

Chapter 66 : World War II (VIII) (1939-1945).

World War II is usually described as a continuation of World War I, and so it apparently was perceived by contemporaries. Hitler was a new Wilhelm II, Stalin was a new tsar, Mannerheim & his white guard fought anew against the red hordes, Finland was again helped by a Prussian Germany, etc. The new element was Germany's murderous intent - but that only emerged gradually. The entire German leadership had been brutalized by their experience in World War I.

Gustaf was initially pro-German “but after the atrocities against Jews and the hapless prisoners of the concentration camps [October 1944] became known, he told me [Sven Hedin] that his feelings for Germany could not remain the same as before.”¹ Secretary of state Erik Boheman was even more emphatic: “In the beginning he regarded Hitler as a rabble-rousing upstart and eventually as a lethal madman. He abhorred Nazism, not least the persecution of the Jews; the king had several Swedish Jews in his closest circle.”²

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At the outbreak of World War II September 3, 1939, Gustaf was 80 years old, but still in good health. His grandson, heir prince Gustaf Adolf, was since 1932 married to the daughter of Duke Eduard of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, who after the November Revolution in 1918 had invested in a career in the Nazi Party.³ Gustaf had also since the Nazi *machtübernahme in* 1933 met the 3rd Reich's leading political figures at diplomatic events.

Gustaf met Hitler three times. The first time was April 21, 1933. Gustaf was passing through on his way to Nice through and was to meet President Hindenburg for a lunch meeting at the Berlin Embassy. At the same time, he wanted to criticize the German leadership for the harassment of the Jews - through his brother Carl at the Red Cross, he was well informed about what was going on - and therefore asked Hindenburg to bring some of his government colleagues. Those who accompanied Hindenburg were newly appointed Chancellor Adolf Hitler, Vice Chancellor von Papen, Foreign Minister von Neurath, former President of the Imperial Court Simon and President of the Prussian Academy von Schillings.⁴ No record was kept of Gustaf's “table talk“ but at least Hitler was allegedly very upset. Jarl Torbacke has compiled what we know. The versions are partly contradictory. I present the version that Gustaf gave to Councillor of State Felix Hamrin the following month:

The exchange of words began, according to what the king now announced to Hamrin, with his majesty stating that he had always been a friend of Germany; This was precisely why he disapproved of the new regime's actions, which meant that Germany lost all sympathies from all peoples. Hitler answered that he must supplant the Jews, who had attained too much power; the few Jews who had been killed must moreover be put against the hundreds of people murdered by the Jews Communist accomplices. The King then appealed to Hitler to proceed with more discrimination.⁵

Hitler's version of the meeting is from a table conversation in 1942:

¹ Hedin 1950: del 2, s. 26; Carlgren 1990: s. 57, fotnot 45.

² Boheman 1963: del 2.

³ Se kapitel 102 om Hitlers hertig.

⁴ Dagens Nyheter 1933-04-22, s. 8.

⁵ Torbacke 1971: s. 53; Thorsell 2006: s. 38. [Felix Hamrins dagbok, 1933-05-05.]

It had not always been easy to persuade the old gentleman [Hindenburg], but once you managed to convince him, he fully endorsed the matter. In the beginning, he had hardly wanted to know of any action against the Jews. However, at a lunch at the Swedish legation where we both participated, and the Swedish king had criticized the German Jewish measures, the old gentleman with his deep serious voice had rejected the remarks on the grounds that they were internal German matters which concerned only the German Chancellor.⁶

Hitler, who had grown up in the Habsburg Empire, had long time a respect for monarchs - Gustaf was after all king of a country of pure-bred Arians - but the meeting seems to have had no effect beyond Gustaf being allowed to explain his position. To drive home the point, Gustaf afterwards played tennis in a double with the Jew Daniel Prenn, Germany's best tennis player, who had just been banned from representing the country in the Davies Cup. Neither the meeting nor the tennis match became public knowledge until after the war.

