

## Chapter 18 : Napoleon's Godson (I) (1799-1823).

Joseph François Oscar Bernadotte, later known as Oscar I, was born on July 4 or 6, 1799, in Paris as the only child of General Jean Baptiste Bernadotte (1763-1844) & his wife Desirée Clary (1777-1860). In his memoirs, Napoleon Bonaparte claimed that Oscar was his godson and that he had also given him his third name, Oscar, after the Bard Ossian's son in James Macpherson's epic. However, no papers are available on this and it was his brother Joseph who attended the baptism. Napoleon himself was in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

The literature about Oscar I's person is scarce. There is a short presentation when he still was Crown Prince (Deleen 1832: p. 21), then another dating from the coronation (Mellin 1844; N.N. 1844; N.N. 1845) and the obituaries (AB 1859; Adlersparre 1859: Part 2, ss. 1-46; Crusenstolpe 1859; N.N. 1859; Malmström 1859; Sander 1859; Wallin 1859; 1859). In addition there are 11 longer depictions (Bäckström 1877: ss. 1-128; Starbäck & Bäckström 1885: Part 11, ss. 5-65; NFB 1888; Almén 1893: ss. 86-121; SBHL 1906; de Maricourt 1909; NFB 1914; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944; Tjerneld, 1992; Ulvros 2007a; Sandin 2011: ss. 203-227; Karle 2013), 20 shorter ditto (Bergström 1874: ss. 58-67; Palmstierna 1942; Lande & Gran 1945: ss. 142-143; Jansen 1949; Nerman et al. 1952: ss. 344-347; Hagberg 1953: ss. 183-186; Ohlmarks et al. 1956: ss. 426-443; Elgklou 1978: p. 24...78; Weibull 1991: ss. 42-51; Elgklou 1995: ss. 65-98; Skott 1996: ss. 46-56; Lagerqvist 1997: ss. 352-363; Sandberg 2002; Lagerqvist & Åberg 2004: ss. 40-41; Liljegren 2004: ss. 102-103; Bratberg 2005 & 2009; Lindqvist 2010: ss. 34-49; Sandin 2010; Berggren 2012: ss. 57-62; Norlin 2015: ss. 47-60) and some depictions with him a secondary character (Schinkel et al. 1852-1893; Hellberg 1870; d'Armaillé 1897; Silfverstolpe 1908; Dardel 1911; Barton 1914, 1921 & 1925; Löwenhielm 1927; Höjer 1939, 1943 & 1960; Söderhjelm 1939; Sjövall 1943; af Edholm 1944; Girod de l'Ain 1959; Kermina, 1991).

In addition, there are special studies on Oscar I's interior & Norway policy (Grade 1917; Sjövall 1943; Ulvros 2007b; Alm 2010), foreign policy (Hallendorff 1918 & 1930; Eriksson 1939; Lappalainen 1984), "Cultural policy" (Alm 1987; Vogel-Rödin red. 1991: ss. 116-120; Lindwall 1994), Social policy (Hafström 1969) and Health (Kock 1963; 2008 & 2010). Oscar has also published books, newspaper articles & music (Prince Oscar 1840; Wieselgren 1867: ss. 22-25; 2015).

All the biographers regret that they do not get close to Oscar I as a person.

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Oscar was breastfed by his mother until two years old, vaccinated for smallpox and lived in Paris, in the country side & in the places where his father was commanded. He was educated by a governess Elise La Flotte (1779-1815; b. Reboul) and from 1807 by a teacher Louis Lemoine (1768-1853). From 1809 to 1810 he attended the *Lycée Louis-le-Grand* (then called the *Lycée impérial*) in Paris. His best friend at this time was his seven year older cousin Adolph de Villeneuve (1792-1808), who took part in the Spanish War and was killed during the siege of Saragossa. Ten years later, Oscar still mourned him deeply.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Girod de l'Ain 1967,

<sup>2</sup> Silfverstolpe 1908: del 3.

