

Chapter 65 : Interwar (VII) (1918-1939).

During the interwar period Gustaf worked at improving his tarnished image. There was an incredible number of photographs of him in different sports & outdoor contexts: Hunting, fishing, tennis, croquet & car sports. These were combined with crowd-pleasing initiatives such as him in 1932 offering to cut the appanage. A number of jubilees were celebrated: His 60th, 70th, 75th & 80th anniversary. Most of what has been written about Gustaf as a person is from these & later jubilees, his 85th & 90th anniversary.

In office Gustaf continued approximately as before with domestic & foreign representation. The Crown Prince received a number of assignments abroad - as it seems to keep him away from the Swedish domestic policy. The parliamentary situation was unstable (15 governments 1918-1939) & Gustaf had much to do with the appointments. He kept himself informed about foreign policy and tried to avoid a disarmament.

I describe four subjects in detail: Leisure, office, popularity & cracks in the façade; but disregard representation & internal administration. Gustaf's family relationships, over time an increasingly sensitive subject, is not described here but in the relevant biographies.

*

Gustaf's politicians had little understanding of the importance he attached to his spare time, but it became part of his image. I start with the writings the 75-year anniversary 1933 and build on it with additional information:

- Gustaf had visited England in 1879 and learned to appreciate lawn tennis & croquet. Lawn tennis had few similarities to modern tennis. The object was not to kill the ball, but on the contrary keep it in play as long as possible. In Sweden, Gustaf played first on makeshift courses. In 1896 he founded the Crown Prince's lawn tennis club with himself as chairman.

I learned the game during my stay in England [1879] and immediately found it fun. In the countryside outside London, where I lived, there was a really good grass course. We practised all the time, and I remember, that I thought it was so soft and nice to run around on the green field. Eventually I learned the shots reasonably well but it was very meek tennis. Sometimes, however, it happened, that I got some spin on the balls, which looked well on the lawn. We played with rackets with long handles, but the balls were about as now. What was needed for the game I then took home with me and so we started here too.¹

The club grew to 198 members, requiring more courses. In 1900 the club built a tennis pavilion on Djurgården. In 1904, it hosted the European Championships. Gustaf did well at first during the tournaments but age and his poor technique eventually took its toll and he played with handicap, in the old boy class & double or mixed. His strongest suit was position play. In 1927 he trampled on a ball, twisted his foot, fell backwards and hit his head. The co-players pulled his foot right & waited for him to regain consciousness. Gustaf then took it easier.

¹ Garell 1938: s. 20.

The other players were often full of respect. Gustaf tried to behave as naturally as he was able to. The socialization consisted of him joking & telling tennis anecdotes. He did not like fawning or pushiness and if anybody tried to talk politics he rose and left. It was hard for the surroundings to come up with something sensible to say. You had to get used to the situation. The only tennis player Gustaf had a personal relationship with was the engineer Pontus Qvarnström (1872-1918). In 1905 he married Gustaf's goddaughter Ingeborg Wallenberg.² The last time Gustaf played was during the Riviera stay in 1947. He did not exercise but until at least 79 years he was flexible enough to put one leg behind his neck.³

There was much photographing of Gustaf in striking poses & stylish clothes sporting a tennis racket. Gustaf was a good "clothes horse" although as a model he was rather anorexic (56 kilos!). The film sequences of Gustaf's tennis were "improved" by cutting individual frames so that his shots looked more powerful than they were. He had a collection of 220 trophies. These too were often photographed. Gustaf's popular nickname is from this period: Mr. G (1921) & VeGurra (1939).

Gustaf played croquet wherever there was a lawn: Solliden, Tullgarn, Särö. It was a way to keep the guests busy.

- 1907-1950, Gustaf was chairman of the Royal Hunting Club, founded by Charles XV in 1863. He was a skilled marksman and during his lifetime accumulated an entire room of trophies, 1,104 of them. Everything from capercaillie, elk, wild boar, deer & even a crocodile. Most of it was from the turn of the century when he still had time, but Gustaf hunted trophies until 1948. The room was located on the upper floor of his apartment, where he gave audiences. On the way to the audience, the visitor must pass through the "billiard room". This was in the format 10*10*5.5 meters and the walls were fully covered - mostly with deer horns. Among the deer horns was a full-length portrait from 1919 of Gustaf in hunting gear and a gun, a bronze bust of him from 1936 & a Charles XII statue in ¾ format (130 cm). This room is possibly as close to Gustaf's self-image as you can get. A Swedish Nimrod & warrior prince in the small format.⁴ His forester Lewenhaupt has described it as a shrine.