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Even before the outbreak of World War II, the Nordic kings came together to ensure mutual solidarity. Gustaf, Haakon VII, Christian X, the President of Finland and the foreign ministers met at Stockholm Castle October 18-19, 1939. Gustaf wanted to present something concrete and on October 10 sent Sven Hedin as diplomatic envoy to Hitler to investigate the possibility of a peace congress. Germany had attacked Poland but further actions were delayed & Gustaf thought there was a possibility to get the parties to the negotiating table. He thought wrong though. Hitler very kindly received Hedin but declined the proposal, which he considered hopeless.⁷

June 17, 1940, after the English defeat at Dunkirk, Gustaf made another attempt, this time via official channels. Hitler thanked him for the offer, but declined a second time. The English replied in mid-August, but they also said no. Gustaf's programmatic pacifism was met with contempt. Churchill's comment: "I should perhaps add that the involvement of the despicable Swedish King, after abandoning both Finland and Norway and entirely being in the grip of the Germans, may contain some encouraging aspects, although it as a whole leaves a bad aftertaste." Nevertheless, Gustaf did not give up hope of averting a war that, due to weapons development, threatened to become even bloodier than the previous war.⁸

Edward VIII also seems to have tried to broker peace before everything was too late, but, like Gustaf, has afterwards been accused of pursuing Nazi affairs. Everyone was looking for blood, and they got it. (Lownie 2021.)

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There was an expectation that the Nordic solidarity pact meant that Sweden would assist Finland during the Winter War against the Soviet Union November 30, 1939, to March 13, 1940. However the assistance was limited to emergency aid & a volunteer corps. This government decision was unpopular in broad circles, but the opposition ended when Gustaf February 19 included in the cabinet minutes that he fully supported the government's decision.

⁶ Thorsell 2006: s. 36. [Okänd källa. Upptecknat 1942-05-21.]

⁷ Thorsell 2006: ss. 100-106.

⁸ Richardson 2007a: ss. 21-28; Richardson 2007b.

[The King's official approval] had an immediate unifying and reassuring effect that would prove important for Sweden's future claims for keeping neutral. For example, Prime Minister Hansson, who had initially been hesitant about the monarch's involvement, quickly realized his misjudgment: "Paid the king a visit and thanked him for his official approval."

But Gustav V's political marker also had far-reaching domestic consequences. His open solidarity with the Social Democratic Prime Minister tied the two closer together than before - not only in a real political sense, but also symbolically. Unsurprisingly, these two national icons dominated the mass media image of the Swedish war years. One of the consequences of their symbolic symbiosis was that the possibility of criticizing the government was minimized, as criticism of the prime minister could now be indirectly perceived as criticism of the king. A state of affairs that among others professor & leading cultural personality Sigurd Curman described as the king "placing himself personally as a shield in front of P. A. Hansson".⁹

Gustaf seems to have had nothing against Operation Barbarossa or the Finish Continuation War of June 25, 1941, to September 19, 1944. October 1941 he wrote a private letter to Hitler congratulating him on his decision to suppress the "Bolshevik scourge". In March 1944, however, he advised the Finns to make a separate peace with the Soviet Union. He was primarily a realist and politician. There were limits, however. He regarded the Soviet state as a murder regime and refused to have anything to do with its diplomatic envoy.¹⁰

Gustaf's actions in connection with the German attack on Denmark and Norway April 9, 1940, are described in another chapter.¹¹ However, he seems to have been against the training of the Norwegian police forces, another volunteer corps, which he in the manner of journalist Torgny Segerstedt's publications, considered an unnecessary provocation.