The parents then moved to Sweden and Lemoine accompanied them. The mother returned to France, however, and the family was not reunited until 1823. Meanwhile, the father sent regular letters to his wife about Oscar's progress but these are quite impersonal. Oscar also wrote letters, stating that he longed for his mother. On his arrival to Sweden on January 9, 1811, Oscar made a good impression. "Prince Oskar is very mature for his age, a sweet and good-hearted boy, warmly devoted to his parents and his teacher [Louis Lemoine]. Lemoine is a literary Frenchman who, judging by the education he has given his student, may possess great merits. The Prince is quite intelligent and seems level-headed and right-thinking."<sup>3</sup> On his Father's birthday January 26 Charles XIII appointed Oscar Duke of Södermanland. In the evening it was a ballet. "The male dancers went up to Prince Oskar, lifted him up on their arms and greeted him as Duke."<sup>4</sup> On the 28<sup>th</sup> there was a name day party for Charles XIII and in the evening theatre. Oscar thanked the king for his ducal title with some patriotic couplets written by Lemoine and proved to have a beautiful singing voice.

Because his father insisted that Oscar attend the same ceremonies as himself, his schoolwork suffered the first year. Only the Swedish language education seems to have worked. Oscar was also subjected to "the treatment", i.e. an incredible fawning. Whatever he did he was praised for its merits. Oscar had already in France as the son of a marshal acquired unbecoming behaviour and now it got worse. On June 4, his mother returned to France and Oscar was in mourning. He had nobody to confide in, but he was close to Queen Charlotte who arranged diversions:

Despite her tactlessness and pretensions she [the Queen] was a fun companion with her naturalness and playfulness. She could lie on the floor and show that she could get up without support of her hands. She loved to make parties, to dress up, to dance and to have fun. She was interested in everything that moved in the time, music and literature, people and nature, rural life and urban life. She made up crazy stories and told him [Oscar] funny memories and anecdotes.<sup>5</sup>

Oscar's initial Swedish education was handled by the publisher and librarian Per Adam Wallmark (1777-1858) and lasted for three years until Wallmark published a critical article about Norway as compensation for Finland, which led to him being dismissed & his pension withdrawn. Oscar was receptive, could already after a year passably both read and speak the language but with a piquant French accent. He was provided with a court of play mates, junior uncles they were called, whose lousy French guaranteed a daily exercise in Swedish. The Bearnaisian dialect of Oscar's contributed to the confusion. Lemoine continued to teach "French subjects", but it was slow going. The teaching of mathematics and mathematics was done by his father's adjutant Carl af Forsell (1783-1848). He also had a Norwegian teacher, the priest and newspaper man Niels Wulfsberg (1775-1852).

The games could get very violent and Oscar made an effort to live up to the family reputation of military hardiness. An example from October 1811:

The Crown Prince had allowed his son to ride during his stay at Drottningholm Castle, but always in company with one of us. To amuse him, we split into two parties, they hid, searched for and pursued each other, in a word, played war. The Prince, who wanted to escape one of us (I think Forsell, adjutant of the crown prince), lost control

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<sup>3</sup> Drottning H E Charlotta 1939: s. 637.

<sup>4</sup> Drottning H E Charlotta 1939: s. 641-642.

<sup>5</sup> Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: s. 25.

of his horse, who dragged him of into the woods, hitting a branch with such force that the prince plunged to the ground. When I arrived, I found him lying fainted in the grass. One imagines our anxiety! Returning to consciousness, he would not allow a doctor to be called; regardless he was black, blue and even bleeding. "What good will it do, it's a trifle, if Dad hears of it, he'll shut me in like a girl, and I won't be allowed to ride any more." He obviously was in pain, but refused the doctor. Only after we had promised to remain silent about the whole adventure, did he allow himself to be treated, and it took him fourteen days to recover.<sup>6</sup>

