

Chapter 8 : Charles XIV John (II) (1818-1844) – "The End of It".

We all become conservatives as soon as we have something to conserve.
Swedish wisdom.

Charles John's activities 1818-1844 are described in Andreen (1961), Höjer (1960), Girod de l'Ain (1968: ss. 559-637) & Sjöström (2009: ss. 114-133,141-174). There are also contemporary books. Höjer describes Charles John's reign 1818-1844 point by point under the headings of Internal, Foreign & Union Policy. He divides his reign into before & after the July Revolution of 1830. The account does not say much about Charles John as a person why I largely ignore it. My own account is "backwards-based". I describe what has subsequently been praised or criticized. Chapter 8 is part of his legacy rather than his everyday life.

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With Charles John already Prince Regent, the coronation September 7, 1818, did not imply any major change in his position. His military career was over since the Treaty of Paris November 20, 1815, and he had already started on his "civilian" career. Andreen (1958) summarizes Höjer (1943) on what this meant:

Throughout his long career as Swedish Crown Prince and King, Charles John devoted considerable attention to financial policy. At times, this branch of government so occupied his thoughts that one can speak of an all-engaging interest, a veritable financial mania. All those who came close to him, even the ladies of the court, had to be prepared to listen to long, impassioned monologues on exchange rates, state loans, etc. Convinced of his infallible expertise, he was on this subject even less inclined to heed his advisers, if they had conflicting views.¹

The Peace Treaty of 1815 changed the position of Charles John. He could no longer strut the international scene. Remained to make his mark on Sweden. He wanted to implement his own monetary policy, abolish the arrangement of officers and civil servants buying their stations, promote business development, support art and science. He wanted to be able to reward supporters, disarm opponents and tie influential men to his person. Last but not least, he was driven by his suspicions and understandable sense of insecurity in spending considerable sums on surveillance and propaganda. All this required considerable financial resources, but the fatal thing was that the extraordinary sources of money the warlike settlements were drying up. After a few years, the bottom of the Guadeloupe Fund was discernible.²

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As the story of Charles John is usually told, it ends with the coronation in 1818. This was an unusually grandiose affair that has subsequently attracted a lot of interest, as an attempt by Charles John to legitimize his new dynasty through traditional style.³ The target group was the nobility. This is also how his policies are usually portrayed: Charles John arrives in

¹ Andreen 1958: s. 128.

² Andreen 1961: s. 238-239.

³ Alm 2010.

Sweden with republican ideas, but it turns increasingly reactionary under the impression of the Gustavian court nobility. It seems like an after construction, but it is difficult to sort out Charles John's unique contribution. Höjer (1960) comments:

The main difficulty in writing a biography of a king, who for a long time exercised extremely broad powers, concerns distinguishing his biography from the history of Sweden under his government. ... Since our knowledge of the inner workings of Swedish history at the time is still incomplete, this compounds the difficulty of distinguishing between the king's personal contribution and the government's. ... As to Charles John's the individual circumstances the same difficulties, which were implied in the preamble to the previous volume, persist. On the one hand, the source material is sparse and fragmentary, and on the other hand, even for this stage the impression remains that Carl Johan's life and interests were largely identical to his public efforts.⁴

His wife was of the same opinion: "He liked to work and did not understand any other occupation."⁵ A portrayal of Charles John 1818-1844 would thus be identical to Swedish history, with the consequence that everything that happened in the kingdom was Charles John's fault or merit. This is absurd. He did not have such a position. Nor did he have any such ambition. If his French career was distinguished by a failure of nerve, his Swedish career was distinguished by a failure of imagination. Charles John lacked any vision of society. His intellectual horizons never extended beyond his aspirations for glory. At first, this restriction was not so noticeable. In Paris in the autumn of 1810 a number of people formulated his goals - Fabian Wrede, Gustaf Lagerbielke, Gustaf Fredrik Mörner, Balzar von Platen. After the coronation of 1818 he neither needed, heeded or wanted any advisers. It was devastating, but mostly for himself. During the 26 years as king he did not conduct politics, but expedited matters & defended his reputation. "Nobody has filled a path like mine" is not a good epitaph for a head of state. It is not possible to live indefinitely on old merits.