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The midsummer crisis of 1941 (the decision to allow German troops to transit to Finland by Swedish rail) and its political consequences have been widely reported. Here I confine myself to Gustaf's role (Söderström red. 1947: ss. 358-364; Björkman 1971: ss. 337-421; Carlsson 2006: ss. 142-165; Carlsson 2014: ss. 73-83,279-283). The chronology was as follows:

- June 22, 1941, at 4.00 in the morning, Operation Barbarossa began. At 8.30 a.m., the German diplomats Karl Schnurre and Prince Victor zu Wied presented their demands to Swedish Foreign Minister Christian Günther. At 10.00 he informed Gustaf. At 10:30, Gustaf also met Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson. Hansson interpreted Gustaf's position as meaning that he would rather abdicate than take conflict with the Germans. At approximately 12:00, part of the government met in a preliminary cabinet meeting.
- June 23 at 14-16 o'clock the Foreign Affairs Committee met. 11 members (including Günther) were in favour of the transit. Four were against. Gustaf & the Crown Prince were in favour of the transit.

⁹ Jönsson 2007: ss. 161-162.

¹⁰ Bernadotte 1983: ss. 95-96.

¹¹ Se kapitel 54 om kronprinsessan Märtha.

- June 24 at 14.00, the parliamentary groups met to be informed about the matter and to give their opinion. At 7 p.m. the government met, was informed about the discussions and decisions of the parliamentary groups and approved the matter.
- June 25 at 15.30, the matter was also approved in the Council where Gustaf & the Crown Prince was present. Gustaf thanked the government for making a wise decision. Around 17:00, Gustaf informed the German diplomats of the decision of the Council.

In November 1944 Harald Åkerman (liberal) and Erik Brandt (social democrat) wrote an article about what was said at each group meeting before the government decision. Brandt's version was that "The Prime Minister had declared that he »could of course go to the king with our 'no', but that the consequence would be a governmental crisis with difficult to predict consequences, because the king will abdicate, the unity government will dissolve and the Social Democrats will disappear from the ministry.»"¹² Per Albin Hansson's manner of allowing the parliamentary groups to vote on the government decision without giving them time to get to grips with the issue occurred several times during the war and was perceived as a nuisance.

In December 1946, after Hansson's death, a memorial was published in which one of his close collaborators Gustav Möller wrote about the meeting of the Social Democrats: "A couple of times there was serious risk of a government crisis, the most difficult being the German requirement for passage through Sweden to Finland by a division. The great danger, which a government crisis would have made acute, was that the government of national unity would have been replaced by a clearly German-minded government. This danger also made those members, who were firmly opposed to Germany's demands, very reluctant to draw the ultimate consequences of their stance."¹³

January 18, 1947, Dagens Nyheter published its phone calls to some of the leaders of the government of national unity. Möller referred to the official secrets act and refused to answer. The others either also refused or questioned Möller's version of what took place. Several ambiguities were vented: (1) What Gustaf actually said to Hansson on June 22. (2) If Hansson June 24 gave a biased summary of his conversation to the parliamentary groups. (3) If Gustaf correctly communicated the Swedish reservations to the German diplomats. I confine myself to the conversation between Gustaf & Hansson. There are 12 versions:

- Per Albin Hansson's version (1941 from memory two weeks later): "At 10.30 the king called on me and there was a first discussion about the German demands, especially that concerning the transit of troops. The king declared that he would not by refusing take the risk of a conflict. Rather he would consider, which I must interpret so that he would rather abdicate than to make such a fatal decision."¹⁴
- Axel Gjöre's version (June 22, 1941, from the diary): "The King - to whom the Prime Minister was also called - had [according to Günther and/or Hansson] declared that he would not consider any action that could bring Sweden to war. This meant, as far as one can understand, a willingness to consider German demands – apparently he does not count on other reasons for war. He also stated that he would be prepared to draw the necessary conclusions of his position. This is believed to mean that he would be

¹² Erik Brandt. [Om midsommarkrisen.] Expressen, 1944-11-20.

¹³ Gustav Möller (1946.) Han var en klippta. I: Nerman & Tranströmer, 1946: s. 6.