The "access" to Oscar was jealously guarded by his French surroundings, "his suite Lemoine, the Prince's teacher or rather nurse, Bonnefonds and Flichet, the one his secretary, the other his stablemaster" & faithful servant Barbier. Oscar made a good impression on his Swedish suite but... "This child was of very fragile and weak body constitution, but lively, intelligent and good of heart. I came to like him. ... The little prince had no inclination to study, and his teacher, Lemoine, was little inclined to inspire it. Lemoine was basically modest, very attached to his student, had poetic gifts, a superficial knowledge, was extremely conceited, touchy and still had success with the ladies."<sup>7</sup> Neither Queen Charlotte appreciated Lemoine who competed with her for Oscar's favour. County Governor Mikael Anckarsvärd at this time visited the court and wondered:

With little Prince Oscar, the court seems to follow the same old principles that have corrupted all our princes. You shower [him] with titles and Orders. Old and high officials kiss him on the hand. He his fêted with dances and amusements from the beginning of the week to the end, when according to my simple opinion, he should attend Karlberg military school, dress in cadet uniform and grapple with the boys.<sup>8</sup>

Oscar's father listened and took the criticism to heart. In 1812, his instructions on Oscar's upbringing were published in the official *Post och Inrikes Tidningar*.<sup>9</sup> It was a manifesto in the Enlightenment spirit: Oscar was to receive a comprehensive education, become Swedish, develop male virtues & like all other citizens learn a profession. In the spirit of the philosophers, you could not simply be crowned regent. You had to prove worthy. Sweden has since then made every effort to educate its enlightened monarchs.

Oscar was provided with a provisional court to carry out the project. This consisted of a governor, head teacher, subject teachers & male companions. The governor became the diplomat Count Germund Ludvig Cederhielm (1755-1841) who would guide Oscar in his studies and teach him to behave in public. Cederhielm, sickly and generally unwilling, has since been criticized for fawning rather than guiding. According to Queen Charlotte, Oscar was left to his own devices. It is difficult to take a position on the issue. Oscar's schedule was unrealistic and the planning was time and again disrupted as he accompanied his father on trips to be displayed to the people. It is possible that Cederhielm's experience was too dated to be relevant. He was a product of l'ancien régime, not the new civil society. His role was instead, filled by the head teacher Nils Magnus Tannström (1777-1842) from the circle of *Götiska förbundet*. Tannström was the son of a non-commissioned officer, PhD in History & Philosophy, later professor, religiously inclined & interested in educational issues. Oscar's distinctive nationalism and later revanchism may well be attributed to him. Among the

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<sup>6</sup> Löwenhielm 1927: del 1, ss. 58-59.

<sup>7</sup> Löwenhielm 1927: del 1, ss. 58-59.

<sup>8</sup> Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: s. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Karl XIV Johan. Instruktion. *Post- och Inrikes Tidningar*, nr 134, 1812-11-12.

subject teachers were J O Wallin (Christianity), Louis Lemoine (French, Latin, literary history, etc.), Mr A Stål (English & German), Niels Wulfsberg (Norwegian), engineer Nils Bovallius (mathematics), Jöns Jacob Berzelius (physics & chemistry), Fredrik Westin (drawing), organist Magnus Stenman & lieutenant colonel Johan Byström (music), Pehr Henrik Ling (rapier). Most of the companions were officers 10 years older than himself: Swedes, Norwegians & French. They seem to have been responsible for his physical and military training. 1814 his father was in the field, but received reports: "The letters from Stockholm tell me that Oscar is already a man, he is five feet and two inches long [168 cm]; his bearing is natural and dignified, his behaviour chilly but noble, his face charming and his voice male and pleasant."<sup>10</sup>

Three days each week Oscar dined with his father and reported on his progress. When his father was away, they corresponded. Oscar appears in the letters as unsecure, anxious and concerned for his father's approval. At first, he had no relation with his peers. This was allegedly intentional: "Philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Rousseau and Diderot, believed that royal children should live apart from their peers. Close encounters with peers would be avoided, as it was feared that they might exert a bad, or even pernicious, influence on the personality of the young royalty."<sup>11</sup> The constant intercourse with adults made him precocious (=at the same time intellectually forward & emotionally immature)." In 1815 Oscar's health seems to have taken a turn to the worse: "His face is yellowish, he is meagre and weak both in body and spirit."<sup>12</sup>

