

Chapter 7 : Charles XIV John (I) (1810-1818) – "The Man We Elected".

*Man has been given two hands:
One to grab & One to hold on.*

It is difficult to summarize Jean Bernadotte's Swedish career. It was too fragmented. Chapters 7 & 8 are exemplifications from three areas:

- Jean arrives in Sweden, gets acquainted with Swedish conditions and introduces the French system of propaganda, newspaper censorship, domestic espionage & bribes.
- Jean prepares his Danish-Norwegian campaign, which includes a detour through Germany & France. Finland is abandoned. Norway is forced into a union. "The Politics of 1812."
- Jean abandons the battlefield and turns to economics. With mixed success though. (See next chapter.)

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Hail to the King!

On October 19, 1810, Jean arrived at Elsinore in Denmark where he converted to Protestantism of the Lutheran variety before Archbishop Jacob Lindblom. There was never any religious education. Lindblom: "I was prepared to give him a brief account of the differences between our creeds and [instead] he gave me a lecture on all religions since the creation of the world."¹ The following day at 15 o'clock he set foot on Swedish soil - Helsingborg. On November 2 he marched into the capital and in a ceremony in the Hall of State November 5, Charles XIII declared him his adopted son - henceforth known as Charles (XIV) John. During the ceremony, Charles John kept the crown on, but at the oath of allegiance he took it off and bent the knee before Charles XIII. He made a very good impression with his stately appearance and suave manner. I quote Charles XIII's Adjutant-General Charles Jean Bapiste de Suremain (1762-1835) who had much to do with him 1810-1815:

The allure, the new crown prince first exerted upon the king, soon became general; so great is the dominion of external forms. A different attitude was expected, some taste of the barracks, but one found a beautiful appearance and a courtier's easy presence, politeness and even flattery. How, then, could we have resisted? Women in particular were delighted. Perhaps I too would have been won over by his magic, if not my friend, General Eblé, one of the most respected officers of the French army, who served under his command, spoke of him in a way that made me guard against this feeling. I also set out to observe in cold blood what happened and, above all, to be very careful in everything I did and said.

The first days after the Prince's arrival were devoted to celebrations and ceremonies. For him it was something completely new to give an oath of allegiance to the king before the Estates. However, I have not seen a less embarrassed man. Neither the costume he wore nor the solemnity of the occasion seemed to bother or impress him. The speech he gave was worthy, though quite long and was made with great certainty; even they who did not understand it were impressed. For my part, I was

¹ Söderhjelm 1939: s. 241.

quite amazed at the way, whereupon one of the old soldiers of liberty understood to behave like a prince.

Shortly afterwards I had the opportunity to witness the skill with which he knew to use everything, to make an impression and, so to speak, enchant the street. In the courtyard of the castle a large parade was held, and consequently many curious people had gathered there.

A few guard dragoons with drawn sabres, but without beating anyone, sought to maintain order and in fact put little obstacle in the way of people approaching him. This notwithstanding, the prince summoned their commander, vehemently reproach him for the conduct of his soldiers and ordered them to desist from any intervention at all, so that the troops mixed with the crowd. For it was not without calculation that a former French general showed so much forbearance for the people, and I could tell you more than one move of the same kind.

Thus, while the prince showed such a great desire to please the lowest classes, he did not neglect the others. Priests, nobles, burghers, peasants, soldiers, all were treated in such a way, that he implanted either affection or hopes. For those who did not understand French, his benevolence and patronizing facial expression replaced words.