¹⁴ Björkman 1971: s. 359; Isaksson 1985: del 4, s. 470.

inclined to abdicate in the event of the government denying transit, but not that he intended to change government. He is believed to be very isolated within the family; In any case, the crown prince is said to represent a different opinion very adamantly. The King's attitude obviously makes the situation extremely precarious. The Swedish people have 'invested' an enormous amount of their moral capital in the old king - the crown prince has during the latter years have been overshadowed. Furthermore, Adolf Hitler is said to perceive the king as a guarantor of a policy of neutrality acceptable or tolerable by Germany.¹⁵

- Gösta Bagges version (June 22, 1941, from the diary): “The Prime Minister then announced that he and the Minister of Foreign Affairs had been present at the King's very firm position in favour of meeting the German demands and that he was prepared to take all the consequences of this attitude. The Prime Minister had been led to believe that the King intended to abdicate if he did not get his opinion through. As not all members of the government were present and thought had to be given to the matter, discussions were postponed until the following morning.”¹⁶
- Karl Gunnar Westman's version (June 22, 1941, from the diary): “In the evening I had a conversation with Bagge in Kungsträdgården on a sofa in the shadow of Karl XII's statue. Bagge believed that we should voluntarily agree to the transit and said that the king's hint to P.A., that in the event of refusal he would draw the personal consequences, made a serious impression on P.A.”¹⁷
- Karl Gunnar Westman's version (June 23, 1941, from the diary): “[Hansson] leaned towards a rejection. However, this position requires unanimity. Great importance must be attached to the King's position. Yesterday, the King had most clearly said to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that in the event of rejection he would draw the personal consequences from this, and this certainly meant a threat of abdication.”¹⁸
- The German diplomat the Prince of Wied's version (June 25, 1941, based on a meeting with Gustaf after the conclusion of the Council at 15.30 & conveyed in a telegram sent at 19.20). “Presumably, the King [at the meeting] added that he had even had to go so far as to speak of his abdication ('von seiner Abdankung zu sprechen').“ The Prince of Wied's version was, according to Wigforss, available to the Swedish government from 1948, but the spread was limited.¹⁹
- Möller's version (1947): Prime Minister Hansson, who had been called up to the King, reported on the conversation he had with the King. According to this report, the King, who had previously consulted the Minister for Foreign Affairs, had agreed with his view that the threatening situation justified a concession to the German and Finnish desire. - The fact that the King in this context indicated an intention to abdicate in the event of the unity government did not agree with his position is explained why Prime Minister Hansson because of his conversation with the King also considered it necessary to take this eventuality into account in the event of a government crisis. In my personal opinion however there was no reason to give the king's statements this

¹⁵ Gjöres 1967: ss. 88-89.

¹⁶ Bagge 2013: del 1, s. 247.

¹⁷ Westman 1981: del 3, s. 154. [Bagges version från kvällen den 22 juni.]

¹⁸ Westman 1981: del 3, s. 155. [Hansson version från regeringssammanträdet den 23 juni 1941.]

¹⁹ Wigforss 1950: del 3, s. 169; Carlsson 2014: s. 280. [Prinsen av Wied's version den 25 juni 1941.]

interpretation. - The notion that the king would have wished to replace the government of national unity with another government is certainly wrong.²⁰