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The Guadeloupe fund

Charles John's economic activities 1815-1818 are described in Brisman (1908), Tingsten (1931: ss. 58-280), Höjer (1943: ss. 386-450), Andreen (1958), Girod de l'Ain (1968: ss. 550-553), Åstrand (1973), Sjöberg (1978) & Sjöström (2009: ss. 74-113). Most attention has been paid to the so-called Guadeloupe fund. I briefly describe its creation & use:

Guadeloupe is an island in the French West Indies that was conquered by Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. The island was part of the payment for Sweden joining the 6th coalition against Napoleon. On March 3, 1813, it was handed over to the Swedish royal house, as compensation for Napoleon's seizure or threatened seizure of Charles John's French property. Under the Treaty of Paris on May 30, 1814, the island returned to French ownership, but the Swedish royal house was compensated by 24 million francs (= 1,056,092 pounds sterling 10 million riksdaler according to the Hamburg exchange rate 1815-16 ≈ 1.25 billion in SEK 2015). The sum was paid monthly July 1815 to June 1816.

⁴ Höjer 1960: s. 10.

⁵ Höjer 1960: s. 554.

Prior to the election, Charles John's envoy Fournier had promised that he would pay the Swedish national debt - on 30 June 1815 = 4,155,926 riksdaler - from his own resources. This did indeed happen. 50 percent of the Guadeloupe funds were used for that purpose. (One third of the debt to Holland, Belgium & Genoa. The entire debt to Hamburg & Leipzig. The basis for the write-down of the debt to Holland, Belgium & Genoa appears to have been a decision of the 1812 Parliament to write off all debts in government bonds owned by persons in France and in countries controlled by France.) The remaining 50 percent of the Guadeloupe funds were used for aiding purchases of Swedish currency (25 percent), for commercial credits (20 percent) and for general purposes (5 percent). In the summer of 1817, the funds were exhausted.

Charles John's appanage was initially quite stingy, but was 1812 raised to 100 thousand riksdaler. In 1817, he used Guadeloupe funds to make himself financially independent of the Parliament. He managed to get it to accept a perpetual interest rate of 5 percent on that half of Guadeloupe funds he had "lent" to pay the public debt = 200 thousand riksdaler annually = double the appanage. The sum would be paid in "perpetuity" to him and his descendants. However, it was not inflation-adjusted, and with time shrunk to a negligible amount - from SEK 25 million (1817) to 300 thousand (1983).

The law surrounding the ownership of the funds & the reasonableness of the eternal interest rate was discussed from day 1. The monarchist version has been that the Swedish people should be grateful for Charles John using his private wealth for the well-being of Sweden. As the Guadeloupe funds were supposed to be a compensation for Charles John's French property, attempts have been made to calculate their worth. The figures mentioned are of the order of SEK 50 million. The republican version has been that Charles John only had the right of use; that the Guadeloupe funds therefore were not his to use and that the interest rate was both illegal & unreasonable. However, the Parliament has never wanted to take a position on the law, contenting itself with the fact that the interest rate was a parliamentary decision. Nor was it abolished in 1983, but became part of the appanage, which means that it is now adjusted for inflation.

Additional funds available to Charles John were the Barthélemy Fund, the Piaster Fund, the Rubel Fund & the Pomeranian Fund. These were used as collateral in loans of foreign banks, which in 1826 turned into a disaster.

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The (political) economist

After his honorary doctorate in Giessen, Charles John considered himself an expert economist: Mercantilist & Physiocrat in the spirit of Enlightenment. As a mercantilist, he sought a fixed monetary value and a positive balance of trade. The balance of trade was to be maintained through a silver standard, import bans & protective tariffs. As a physiocrat, he supported agriculture and forestry, communications and mining (i.e. the export industries) at the expense of other industries (which he considered a "drain"). There is a renown remark from 1816: "It is possible that there are 300 people in this country who are more capable military than I. I don't know them, though I think they may exist. But I do not stand back for

anyone in that which is higher finance, for this has long been the subject of my special study.”⁶

Charles John's attempt in 1815-1834 to restore the Swedish banknotes to their "true" value through supporting purchases, fixed exchange rates and other measures has been widely reported. Since Sweden had a silver standard, the notes were in theory redeemable in silver, but the State Bank did not have enough silver in 1745 and 1803 to redeem them at their full value, but they were written down, a so-called coin reset. The banknote issue of 1808-09 (to finance the Finnish war) put Sweden in the same situation, but Charles John wanted as long as possible to avoid another write down, hoping that the post war boom and his own economic measures would normalize the situation. His hope seems to have been to control the inflation through the exchange rate, but since he did not recognize inflation as a concept, his reasoning is hard to follow. As I understand it, he considered the depreciation of the currency to be a form of fraud & caused by speculators.

