

Chapter 87 : Carl Johan Bernadotte (1916-2012) – ”Der Panzer Prinz”.

The Swedish Prince Carl Johan Arthur, until February 19, 1946, Duke of Dalarna, was born October 31, 1916, at Stockholm Castle and died May 5, 2012, at Ängelholm hospital as Count Carl Johan Bernadotte af Wisborg. His father was Crown Prince Gustaf VI Adolf (1882-1973). His mother the English Princess Margaret of Connaught (1882-1920). Carl Johan was married twice: 1st time with journalist Kerstin Johnsson (1910-1987; b. Wijkmark). 2nd time with Gunilla Bussler (1923-2016; b. countess Wachtmeister af Johannishus).

There has been little interest in Carl Johan as a person. He has written his memoirs (Bernadotte 1983), he appears in the chronicles (Elgklou 1978: ss. 189-190; Ohlmarks 1980: ss. 142-143; Skott 1996: ss. 381-390; Sundberg 2004: ss. 264-265; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 125-127; Norlin 2015: ss. 265-268) and his marriage to Kerstin Wijkmark and subsequent abdication was widely discussed. (See appendix.)

The biography below highlights Carl Johan's position as a Swedish prince. His business activities 1946 to c. 1987 are summarized. The emphasis is on how he is pushed out of the royal house and acclimatizes to a bourgeois existence while taking advantage of his royal birth.

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Carl Johan was the youngest of five siblings, almost an afterthought. Closest to him in age was the five year older Bertil. He first went to the Castle school: three years preparatory school and two years realschule, autumn 1923 to spring 1927. Some lessons like biology & gymnastics took place at the Beskow school. He had the family's beloved English nanny Agnes Wiltshire practically for himself so his English was excellent. The other languages were so-so. In 1927 he started at Lundsbergs boarding school where he graduated in 1935. Lundsberg was almost a sports college and those who were studious hated it, but not Carl Johan who was very interested in sports, especially in speed skating. Of course, he was treated differently than others, but not in any conspicuous way. The school by now had the habit. He graduated in the humanities – his only choice - but barely managed the Latin. The Swedish was easier and he even got A on the student thesis with the subject ”Versailles, an arena for historical events”. His favourite topics were history, international politics and geography. He read a lot of biographies and historical novels.

After three weeks of hectic student celebrations, Carl Johan appeared at the Royal guards on horseback (new K1) for further transport to the Cavalry school in Skövde. The goal was a reserve officer's exam. The riding skills were unevenly distributed - some had never even sat on a horse - but Carl Johan had trained riding since childhood. He afterwards nostalgically recalled what it was like to ride shock with pulled sabre - preferably stirrup against stirrups & to shoot with a gun in full gallop. The training ended with field service & four months studies at Karlberg. On April 30, 1937, he was appointed second lieutenant in the Royal guards on horseback (new K1) & at Dalarna infantry regiment (I3).

In 1937 he enrolled at Stockholm University on a newly started ”diplomat & state official course”. In the summer months leading up to the outbreak of the war, he visited Germany and France. He practised at the Foreign Ministry. Business seemed to him to be the only professional option because he lacked special talent but was amused by representation, social relationships, organization, negotiations & ”deals”. By birth, he was isolated from

the other students, but did not reflect very much on it. Half way through, World War II broke out. In 1940 he took a supplementary officer course, was 1941 appointed lieutenant in his regiments and 1942 transferred to the Swedish Armoured Troops (P3) where he remained until the end of the war. In 1945 he was transferred to the reserve and in 1948 he was dismissed with the rank of captain. In the meantime, there was a lot of representation and he socialized with Swedish & foreign diplomats, publicists & businessmen, which later came in handy, as well as his technical hobbies of engines, flying and sailing.¹

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After Carl Johan fled the kingdom to marry Kerstin Wijkmark, he had much the same position of "trade ambassador" as Princess Margaretha's husband Prince Axel of Denmark, though without a title. The assignments were carried out for Anglo-Nordic [trading Co] which was owned by Wijkmark's employer at Europafilm brothers Gustav & Per Scheutz. Anglo-Nordic was mainly engaged in business with South and Central America. Carl Johan's position is unclear. He was both front-man, apprentice & at the end negotiator. His business career:

- assignments for Anglo-Nordic [trading Co] 1946-1952
- deputy assistant Director of Anglo-Nordic Traktor AB 1953
- chairman of Sundstrand-Hydraulic AB 1954
- European manager of Sundstrand International and its subsidiaries since 1969,
- chairman of the Board of Sundstrand Deutschland GmbH in Hamburg
- chairman of the Board of Sundstrand International SA in Fribourg (Switzerland)
- member of the board of OSEC Petroleum AG in Munich.

Carl Johan also held positions of trust: 1948-1963 chairman of the Unintroduced Nobles Association, from 1963 honorary member. In the late 1960s, he was for a couple of years involved in the sale of mutual funds - the details are unclear, but things do not seem to have gone so well.

From 1946 to 1952, Carl Johan & Kerstin lived in the U.S.A., then in Stockholm, London & Paris. The memoirs end with a long list of his business successes, good name, reputation & how he reconciled with his father. It is clear that Carl Johan has always been helped out in his business career by an accommodating environment and that it is unclear how he would have fared without that help. He was always very sensitive to this. The mantra – it again and again returns in the memoirs - is that despite his royal upbringing he was like people are most & that he regretted his previous royal life. In 1956, however, he was described as follows:

He is as completely free from vanity as only those who are high-born can manage. But that does not mean that he tolerates intimate or tactless overtures. If someone accidentally goes too far, he becomes ice cold, lets the sides of the mouths sink, so that he looks like a sad boxer puppy - hence the circles nickname, "Pluto" - straightens up and becomes two meters long. He has an admirable way to freeze people in their tracks, and whoever happens to tread on his toes will certainly never repeat it.²

¹ Vecko Journalen 1945:21.

² Gunnar Müllern. Prinsen som kunde göra affärer. Aftonbladet 1956-10-20, s 2.