As to the king, the crown prince succeeded in fully conquering him through all possible signs and reassurances of reverence and attention. At all evenings, the Crown Prince appeared with the Queen, sitting between her and the king at a large round table, around which the ladies and courtiers gathered in a circle behind them standing at attention. Here he conversed his audience and amused them through his stories and by his very tone. Talking on historical subjects, he seemed to be the most knowledgeable person around, dwelling even on lesser known subjects as the times of Odin and Birger Jarl, on the revolutions of the Eastern Roman Empire and the beginning of the French monarchy. When talking about war, it was always with a modest slant, that he mentioned his own feats. In administration or finance, on the other hand, he demonstrated greater claims and spoke extensively and with apparent satisfaction on his work as Minister of War under the Directorate. Often he turned to his audience for approval or information. I was asked more than once and was sometimes embarrassed to contradict him on Louis XV and Louis XVI, whom he seemed to know less about than Charlemagne.

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What also prevented me from surrendering to his magic was the ways of his French suite. Some of them hastened to form a special police, whose stories he paid for and greedily took in. In this respect he encouraged the whole world, and reports were soon coming from all sides; If they were not favourable to him, he took offence and saw enemies everywhere. From this derived aggravations, prejudices, epithets and behaviour that made people reconsider their early admiration.

...

He was endowed with a particularly vivid imagination. He had lived through and made his mark in a time of political upheaval and was extraordinarily observant of all matters of opposition. Even the most insignificant circumstances acquired an exaggerated importance. He did not trust peoples morality but their appetites; he knew mankind's bad qualities better than the good and if the bad was not evident it had to be searched for. In order to know what his subjects thought of him he augmented his paid police with all manner of unpaid spies. Discussions that had been public went into hiding. His hot temper played him tricks, rash words, ill-considered judgements calls,

that found their way to the wrong ears. [de Suremain recounts several of Jean's accusations that had made both him and his surroundings ill at ease.]

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In this way the first months passed, which the Prince spent in Sweden. Even though he was not yet ruler *de jure*, he was *de facto* the ruler. All important matters were communicated to him, before they were presented in the Council of State, in which he participated. In most cases he could not have a valid opinion since he did not know the laws of the country. But as long as his opinion was not in direct conflict with any law, it prevailed.²

As mentioned Charles John was accompanied by his French (military) suite, but only for the first half year. In early 1811 his wife Desirée, son Oscar & his trustee & childhood friend Louis Marie Camps joined him. Desirée stayed for a few months before she too returned.

Charles John initially claimed his intention was to remain loyal to Napoleon, but as is known he rethought this position. On March 23, 1813, he wrote a "public" letter in which he justified his actions: "In politics, Sir, there is neither friendship nor hatred; There are only obligations to fulfil against the people that Providence has called upon us to govern. Their laws and prerogatives are treasures that are dear to us, and if in order to protect them you also have to renounce old relationships and family sympathies. A prince, who wants to fulfil his task, must never hesitate about what decision he is to make..."³ Perhaps so. Charles John had very high thoughts on the importance of an oath of loyalty. His loyalty was complete until he changed it. This side of Karl John's character later met with little sympathy from the French, who took umbrage at his participation in the coalition that forced Napoleon to surrender.

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The quotes above show how Charles John was perceived by the court circles immediately after his arrival. However, the appearance was deceptive. There were no political parties in the modern sense, but there were camps, factions & groupings all hoping for his support. Charles John remained cautious while trying to figure out the situation through his "spies". His non-existent Swedish complicated everything. His social intercourse was limited & all documents had to be translated. Initially he was mentored by his Swedish teacher Peter Adam Wallmark (1777-1858). Another (self-appointed) mentor was the Dowager Queen Sofia's secretary etc. Axel Gabriel Silverstolpe (1762-1816) who ensured that he received a French translation of the constitution. Silverstolpe also held a few seminars about the thinking behind it. Some facts about Silverstolpe's politics:

The 1809 *coup d'état* gave S a given opportunity to work for his political ideas. He published a number of widely read brochures and at several sessions of Parliament was a member of KU (the constitutional committee). His most lasting achievement was as one of the men behind the 1809 Constitution. The problem he set out to solve was to combiner kingship and liberty. In 1809 he gave his answer in the influential publication *What seemingly does the public opinion desire for an improvement of the Swedish constitution?*, which was published shortly before work on it began. In his publication, S analyses the attitude of public or enlightened opinion and agitates for the so-called Håkanson's proposal, which was drawn up on behalf of the government and would form the basis for the final version of the constitution.

