there is much hatred and unwillingness in the air. Since the whole thing is very embarrassing and since I really can not do any good here, I depart Tuesday evening and arrive Wednesday morning in Stockholm.¹⁸

¹³ Prince Gustaf unpopular. New York Times, 1899-03-14.

¹⁴ Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning, 1894-04-03, s. 3.

¹⁵ Oscar II 1960: del 2, ss. 348-351.

¹⁶ Weibull 1960.

¹⁷ Essén 1933c: ss. 89-91; Jacobson 1943: ss. 156-158. [Kronprinsen-regentens yttrande i sammansatt svenskt och norskt statsråd den 5 april 1905.]

¹⁸ Hildebrand 1945: del 1, kap. 4. [Brev från Gustaf till Oscar II den 29 april 1905.]

In the meantime, his father returned to work. May 18 and 24, the Storting voted unilaterally to establish its own consular service, which Oscar May 27 refused to approve. The Norwegian government resigned, and recalled its Stockholm-based cabinet ministers. Oscar refused to accept the Norwegian government's resignation. The Norwegians discussed how they should act. The Swedes also discussed the matter. Gustaf believed that a proactive dissolution of the Union by Sweden would be best. However, he had no support for this.¹⁹ June 2 he went to London to attend the wedding of his eldest son. On the morning of June 7, Oscar received a telegram that Norway unilaterally withdrew from the Union. Gustaf probed the position of the English government & on the return journey also the attitude of the German Government. Both wanted a quick & decisive ending so that Russia did not win sympathies by recognizing Norway before they did. Negotiations on the terms of the dissolution of the union were held from June 7 to October 26, but Gustaf had no part in them. The historian Karl Hildebrand had a conversation with him during this time:

I had become editor of Stockholms Dagblad a few months earlier and felt the need to learn for my own information about the Crown Prince's perception of the consequences of the Union's dissolution; it was no interview. I have forgotten his exact words, but the impression I got from his statements is still alive. He was of course upset about what had passed in Kristiania, but judged the situation calmly and coldly and apparently had the impression that if the Norwegians did not understand the advantages of the Union, and misunderstood the King's and the Swedish people's intentions, there was no reason for them to regret their decision, but leave. There was a male pride in the prince that appealed to me.²⁰

¹⁹ Weibull 1960.

²⁰ Hildebrand 1928: ss. 3-4.