April 14<sup>th</sup> (grand interrogation), 15<sup>th</sup> (confirmation) & 18<sup>th</sup> (communion) 1815, Oscar was confirmed by Archbishop Jacob Lindblom in the presence of Charles XIII, the Queen, the Ministers and a number of MPs. Oscar passed the interrogation with colours: "Everyone was deeply moved, even enraptured by the way he answered the questions." It appears to refer to Oscar's versified answer to the question "What is a Christian?" On 20 April, he was declared "fit for arms" and took his oath of faith and fealty to King, Country & the Laws. His old court was replaced by a regular court consisting of 18 people. Head of this court was Anders Fredrik Skjödebrand (1757-1834; head of court 1815-1823). The companions were promoted to chamberlains. The teaching continued in much the same form. In 1817 he came of age and on July 14 he sat in at his first cabinet meeting. On February 5 the following year, Charles XIII died and Oscar became Crown Prince. He received a staff of military advisers. His father was crowned in Stockholm on May 11 and in Norway on September 7. Oscar on both occasions gave an oath of fealty. In his free time he travelled widely to Skåne, Bleking, Västergötland, Värmland, Dalarna & Uppland where he visited nobility, antiquities, industries, schools & charities. Wherever he went there where splendid tributes.

1812-1819 Oscar received many military honours, but his training and practice is unclear. In 1817, he was deputy chairman of a meeting of the country's military commanders. In the summers of 1819, -20 & -21 he commanded a training camp. He had then advanced to full Swedish and Norwegian general and supreme governor of the Artillery School. He also received civilian honorary positions: In 1815, -18, -22 & -24 he was chancellor of the Academy of Agriculture and the Universities in Uppsala, Kristiania & Lund. 1815 he became honorary member of the Royal Swedish Academy of War and in 1824 & -26 Norwegian Supreme Commander & Swedish

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<sup>10</sup> Girod de l'Ain 1960: s. 165. [Brev från Jean Bernadotte till Desirée, 1814-03-08.]

<sup>11</sup> Sandin 2011: ss. 216-217.

<sup>12</sup> NFB 1888. ["En framstående norrmän vid prinsens besök i Kristiania 1815."]

Grand Admiral. Oscar attended meetings, gave speeches, inspected the activities & listened to lectures.

Oscar's upbringing can be summarized as flattery & tough demands, but no love. In the letters to his mother, he appears constantly unhappy. It has not been possible to find a single occasion when his own wishes weighed more heavily than his father's. I have not found one single comrades of the same age.

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The fall of 1819 & spring of 1822 Oscar studied at Uppsala University. He was received with great festivities and both times lived with the archbishop. The total duration of study was three or four months. Oscar followed lectures in practical philosophy (Nils Fredrik Biberg), mathematics (Jöns Svanberg), History (Erik Gustaf Geijer) & jurisprudence| political science (Lars Rabenius & Johan Gabriel Richert). Further subjects (outside the university curriculum) were chemistry (Jöns Jacob Berzelius), military strategy (Johan Lefrén) and German language & literature (Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom). Oscar was most impressed by Geijer & Richert. Geijer was a nationalist in the spirit of Götiska förbundet. Richert was a Utilitarian in the spirit of Jeremy Bentham. His father recommended enlightenment writers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith as suitable for broad reading. There was a professorship in political science and eloquence, the Skyttean professorship, which at this time was held by Olof Kolmodin the younger. with the speciality of Roman literature. There is no mention of him at all. The most important element in Oscar's training was probably the all night talks that took place twice a week with specially invited guests but we know nothing about these.

