The French Marshal Jean Baptiste Bernadotte came to Sweden for the first time in 1810 after the riksdag (the assembly of the four estates) had elected him heir to the throne. By virtue of having been adopted by Charles xiii, he was a graft on the Holstein-Gottorp family tree, which through him would continue to hold the royal throne. Bernadotte was given the name Charles xiv John (Sw: Karl xiv Johan) as a symbol of continuity in a line of monarchs dominated by the names Karl/Charles and Gustav. Two hundred years have passed by since then, and to this day one of his descendants sits on the Swedish throne. Continuity is still demonstrated by the names Charles and Gustav, but in the list of kings the name Oskar has been added with the new dynasty. The link to the house of Holstein-Gottorp has also dropped out of general awareness, and today the dynasty is exclusively known by the name Bernadotte.

How was it possible for a French soldier – a commoner – to inherit a royal throne in northern Europe, through successful power-play create a double monarchy, retain his position for a quarter of a century and finally pass on two united realms to his son to be handed on to the next generation? Bernadotte’s successful establishment of a new royal dynasty came about through considering domestic conditions. Also the new dynasty kept its hold despite the violent instability that marked the European continent. Seen in a European context, Bernadotte managed to establish and uphold a new dynasty against poor odds. In this respect, he was more successful than Napoleon himself, who in 1810-1811 attempted to found a new dynasty with an imperial alliance as a basis for legitimacy and in 1814 failed to uphold his son’s rights.

Bernadotte’s military qualifications and his strategic and administrative talents have been examined by generations of historians, and it is justifiable to ask whether the subject has thereby been exhausted. A first reason to answer
1. Charles XIII with a portrait bust of his adoptive son, confirming the latter’s status in the royal line of succession and acknowledging him as a true scion of the king’s Holstein-Gottorp dynasty. (Oil painting by Pehr Krafft the Younger 1817. Socialstyrelsen. Photo: Svenska Porträttarkivet, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.)
2. Oskar I with a portrait bust of his father as the founder of the Bernadotte dynasty. As is the case with the similar portrait of Charles XIII, the motif illustrates different stages of the dynastic transition process. (Oil painting by Fredrik Westin, unknown date. Private owner. Photo: Svenska Porträttarkivet, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.)
'no' to that question, is connected with historiography. Bernadotte has of course been treated in different ways dependent upon the research interests within the field of history which have varied over time. In our day, theoretical approaches and methodical tools should be applied to the same sources that have been worked with by others, to ascertain whether important aspects can be added to earlier research. A second reason to answer 'no', concerns the possibilities that are opened up through previously untried multidisciplinary cooperative projects, based on theoretical as well as empirical extensions of the area. Earlier research efforts have been one-man projects, resulting in uniformity and limited scope. A third reason to give a negative answer is concerned with the connection of historiography with topical geopolitical perspectives. Bernadotte's geographic area of activities is today a self evident part of the major European community project. Fifty years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, in 1957, the striving towards cooperation in the continent of Europe has renewed the interest in Napoleon's francocentric empire and pan-European ambitions. The place of the Scandinavian peninsula in Europe needs to be examined against the background of the inheritance from the Napoleonic era. In summaries of Napoleon’s ventures in expansion, Scandinavia is often described as an area that was not affected.

A new study of the era in Sweden-Norway can point to distinctive features in national developments, establish international connections, analyse centre-periphery factors, and contribute to making research written in Swedish and Norwegian available internationally. It can also link research about Bernadotte's French period together with the later part of his life. These possibilities do however require an appraisal of the research situation that can serve as a starting point for subsequent research efforts. The purpose of the research project *The Making of a Dynasty* (Sw: *En dynasti blir till*) is to study how dynastic legitimacy and continuity are established and expressed after 1810, primarily in the Swedish public domain. To widen the examination in relation to earlier research, the project includes scholars from various disciplines – history, literary history, the history of ideas, history of art and history of music. This book, *Scripts of Kingship*, is the project's first joint publication and is intended to provide examples of how sources, familiar as well as previously unknown ones, can be examined in the light of internationally topical research interests and how new areas of material can contribute to the primary understanding of Charles xiv and his era.
A Life in Comparison