² de Suremain 1902: 197-209.

³ Söderhjelm 1939: ss. 277-278.

Some of the basic ideas in S's writing later reappeared in the constitution, e.g. the prohibition for the king to attend the Parliaments's deliberations and decisions and the meetings of the committees (except the secret committee). The main difference between the brochure and Håkanson's proposal was that S did not grant the king a veto in legislative matters. The fact that he did not get approval for his thoughts on this point is shown by the fact that the constitution gave the King shared legislative power with the Parliament. However, S's proposal to include a ban on the use of force against the Estates or its individual members was adopted. Such attacks were now to be regarded as high treason. This provision, which was designed to protect the Parliament against an attempted coup by the king, was inspired by the French revolutionary constitutions and new for Sweden. On the representation issue, which was raised at this time, S agreed to the view that the Parliament should continue to consist of the four Estates, but with the addition of representatives of the agricultural and landowning class that had hitherto lacked political representation. Three years later he went further and condemned the Estates all together. This was done in the book *Attempt to develop the foundations of the Swedish government*, where he advocated a two-chamber parliament, "wherein the Estates were mixed".⁴

Håkanson's proposal (HF1) was a one-man investigation commissioned by the Provisional Government, and subsequently reworked by a Joint Committee into the 1809 form of government (RF1). Charles John seems to have been so impressed by Håkanson's work that he commissioned him to draw up a proposal number two, more in line with his own approach (HF2), which was then reworked by his Chancellery into the 1812 form of government (RF2). And what was this approach of Charles John? In the absence of a political declaration, Andgren (1933) refers to a draft of Schinkel's history of the period (1852), possibly written down after Charles John's dictation, which he finds a convincing description:

»Il se trouvait placé entre les deux régimes qui divisaient le monde. Enfant de celui de la révolution il venait prendre place dans le cercle des anciennes dynasties». [He was caught between two world views. Child of the Revolution, he had to adapt to the old dynasties.] He had experienced and recovered from *»la crise de maladie du siècle»* [the sickness of the century] and was able to join those who found, that the principle of popular sovereignty, which had such magical attraction on the masses, is in reality an enemy of all government. It was clear that when this principle was applied to our old and frail forms of administration, complete chaos would arise. The Crown Prince had therefore never shown unmixed sympathy either for the men of 1809 or for their work, which had paralysed government through too many shackles and often ill-conceived controls. His role was that of a royalist, and although he was *»prince nouveau»* [a parvenu], he wanted to rely on *»les anciens éléments de la monarchie»* [the establishment]. It was emphasized that he took extraordinary care to secure his new dynasty and to fuse various parties and make them submissive and affectionate. His conduct was largely motivated by circumstances, by his status and by the interests of his family.⁵

Andgren (1933) lists a number of differences between RF1 & RF2 that all boil down to greater freedom of action for the king. Example: According to RF1, it is incumbent on the King to hear his official advisers. In RF2, the king is free to decide if he wants to listen to

⁴ Christensen 2003.

⁵ Andgren, 1933: ss. 144-145.

them and also the way in which matters are prepared. According to RF1, the Parliament decided the taxation and its purpose. In RF2, the king was allowed to use any money for anything. According to RF1, the Freedom of the Press Act (TF) belonged to the constitution, and amendments had to be approved by two successive Parliaments. RF2 downgraded TF to regular law. Etc. RF2 was never presented to the Parliament, but Charles John until 1815 adopted many of its freedoms, citing the country's emergency. Charles John, as a man of Napoleon & fate, elected successor to the throne and Sweden's last hope, had such a position that no one wanted to oppose him. King, government, Estates & people allowed themselves to be regimented until the danger was over.⁶ However, when the emergency ended, the process began to force him back to the 1809 constitution. A mini-debate during Charles John's later years was whether his oath to Charles XIII or to the Parliament also meant that he had sworn to uphold constitution. At the time, however, the constitution did not have such a status as later. Charles John seems to have perceived the 1809 constitution as yet another draft.