Oscar took part in the social life of his teachers, officials and their families but not in student life. He would dance, sing and play the piano. He had a soft and pleasant look. It often led to misunderstandings about who he was. The environment was struck by how he could at a moments notice switch between the "friendly, happy, almost benign Oscar" of family life and the *Crown Prince* who graciously addressed one of his subjects.<sup>13</sup> He had a well-developed, albeit drastic sense of humour. For example, he forced his companions to breath nitrous gas during chemistry classes because he thought they were acting so funny then. One of the more complicated jokes was:

Crown Prince Oscar and another gentleman had once had an argument with lady-in-waiting Hedda Wachenfelt, "a pretty decent girl", who got angry, and became the but of several practical jokes. She had just read "Gefion." One evening the Crown Prince had ordered a companion to write on her table in her bedroom a phosphorus drawing of the verse: "Mild modesty is power, and patience the opposite of weakness", which was a quote from the countess d'Albedyhl's "Gefion". When she lay down and put out the light, it could be read in letters of fire.<sup>14</sup>

On April 13, 1821, he became seriously ill. The diagnosis was "chills" which manifested itself as high fever & nosebleeds. During the summer, he recovered at Bäckskog's royal farm in Skåne, which he leased during the entire Crown Prince's term 1819-1845. Afterwards he drank well. He was accompanied by his chamberlain Carl Gustaf Löwenhielm (1790-1858). During the summer, Löwenhielm's wife Jacqueline (1797-1839) joined them, with whom

<sup>13</sup> Silfverstolpe 1908: del 3; Ulvros 2007a: s. 76.

<sup>14</sup> Silfverstolpe 1908: del 3; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: ss. 63-64.

Oscar was suspected of having an affair. The relationship between Löwenhielm and his wife was not good and they later divorced. Oscar's teacher Atterbom feared the worst:

"The Prince's illness," Atterbom writes to Geijer, "which was considered dangerous, has now turned into chills. God forbid it to be anything else, for then one has the *worst* to fear. The recovery is said to be very slow but it is likely that the bitter chalice will be avoided *this time*. But I fear that Sweden will still be forced - sooner or later to drink it. I have dark suspicions, that I dare not turn into *thoughts*. God rules all to the best, though! The king, during the worst days of his son's illness, has been beside himself for worry. Shut himself in, cried despairingly and prayed."<sup>15</sup>

Oscar's marriage had been discussed since childhood, but Oscar had been demonstrably unwilling, and was said to have obtained a five-year reprieve for completing his studies. However, the 1821 scare that he had contracted an incurable unmentionable disease accelerated the decision. On May 9, 1822, he went on a combined educational and personal journey, where he had to choose between three or four candidates. The itinerary was Stockholm-Copenhagen-Hanover-Düsseldorf-Aachen-Amsterdam-Brussels-Eichstädt (near Munich)-Switzerland-Milan-Florence-Rome-Verona-Eichstädt-Dresden-Berlin-Hamburg-Copenhagen-Stockholm. The total time was 7 months. Oscar was expressly forbidden to visit France but met his mother and aunt Julie in Aachen, near the border, and in Switzerland. In Eichstädt he met his future wife Josefina of Leuchtenberg (1807-1876). His mother thought he could have made a better choice but it is unclear what she criticized. In Verona, Oscar attended the last conference of the "Holy Alliance". He was received so heartily by the assembled royals and their diplomats that he realized his father's fears of a Gustavian restoration were unfounded. Oscar was also able to compare Sweden-Norway with the United Kingdom of the Netherlands - a similar forced marriage 1815-1839 between Holland-Belgium-Luxembourg. His experience with the German miniature courts is often quoted:

The spirit of our century makes the princes' profession difficult, for it is no longer enough to make a good profile when one sits on a throne or, when in company, to utter a few flatteries that everyone applauds; one must be able to talk science to the learned, tactics with the military, professionalism with different professionals - in short, scatter your magic in in all directions.<sup>16</sup>

Söderhjelm & Palmstierna (1944: s. 229) summarizes that for Charles John royalty was a profession, while for Oscar it became more of a stage performance. Berggren has taken the quote as the title of his book "From ruler to performer".

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<sup>15</sup> Silfverstolpe 1908: del 2; Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: s. 75. [Brev från Atterbom till Geijer., 1821-04.]

<sup>16</sup> Söderhjelm & Palmstierna 1944: s. 229; Ulfsten 2007: s. 89.