- Günther's version (1951 from memory): What the king said was as far as I remember only: "If we were to reject the German petition, I would not wish to be involved." This could be interpreted in the direction of abdication, although the word was not mentioned, but the king did not even speak about the possibility of any government crisis, and his remark was made in the usual tone of conversation, with no trace of official statement and even less any "threat".²¹
- Günther's version (1954 from memory): "King Gustaf never mentioned the word abdication. ... He explained that in his old age he did not want to contribute to anything that could plunge the country into war, which he believed a rejection of the Germans' request would do. We must give in, the king said, otherwise he 'would not participate'. I particularly remember those words. However, he said this in such a way that I could not see it as a serious threat of abdication. In my opinion, the king only wanted to emphasize his personal opinion as strongly as possible about the advisability of this time giving in to the Germans. The talk of 'not being involved' could hardly be taken literally, any more than one thinks that a person intends to commit suicide if he says that something should happen 'over my dead body'.²²
- Gustaf Andersson's version (1955 from memory) "The King had explained that in the event of a negative answer he could hardly take responsibility for the country's government in the future. This message was interpreted by *me* and several others as a direct threat of abdication, and it is now confirmed that the king also intended to give this meaning to the statement. Thus, any disagreement on the substance of the Prime Minister's note on the matter before the government and the party group is eliminated."²³
- Posse's version (1944 & 1949): "When we [Prince Eugen, Prince Wilhelm & Amelie Posse] afterwards sat down on the old worn leather sofa in front of the evening fire, "Uncle Eugen" said that he wanted the two of us to know that The King had firmly and categorically informed him that no one at that time had mentioned anything about abdication. He had not even thought that his words could be interpreted like that - since what he had in fact said had only been that "if the Reichstag responds no to the demands of the Germans, you have to be prepared to face the consequences - and they can be particularly serious"! "Right shall be right. I certainly don't know why they should impose on my brother something that he has never said or meant - it's hard enough anyway to be king in these times," Prince Eugen said, and looked quite relieved."²⁴ In a letter to Torgny Segerstedt from July 1941 Prince Eugen also defends the transit. They were not there to help the Germans, but to help the Finns.
- Sometime in 1954-1960 Gustaf VI summoned Christian Günther. "He had noted that one had given his father's statement in 1941 (that 'do not want to be involved')

²⁰ Gustav Möllers svar till partikamraten Karl Ward, Norrköping, i en interpellation den 12 februari 1947. I: Söderström red. 1947: s. 364. [Baserat på anteckningar från ett möte med Per Albin Hansson där även Axel Gjöre & Gösta Bagge närvarade. Alla förde anteckningar.]

²¹ Dagens Nyheter, 1951-05-08, s. 3.

²² Christian Günthers besked [om midsommarkrisen]. Vecko Journalen, 1954:37.

²³ Andersson 1955: s. 270.

²⁴ Posse 1949: s. 413. [Baserat på prins Eugens uppgifter 1944.]

different meanings, including abdication. He pointed out to Günther that he himself had never interpreted the statement in this way, and thus supported Günther's press statement of 1954.”²⁵

- In 1966 Thorsten Nothin recalled in his memoirs the curious fact that no one asked Per Albin Hansson about his own assessment of the situation, but all discussion was about what Gustaf V had said or not said. “Where they already at that point prepared to blame the king if the decision was criticized? That question can only be answered in the affirmative. For in the autumn they began to say that it was the king who forced the consent. And they turned a deaf ear to all that might give the matter another interpretation.”²⁶

Since most versions are several years old and/or 2nd hand, it is difficult to decide on the truth. The fact that Günther's version grew with the years is explained by the fact that his memory was contaminated by other versions. Söderström portrays it as a fantasy that Gustaf would threaten to abdicate or appoint a pro-German government, which appears as the 1947 consensus. However, the debate about who said what and how it was interpreted refused to stop.²⁷

The Germans were also allowed to transport munitions by sea in Swedish territorial waters. Due to a misunderstanding, the three ships Tannenberg, Preussen & Hansestadt Danzig 1941-07-09 entered a Swedish mine field and sank, the so-called Östby-sänkningen. According to the Swedish Wikipedia, 150-200 German sailors died, according to other information far fewer. A memorial was erected the same year at Öland's Gräsgård in the presence of Prince Gustaf Adolf, Sibylla & the German Consul in Malmö. Gustaf Adolf gave a short speech in which he praised the German sailors for their courage and sacrifice. The three ships sunk were civilian passenger ships and a car ferry.²⁸

