

Chapter 71 : The Queen You Love to Hate (IV) (1907-1930).

December 8, 1907, Oscar II died after a long illness. Victoria was in Baden but returned to Stockholm the next day. No coronation ceremony was held, but many promises and oaths of allegiance were exchanged between Gustaf, his officials and the elected representatives. January 4, 1908, Victoria returned to Baden, but did not attend the wedding of her son, Wilhelm, in St Petersburg May 3, 1908. More on this in a later chapter 72 on Wilhelm. However, she followed Gustaf during most of his other incoming and outgoing state visits: Germany, Austria, Denmark, United Kingdom, France, Russia & (later) Finland. Also on three longer “national tours”.

Victoria's sick, foreign, Tullgarn and Solliden absences meant that she was absent from Stockholm Castle up to nine months a year. She maintained an extensive correspondence though. The extent of her illness has been debated. According to the doctors of the time, she suffered from chronic bronchitis. According to her relative Jan Bernadotte (1941-), it was an inherited form of pulmonary emphysema.¹ In any case, with the medical science of the time it was incurable. There are reports that she spent several weeks in bed at Tullgarn without any obvious symptoms, suggesting a depression. Over the years, her condition worsened. Her doctors all seem to have been focused on relieving the symptoms and avoiding unnecessary medication. Victoria had strong opinions on how to treat her illness, and paid annual visits to a doctor or health resort. Those mentioned are Dr. Johann Mezger in Amsterdam and the spa resorts of Baden-Baden, Franzensbad, Hohenburg, Kreuznach, Reichenhall, Rippoldsau & St Moritz. The treatments were massage, sweat cures, “water”, Lean Cuisine and light exercise. The prevailing explanation for the deterioration of her health during the winter was “the Swedish climate”. Unclear whether it was the cold winter air itself or the pollution caused by wood and coal burning.

From 1893 her court physician was the socialite physician, author etc. Axel Munthe. In 1880, he became MD in gynaecology and had since (possibly) practised medicine for the psychiatrist Jean-Baptiste Charcot. He completed his medical studies in half the normal time and was criticized afterwards by the board for being poorly prepared. The thesis received the lowest possible rating “passable”. Since he does not appear to have received further training in his profession, he must be regarded as a charlatan in the later part of his career - which also was his own judgment. No investigation into his competence was made before him being hired by the court. It was enough with a presentable appearance and that Victoria wanted him.² Munthe is often described as a demonic Svengali but that is difficult to confirm. He seems to have complied with the patient's wishes and certified her as ill whenever Victoria wanted so. As an employee of his patient, he was in a difficult position.

In 1889, Victoria underwent several operations, but not by Munthe. They removed a polyp, an infected tonsil (or ethmoid bone) and drained a suppuration. Munthe's own treatment was “a combination of charismatic presence, psychological gaze and authoritarian image” i.e., relief of symptoms through suggestion.³ When this no longer helped, he prescribed morphine. At the end of her life, Victoria was addicted.

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¹ Bernadotte 2006: s. 60.

² Johannisson 1999; Jangfeldt 2003.

³ Johannisson 1999: s. 38.

As queen, Victoria was expected to practice charity. Depending on what is included in the charity projects - if she only supported the project or if she worked actively in it - there were between 20 and 40 of them.⁴ In 1882 she became chairman the Society to encourage motherly and moral care for help to decent families (discontinued in 1907). Over time, she inherited old projects. When Princess Eugénie (1830-1889) died, Victoria became chairwoman of Eugéniahemmet and when Queen Sophie (1836-1913) died, she also became chairwoman of Sofiahemmet. The General Protection Association for the Coordination of Individual Help Activities within the Stockholm area was her own initiative however. The Queen's Central Committee was a similar but separate organization for the country as a whole.

The most widely publicized is The Queen's Central Committee. It was founded August 15, 1914, and existed until 1961. The board included Prince Eugen, Minister of Civil Affairs Oscar von Sydow, Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, all of Sweden's governors and others. Victoria was working chairwoman & bank director Harald Lettström (1867-1967) "Secretary General". Other people with influence were the envoy Herman Lagercrantz (1859-1945), the former lady-in-waiting Marie-Louise af Segerström (1854-1917) & Mrs. Elin Linder (1872-1957; b. Pfeiff). Lettström & Lagercrantz had a long experience of board assignments. af Segerström had been Queen Sophie's adviser on charity issues and "executive power". Linder had experience of Red Cross work. In the Central Committee she mainly dealt with the manufacture of personal items for the militia or *Landsturm*.⁵ Initially most talked about was the 12-March gifts (the Victoria Day) of knitting to the *Landsturm* to be distributed through the Central Committee's reserve depot. The 12-March gifts in 1915 were 74 thousand pairs of stockings etc. stacked in the White Sea hall in Stockholm Castle in the form of a giant "stocking" fortress. However, most of the work was outsourced and paid for with lottery money and donations. The goal was a set of underwear to each *Landsturm* soldier. With this was understood a shirt, a pair of underpants, socks and a sweater. The objective was achieved in 1917. Over time, the business grew. For example, it included an extensive Norrland & emergency help. Lagercrantz describes Victoria's role:

In the 16 years since [the work of the Central Committee was started], around 7 million has been distributed by the Committee through various charities for very different purposes. She was involved from the beginning to the end. She always claimed authority, I recall this from our conversations. The Queen said that there will be nothing accomplished without a single person in control. And she understood to make decisions, usually wisely and with a sense of justice. There is no doubt that the great work of the Committee was accomplished mainly thanks to the high status of the Queen, under which the various wills had to bend.

The character of the queen is little known. Her personal peculiarity was a kind heart without the slightest sentimental touch, combined with an extremely practical bent, a point that was not least expressed in her philanthropic activities. The Queen never gave alms in the way that rich people so usually throw at the needy and then forget about them. Her gifts always had a strong personal character. Hardly a day went by without a telephone call between her and the committee's executive members, usually bank manager Lettström, who had filled the demanding secretarial post since the institution was founded. Her work is best proved, if I mention that the committee's documents now cover more than 30 4-inch volumes, and the Queen took note of virtually every case.⁶

⁴ Åsbrink red. 1922: ss. 171-174; af Klercker 1944: s. 314.

⁵ "Kvinnoporträtt till dagskrönikan." Idun 1917:49, s. 787.

⁶ "Drottning Victorias gamla vänner har ordet." Vecko Journalen 1930:15, ss. 26-29,35.

After the war, the Central Committee was criticized for helping Russian and German war invalids to return to their respective countries. Probably is meant the Red Cross Invalid Trains that 1915-1922 repatriated some 63 thousand people. Victoria attended the first prisoner exchange - greeted the wounded soldiers and each gave them a gramophone with suitable disks to pass the time. 1923-1930 the committee was its own authority and as such it also sent emergency aid to Baden.

Two other activities were The Queen's "Candlelight Evenings" & The Queen's Rest Home on Öland. The candlelights were for those in the Stockholm area that the winter 1917/18 could not afford candles or kerosene. About 450 women were invited to the castle two days a week where they got to meet Victoria, warm themselves and use a number of sewing machines. The invitation to similar "Sewing Evenings" continued for several years. The Rest Home was a renovated building near Borgholm. The money came from a national gift on her 60th anniversary and was inaugurated in 1924. Victoria's presence at the coffee receptions was very appreciated. There is a memorial to the impression she made:

She performed her representative duties with extraordinary flair. To see her, for example, at a castle ball in the whole glory of her personality, was a sight you never forgot. But maybe she was even more impressive at a sewing club at the castle for her poor old ladies. With her peculiar fast walk, she moved from one group to the other, spoke to all her guests with her soft warm voice, heart to heart. She shared in their interests, their relationships. Wherever she went, everyone took heart, but she had to pay for it with hours of suffering.⁷

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Possibly - it is difficult to find information about who made the decision about what - Victoria made an effort to modernize the court ceremonial. She seems to have changed the ceremonial surrounding childbirth, church-taking and baptism. Only the medical staff and the father were allowed to attend childbirth. The rest would wait in a separate room. The church service - a thanksgiving service - was abolished. The baptism still took place in the White Sea hall at the Stockholm Castle but the mother was now allowed to bring the child to the priest herself. The Queen used to carry the baby, and the mother was not even allowed to attend the baptism, she being still unclean.

Other changes included Victoria's introduction of a parade cour with deep curtsies and bows. During Queen Sophie, the people had been standing along the walls while she passed by. Now it was the other way round. The parade was a forced rationalization on account of the court increasingly being opened to outsiders:

The rank [requirement to be presented at court] is reduced. It now includes, first and foremost, of course, the wives of the excellences, i.e. the ministers of state and foreign affairs and the Marshal of the Realm; further the ministers wives, all the wives and unmarried daughters of Swedish nobles and in addition wives and daughters who are not nobles, but whose husbands or fathers hold the rank of Adjutant General and beyond, the heads of the war schools, heads of regiments and corps, and holders of certain higher orders, at least first class commanders. This has been extended even further in the last years, so that now it would be hard, even impossible, to arrange the cours in the old way, when H.M. approached each of those presented and addressed a few words to them. Such a cour would have to be repeated many, many times in order

⁷ Dyrssen 1930.

to satisfy all. However, the now customary parade cours allow a large number of ladies to be presented at the same time.⁸

The statutes of the Order of the Seraphim were amended so that even the Queen could now wear it. Sophie received her order retroactively. The castle balls were modernized so that the parliamentarians were offered supper and those so inclined could dance. Even the dances were modernized - two-step & Boston-waltz were allowed (although that is probably attributed to Victoria's sister-in-law Princess Ingeborg). There is no record that Victoria herself took part in the dance - presumably she would then have had to dance with everyone and in rank order. The dress code was unchanged: Tails & ball dress.