Charles John also had many conversations with "hommes de talent" (influentials) where he for once kept silent & listened to what they had to say. With time, he surrounded himself with political moderates - moderate Royalists & moderate Constitutionalists. A contemporary description is more contemptuous "intelligent but spineless instruments that he could dominate". Most famous of these has been Carl Otto Mörner's brother-in-law Gustaf af Wetterstedt, "the Crown Prince's personal minister", whose political convictions were so diffuse that he could represent anyone on anything. Lars von Engeström served the same purpose for Karl XIII. Over time, those with a political conviction searching his support discovered that Charles John's polite approach was pure sham - he completely ignored what they had to say (as far as it could not be exploited) & he never changed his opinion about anything.

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Charles XIII's illness meant that Charles John was installed as temporary Prince Regent on March 17, 1811. As Prince Regent, Charles John also became commander in chief. According to the Constitution, a parliamentary decision was required to confirm it, but the decision was made by Charles XIII personally in cabinet. This led to some reproaches and Charles John's first confrontation with Swedish civil society. He had all the Stockholm printers gathered and told them "that if any of them further had the gall to publish incendiary pamphlets, he would immediately command the printer's arrest and have him shot."⁷ Protests were cut off by saying that if they did not shut up the dissenters would be thrown out of the window (*défenestrer*) or he would return to France leaving the Swedes to their own devices.

What has been most talked about is Charles John's military mobilization later that year. The conscriptions resulted June 15, 1811, in Sweden's last "peasant uprising", the so-called Klågerup riots. Jean suspected a royalist uprising supported by Denmark and gave the military a free hand. This ended in about 800 peasants entrenching themselves on Klågerup farm armed with muskets and sabers. The military were 150 men with two canons. After fruitless negotiations it came to a battle and some 30 peasants died.⁸ The rest were put on trial. The penalty for rebellion was death for all or for every tenth according to lot but in the

⁶ Termænius 1938: ss. 27-28; Carlson 1990: ss. 21-24.

⁷ Rapport från ryske ministern Suchtelen. Stockholm 1811-03-28, citerad i: Ahnfeldt & Suchtelen 1887: s. 236; Boberg 1989: s. 32.

⁸ Rosborn 1991.

end only three of the ringleaders were executed.⁹ The trigger seems to be the peasants having paid to be exempted, but this was ignored.

In early 1812, Charles John commissioned the establishment of a regular secret political police (HPP). The organization appears to have been a copy of its French counterpart. The target groups were Danes & Gustavians. Later also Liberals. It is unclear what it actually achieved. There was an instruction to the county boards, in Stockholm the governor, to every week report on "the calm in the country", "the public mindset for or against the government" & "keep an eye on suspects".¹⁰ HPP read newspapers & pamphlets, paid informers, sat in with the opposition meetings, broke seals & reported gossip. The Stockholm Department reported directly to Charles John & is the most widely publicized: initially it operated under the publisher and agitator Carl August Grevesmöhlen (1754-1823); 1812-1816 under Colonel Carl Mörner (1755-1821); 1816-1818 under Colonel Olof Rudolf Cederström (1764-1833); 1830-1840 under acting police chief Klas Ulrik Nerman (1792-1852). All of them are assumed, through their (over)reporting, having fuelled Charles John's "shadow fear". The consequences for the accused were a ban on publishing, prison, the death penalty, exile, dismissal from service and revoked pensions. One can imagine that a sick pallor of reflection took hold as the consequences of electing Charles John as heir to the throne became clear.