In 1976, historians Hans De Geer & Jarl Torbacke published a book about contentious problems in Swedish contemporary history. Among the problems was Gustaf's possible threats of abdication.²⁹ It seemed to them not at all unbelievable that (1) Hansson was indeed threatened by Gustaf, but that he was too compliant to ask Gustaf to clarify himself, or (2) that he invented the threat to scare his parliamentary group into obedience. Nine of Gustaf's short biographies address the issue but have difficulty in taking a position (Elgklou 1978: ss. 208-209[1+2]; Ohlmarks 1983: ss. 190-192[2?]; Weibull 1991: s. 83[1+2]; Elgklou 1995: ss. 249-251[1+2]; Skott 1996: ss. 110[1?]; Lagerqvist 1997: s. 411[2?]; Liljegren 2004: s. 109[1]; Hadenius 2007: ss. 237-241[1+2]; Norlin 2015: ss. 132-133[2]). Six 1s & Seven 2s. A reasonable middle way is that after Gustaf's actions during the 1914 courtyard crisis, the 1925 defence crisis and the mediation proposal to Hitler in 1940 he was thought capable of anything, which is Erik Carlsson's interpretation 2006 & 2014.³⁰ My own interpretation is that Gustaf was in the habit of marking his dissatisfaction with decisions he did not like by entering a reservation in the minutes - which annoyed the councillors since it meant that

²⁵ Carlsson 2006: s. 161.

²⁶ Nothin 1966: s. 402.

²⁷ Plobeck 1959; Herlitz 1959; Boheman 1963: del 2, ss. 11-21; Andersson 1968: del 2, ss. 118-122.

²⁸ Ulf Lundberg. Die Versenkung der Tannenberg, Preußen und Hansestadt Danzig. <modellmarine.de> (2017-01-01); Jan Linder & Lennart Lundberg. Ofredens Hav, Östersjön 1939-1992.

²⁹ De Geer & Torbacke 1976: ss. 199-319.

³⁰ Carlsson 2006: ss. 161-163; Carlsson 2014: ss. 279-283.

Gustaf protested his own decisions. This could be interpreted as a verbal counterpart & had actually occurred on other occasions, however not generated such a debate.

In 2014 Carlsson landed in the formulation “Gustaf V was not at all foreign to tactically motivated statements. He had the ability to say convincingly what he wanted to get through to the addressee - but that by no means corresponded to his actual opinion. In this case, Gustav V is considered to have spoken plainly and, unlike other situations during the midsummer crisis, to have used the word 'abdication' instead of any euphemism, this to avoid misinterpretation in Berlin.”³¹ I.e. Gustaf was a political tactician of the first order. This is probably a misinterpretation. Gustaf's own comment is that Per Albin Hansson over-interpreted what he said - something that happened before & that would happen again. In any event, it is a single formulation: Either Gustaf said that he himself would take the consequences or he said that Hansson & the government would take the consequences. Gustaf ended up standing as a shield in front of Hansson & his government for the second time. The debate seems somewhat exaggerated, but Gustaf's prominence during the war subsequently aroused unpleasant associations:

Of interest is that the suspension of parliamentarianism in favour of an ideal constitution, which comes close to the old ideals of the Bernadotte dynasty by a government above the parties, coincides with a certain rebirth of the personal regiment, which in 1914 stuck up its head.³²

Only in abnormal times [such as war and disasters] can the monarchy function normally. ... It is in view of this eventuality that the king [King Gustaf V] holds himself with 120 courtiers in degrees from colonel to field marshal. It seems a little over-ambitious.³³

Much has been written about the trusting relationship between Gustaf and Social Democracy based on the statements of Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson and others.³⁴ It is probably more correct to describe the relationship as a marriage of convenience. Hansson seems ambivalent. On the one hand, he considered the monarchy superseded and harmless. On the other hand, good relations facilitated the work of the government. At the 1944 party congress, Hansson attempted to persuade delegates to abandon the 1911 Republican demands but failed. The chairman of SSU Bertil Johansson said roughly the following: That the next man in the succession [Gustaf VI] we may well have to tolerate but then comes a person [heir prince Gustaf Adolf] who must never become king.³⁵

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Sweden's efforts during the Hungarian Jewish persecution have been widely reported. On June 30, 1944, Gustaf sent a telegram to the Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy, protesting the deportations to the German death camps:

Having learnt of the extraordinarily harsh methods which your government has adopted towards the Jewish population of Hungary, I will take the liberty of

³¹ Carlsson 2006: ss. 164-165; Carlsson 2014: ss. 282-283.