She also created her own Order "The Queen's Tiepin" with her monogram in Sapphires. This was awarded to Marshal of the Realm Count Ludvig Douglas (1849-1916), 1st Marshal of the Court Reinhold Rudbeck (1871-1957), Lord Chamberlain Carl Rosenblad (1848-1931), 1st Chamberlain Carl von Eckermann (1853-1937) & Governor Harald Lettström (1867-1967). As it seems for a mixture of loyalty & merit.

Jansson (1963) mentions a number of other initiatives amounting to Victoria trying to exercise the same detailed control over the royal court as over her private household. Some of Jansson's claims seem doubtful: That she took the initiative to Gustaf national tours. That she hired courtiers with an industrial background to broaden Gustaf's circle. That it was at her request that Gustaf employed her relative Count Ludvig Douglas as Marshal of the Realm and political adviser. Jansson does not report any sources but probably it is interviews & correspondence.

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Victoria's position as the "woman behind the throne" lasted 10 years until October 14, 1917, when Gustaf had to agree to the governments being formed by parliamentary majorities - not through his personal choice of councillor or "adviser" - and he lost much of his direct influence. What she actually accomplished behind the throne is unclear, but Gustaf's obstinacy in defence issues is usually attributed to her influence. I've split the story into two: When she acts on her own and when she acts as one of Gustaf's private advisers.

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Sweden's role in a future major war was long expected to consist of a naval war against England in the Baltic Sea and a Swedish-German attack against Finland & St. Petersburg to capture Åland. Both the German and the Swedish public were very committed to the coming war. In 1898, the German Naval Association was formed to promote a strong German naval defence. In 1902, Victoria contacted her naval and other acquaintances about a Swedish equivalent.

After some quite intensive work, including: correspondence with all governors and other influential persons within the various counties, a large constituent meeting took place at the Royal Castle on November 17, 1906, under the personal direction of The Crown Princess. The name of the association was then at long last decided on as "Sveriges Flotta, förening för sjövärn och sjöfart", the statutes were adopted and a supreme council was appointed. H. R. H. himself expressed his commitment to be the protector and honorary president of the association.⁹

⁸ Comtesse G. "Ceremoniel och dräkter vid det svenska hovet." *Bonniers Veckotidning*, 1926:4, ss. 20-21.

⁹ Åsbrink red. 1922: ss. 246-248.

The association played an important role in the so-called F-boat collection in 1912 when Karl Staaf's government withdrew funding for the first of the armoured ships of the Swedish class to spend the money on the army instead. The subsequent F-boat collection was taken as a popular vote of no confidence in Staaf's priority. The 1914 peasants' march was another popular vote of no confidence. Before the Swedish class ship, Victoria had considered a collection of her own for a destroyer targeted at Swedish women, but that project was cancelled.¹⁰

Three more of Victoria's paramilitary fleet engagements were The Crown Princess Victoria's Naval Home in Karlskrona (1903), Crown Princess Victoria's Home for cabin boys in Karlskrona (1905) and Queen Victoria's Naval Home in Stockholm (1908). Each with the idea that the sailors would have a library and a gathering place during the land missions. She was also interested in the Swedish Society for the Rescue of Shipwrecked (1907).

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Parts of Victoria's representation was also political. Åsbrink¹¹ quotes Russian minister Nekludoff. Åsbrink's translation is a mix of the original version and his own flattering inventions. I quote the original:

Queen Victoria of Sweden, from the start of the war, openly supported Germany. She rejoiced at the German victories and mourned for Germany's setbacks. However, she never became a party leader, she always remained *queen*. She did everything she could for our prisoners and for the badly wounded Russians who travelled through Sweden in the thousands. She showed a real interest in them. I had the honour of meeting her twice during the war and on both occasions she welcomed the Russian minister in a way that was not only free from any trace of hostility and coldness, but on the contrary was characterized by goodwill and kindness.¹²

Nekludoff's judgment is rather too kind. During the war, Victoria was very active and conspired with her German relatives to bring Sweden into the German fold. This would be done by different ways influencing Gustaf's decisions (see below).