Gustaf's intense hunting interest further into old age has often been commented on. "It is a free zone where all the participants, high and low, participate in a role-playing game. For a limited period of time, the actors establish a room in which an ancient, traditional manor life, symbolized by the hunt and with one or more royalties as central figures, is enacted. The hunt is staged according to a detailed script, where the participants bring history and tradition to life. During the season, the hunters go from place to place as a travelling theatre company and perform their rituals according to custom and practice. In manor hunting, people tell themselves about themselves. One can interpret it as a historical and romantic tradition linked to the environment and values of a distinct community. The participants play out class differences that are not otherwise accepted."⁵

- In addition to his hunting weapons, some 15 rifles & shotguns, Gustaf also had a small collection of antique weapons - flintlocks, daggers etc. Gustaf was also very amused by car racing & forced his drivers, retrained coaches, to drive faster than they were comfortable with. Like his mother, she too a car lover, he was known for

² Fontander 1999.

³ Vecko Journalen, okänt nummer. I: Prawitz 1943: s. 27. [Ecklesiastikminister Arthur Engberg.]

⁴ Nordenram m.fl. 2007.

⁵ Rundquist 2003: s. 59.

his cries "Faster! Faster!" From 1920 he spent a few weeks each spring in Nice. The luggage was sent by train and he himself took the car. On April 26, 1922, he was hit by a car, but survived with broken ribs.

- Gustaf had a basic artistic education, although he lacked both interest & aptitude. However, in some contexts it was useful. He collected antiques, mostly furniture, silverware and porcelain, which he bought at auctions through agents. He also inherited his parents, his wife and the Duchess of Dalarna's collections. What has been most talked about is his embroidery. This started during the convalescence after his surgery in 1914 and over time grew to an entire workshop.

When the king began to sew - it was probably now about twenty years ago after a painful stomach operation - he sewed with woolen yarn on rough straw. Since then, both the taste and the hand have developed considerably. Now the king sews with the finest silk - he has a whole chiffon full of silk in all the colours of the spectrum. Each shade in a cover of its own, box after box. [The production consists of] dense, dense tapestry seam in the style of old Flemish works. Lots of colours in fine, well tuned shades. And there will be big pillows, chair seats, fire screens, yes, whole furniture.

When a new job is to be set up, the two ladies who are the king helpers, have a lot of headache. New patterns must be invented, similar old, but still a little varied. And then there is the colour problem. Usually you go by the colour scale of old tapestries - carpet green, pale red, different shades of brown, yellow and white. There must be a dozen shades of white in this silk chiffon down at the Queen's small floor in the south-east palace wing. That is where the sewing room is located. So it is a matter of arranging the selected silks, so that the king can comfortably find the colour he desires, each parcel of silk is put on a large white paper, colour by colour, so that everything is ready. The pattern is sewn up in rough strokes with contour lines and so the king may pronounce his approval or not. He is interested in both patterns and colours. You often have to make new proposals, adjust and moderate, before the king finally finds pleasure in the new work.

Where these works go... Well, most are distributed as gifts to the royal family.⁶

- Like his father, Gustaf supported medical research through the returns of the Jubilee Fund to his 70th and 80th anniversary. The 70th anniversary fund went to cancer research, hospital buildings & radiological equipment. The 80th anniversary fund to research on disabling diseases, mainly child paralysis & rheumatism. Gustaf decided the direction of the funds, but did not interfere in the details.
- Gustaf was not amused by reading but well by music, mostly operettas & classical music it seems. He had a considerable record collection. His favourite was Schubert's unfinished work. He did not visit cinemas but the court used to see current films in the White Sea reception hall. Gustaf was especially amused by educational school films such as "from farm to fork". Gustaf was also a spectator at races, sailing, football and anything. He played at auction bridge.
- Gustaf is little known for his cultural work, but he allowed researchers access to the Bernadotte Archives, which resulted in three extensive royal biographies: Torvald

⁶ S. Kung Gustafs stora hobby. Vecko Journalen, 1933:24.

T:son Höjer's on Karl XIV Johan; Anders Lundebeck and Karl Hildebrand's about him himself.