³² Lagerroth 1951: s. 319.

³³ Hans Haste c. 1955. I: Republiken. Meddelande från Republikanska Klubben, 1958/771. [Arbetarrörelsens arkiv.]

³⁴ Hansson 1938; Prawitz 1943: ss. 8-10.

³⁵ Isaksson 1985: del 4, ss. 27-32; Se även kapitel 99 om prins Gustaf Adolf.

addressing your Highness personally in the name of humanity to ask you to take action to save those who are yet to be saved by this unfortunate people. This appeal has been prompted by my old feelings of friendship for your country and by my sincere concern for Hungary's good name and reputation in the communities of nations.³⁶

Other groups also protested and the deportations were cancelled. Those Jews who had foreign citizenship or protective passports were allowed to leave the country. This is where Raoul Wallenberg's efforts were made. After the war, Gustaf was praised by the Jewish community for this, the reception of the Danish and Norwegian Jewish refugees and the rehabilitation of concentration camp prisoners:

It was an act of profound human solidarity, an affectionate protest against the hateful mentality and doctrine of violence of our time. The moral authority enjoyed by King Gustaf in all quarters, his high reputation as the most experienced in Europe, for wisdom and righteousness highly esteemed monarch, became an inestimable asset not only for Sweden but also for all the forces who, during this dark period, sought to save what could be saved from human values. Therefore, for the whole of the wide Jewish world, King Gustaf appeared as a high representative of active human love in an age of violence and brutality, which no other monarch of our time was honoured, revered, loved. Such shall his memory always live in Jewish hearts.³⁷

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Since Gustaf was to represent stability, the depictions of his person and everyday life were unexciting. Lennart Bernadotte, for example, produced a short film "A Day With the King" in 1940, where the war was barely visible. In 1943 - in connection with the 85th anniversary - what came to be the most famous depiction of Gustaf's everyday life, "The King Is Coming", is now in its total pointlessness impossible to read. Gustaf's speech on June 16, has more kick:

Prime Minister!

I would like to express my warm and heartfelt thanks for the overly fine and kind words that have been addressed to me on my 85th birthday. It is not easy for me in the autumn of my old age, in the present difficult political conditions of the world, to take the right course in seeking to preserve peace and freedom for our beloved fatherland. I wish to state openly that I and my government have been in full agreement with what has been done or what could not and should not be done. It is my firm view that a constitutional king should not, under normal normal circumstances, behave as a leader in one direction or another, except in exceptional circumstances. However, in the current major world crisis, I felt it was my imperative duty to try to help the country out of its difficulties on several occasions through personal intervention. This has also been achieved so far by the grace of God and with the help of my government colleagues. The danger has not been overcome. But I hope that the trust which has been shown to me by my Swedish people in these difficult years will not be disappointed. "With the people for the homeland" has always been the clue to my

³⁶ Judisk tidskrift 1944, årg. 17, sida 244 & 281.

³⁷ Hugo Valentin. Gustaf V. Judisk tidskrift 1950, årg. 23, sida 281. [Nekrolog.]

actions. One should never give up hope for a happy end, if we only keep together and stay united I am convinced that we shall suffer the storm with honour. God help us!

I will always remember this summer night with the greatest gratitude and joy, when so much kindness and love has flowed against me.