Both Gustaf and Victoria received German honours. In 1908, Victoria was appointed honorary colonel of the Pomeranian Fusilier regiment N:o 34, which had Swedish ancestry. The following year she visited the regiment and in 1911 she rode at the head of it at a large military parade. She was dressed in a suitable uniform: gun-coat, helmet, sabre, sash and riding skirt. She was photographed in the outfit and the picture is still used as a proof of her German-sympathies and "masculinity". In 1912, she was reported to have tried a zeppelin or reconnaissance balloon. During the war she was very active during her German visits: She met her cousin Wilhelm II, addressed the Berlin students, sent gifts and greetings, laid wreaths on the regiment's graves and visited wounded at the hospital in Stettin. She also tried to have one of the regiment's soldiers punished for desertion when he hid away in Stockholm. The regiment thanked her with counter gifts, including a "war crown" of shrapnel, casings and rifle ammunition. There is an unconfirmed fact that she sent personal gifts to the Swedish volunteers on the German side - some ten officers.¹³

¹⁰ Nyman 1957: s. 85, not 7.

¹¹ Åsbrink red. 1922: ss. 134-135.

¹² Nekludoff 1921: ss. 40-41.

¹³ Elgklou 1978: s. 164.

Victoria is not usually associated with the Weimar Republic and the Nazis, but she did make a detour in 1923 to lay flowers on the grave of Lieutenant Albert Schlageter. Schlageter led a group that sabotaged railway tracks in the French-occupied Ruhr region and was executed on May 26, 1923. He was born in Baden, a member of the NSDAP and subsequently regarded as one of the martyrs of the movement.¹⁴

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As Crown Princess, Victoria had few political contacts. As queen, she was assumed to have Gustaf's ear and had contacts with Swedish and German pressure groups. However, her real influence seems doubtful. She appears to have had a role similar to that of Queen Sophie: Sounding board, middleman & moral support. As an adviser, she was one of many. There are three separate episodes: The general strike of 1909, the Courtyard crisis of 1914 and her attempts 1914/15 to bring Sweden into the war on Germany's side.

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It is possible - even likely - that Victoria during the general strike of 1909 encouraged Gustaf to prosecute two persons for Lèse-majesté but that has not been possible to verify. After the Amalthea bombing on July 12, Gustaf visited the injured in the hospital to convey his regrets.¹⁵ What is reported is speculation based on the press campaign afterwards:

The Queen does not like when the people assert themselves and are disobedient. She firmly believes in the personal kingship, she hates parliamentarianism, socialism and liberalism. For the Queen, the strike is a defeat. She regards it as treason.¹⁶

The facts of the case are that on August 7 Gustaf had LO and SAF (workers and employers) summoned to inform himself about the strike. Charges were brought against the agitators Carl Åström & Einar "Texas" Ljungberg for claiming that he did not remain neutral at the meeting, but took the side of the right i.e. the employers. Since the official accounts do not mention the meeting, it is difficult to understand what happened. It took place on Friday October 29 at the castle, Present were Gustaf, CEO of SAF Hjalmar von Sydow & Chairman of LO Herman Lindqvist. Gustaf is said to have urged the parties to come to an agreement.

The reason for the meeting was that Erik Palmstierna, MP of the Liberal Coalition party called the "Red Baron" after 1911 joining the Social-Democrats, contacted Prince Eugen, the "Red Prince" called after expressing sympathies for the suffrage and labour movement, to ask him to persuade his brother to mediate between the parties. Eugen promised to at least try.¹⁷

Victoria later often reiterated the charges - that the king must be a neutral party above the political parties - but did not follow her own advice, as in this letter to her relative Count Ludvig Douglas: "When the terrible moment has come - I cannot denote it in other words - when sooner or later a left ministry must be formed, then the King needs an affectionate and reliable man in his vicinity..."¹⁸ The letter is actually more serious than one might think because it implies that Victoria wanted to politicize the court. With Douglas as Marshal of the Realm - he grew up in Germany, was a defence activist and a former Swedish foreign minister - it actually for a while became so. Not so good for the Royal House's reputation.

¹⁴ Dagens nyheter 1923-08-02.

¹⁵ Söderström red. 1947: ss. 59-60,289.

¹⁶ Ulfstätter-Troell 1996: s. 349.

¹⁷ Palmstierna 1951; Meister 2018: ss. 140-141.

¹⁸ von Platen 2002: s. 211.