* * *

The Swedish biographical dictionary summarizes Gustaf's official role:

After the war, G became increasingly got involved in his role as head of state in a parliamentary democracy. In the early 1920s, he acted as an independent mediator, and in domestic politics he allowed the majority to prevail. However, he maintained his keen interest in foreign policy and personally committed himself to a wider Nordic cooperation. His conversation with Mannerheim in 1922 about the Swedish-Finnish defence cooperation testifies to great foresight and a clear understanding of the hard realities.

Significantly, the only issue that led to serious disagreements between Mr. G and his cabinet was the question of defence. Already in 1921 he secured Branting's support, in case the new Defence Minister P A Hansson wanted to pursue a radical disarmament policy. Prior to the disarmament decision of 1925, he reacted vehemently and considered refusing sanction and dissolving the Parliament. Since the right-wing leadership did not feel able to support him, G had to resign and even, after pressure, refrain from dictating a protest to the record. But his bitterness over this "dangerous misjudgment" was expressed in several startling speeches to dissolved regiments. Else he did not get involved in active politics, and with age he gained much of the popularity he had never coveted. On his 80th anniversary, when he showed his resilience by riding in a gallop over Gärdet (the former exercise field), he was hailed as "king of the people and king of peace".⁷

From Gustaf's perspective, the parliamentary system meant that he no longer chose a head of government because he had confidence in the person, but because he had to choose someone who satisfied the majority of the parliament. But the fact that the head of government was a Social Democrat did not initially mean that the ministers or their policies were. The other ministers could initially be officials or politicians from another party. It was a consequence of the negotiating situation of minority parliamentarianism. Gustaf seems to have consistently worked to moderate the political divisions of the time by insisting on "unpolitical" or "balanced" coalition ministers and making demands on their agenda.⁸ This was perceived as positive but was in reality a continuation of his father's bicameral parliamentarianism. The 1920s is best described as a transition period.

The parliamentary system of 1918 - with the prime minister as the "viceroy" and the advisers as party representatives - did not fit well with the ideas of 1809. The Prime Minister, according §§ 106 & 107 of the Constitution, exercised a form of ministerial government. King Gustaf V therefore adopted the odd habit of protesting orally or reserving himself for the record before certain government decisions - formally his own. In 100 years, the king-adviser relationship had been turned upside down. The king had become "adviser to his advisers".

The actual work situation was in 1928 described as follows:

During King Gustaf's reign, the cases have grown to a scale [5-700 cases per week] which makes it virtually impossible to proceed in the old style. The way in which the

⁷ Holm 1967.

⁸ Gerdner 1946 & 1954; Håstad 1947: s. 372.

King now handles government matters seems a better fit. The principle that the King and the Council of State applied during the Edén ministry [and continued under social democracy] was thus characterized by government before the Councils informed the King of all important matters of government. When such matters were pending, the minister in question member was admitted to the king to explain the substance of the matter and the proposed decision. The king's opinion could then be obtained beforehand, so that discussions in the Council did not need to take place. In these cases, the Council was a more or less pro forma rubber stamping of agreed on decisions, and this made it possible for the councils themselves to be held at a reasonable number.

...

And here I come to the thorny question of King Gustaf's actual influence. The king is not an empty figurehead. King Gustaf takes an interest in all matters presented to him. Of course, there can be no question of bothering the king with a presentation in detail of all the thousands of small matters that pass through the Council. Here, for practical reasons, the procedure should become more formal. But the more important matters he follows with attention.

...

In all his actions, the king is strictly constitutional. It does not follow, as some seem to imagine, that this makes him irrelevant. When the relationship between a constitutional monarch and his advisers is sound, good arguments will always carry the day. If the monarch represents the argument best founded in reality, this will not be without influence on the outcome.

There is a group of government affairs which King Gustaf follows in detail, namely the foreign affairs, Every dispatch that arrives at the foreign ministry is handed to him, and experience suggests that he studies them in detail. The government to which I [1917-1919 as a Social Democrat] belonged should also testify with gratitude that the Parliament often, in the current troubled times, benefited from the King's experience and good judgment in foreign policy matters as well as from his personal relations.⁹

Most of Gustaf's time was spent on newspapers, audiences, correspondence, representation & military inspections. During the winter months, anyone could Tuesdays visit the castle to meet him. The name was recorded in a book & you sat down in a waiting room. This was how Kurt Hajby came to meet him.¹⁰ In 1926 he relinquished the command of the Swedish Navy to concentrate on the army. In 1939, he retired from the audiences.