I call upon all of you to raise with me a four-fold hurrah for our beloved fatherland: Long live Sweden!³⁸

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In connection with the 85th anniversary, an opinion poll was made on what the Swedish people thought of the monarchy as a form of government. 84 percent were in favour. Six percent wanted a president. 10 percent had no opinion. There were some differences. The “higher classes“ - especially those in rural areas in the Skåne & Mälars landscapes - were most positive. The older men - especially those in the cities & in Norrland - were least positive.³⁹ Gustaf lived long, but his enemies lived even longer.

The following year, another poll was conducted on “Which living person do you admire the most?“ which Gustaf won by a wide margin (25 percent). Second came Churchill (10 percent) & third Per Albin Hansson (six percent). The choice of Gustaf was motivated by: The King's “effectiveness“ (efforts to keep Sweden out of war or help neighbouring countries) is mentioned by 36 percent, “character traits“ (upright, modest, etc.) by 27 percent, “bodily traits“ (vigorous, stately, etc.) by 26 percent and “posture, behaviour“ (folksy, common national symbol) by 13 percent.⁴⁰

This with Gustaf's simple habits has been made much of. Gustaf was admittedly a chain smoker, but extremely moderate in terms of food and drink. He appears to have been exempted from the alcohol rationing, but during the war he submitted to the same restrictions as the rest of the people. His brother Carl supplied him with potatoes from Fridhem. The guests had to bring their own sugar.

Political scientist Herbert Tingsten devoted a longer article to Gustaf's in his mind undeserved 1943 popularity. I quote:

The increased popularity and authority gained by the monarchy in Sweden in recent years, and especially during the World War, is not an isolated phenomenon. The same applies to the kingdom of several democratic states. The monarchs of northern and western Europe have been more powerful than they have been for a very long time in the public mind as the mouthpiece of the people, as symbols of national unity and in some cases as political leaders. This development has been partly contingent on personal and temporary relationships. However, it is not insignificant in that it can be traced to more generally effective factors.

The parliamentary system causes the monarch to lose power but gain in popularity. An independently acting king arouses opposition and unwillingness among the small or large groups who dislike his approach. A king, who appears to the outside world both as a symbol of unity and as a legal point of reference for various ministries, hardly challenges others than the querulous. Many people are grateful that, at least ostensibly voluntarily, he has ceased to use the power which since ages are

³⁸ Ohlmarks 1982: s. 154. [85-årstalet på borggården 16.6 1943.]

³⁹ Dagens Nyheter, 1944-01-13, s. 6.

⁴⁰ Dagens Nyheter, 1945-10-04, s. 8.

associated with the word king. His position makes him and the entire royal house a centre of interest and appreciation, manifested in idyllic depictions of private life, photography and gossip. If the monarch has any ability to behave in a popular way - which is usually easy in such an untouchable position - he awakens a personal affection, which does not stem solely from the recognition of successful servility but naturally follows from the joy of the social inferior over the good will shown. The politicians, who professionally attack each other and the opposing parties, remain in awe of the king, who, precisely through his political inaction, is taking a protected position. The popularity gained in this way already brings with it a potential political authority. But what is more, the ambiguity of the ideology that is woven around the parliamentary monarch is designed to strengthen his position. There is talk of the king being impartial, of him being above the parties, of him representing the unity of the nation. In the expression of parliamentarianism, this means that the king cannot or should not act politically; when one stresses his impartiality, one would say, that he may not take a stand and in declaring him to be above the parties, he should serve as constitutional cover for the strongest party or parties, regardless of his own opinion. But from this meaning of the usual slogans, it is easy to slip over to the opposite. Is he not the most impartial to act, is he not the best of all political leaders, the one who is supreme over all parties and only has the interest of the nation at heart? In fact, the ideal parliamentary monarch is characterized by essentially the same attributes as modern monarchism gives the long-awaited royal leader. In special situations, the propaganda of a neutral monarch, which is a constituent part of parliamentarianism, can become an asset to the independently acting king.⁴¹

⁴¹ Tingsten 1943.