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The above required money but the 1812 Parliament was compliant. All of Sweden's foreign possessions were left to the state, that is Charles John, to administer & tax without the Parliament's involvement. Swedish Pomerania until 1815, Saint-Barthélemy until 1878, the "Guadeloupe revenue" until 1882. The "Barthélemy account" was some years filled through bridging loans, these too safe from the Estates' auditors. On top of this was the rouble fund from 1812, the piastre fund from 1813 & the Pomeranian fund. Gunnar Heckscher fears the worst.

It might be assumed that Charles John, who from his own experience knew Napoleon's way of tying the closest aides to his person through donations, was not unfamiliar with the idea of trying a similar method in Sweden as well. At the hearing on Guadeloupe, he openly admitted to the British Minister that he intended the proceeds of this acquisition as a means of exerting corruption, although that should primarily apply to the Estates. But he also had to intervene personally time and again to help the country's leaders out of economic difficulties with loans or gifts. ... As long as such a thing could occur, the Swedish bureaucracy was not independent. The royal power had retained something of its patriarchal nature, and the cabinet was not free enough to assert itself as a fully independent factor in state life.¹¹

Sten Sjöberg rather favours the opinion that Jean's "election campaign" - all Fournier's promises in his name - was more expensive than intended, that he as crown prince was forced into an expensive way of life and that politics, no matter how it is conducted, requires three things - money, money and again money:

⁹ Bentz 1941.

¹⁰ Tyska betraktelser vid Carl XIV Johans död. I: Augsburgers Allgemeine Zeitung & Aftonbladet, 1844-05-09, s. 2.

¹¹ Heckscher 1933: s. 316.

It is more than likely that Charles John was in great need of money during his early years as Crown Prince. In order to gain popularity, he had dispensed money and probably granted loans to unreliable debtors. He had never been very wealthy. ... His wife's and son's housekeeping in Paris was expensive and when he installed himself in Sweden there were lots of people queuing for handouts. Many journalists and writers demanded financial encouragement to promote the Crown Prince's views to the public. The secret police he after French pattern quickly established in Sweden had executives who were in need of pecuniary encouragement, as well as prominent but economically unfortunate parliamentarians.¹²

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War & Peace

It appears that Charles John already in 1810, while still in France, was informed of the 1808 discussions with Prince August about "a small Scandinavian" union. In 1811 he discussed it with Napoleon and motivated the union with "natural" land borders. The only way to achieve it would be to join Napoleon's alliance against Russia. In the meantime, he also sounded the position of Russia and England. The historian Einar Carlsson interprets various information as Charles John for a while hoping that Napoleon or Alexander I would support a Nordic great state Sweden-Norway-Finland, but there he was disappointed.¹³ In the Treaty of Paris on January 6, 1810, Sweden had regained Swedish Pomerania (which they had lost to France in the Pomeranian War of 1805-07). In exchange, Sweden must declare war on England and join the Continental System. However, under Charles John, trade with England continued. The result of the double dealing was that Napoleon had Swedish Pomerania reoccupied in January 1812 to force Charles John to bind himself to France.¹⁴ It turned out counter-productive. Sweden instead threw itself into the arms of Russia and on September 18, 1812, signed an agreement, the so-called Turku Treaty, in which Russia would support a Swedish annexation of Norway - by force of arms if necessary - and in exchange Sweden would support Russia's annexation of Poland. A secret clause stipulates that the countries would assist each other militarily if attacked.

Outside of the protocol, Alexander I also promised Charles John to support his dynasty in every way, which came in handy at the Congress of Vienna in 1814/15 where the Gustavians' attempts to have Prince Gustav of Wasa restored as Swedish heir to the throne failed. Alexander is also said to have supported Charles John in his hopes of becoming Napoleon's successor. If Charles John had such ambitions or if such an oral promise existed, they quickly proved unrealistic. On April 12-30, 1814, Charles John was in Paris where allegedly the following took place: "Desideria used to remember, with pain, how the mob one night, with furious cries of: »Down with the traitor! To the lamp post with the deserter!« smashed the windows of their hotel. This fracas - told the Queen - disturbed Charles John deeply, and the next morning he left Paris – forever."¹⁵ Afterwards Charles John blamed himself for being misled by Alexander I about the opinion.¹⁶ In Paris he was told by Alexander I that Austria had been against him from the start & towards the end also England who would rather have a Bourbon on the throne than a former Napoleon protégé.