* * *

There are many positive and negative views about Gustaf. The positive first:

Diplomat & author / debater Rütger Essén (1890-1972)

King Gustaf V was the son of a sober and more objective time [than his father], but the difference between the fifth and fourth monarchs of the house of Bernadotte was not only a generational difference. King Gustaf V wanted to be more than seen and had a completely different view of the world than Oscar II. He was an illusion-free man with a strong sense of duty, hard to deceive, little amenable to flattery, little sense of vanity and ostentation, personally modest, with a sense of humour and an instinct for the value of personalities and for political facts. However, he lacked his father's

⁹ Värner Rydén. Koningen och hans rådgivare. Dagens Nyheter, 1928-06-10, sida 2,35.

¹⁰ Finn. En dag som kung. Dagens Nyheter, 1924-03-16, söndagsbilagan: ss. 1,7.

literary education and brilliant conversational talent, and his charming, if occasionally theatrical performance.¹¹

The explorer and writer/debater Sven Hedin (1865-1952)

Unlike many others, he has never been afraid and has always stood up for his words and actions, even though the situation may have changed completely and he could therefore be misunderstood. History retains the memory of many noble and right-thinking men endowed with rare character traits. During my own time, I have not met anyone who in this regard could compete with King Gustaf. The qualities I admire most of the King are, in the first place, his personal courage, his upright and manly stance, his boldness and calm in the most critical situations and his absolute freedom from excessive precautions, fear or cowardice. He does not shy away from a risky act out of fear of the possible consequence - for him, it is enough with the conviction to act right and to do and say it if he considers it the best for the Fatherland and worthy of his own responsibility and his duty. Nothing has ever been able to pull him out of his composure, and even in very distressing situations, both in internal and foreign policy matters, he has been the staunch, the spiritually and playfully superior figure who, through his unshakable calm, has given his advisers the confidence and sense of security that they seem to sometimes have lacked in themselves.

Humility before God and humility before men are also characteristics of our king [as] his unwavering kindness. Once you have won his trust and friendship, you can be sure that he will never let you down - whatever may happen. A trait that is so common in other people, slander, is completely absent in the king. He simply cannot stand the fact that in his presence, anything evil or derogatory is said about an absent person. He immediately speaks up for the absentee.¹²

Lawyer & minister Nils Quensel (1894-1971).

I soon found [1936-1950] that it was easy to talk, even to discuss issues with him. He was always simple and natural, went straight to the point and spoke without beating about the bush. He received objections in a way that, from the conversation, banished any trace of coercion or temptation to a lack of transparency. ... You did not for a moment forget that you faced the king, but the main impression was that he was the responsible father and the fatherly friend. I do not believe you can find a man more straightforward, objective and just than King Gustaf. His quick perception and sense of essentials, even of the most complex issues, was a pleasure to behold.¹³

Official & politician Torsten Nothin (1884-1972) (Social Democrat).

Various writers have acknowledged that the king possessed naturalness and dignity. It has been said of him that he seemed king without striving to be so. There is no reason to reconsider these judgments.

However, it is more difficult to detail the different aspects of him, which combined to give this impression.

The experienced judge of character, governor Marcus Wallenberg, who knew the king for a very long time, summed up his opinion in the words: "He has discretion."

He had discretion and this showed in a variety of details. Thus he was extremely careful not to emphasize anyone in particular nor to put anyone down. When asked for an award or public recognition, the King always carefully considered whether the measure could create a "precedent" or whether someone else could have the same

¹¹ Essén 1933c: ss. 182-183.

¹² Hedin 1950: del 2, s. 28.

¹³ Quensel 1973: s. 289.

claim to be remembered. But even in daily life, he was equally cautious. How many times did I not see when he, on entering a gathered dinner party, took a fraction of a second at the door to catch where the various guests stood so that he could greet them in the order that everyone found natural. And when he joked, it was done in a good-natured way, that could not hurt anyone. "But then get up out of the pit, Garvis", he once said, when he was about to visit a Swedish national football team and had to bend particularly deep towards the short-grown, but straight football idol.

But "discretion" was by no means all. He owned much more than that. He had a distinctive sense of fair play and, without bargain, demanded the same back. His questions were honest and he wanted an honest answer to them, not flattery or evasions. Nor did he tolerate any bad mouthing of absentees. If such happened, the guilty party was immediately reprimanded.

He had a distinctive sense of justice [and] at his peak an unusual memory for events and for persons. Book-minded he was not [but] he had a great ability to distinguish great from small and abhorred petty details. Neither did he like long speeches.