The mercantilists had three theories of monetary value: The quantity theory of the nominal value of issued banknotes, the fund theory of their metal value & the mortgage theory of the confidence in the banking system. In practice, there was also a fourth variant, banknote mercantilism or nominalism, about credit expansion with limited collateral, a combination of fund & mortgage theory. The pro-Charles John line has been that his actions were correct in theory, but he lacked the resources to implement them. If you read the sources, the conclusion is rather a prestige struggle between semi-educated economists - king-adviser- parliament - where the discussions descended into the swamp of "the arguments are weak - raise your voice". In 1830, after 20 years and under the threat that the entire cabinet would otherwise resign, Charles John was forced to agree to a write-down of the nominal value of the banknotes to the Hamburg exchange rate (a silver standard) and this to a worse rate than if he had not opposed the decision.⁷ The defeat grieved Charles John until the end & even in his last publication *Sur les banques* (1842) he defended his policy.

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His Economic policy

Charles John's economic policy 1818-1844 was a continuation of his economic policy 1815-1818. The conflict over the currency reset has already been described. He also imposed tariffs and import restrictions. Swedish exports were mainly iron, timber and oats. Imports were mainly spices, spirits & luxury items. 1823-1833 during the time of English ambassador Lord Brougham, the Swedish customs system was gradually dismantled. It was mainly used for the trade in everyday goods. The land tariffs against Norway were abolished completely. The dock dues were reduced by half. Charles John also supported a number of industrial projects in the physiocratic spirit, although he did not initiate them. I have counted 20-30, but there are few details. Most renowned are the Agricultural Academy, forced enclosure, the Forest Institute & Göta canal:

- The Agricultural Academy was founded in 1811 with Charles John's support and he became its first president and director.

⁶ Brisman 1908: s. 103-104.

⁷ Höjer 1960: ss. 167-230.

- Forced enclosure (1827; laga skifte) was a continuation of storskifte (1747) & enskiftet (1807). The neighbouring farmers' right of veto was abolished and it considerably increased the agricultural area by also allowing commons to be cultivated.
- The Forest Institute was founded in 1828 with Charles John's support. It was later incorporated into the School of Forestry and the Agricultural University.
- Göta Canal was planned under Gustaf IV and completed in 1832. It has been criticized for being too expensive (just over 12 billion in 1995 value) to ever make back the money, but I have not been able to locate the calculations. In the 1870s, it received competition from the railroads, but "was in operation" until the 1930s. The design and construction involved so many people that it has been seen as an important educational initiative for later large-scale industrial projects.
- Svenska Industriföreningen (1832-1850) was a forerunner of the Swedish Industrial Association (1910-). It published a newspaper and organized exhibitions. Crown Prince Oscar was the patron. It seems to have been abandoned by its members when Charles John gained too much influence. Aftonbladet criticized it for supporting the guilds rather than the free enterprise and with the approval of the court.⁸
- Charles John also, through his minister of finance Carl David Skogman, supported the creation of business and savings banks.

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The criticism has been Sweden's late industrialization. Charles John's economic policy appears French rather than English. It seems strange, for example, that no license for building railways was granted until after Charles John's death. The reason seems to have been: (1) Charles John considered the iron should go on export to help the balance of trade, not be used within the country. (2) Rails was in competition with land roads & Göta Canal. (3) The Nobility & Peasant Estate distrusted the economic arguments about a future return on invested capital. (4) Pure anti-modernization. (5) The belief that the economy was a zero-sum game: Profits of one was by necessity the loss of other's. (An attitude that has gone to posterity as "the Swedish envy".) The Parliamentary decision on state-funded Swedish trunk railways (with privately funded branch lines) was taken in 1854 under Oscar I, but not completed until 1892 under Oscar II.

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Foreign policy

Charles John's foreign policy, "The Politics of 1812", consisted of aligning himself with England and Russia, who in exchange supported his Norway policy. The cooperation was not smooth.

The annexation of Norway caused difficulties throughout the Crown Prince's lifetime. The Treaty of Kiel provided for financial compensation to Denmark for losing Norway, the so-called "liquidation issue". The Danish demand in 1815 was six million Rdr which according

⁸ Björck 1991.

to Charles John the Norwegians would pay themselves. These responded by saying that in such case they wanted their exclaves Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and also part of Danish West Indies back. As the great powers, including Russia, sided with Denmark, it looked as if Norway would return to the fold. The conflict, however, through Charles John's reluctance (read diplomatic troublemaking) became so long-drawn out that the Great Powers grew tired, and Norway in 1820 escaped by half the sum.