¹² Sjöberg 1978: ss. 45-46.

¹³ Carlsson 1948.

¹⁴ Carlsson 1954.

¹⁵ Louis de Bourrienne, citerad I: Lindwall 1919: s. 185; Desirée, citerad I: Brander 1923: s. 128.

¹⁶ Louis de Bourrienne, citerad I: Crusenstolpe red. 1837b: del 2, ss. 208-215.

Alexander's motive for entering into a contract so beneficial to Charles John & then sticking to it has been discussed. The positions vary between Alexander's desire to secure his Nordic flank in every way possible and his fascination with Charles John's person. Impossible to tell. Perhaps Alexander also played double, triple or for the galleries. After the Congress of Vienna, he was less forthcoming.

"The Policy of 1812" was approved by an extraordinary Parliament April 13 to August 18, 1812. Charles John went as far as to give a speech to the Estates in Swedish based on a manuscript written in phonetic writing - his only attempt. Further decisions were taken. The most widely spoken about was the introduction of public military service, the granting of war taxes, the unilateral cancellation of the entire Swedish foreign debt (according to other data 2/3 of the debt) and the amendments to the Freedom of the Press Act (permit to publish, the power to withdraw said permit and a wider interpretation of crimes against the state). Since the amendments to the Freedom of the Press Act were applied directly (not after another Parliament), it can be interpreted as meaning that RF2 this Parliament started to be introduced through the back door.

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Charles John then went to war. The goal was Denmark, but in 1813-1814 because of promises to Alexander I in Turku he took a detour over Germany & France. England provided sufficient funds for 30 thousand men. Russia & Prussia contributed another 15 thousand. Charles John was afterwards criticized for excessive caution in his warfare, but the goal was after all Denmark & Norway. Napoleon's childhood friend Pozzo di Borgo, now a Russian envoy, has provided a description of a nightly conversation on May 7, 1813. Charles John experienced himself with all his pledges, standing with his back against the wall:

You will be curious to know something about the Prince's personality. He certainly possesses distinguished qualities and talents. As he says himself, he has never been unlucky at war. But the discipline and training of the Revolution reveal themselves in his manners. Discussions with him are always lively and unmethodical. He speaks with eloquence, but without arrangement. *L'amour-propre* [narcissism] is displayed in every word. The sun never rises except by his advice. We spent the entire night in conversation. He mingles protestations of frankness and simplicity with a strong dose of *finesse* and boastfulness. When he perceived that I saw through him, he became natural and ended by speaking with emotion. He said "If I do not obtain Norway and if I do not reap success, a violent death must be my destiny. I shall leave my son to the guardianship of Swedish honour. Even as a private individual he will have from his mother an honest independence." In truth the Prince is on the gridiron [*sur la braise*].¹⁷

There is also a description from an audience with English envoy Sir Charles Stewart on July 8 of the same year:

The Prince Royal strikes me as being thoroughly French, *coeur et l'âme*. His engaging manners, his spirited conversation, his facility of expression, and the talents which are perceptible, even on a first interview, made no great impression on me, because I was prepared to meet all this. I rather regarded him as a highly finished actor; and I doubt if he is, in the long run, a character either to admire or confide in. ... England will

¹⁷ Barton 1925: s. 66.

retain him as long as it is for his advantage to be retained, but there is no natural link between him and his present allies.¹⁸

Höjer (1943) summarizes Charles John's international position this time as:

The three months from Trachenberg [July 1813] to Leipzig [October 1813] is the stage in Carl Johan's life, when his position was the most brilliant and he had the greatest influence on world history. They were full of successes, and the task he set himself in the Trachenberg Plan had been realized. But the weaknesses, which on some occasions made themselves known in his command [passivity] as a result of the military situation in the theatre of the North Army, of the political conditions and of certain peculiarities of his own personality [vacillation], greatly damaged his prestige. This as well as the latent opposition between the interests of Sweden and its allies made his position false and caused the great influence that he had exercised in Trachenberg no longer possible to preserve. It should be added that Austria's entry into the coalition as well as the great successes against Napoleon made the Allies less dependent on Sweden's resources and on Carl John's personality. His position was doomed to weaken in the long term, but the events and conditions mentioned accelerated a development, which itself was inevitable. October 1813 therefore forms a turning point in Carl Johan's orbit as a world-historical personality. He had passed his peak.¹⁹

Remained to do what he had originally set out to do. In November and December 1813, Charles John defeated the Danish forces. In the Treaty of Kiel of January 14, 1814, Denmark ceded Norway – but excluding Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands - and in exchange received Swedish Pomerania, including the island of Rügen. The relationship between Sweden and Norway would, according to Charles John, be similar to that between England and Scotland, which meant extensive autonomy.

The peace negotiations in Kiel, which began in December 1813, took place under great time pressure. Every day he postponed the North Army's march on France, his relations with the major powers in the coalition deteriorated. The Danish side therefore took every opportunity to drag on, while seeking and obtaining diplomatic support from Austria. Charles John was in a desperate position.

The draft peace treaty, which was the basis for the negotiations, stipulated in its fourth paragraph that the Norwegian dioceses and provinces, with everything they included, would "henceforth with full ownership and sovereignty belong to the Kingdom of Sweden and thus remain incorporated". On Charles John's own initiative - before the draft was submitted to the Danish delegates – the wording was changed to the effect that the Norwegian provinces would henceforth "belong to Hans Maj:t The King of Sweden and constitute a kingdom united with Sweden". Norway's incorporation into the Swedish state had thus been written off in favour of the formation of a state union.

The motive for Charles John's intervention and amendment of the peace treaty clause four seems to have been to induce the Norwegians to accept the union with Sweden by connecting it with the strong demands for the country's independence in the form of a separate kingdom. However, another, and for Charles John himself even

¹⁸ Barton 1925: s. 80.

¹⁹ Höjer 1943: ss. 199-200.

more important, motive was to demonstrate his liberal attitude - something that is clear from his letters to his supporters in France.²⁰

To further complicate the legal situation, Charles John had in 1812-14 issued a number of pledges in the form of leaflets, brochures & letters to influential people, where he promised a free Norway. Below is an example from 1813:

The Swedes are pleased to see that a neighbouring people, who speak the same tongue, who profess the same faith, and in their heart maintain the feeling of national independence, wish not to submit to Sweden, but to unite in a common defence. It is not thus, and can not be any question of, a fusion of Norway and Sweden, were the former of these Kingdoms would be forced to renounce their name, their domestic constitutions, their laws and their rights: one wishes only a sincere and just union, of time and circumstances being in the interest of both, hastened by a treaty between Sweden and its allies.²¹

Norway was not as easy to take as Charles John had expected from the Treaty of Kiel. Instead of greeting the Swedes as liberators from the Danish yoke, the Norwegians tried to break away, which forced Charles John to further not very well-considered concessions. Norway would not only be an equal partner within the semi-state of Sweden-Norway. It would also have its own constitution. Norway initially declared themselves satisfied. If not, the Vienna Congress would have pitted the whole of Europe against them. Later they resumed their liberation project. In 1821, they abolished their nobility. In 1838 their merchant fleet was allowed to fly the Norwegian colours. And so it continued. If you put the Treaty of Turku, the Treaty of Kiel, the Moss Convention and other negotiations side by side, Charles John's lack of government and negotiating habit appears. Short-term gains led to long-term problems. "A severe blow to the table by the King was not followed by further, consistent action to the entrenchment of the King and the Union, while the Norwegian Parliament might retreat as to the forms of conduct but never in substance or in principle."²² Karl John's complicity has led to suspicions. Perhaps Desirée's opinion on Norway was also Charles John's: "In that way, we had a reserve throne, if the congress of Vienna had chased us out of Sweden."²³ In 1816 another "reserve throne" was Argentina.²⁴ In 1817, Charles John appeared so tired that the English minister thought he would abdicate in favour of his son and withdraw to private life.