In his spiritual testament dated February 11, 1844, Bernadotte states: "Personne n'a fourni une carrière semblable à la mienne." The king’s pregnant and much-circulated statement is often cited alone. The result is that it gives the impression of being extremely self-centred, and, at least for every sceptic, decidedly preposterous. Did he really consider that the course of his life was not bettered by any other person at all throughout history?

The king dictated his testament during his final illness, less than a month before his death. On February 11 he was physically frail after two weeks of illness, but he still had the strength to think about his life and what he had achieved. There were many others too who had recently been busy studying what he had done for the country – 1843 happened to be the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ascension to the throne, and the Swedish press was clearly divided in their opinions. Because the jubilee year coincided with the king’s final year as active monarch, their estimations must have been on his mind. And yet his last testament is not directed against the criticism that came from the Swedish press. Instead it is completely preoccupied with Napoleon.

Seen in a wider perspective, the statement: "Personne n'a fourni une carrière semblable à la mienne" is beyond doubt a challenge to Napoleon’s life’s work. Later in the dictation, the king maintains that contrary to his own plans for the future, he accepted the offer to be elected as Sweden’s crown prince after having heard Napoleon’s reaction, as expressed to Marshal Louis Nicolas Davout: “The Prince of Ponto Corvo has no misgivings as to anything; he is however not there yet.” “This,” says the king on his deathbed, “gave me cause to decide to announce that I would accept if I were elected.” “And,” adds the king, “Napoleon himself on that occasion said to me: ‘You will not be happy; what they [the Swedes] need is a god.’ He could not tolerate that any mortal being became as powerful as he himself.”

The comparison with Napoleon is a reference to the moment when Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, marshal of France since 1804, agreed to be a candidate in the election of the Swedish crown prince. And that was the limit for his

2 See footnote 1.
advancement within the bounds of Napoleon’s sphere of power with France as the centre of the world. Bernadotte had been granted his position and his titles by Napoleon personally. In this context it is relevant to note his family connection with the emperor, which consisted of his wife Desirée Clary having once been engaged to Napoleon for a few months in 1795 and that her sister, Julie, in 1794 married Napoleon’s brother Joseph. Joseph had been placed upon the Spanish throne by his powerful brother in 1808. Bernadotte, having been elected crown prince by the riksdag in 1810, placed himself outside the emperor’s sphere and thus on the other side of the knife-edge.

Despite their unquestionably close but also strained relations in life, the old king’s comparisons with Napoleon suffer from a strong shift of perspective made possible by the passage of time and the key of history. In 1810 Bernadotte was one of many protagonists within Napoleon’s empire. The emperor’s reaction to the proposal from the Swedes can, of course, have been a consequence of the offer as such, but he can hardly have felt cause to seriously compare himself with any of his marshals, regardless of Bernadotte’s propensity – which would certainly have been irritating – to go his own way, literally as a general in the field and metaphorically in his other positions.

The old king continues from his sick bed: “I could perhaps have been able to agree to become his ally: but when he attacked the country that had placed its fate in my hands, he could find in me no other than an opponent. The events that shook Europe and that gave her back her freedom are known. It is also known which part I played in that. One may study our history from back in the days of Odin (Woden) right up to our times, and then one cannot tell me that the Scandinavian peninsula has not been of any importance for the development of events in the world!”

The old man who in this manner described his own path could only do so in relation to the person who had marked his life more than any other. And despite the fact that Napoleon had been dead for almost a quarter of a century, the force of their mutual competition was so great in the mind of the king, that it drove him to use the word ‘personne’ [nobody] instead of actually articulating the name.