The Eidsvoll Constitution was a rush job. On September 9, 1814, Charles John presented an amendment, that would have considerably strengthened Swedish royal power over Norway, but the Norwegian Constitutional Committee voted it down. Perhaps Håkansson was also involved also in this proposal, but information is missing. In 1815 the Norwegians presented a proposal to abolish their nobility. With a suspensive veto, Charles John had two Storting (meetings of the Norwegian Parliament) 1815 & -18 to veto it before it 1821 would become law. In 1821, he tried to make Russia-Prussia-Austria-Great Britain stop it with a proposal of absolute veto – if necessary in the form of a coup d'état, but the great powers did not want to have it & Charles John's proposal (HF3?) was voted down by the Storting in 1821 & -24 and in a shortened form in 1828. Tsar Nicholas justified his decision with a piece of advice to Charles John "between us princes": that if the prince gives the people a constitution, it was also his duty to uphold it. Charles John, however, thought differently. Here is his Napoleonic slant on Nordic Liberty:

Charles John's most important demand [1821] was: a radical extension of the King's right to issue provisional decrees; the introduction of an absolute veto [instead of a suspensive veto]; the right to dissolve the Parliament without at the same time providing guarantees for the election of a new Parliament; no longer meetings every three years but five; the right of the king to dismiss all officials at will, except judges; the right for the king to decide over the Norwegian composition of the State Council in Stockholm, where the members would not change annually; The Parliament could also gather outside Kristiania; veto on naturalization issues (to prevent Danish infiltration); the right to appoint the President of the Parliament and to decide what matters the Parliament could vote on, and that extra ordinary meeting of the Parliament only could vote on Royal Bills; reorganization of the Impeachment Institute, so that royal appointees and disposable officials gained a majority; the creation of a new, hereditary nobility (probably to create the conditions for a conservative house of Lords); and, lastly, a substantially restricted freedom of the press.⁹

The suspensive veto could only be used twice. There is a report that Sweden later interpreted the Norwegian constitution as meaning that it could be used thrice, but I have not been able to confirm this. The contemporary discussion about the Union treaty is covered by Johanson (1837). Weibull's monograph (1957) shows, however, that much information at this time was not available outside the secret committee.

In 1825, Charles John made an attempt to sell off some of his oldest ships, to get money to modernize the rest. His customers were Colombia and Mexico, Spanish colonies that at the time were trying to break away. The sale took place at the time England recognized them as independent states & has been interpreted as an attempt by Charles John to break away from the Russian sphere of influence. Unfortunately for Charles John Spain belonged to the Holy Alliance, Alexander I made their cause his & England was unwilling to take a stand in Sweden's conflicts. Under the threat that Spain hijacking Swedish merchant ships, Charles

⁹ Kaartvedt 1998: s. 120.

John was forced back under the Russian umbrella, where Sweden would remain until the Crimean War of 1853/56.

Charles John is often referred to as the Prince of Peace. This desire for peace seems to have been forced on him by circumstances, however. Höjer refers to a letter from 1833:

In an attempt to answer the previous question [on the choice between England and Russia], one might as a starting point take a confidential letter, which the king wrote to his son on August 10, 1833, thus only a few months before the declaration of neutrality. In it, he states quite categorically that a peace that is too long will destroy the public spirit, soften the sense of political independence and expose governments to the claims and demands of peoples who, on the other hand, exposed to any risk would be easy to govern. But against this certainty, he puts another one, namely the inadequacy of financial resources, in establishing nations that were sinking into disarray. "And this is our case, my dear friend." Sweden had a numerous army and parts of it was well equipped, but it lacked the money to properly use it. - It is always difficult to choose between the many, often conflicting opinions on sensitive issues, when Charles John's practice does not give any answer; the subjective nature of the researcher is easily given undue prominence. However, something of genuine emotion and real observation seems to be speaking from these lines in the letter to Oscar, where disappointment at too passive and too modest a role on the European stage shines through. These statements are also in good harmony both with his previous line of thought and with his anxious desire to intervene in any European crisis from the hundred days to the 1840-1841 Oriental conflict in any way, preferably as a mediator or adviser, unless other opportunities were offered. It was not a neutrality of principle but a neutrality of necessity, forced upon him by lack of resources, but to which he stubbornly clung until the very end.¹⁰