Whether the king had any what in everyday speech is called closer personal friends I do not know. I do not think so, at least not since a couple of his peers within the court died.¹⁴

Author & journalist Ludvig Nordström (1882-1942)

Our time offers the bizarre spectacle of elected Heads of State exercising royal power, while the legacy kings lack real political influence. The King's role in the world's remaining monarchies has, under the rule of democracy, become something other than a political one. It has become moral, psychological, spiritual. It was not difficult to be monarch during the days of autocracy. From a moral point of view. The difficulties then lay in the foreign and military spheres. Now the problem of the King's office lies in the purely human sphere. Have you generally made clear to yourself how much of self-control, of inner and outer adjustment, of good will and of selfless vision a man must have, though born to lord and king, to accept the position as only being 1st in rank among the officials of a fully democratic state? To obey the will of the people and yet stand above them as a living symbol of the kingdom's historical continuity? To subordinate all feelings, possibly even affections, to an inalienable duty? To cooperate with the elected representatives of the people from the most diverse circles, of the most diverse levels of education? To represent history in the face of today's political storms, and at the same time be able to feel, think and act as a human being among all these bickering people from all stages of life?

These problems have been the life problems of the current King of Sweden. It has been testified by his collaborators in the government that he has solved them in an admirable way. He has become more Mr. G. than His Majesty. And the fact is, that on all the pictures in uniform he seems embarrassed, while in sports costume he comes alive. You know he feels at ease.¹⁵

[i.e. Gustaf was not only powerless after the transition to parliamentarianism. He also *enjoyed* it. Also a way to square the circle. It is probably significant that also Karl XV's biographies at this time, for example by Carl Hallendorff, were rewritten in the same spirit - that King & people lived in harmony. But it ended up for Gustaf as for Karl XV. Both were retroactively supplied with a comprehensive "popular" sex life.]

¹⁴ Nothin 1955: ss. 311-312.

¹⁵ Ludvig Nordström. Han som skapat en ny kunga-typ. Vecko Journalen, 1933:24.

Per Albin Hansson (1885-1946) (Social Democratic party leader)

Of course King Gustaf is a conservative man, but conservatism is an evil only when it lacks the will to understand, adapt and convey. Such, however, is not the conservatism of King Gustaf, which is steeped in understanding, consideration and tolerance. He is a democratic king - not in his political views but in his personal orientation. King Gustaf of Sweden, as a constitutional monarch, has not only accepted that the kingdom should be governed by the people's will. He has also actively worked for majority governments in the spirit of democratic parliamentarianism. Rooted at a time so different from ours, he has grown together with the new in a way that has gained him general popularity.¹⁶

Miscellaneous anecdotes, 1943

Ahead of Gustaf's 85th birthday, Stockholms-Tidningen made an appeal about personal memories of the king. These and a number of anecdotes were published by Prawitz (1943). The majority are those where people make themselves ridiculous through fawning, lack of etiquette or exaggerated etiquette and Gustaf refuses such, is lenient, fires a dry joke or gains sympathy by otherwise deviating from the expectations of haughty behaviour. For example:

Here's the old man!

Five years ago, it happened in October during a royal moose hunt that the king who had beaters with him, for a while became separated from the rest of the company. One of the men was worried and said a little irreverent:

- Where is the old man? Has he wandered off?

But then he blushed all the way up over his ears, when the king, who was no further away than he heard what was said, put his head up and replied:

- Here he is!

After that episode, the fool became a royalist for life.

A. L., Smål. Burseryd¹⁷

*

The negative opinions are from the courtyard crisis. I quote the views that found their way into the biographies & chronicles. The Authors' sources are provided to the extent that they can be identified:

- First to publish criticism was Lars Elgklou (1978) who quoted from Hugo Hamilton's (1955) diary: "Do jigsaw puzzles, fishing pike and playing bridge until 1-2 o'clock at night, and this day in and day out, is not a life for a king. ... If we had not spoken of more serious things at some point, the conversation would never have risen above the most meagre cold talk." Elgklou was also generally negative about Gustaf's actions during the courtyard crisis and that he had let himself be influenced in a pro-German direction by his wife Victoria.
- Åke Ohlmark's biography (1983) contained a number of quotes from Karl Staaf's diary, probably taken from Leif Kihlberg's Staaff biography, about the bad relationship between Staaff & Gustaf, that Staaff did not consider his own fault but blamed on Gustaf's advisers. Ohlmarks also cited Axel Bruswitz (1951)'s analysis of the peasant march as not planned by Gustaf, but welcomed. Ohlmark also quoted Elis

¹⁶ Hansson 1938. [Kraftigt förkortad.]