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During Karl Staaf's second government October 7, 1911, to February 17, 1914, Gustaf invited conservative politicians to Drottningholm in order to discuss how best to counter Staaf's proposals. According to some accounts, Victoria attended the meetings. According to other information, she listened to them from a neighbouring room and Gustaf was in the habit of leaving the meetings to consult her. Victoria is described as a driving force. The conflict with Staaf also had a foreign policy dimension, as William II wanted to teach his Swedish colleagues how a "real king" should behave, as he also did during the Union crisis in 1895. German minister Franz von Reichenau was very active as go-between in this and other contexts (see below).

December 1913 work began on the so-called peasant march. The committee was chaired by wholesaler Jarl Frykberg. December 21, he sought out the academician etc. Sven Hedin and asked him to write a suitable response for Gustaf to hold on the planned courtyard meeting February 6. Hedin agreed. January 25, he and collaborator Carl Bennedich finished the speech and during an audience Hedin submitted it to Gustaf who gave it to Marshal of the realm Douglas to use as a draft. After that, the speech went to Gustaf's private advisers, who all wanted to tone down the wording. Several meetings took place. The last with Victoria, Gustaf's brother Carl & politician Ernst Trygger the morning of the courtyard meeting:

Trygger states that on the morning of Friday February 6, not long before the peasants would begin their march to the courtyard, he received a call from Queen Victoria, who reported that Prince Carl was at the king's house and that the prince had been in contact with a member of the cabinet. He had predicted that the government would resign if the king's speech was given in its present form. The Queen asked Trygger to immediately come to the castle, which he did. "And on her [the Queen's] and my support the King gave his speech, even though Prince Carl advised us to change it," Trygger's diary says.¹⁹

Eric Wennerholm has written an alternative, more embroidered version of this last meeting or possibly a still later meeting. According to him, there was a lunch meeting or family council with Gustaf, Victoria, sons & Sven Hedin. Hedin reportedly much later, in 1951, told Nils F Holm of the Swedish National Archives (1910-1995) what took place, which Holm around 1978 passed on to Wennerholm:

Just before the speech was to be held, the royal family had lunch with Hedin as the only guest. By former first archivist of the National Archives Dr. Nils F. Holm, who was Hedin's assistant when, in 1951, he wrote the book "Försvarstriden 1912-1914", I have gathered some interesting information, which never before reached print, about what happened on that lunch. Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf and also Princes Carl and Eugen were eager to have some points of the speech softened. The king began to waver and tried to persuade Hedin, who replied that it was too late to change his mind. The debate continued and the king began again to waver. Then Queen Victoria stood up from her chair and uttered clearly that "if you give in now Gustaf so I no longer want to be involved". The king hastened to her place and uttered reassuringly: "Sit, Victoria, sit by all means, I'll make the speech."²⁰

Victoria did not attend the actual courtyard meeting on February 6, but followed it from a window. Gustaf had in fact promised several of his private advisers to delete the most

¹⁹ Nyman 1957: s. 257.

²⁰ Wennerholm 1978: s. 169.

provocative parts of the speech, but when it came to the crunch he thus did not. "The Queen is supposed to have cried with joy."²¹ Afterwards the whole gathering, 31 thousand people, parades through the castle, delivered their reverence to Gustaf & Victoria and each received a diploma. 2300 of them also stayed for supper. Victoria had exaggerated ideas about what the courtyard speech would accomplish and wrote to her cousin Prince Max that "now the monarchy has been saved for all time".²² The German envoy Robert Douglas & politician Count Fredrik Wachtmeister later commented on Victoria's role:

FW: Dad thought, that the Queen [would] have been very good as a regent, but not in this world. She decides everything, but she never comes into contact with political life - has no idea what the conditions really are, as a result of which she makes mistakes. Me: that it would be better if the Queen attended [the Council of State] so that she could listen to the discussions and that people could speak to her directly? Yes, Dad thought so. - Now she almost only listens to these courtiers and to Sven Hedin, "whom she supposedly receives in private audiences."²³

RD: ...The king, who when all is calm and goes well, keeps the queen in the background and does not speak politics with her, now as always when he is in distress seeks her support and help. However, as she has not been able to follow the developments, she had difficulty assessing the situation.²⁴

The quotes seem to refer to the formation of the government after the departure of Staaf & then Schwarz. Other sources indicate that Victoria's political contacts consisted of her being informed orally and/or in writing of the political situation by Marshal of the Realm Count Ludvig Douglas & court preacher Gottfrid Billing and that she wrote letters to a number of conservative politicians: Gottfrid Billing (who was also a politician), Arvid Lindman, Ernst Trygger, Hjalmar Hammarskjöld & Sam Clason.²⁵ In addition, she did had a number of calls. Much has been made of the fact that Victoria afterwards called the left-wing politicians a "rabble"²⁶ but that she also called it the right-wing politicians.²⁷ Both the left and the right were more loyal to their voters than to the royal house.