One of the ways to make the major powers respect Sweden-Norway's neutrality was that it could still defend itself when forced to. It is doubtful whether that goal was ever achieved. The defence was constantly underfunded & outdated but kept a high profile. The entire reign of Charles John & up to World War I the Swedish Parliament obsessed over the same three questions: (1) The manpower supply (allotment or conscription). (2) An archipelago fleet of many small cheap vessels or a high sea fleet of a few precious ones. (3) The strategy (shell defence, defence in depth or the possibility of taking the fight to the enemy). With the Russian invasion fresh in his memory, Charles John seems to have advocated defence in depth with fortresses, allotted soldiers spread across the country and an archipelago fleet in Stockholm's defence. Karlsborg fortress, built in 1820-1831, was intended as the "reserve capital".

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Press policy & propaganda

Charles John's efforts to influence opinion and his own legacy have attracted great interest. The "Press policy" was at first very tangible. For example, he had all the printers in Stockholm gathered together and told them "that if any of them continued to publish incendiary pamphlets, he would immediately command the printer's arrest and have him shot."¹¹ Later the press was governed by warnings, circulars & decrees. Daily corruption was widespread: For example, 1200 Swedish & Norwegian newspaper men were provided with

¹⁰ Höjer 1960: s. 261.

gifts, pensions & long-term loans.¹² Charles John had his own agency "The King's General Bureau" which handled such details. There was also a Paris branch.

During Charles John's reign, 81 charges led to rulings, half of these to convictions. Most of the prosecutions took place after the July Revolution of 1830. The power of withdrawal was used in 63 cases, before being abolished in 1840. The legal morass made every indictment a spectacle. The main effect was to poison the social climate. Charles John was in the habit of complaining about it to foreign diplomats:

In 1834, the Danish minister was told that force was the only thing that helped against the opposition and the journalists. On the minister's objection that the spirit of the time required a certain consideration, Carl Johan replied: "The spirit of the times is not as these journalists say it is. They are miserable people who want confusion. The people are solid - put yourself at the head of 100 000 men and the people will follow you and immediately abandon the journalists with their spirit of the times ... They are all tyrants, persons such as Robbespiere & Marat, tigers who are just waiting for a suitable opportunity to devour you and then eat each other." In a conversation with the Russian Minister in Stockholm, he described the European press as a cancer that gnawed at all social conditions and that must be eradicated.¹³

Charles John's favourite maxims were "Il n'y a pas de petits ennemis" & "il faut respecter les masses". Posterity has named this "fear of shadow" but for Charles John it was wise policy. He wanted to buy everyone. The concept of loyal opposition lay outside his comprehension. "Opposition c'est conspiracy." Most of this is described in Knut Wichman's 1927 monograph on the indictment of Crusenstolpe, and its aftermath.

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As has been pointed out Charles John's triple authority as Napoleon's "viceroy", commander in chief and elected heir to the throne made him difficult to oppose. This was compounded by Charles John's purely histrionic talents, which literally left the surroundings speechless. Two examples:

When Napoleon's minister Alquier in 1811 threatened the newly arrived Swedish King Charles John with war if he did not execute the will of the Emperor, he had quickly arranged a scene including his son. "I would rather seek death at the head of my grenadiers," exclaimed Charles John, "rather push a dagger into my chest, throw myself headlong into the sea, or straddle a gunpowder barrel [than retracting my oath] ... Here is my son [Oscar makes his admission], who shall surely follow my lead. Will you, Oscar?" - "Yes, father." - "Come in my arms, you are indeed my son!"

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In the autumn of 1832, when Charles John bid farewell of his son when leaving for Norway, he harangued him in the following manner in front of an astonished Council of State: "You are surrounded by traitors Oscar, but rather than abandon Sweden - kill yourself! Kill your wife! Kill your children!"¹⁴

¹¹ Rapport från ryske ministern Suchtelen. Stockholm 1811-03-28, citerad i: Ahnfeldt & Suchtelen 1887: s. 236; Boberg 1989: s. 32.

¹² Torbacke 2000: s. 268.

¹³ Boberg 1989: s. 166.

¹⁴ Palmstierna 1939: s. 475.

Hard to know how to respond to such a performance.