¹⁷ Prawitz 1943: s. 32.

Håstad's criticism in *Svensk Tidskrift* (1947) of Staaff's actions & unrealistic belief in the eternal peace.

- Jörgen Weibull (1991) quoted Prince Carl's (1931) & his own (1960) criticism of Gustaf's tendency to unanchored initiatives.
- In 1995 Lars Elgklou published a second biography, in which he in addition to his old views quoted Carl Fleetwood (1968) about Gustaf's incredible obstinacy when cornered, Thorsten Nothin's (1955) views that Staaff's rude behaviour was deliberate and Hugo Hamilton that Gustaf under pressure became agitated & acted without caring about the consequences.
- Staffan Skott (1996) expressed himself disparagingly in a variety of ways but few of them were documented. Gustaf was unpretentious, indolent, decent, easily agitated when somebody opposed him & a nobody. He quotes Hugo Hamilton (1955) et al: "Do jigsaw puzzles, fishing pike and playing bridge until 1-2 o'clock at night, and this day in and day out, is not a life for a king." Gustaf was also nervous, self-pitying & prestigious, had hysterical outbursts and drove his advisers to the brink of despair with his laziness, nonchalance and lack of factual knowledge.
- Lars Lagerqvist (1997) complained about the lack of sources. According to unclear sources, Gustaf was judicious, but had difficulties getting along with Staaff.
- Gustaf von Platen (2002) quotes Fredrik Wachmeister (Steyern 1965) "It is not much fun to approach the king and talk to him about something. He openly shows his boredom with all government speeches. He doesn't even listen. He sits on the council but seems listless - sometimes he sleeps. Staaff was accused of signing acts which he disliked. But why does the king not find out what Staaff signs? Instead, the king sits up much of the night playing cards. He takes that as a job that has to be done on a daily basis. Nowadays, the evening even begins by adding 'puzzles', in which pleasure the whole court is expected to take part. The consequence of this late-night activity is that he can no longer cope with his day time duties. He doesn't touch the government documents, he doesn't even send for them for show." - "Gustaf had an often documented need [unknown source] to consider a question, postpone the decision and sleep on the matter." - "The king ruled over Sweden, but over the king ruled Victoria".
- Bengt Liljegren (2004) is generally patronizing: In addition to a keen interest in hunting, Gustav V was known as a passionate, if not very prominent, tennis player under the name Mr. G.
- Lars O Lagerqvist & Nils Åberg (2004) are brief: Gustaf abstained from the coronation, was the last king to exert any personal influence in politics, accepted parliamentarianism in 1917 and during both world wars worked eagerly for neutrality. His height was 192 cm & he sat long on the throne
- Stig Hadenius (2007) continues the Gustaf-critical trend by quoting Wachmeister (Steyern 1965) & Bruswitz (1951) "According to the mythology surrounding the peasant march, it was a sudden rage that caused the peasants to travel to the king and express their concern. But we know that the ground was well prepared. Strong forces worked against the Staaff government, and the march was not only about the defence but about Sweden's political future. On the right, there was the fear of Russia and a

strong fear that the defence was inadequate. The position of the royal power was threatened, and the working class was on the rise.”

- Herman Lindqvist (2010): King Gustaf V of Sweden became the longest (192 cm) and oldest king (ninety-two years) of all. He also sat longer on the throne than any king since the Middle Ages (almost forty-three years). Lindqvist quotes Hugo Hamilton (1955) & Skott (1996) ”Gustaf was nervous and prestigious and, like so many other kings in the family before and after him, could have hysterical outbursts. His laziness and negligence drove the advisers to despair.”
- Arne Norlin (2015) considers Gustaf to be untalented, undecided and uncertain. He quotes Skott (1996) that if Gustaf had not been lucky enough to become king he would have been ”completely unknown (except possibly by the vice squad)”. After 1917 Gustaf V started to grow old. And the older he got, the less able he was to protest the passage of time and the more people grew accustomed to his existence.

My own assessment is that the biographies & chronicles are too much based on research into the constitutional crisis, on biased sources & on different time periods. Those who had experience with Gustaf before & after 1918 judged him quite differently. A later attempt to write Gustaf's biography by combining all available information mostly ends in confusion.