The courtyard crisis also resulted in a prosecution for Lèse-majesté. MP Carl Lindhagen hailed the republican system of government, which resulted in a fine of 100 kronor.

Afterwards there were a lot of rumours. Hedin was asked how many times he and Victoria had met, but said that he did not remember. Many times though. A person who had seen the draft recognized Victoria's handwriting in the margin, which has later been confirmed. Until 1917, Victoria & Hedin exchanged 267 telegraphs, not only about the speech, but also about Hedin's love affairs.²⁸

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Victoria's attempt in 1914/15 to bring Sweden into the war on Germany's side is a sore point. The earlier "official" biographies remain silent about her activism and the latter psychologise it. The first depiction is an episode in the anthology *The history of Swedish foreign policy*.²⁹

²¹ von Steyern 1962: del 2, ss. 135, 139 & 141.

²² Palmstierna 1952: del 1, s. 244.

²³ von Steyern 1962: del 2, s. 154, 1914-03-03.

²⁴ Westman 1987: s. 23, 1917-10-09.

²⁵ Nyman 1957; Jarlert 2012.

²⁶ Fjellman 1980: s. 150.

²⁷ Nyman 1957: s. 267.

²⁸ Johanson 1993: s. 110.

²⁹ Lindberg 1958: ss. 297-303.

According to Lindberg, Oscar II had the ulterior motive for Gustaf's marriage that Victoria would make Swedish public opinion more German-friendly, but that this through her illness and many stays abroad did not succeed. She never adapted but remained who she was. He writes disparagingly about her politics and personality. The "monarchist principle", her German sympathies and her military interests are interpreted as evidence of her immaturity, intellectual bigotry, even treason. In 1914 and onwards, there was a republican (with a time communist) rumour that her goal was for Sweden to become a German vassal state.³⁰ This latter claim seems to have been fostered by the rumours of an episode February 18, 1915. Swedish, Danish and Norwegian women's associations planned a joint peace demonstration. Victoria summoned the Swedish organizer Agda Montelius and asked her to cancel the demonstration - "this women's stupid venture to interfere in politics" - because it could be seen provocative to the Germans. Montelius protested that "the women of the North are accustomed to having their own views since time immemorial". Victoria cut her off saying, "I ask to remind you that I am German". Whereupon Montelius replied "But Your Majesty is also Queen of Sweden!"³¹ Neither Gustaf nor Victoria made any effort this time to hide their German sympathies. For example, the Parliamentary lunches often became embarrassing when Victoria made derogatory statements about the entente in the presence of Princess Margaret.

When the emotions had died down, two studies were published.³² The conclusion was that Victoria wanted to use her German connections for the benefit of Sweden. Sweden would benefit of a strong monarchy, a strong defence and an alliance with Germany. Around 1911, therefore, a Swedish-German activist movement & "court camarilla" consisting of:

- Victoria: Cousin of Emperor William II & Gustaf's personal envoy.
- Ludvig Douglas (1849-1916): Grandson of Louis I, Grand Duke of Baden, Minister of Foreign Affairs 1895-1899 and Marshal of the Realm 1911-1916. His son Robert Douglas (1880-1955) was from time to time William II's personal envoy.
- Franz von Reichenau (1857-1940): German Minister in Stockholm 1911-1914.
- Eric Trolle (1863-1934): Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs 1905-1909, envoy in Berlin 1909-1912 and Marshal of the Realm 1930-1934.
- Arvid Taube (1853-1916): Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs 1909-1911 & envoy in Berlin 1900-1909, 1912-1916.

The most concrete effect of the activist movement was that both Gustaf, William II and their governments were misinformed by their diplomats about their country's views. Gustaf got the impression that Germany was more averse to Swedish neutrality than it was. William II had the impression that Sweden was more pro-German than it was. It ended with a diplomatic crisis: that in early 1915 the German minister Reichenau was declared undesirable and replaced with Hellmuth Lucius von Støedtten (1869-1934). Victoria tried to get rid of Lucius by accusing him, in public during a Berlin visit (to a student delegation) of an irresponsible lifestyle, which was correct but ignored. The following year, Douglas & Taube died. Until the end of the war, Victoria used her personal relationship with William II, for example by sending a telegram in February 1918 asking him to refrain from occupying Åland and expelling the Swedes. William backed down so far that the Swedish ships that were there could remain.³³

³⁰ Bäckström 1958: s. 113; Lindberg 1958: s. 302.

³¹ Palmstierna 1952: del 1, s. 95; Bokholm 2000: ss. 311-314.