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The alternative, not quite so Norwegian-patriotic version, is that the Danes, through their Crown Prince Christian (at the time Norwegian governor) managed to put a spanner in the works of the Swedish power-takeover. On January 16, 1814, Christian called for a meeting in Eidsvoll, to declare Norway an independent kingdom. This was followed by a provisional parliament, also in Eidsvoll, which elected him on May 17 as Norwegian king. A constitution was also adopted (F1). Then came the Swedish invasion & the negotiations in Moss August 7-14. The Swedes did not accept Christian as their counterpart, but two of his ministers negotiated in his place. Charles John's role in Moss is unclear, but on September 9 he presented his own constitutional alternative (F2) which, however, strengthened Swedish influence to the extent that the Norwegians refused to accept it (see chapter 8). Thereafter,

²⁰ Weibull 1998: ss. 96-97; [Frankrikebrevet har inte gått att lokalisera.]

²¹ [Charles John.] Proklamation från 1813. I: Hemstad, 2014: s. 116.

²² Höjer 1960: s. 433.

²³ Brander 1923: s. 29.

²⁴ Medina 2009; Berezán 2016; Retsö 2018.

Christian relinquished all claims to the throne On October 10, he abdicated. The constitution (F1) was retained but adapted by the Norwegians to fit the union. The revised version (F3) was approved on November 4 by the Norwegian provisional government.

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The later research on the period (Glenthøj 2010) has been about the popular support of Norwegian patriotism. As one might expect, it was weak, but grew over time, which makes for exaggerating its significance for the course of events. Hatred of Swedes seems to have greater value as an explanation.

The Eidsvoll Constitution (F1) has over time been surrounded with such mythos that it is difficult to form an opinion about it. General Magnus Björnstierna who led the Swedish Moss negotiations has described its creation as:

”This ”masterly production” is, with a few modifications, a translation of the Constitution framed *at Cadiz* in 1812 by the Spanish Cortes, renewed in 1820, and of which we know the deplorable history and the still more painful end: whereas this Spanish constitution is itself a copy of the French constitution of the year 1791, which led, in the short time of two years, to that of the *National Convention* and of the *Comité du Salut Public*. To this groundwork was added whatever the Swedish Constitution of 1809 contained restrictive of the power of the crown. This may explain how “this production of a mastermind” could be framed in the rather short time of four days.”²⁵

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In the Waiting Area

Höjer (1943) concludes his portrayal of Charles John as Crown Prince in a minor key:

The last three years before the accession to the throne are perhaps the part of Carl John's long career, where he appears least in his favour. His weaknesses - the anxious suspicion, the lack of self-control in statements and the excessively lively private economic interest - were particularly evident in 1816-1818. However, it must not be overlooked, how testing his situation was. His long, active military and political career, which seemed to lead him towards ever bigger and more brilliant prospects, had suddenly closed down and left him floundering in a cultural and economic back water. His Jacobin ideals had forced him into exile. France was defeated. He was defeated. The reaction had triumphed.

But if 1816-1818 constitute an interlude and a not an entirely glorious one at that, 1811-1815 is the main act. His regency was long and in several respects significant; As a world-historical personality, however, he stands and falls with his contribution during the final crisis of the Napoleonic era. Briefly, this can be summarized as the policy of 1812 with its consequences for Sweden: on the one hand resignation in respect to Finland, on the other the Union with Norway.²⁶

²⁵ Björnstierna 1840: s. 5.

²⁶ Höjer 1943: ss. 447-448.