

The Bernadotte Monarchy
between fact and fiction

by

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Preface

In a republic must be virtue, in a monarchy glory, under a despotic government fear. Virtue would then be unnecessary, honour dangerous.
Montesquieu (1689-1755)

The subject of this book is the Swedish monarchy's *raison d'être* circa 1718-2018 with emphasis on the Bernadotte era. The book is in six parts. Part 0-3 deals with the office, part 4 with the persons, part 5 with the discourse:

- Part 0 : Introduction
- Part 1 : Political ideologies
- Part 2 : Kings as politicians
- Part 3 : Kings as symbols
- Part 4 : The smallest social group in the country
- Part 5 : Kings as fantasies

“The story“ is that the Bernadotte family 1810 arrived in a Sweden which, because of its isolated position and history had both a constitution, a sociology & a psychology, which was significantly different from the rest of Europe. In the 19th century, they first relied on the old nobility, and then on the new group of parvenu commoners. In the 20th century, popular support was also important. Their historical role would be to administer the transition between the estate society & modernity: 1818-1865 they lead the dismantling of the estate society. 1866-1918 they lead a Swedish version of economic “shock therapy“. After 1918 they became figureheads.

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The Bernadotte Story in Sweden is part of a wider monarchic history as depicted in Perry Anderson's two books, “Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism“ & “Lineages of the absolutist state“. This book is a case study from a hypothetical 3rd volume “Transitions from monarchy to democracy“. There is no direct model, but since the narrative is based on an existing literature (political science, history, biographies, memoirs, debate, journalism) where different parties (scholars, politicians, monarchists, republicans, etc.) give their interpretation, it can be compared to a collection of essays. The disadvantage of such a scheme is a certain amount of jerkiness in the disposition. The advantage is that the Swedes thoughts about their modern monarchy can be gathered between two binders. The main difficulty has been organizing the sometimes very sprawling data.

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Part 0 (introduction) is a short introduction to the monarchic form of government, how it is defined in the research & its political science *raison d'être*. The existence or non-existence of the monarchy is often debated with ideological arguments dating from the French Revolution. Here, however, it is debated with functionalist arguments from a variety of sources, from Montesquieu's *On the Spirit of Laws* to German-American organizational sociology. The field originated in the democracy projects of 1688-89, 1789, 1848, 1918, 1945, 1989-91 & 2011 where the outcome has been mixed.

The most important observation from the book's point of view is that the monarchy's primary task was to keep together a politically divided kingdom and when, after the divisions of 1718, 1809 and 1905, this was no longer needed - the reduced area & the improved communications had made what remained a homogeneous nation state - it lost its *raison d'être*. It also proved difficult for the monarchy to manage the increased economic & political activity. "Hard to be God", as the Russians put the matter.

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Part 1 : The literature on the Swedish monarchy 1718-2018 is extensive. To force some order on it, I distinguish between monarchy as a form of government and monarchy as an ideology. One unforeseen development after the constitutional reforms of 1917-1921 was that the ideological dimension of the monarchy, the arguments that legitimized monarchy in "the people's hearts", was difficult to legislate away or even to discuss, because they were regarded as irrelevant to democracy. It was both 1918 & 1974 easier for politicians to leave the royal house be & hope that the monarchy would somehow wither away, rather than to actively dismantle it. The monarchic ideology, tradition or collective imagination persisted however and, with 1,000 years of history behind it, was far better anchored in the political landscape than its republican competitors - liberalism, socialism, communism, Nazism & fascism. I describe these ideologies as best I can. It is a piece of historical archaeology:

- Chapter 1 : The theocratic state
- Chapter 2 : The autocracy
- Chapter 3 : The aftermath
- Chapter 4 : The master race
- Chapter 5 : Estates of the realm
- Chapter 6 : The nation state
- Chapter 7 : Monarchic political science

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Part 2 : Swedish 19th century history is often described as an overture to the social democratic state: "The Whig interpretation of History" (Butterfield 1931) - history depicted from the perspective of the present & "The End of History and the Last Man" (Fukuyama 1991) - parliamentary democracy as the apex and end of political science. With such a focus, old time politics often become incomprehensible. I have therefore gone to great trouble to describe how the past perceived its monarchic system.

- Chapter 8 : The coup d'état & the Constitution [1809]
- Chapter 9 : Sweden-Norway-Finland [1809-1905]
- Chapter 10 : "The European concert" [1814-1918]
- Chapter 11 : The Estates society [1809-1865]
- Chapter 12 : The bourgeois state [1866-1918]
- Chapter 13 : Democracy [1918-1974]
- Chapter 14 : The death of ideology?

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Part 3 : Since the Social Democrats (and also the Liberals) were divided on the monarchist issue & the conservative parties were indifferent or paralysed, the Torekov compromise of

1971 was not a compromise between the Parliament's monarchic & republican parties, but a compromise between the Social Democratic majority & a new generation of radicals, jokingly called SSU Helgeandsholmen. (SSU is the social democratic youth organisation.) What was lost in the compromise was Gustaf VI's formal (but illusory) powers. However, a lot of not so illusory informal powers remained:

- Chapter 15 : The Torekov compromise
- Chapter 16 : The appanage & state utility
- Chapter 17 : The monarchy's "ruin-value"
- Chapter 18 : Power, influence, etc.
- Chapter 19 : Fighting monarchists
- Chapter 20 : "Monarchists of the heart"
- Chapter 21 : Structural functionalism

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Part 4 turns the issue 180°. The chapters does not deal with the role of the monarchy in society, but with the rules that the royals (kings, queens, princes and princesses) must follow in order to maintain the system. The regulatory framework has a long history, but has been reworked in line with societal development:

- Chapter 22 : Order of succession
- Chapter 23 : Lèse-majesté & High treason
- Chapter 24 : Royal house laws
- Chapter 25 : A royal upbringing
- Chapter 26 : Money & privileges
- Chapter 27 : Sense, sensibility & ceremonies
- Chapter 28 : Hierarchies & quality of life

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Part 5 finally is about fact & fiction, about a never ending political conflict, about Swedish opinion statistics as a fantasy product & about the future of the Swedish monarchy. The most important observation from the book's point of view is that the 1809 constitution perpetuated the conflict between King & Parliament by making them opponents. Until 1918, the conflict was political. Then symbolic. Old political grudges keeps it going.

- Chapter 29 : The true nature of monarchy
- Chapter 30 : "Why I am a Republican"
- Chapter 31 : "Why I am a Monarchist"
- Chapter 32 : A frozen conflict
- Chapter 33 : Opinion polls & discourses
- Chapter 34 : Rise & fall of court journalism
- Chapter 35 : Dead man walking

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The appendix "Psychoanalytic & rhetorical political science" is yet another turn of the screw. The monarchy is interpreted as an irrational manifestation of culture, no longer comprehensible within the context of rational Enlightenment, but belonging to German

Romanticism. Incomprehensibility is its true nature. With that viewpoint, the monarchy can be interpreted in the manner of your choice and so it is.

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Appendices (online)

- Appendix A. “The King's Biography“ (the present Royal Family).
- Appendix B. ”Bernadotte biographies” (all c. 1818-2018).