³² Carlgren 1962; Schuberth 1981.

³³ Hellner 1960: ss. 420-421.

1916-1919, Victoria spent long periods in Karlsruhe for her health. There's a letter to Hedin from 1917-11-02, typical of Victoria who despised all the petty bourgeois philistines: "Here everything is so big, so uplifting, that it is a real grace to live. Germany stands as a man and everywhere the certainty of victory is unbroken, everywhere you *believe* in victory. Such a people cannot perish! But the struggle is terrible and the hardest battles remains"³⁴

At the end of the war, the castle at Karlsruhe was fired at and November 11, 1918, a soldier's party stormed it. Later, some 60 bullet holes were counted in the facade. Victoria, her mother, and the servants escaped through the back and lived until the autumn of 1919 at Zwingenberg Castle in Neckardalen, at Robert Douglas Castle Langenstein & at Mainau Summer Palace as the German government could not guarantee her safety during a journey home. Victoria wrote a memo to Gustaf about the incident to calm his nerves.³⁵ She worried that Germany was breaking down. 1919-01-11 she wrote to Hedin: "It gets worse and worse everywhere and you ask: what's next! I do not believe that we will avoid Bolshevism in Germany, but that it will plunge further downwards towards into the abyss. May Sweden at least be spared!"³⁶ In 1920 Prince Eugen made a visit. The Baden-atmosphere was despondent. Inflation was already so high that the formerly so well off court nobility was in the process of being ruined.

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Victoria's "foreign policy" was consistent with the pro-German policy advocated in the book of Activism or War-book as it was also called.³⁷ The activist movement - mainly officials & academics - was at its most active in 1915 & 1918 and so was Victoria. I quote a summary of the movement's program:

The Worldview of Activism

...

The activists indulged in joy over the great good memories and in bitterness over the many difficult and nefarious. They emphasized the importance of monarchy and saw in the interaction strong king - faithful people a special mark of Swedish democracy. Thus a strong royal power could have prevented the dissolution of the Union in 1905. It was also this strong royal power that the peasant march had appealed to and Harald Hjärne had argued for.

The King power could also bridge the gap between capital and labour. The social-reformist interest of some activists reflects their attachment to patriarchal conservatism. In their minds, the king also represented the principle of action. There is talk of a "strong and bold act" in opposition to parliamentary bargaining with vital national values.

Speculations about race was common among the activists. The racist tones had been introduced by the Germans into the ideological war when they talked about Germanic opposing to Slavs in a cultural struggle. The Germanic tribe is at the most serious risk in its main country, Germany, as stated in Sweden's foreign policy in the light of the World War. This tribe will fight against intrusive inferior breeds. Sweden's future task will be to be the leader of the northern Germans in this battle "whose prelude we now are experiencing".

Some could dream of a great Nordic federal state. There was little time for the old type of Scandinavianism, which had flourished during a period in the 19th century. The idea of a federal state encompassing Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and

³⁴ Johanson 1993: s. 104. [Brev från Victoria till Sven Hedin, 1917-11-02.]

³⁵ Fabiansson 2014: ss 347-350.

³⁶ Hedin 1950: del 2, s. 34.

³⁷ Järte m fl. 1915.

Norway under Swedish leadership arose. The role model was the relatively new empire of Germany. The Swedish king would be the emperor of this empire, and the League's flag would contain "five golden crowns on a red bottom". Everything had been thought about - and everything assumed a German victory in the war.

The war was regarded as the true, genuine way of life of the Germans. Sweden's entry into the war was ultimately the goal of the activists. A war against Russia was for them a defence war, a deterrent of a deadly threat; It was about Sweden's survival as a free people. But the activists had completely appropriated the worship of the war that for almost a hundred years had characterized German militaristic thinking. The admired Treitschke had said that the war was morally necessary, that the war was the only medicine for people who had become lazy of well-being, that only in the war will the people become a real people. He speaks of "the insane idea of eternal peace", incompatible with the lives of the Germanic peoples, who are above all brave.³⁸

* * *

Victoria also had an everyday family life. Much of this revolved around the grandchild Lennart and is described in a later chapter 75. Before her 50th anniversary August 7, 1912, Victoria gave her first and, to all knowledge, only interview.³⁹ The journalist was Eira Hellberg (1884-1969; "Jaya") from Aftonbladet. Interview and interview. It began with Marshal Douglas describing Tullgarn and the royal couple's everyday life:

The life of Tullgarn is very simple. TT. MM. have breakfast at nine o'clock and then engage in reading and writing until eleven. Letters are delivered twice a day, in the evening and morning. If the weather is good, a trip will be made in steam slope, located at the bridge below the courtyard. A 2nd breakfast is brought along and served on some rocky isle or meadow. You read, talk, fish and rest. The Queen often comes along, and does her health not allow a sea trip, the king and she travel in a carriage. The royals spend the afternoon for themselves. The dinner is served half past seven and then follows a lot of bridge, cigars and conversations. The hours of work with the signature of government documents are scheduled for the morning and after the arrival of the last post on the evening. The royal taste is simple. Lunch consists of an egg dish, a meat dish and fruit. The dinner has four dishes - soup, fish, meat, dessert and fruit. Sherry and red wine. Champagne never occurs, not even on birthdays.