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Which brings us back to the question why, despite Napoleon's predictions, Charles John kept his throne until the end and even got a flattering resume. The short answer is that he accomplished what was expected of him: peace, money, stability & military glory. 1810-1844 the population increased by 41 percent. GDP by 215. Public debt descended to zero. The kingdom became an honourable double monarchy - almost an empire of yesteryear. The long answer is a fascination with his personality. Anyone who has ever met Charles John has testified about his "snake charming talents". Here a description from the French envoy Markis Marie-Hippolyte de Rumigny circa 1817:

The Prince Royal presents two very different sides ... On the one hand, one recognises in him a man of elevated genius, ardent, active, enterprising; and, above all, a captain with the gift of audacity and success. It is not uncommon for heroes who shine in the field to appear weak and mediocre at other times and in relation to other objects ... He is agitated by the weaknesses of a restless, irritable, irresolute spirit. ... He is an ambitious personage raised by events beyond the bounds of the wildest imagination, who is not satisfied with his lot. ... His political principles have no settled lines. In the same breath he speaks like an absolute despot, and like a republican demagogue. ... This medley is the result of the studies and impressions of his youth, which took such deep root as to be difficult to destroy ... His greatest talent is to impose upon others by the effect of his elocution. ... It is true that he has the gift of eloquence, vehement, impetuous, passionate, which seduces and carries away his hearers, not by its force or reason, but by its energy and volubility. He has also the great accomplishment of knowing how to charm by his affable and ingratiating manners.¹⁵

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At the end of his reign, Charles John is said to have lost his sense of touch with what was moving in time. French envoy count Charles Edgar de Mornay (1803-1878; envoy (1835-1845) has told of Charles John's fury over the liberal opposition during the 1840 & -41 Parliament:

The wretches, the ungrateful! To hell with them all! I regret that I have served them! I wish I had never set my foot in their country! They forget the difficulties from which I have delivered them, and what I was, when they sought me out. I was Marshal of France! And I renounced this title to serve and to rule them. Yes, I have had the honour of being a Marshal of France, and I am now I only King of Sweden! For their sake, I have denied my blood, my homeland, and I have borne arms against France! Cursed be their crown!¹⁶

The attacks on Charles John of 1840 & -41 have been interpreted as a reaction to all the exaggerated praise his first time in Sweden, but may rather be interpreted as a purely natural desire of the Parliament to restrain a self-indulgent monarch.¹⁷ After the Parliament of 1840 &

¹⁵ Barton 1925: ss. 147-148.

¹⁶ Lindwall 1919: s. 226.

¹⁷ Rexius 1917.

-41 emotions cooled. Charles John's 25th anniversary on the throne in 1843 was celebrated all over the country & perceived as a reconciliation ritual & thanksgiving for all that had been.

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The bedchamber reign

There are three odd elements of Charles John's late biography: "the bedchamber reign", "the Brahe-rule" & "the Nerman regime". The bedchamber reign is documented from 1810, but then Charles John was still an early riser:

One of the oddest habits of a man, whose life has been as active as the Swedish Crown Prince, is that he is a very late riser. Is that because he sleeps long? No. His bed is for him a kind of study, where he writes his letters, prepares his speeches, plans his schedule, receives reports, talks about all kinds of subjects, holds audiences and deals with issues. Awake at six or seven o'clock or even earlier, he is still in bed at ten.¹⁸

Over time, the behaviour accelerated. In 1824 he didn't rise until 13 or 14 o'clock. After 1830 he rarely left his suite, had it heated already in August, wore double sets of clothes, only communicated with the outside world through his Marshal of the Realm Magnus Brahe, gave the head of the secret police Klas Ulrik Nerman precedence and only socialized with favourites. He had never been punctual, but after 1840 he was often 2-3 hours late even to cabinet meetings. Late hours, hypochondria, rheumatism & fear of cholera have been cited as triggers. His wife had no good explanation, but later behaved in the same way. Perhaps, like him, she wanted to demonstrate her indispensability by being difficult. In any case, there was nothing that forced Charles John to rise and then he didn't. However, even late in life he was very sprightly and to prove the point he used to stand on one leg and lift the other so high that he could bite his toes.

Regarding Charles John's last words, there are several versions. The most cited "No one has filled a career like mine" he dictated on February 11, 1844 as part of his "spiritual will".¹⁹ One of those present at his deathbed states that he accused everyone in the room of being a traitor and concluded with "Oscar, Oscar, we shall defend ourselves".²⁰

Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte died on 8 March 1844 in the aftermath of a blood clot. He was 81 years old.

¹⁸ de Suremain 1902: s. 216.

¹⁹ Norborg & Hentzel red. 1955: s. 156. [Diktamen 1844-03-08.]

²⁰ Lagerqvist 2005: s. 213.