Then it was time for Victoria to show herself.

The Queen - yes, is it the Queen? A slim lady in gray suit, a simple white silk blouse and a narrow gold chain around the neck, large hat with roses and a thin walking stick in the hand. The Queen's handshake is firm and sympathetic and must have won her many friends. But she is not like herself from the photographs or the hasty glimpses, you catch of a passing wagon. There's an ever shifting charm in her face, which the camera has never been able to capture. She makes the impression of being a good woman and a fine lady, even though that expression says so little in Swedish. She is dignified, but not stiff, and more straightforward than you first believe.

...

The Queen is happy with the moments she can spend in Sweden and help Swedish interests. She is particularly interested in the school system, the youth movement and the care of the poor. Out at Tullgarn, she herself finances schools, so that the children do not have to go so far to the regular ones, and she is a frequent and wellcome guest both of the teachers and children. Every day she runs her team of horses or rides. It is

³⁸ "Svenska aktivismen". <sv.wikipedia.org> (2018-01-01); Franzén 2001: ss. 138-159.

³⁹ Jaya 1913: ss. 5-17.

her sorrow that her powers do not allow her more. But she cares about her home. Everything, both at Tullgarn, Drottningholm and the Castle is handled under her supervision. Each chair and flower is on her command, and she keeps to the old ways of both style and spirit. The large garden at Tullgarn is her creation.

The Queen's main interest is music and she plays herself - mostly Wagner. She is a frequent guest at the Opera, often attending rehearsals and following with great interest the training of the new abilities. The capital's other music scenes also have a warm friend in her.

And for the rest, she has the ability to make everything pleasant around her, as the royal court eagerly admits. She is touchingly thoughtful and considerate and helps out in quiet. She wants to serve Sweden. The country is perhaps smaller and more crowded than the old emperor's granddaughter was raised to, but she holds it dear and it is hers.

There is also something else that strikes you when talking to the Queen. She says no empty words. The most common things acquire new meaning and, to agree with one of her close friends "she always says something sensible". Her voice is low-key and sounds a bit chilly, it can become warm and mild, but it takes time. ... When you leave Tullgarn and try to collect your impressions of the Queen, you involuntarily think that you have met a real personality, one, on whose words you can unreservedly trust and whose judgments rarely go wrong.

*

After her mother's death in 1923, Victoria spent more time in Rome. The last two years all the time. Her health was now too bad to stay in a hotel, but in her own residence in Suezia. Her son Wilhelm described it in December 1925 as follows:

To return to the house, my mother resides in two small rooms to the south and does not enjoy the luxury that surrounds her. There is something monumentally tragic about the whole arrangement. There she sits and can barely move and pays out monthly sums, which would be enough to build [my villa in] Eze many times over, only because she must have many nurses and servants and God knows everything, which requires a big house. In the large dining room with marble pillars and gold tableware, in the salon with its two mahogany wings, in the hall with the dreadful Venetian furniture and the large stacks of illustrated newspapers - the site's only reading matter - she has never set foot. Isn't it like the first act in a better play of grief? If it was someone else in the lead, I'd call it comedy. And she hasn't become better by all this, rather worse. At least for now. I was really scared when I came down and found out how ill she actually was. At home we thought that things had moved on. On top of it all, she has a completely useless German doctor, a certified idiot who just shakes his head at everything you say. Its a mess. You could get pregnant from the frustration. Now I have found a Swedish doctor [possibly Axel Munthe], who happens to be in the city, but he can't be here forever. What will then happen? Its for the birds, I wash my hands because I have had nothing to do with the arrangement. But I think it's too bad for mom, really bad.⁴⁰

There she died April 4, 1930, surrounded by Gustaf, Prince Wilhelm, Doctor Munthe and a nurse. Her son, Gusty, had had so many fights with her that she did not want him there. Long after, Munthe claimed that he had euthanized her with a shot of morphine. The official cause of death was cardiac paralysis.

⁴⁰ Andhé red. 1971: ss. 136-139.