A Hothead’s Competitive Instinct

That Bernadotte was virtually obsessed by Napoleon up to his death, is of
little surprise. That Napoleon harboured a well-founded critical interest in Bernadotte is not particularly remarkable either. However Bernadotte's last dictation is remarkable in the way that it claims that it should be possible in the light of history to, in some way, place the French emperor on an equal footing with himself – and have Napoleon look the worst. This is a document that has its basis in a strong need to assert oneself, possibly also together with a conviction that the victors' preferential right of interpretation would apply without restraint for the foreseeable future.

One of Napoleon's biographers in modern times, Frank McLynn, maintains that the emperor's foremost opponents were Wellington, Talleyrand, Metternich and Bernadotte, four men all of whom lived past their eightieth birthday and survived Napoleon himself. This fact made it possible for their opinions to be accepted to a disproportionately high degree. But while Talleyrand could admit that Napoleon was brilliant in several respects, it was quite unthinkable for Bernadotte to recognise such a quality.\(^3\)

McLynn describes Bernadotte's character as pretentious without cause: "Bernadotte's fundamental problem was that his proper mark was as a second-rate regimental colonel, yet he considered himself a genius."\(^4\) Furthermore, he was an opportunist: "Bernadotte was actually an egomaniac of first order, whose political beliefs were always a mask for the promotion of Jean Bernadotte."\(^5\) Bernadotte's propensity to find himself in a noisy quarrel with everybody and nobody is described as an "ability to start a row in an empty room". McLynn maintains that Bernadotte's opinion of himself being superior to the emperor when it came to military talent and his much-talked-of hatred of Napoleon cannot be denied as there are many historical accounts to support these views.\(^6\) This strong emotion must also at first have been reinforced by a competition for Desirée, since she kept up contact with Napoleon even after 1796.

None of Bernadotte's worse character traits were of any real importance for the rapid and exceptional turn of the tide in favour of his candidature that took place in the Swedish \textit{riksdag} in August 1810. In a confidential letter to G. F. Åkerhielm penned in Örebro on 30 July 1810, Gustaf Löwenhielm does indeed write that a contact in Hamburg told him that Bernadotte "wishes to see

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everybody satisfied – makes light and magnificent promises [...] if they do not work out he becomes furious and someone always ends up a victim". But as opposed to today's politicians, Bernadotte did not run a campaign and he was not himself present where the election was being held. A single person was to be elected, but there was greater interest in proven capacity rather than personal qualities. The tide never would have turned without Napoleon's approval, and the election as a whole must be understood in the light of the fact that the imperial French great power stood at its zenith. All the candidates being considered for the Swedish throne had to be weighed with due consideration of the situation within foreign politics, even though national political wishes also marked expectations. Gustaf Löwenhielm, like his brother Carl Axel opposed to the election of Bernadotte, recognises his great talents as a general but at the same time notes that his administrative abilities are unknown, a circumstance that under normal conditions would have been a burden.

The choleric and egocentric temperament that contemporary observers and present-day historians have ascribed to Bernadotte add yet another level of meaning to the words in the final dictation, since such character traits must have made him likely to compare himself only with the greatest of them all. "He could not tolerate that any mortal being became as powerful as he himself," is a description that could have applied to Bernadotte himself just as much as to Napoleon. And when the old hotspur on his death bed proclaimed himself victor he could let his head sink back upon the pillow without having to take the consequences of his claim. It is instead posterity that has to bear in mind that he used his preferential right of interpretation right to the very last.

A Glorious Past and a Future Full of Promise

Alma Söderhjelm writes in 1939 that Bernadotte in the year 1810 seems to have been happy and satisfied to have been given the insignificant crown in the land of icicles. But for him, the country's weakness might not have meant that it was insignificant – in contrast to the petty principality of Ponte

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8 Söderhjelm (1939), p. 231.
9 Söderhjelm (1939), p. 239.
Corvo that he had been granted by Napoleon. Sweden’s weakness must have been tempting for a person trained in territorial and political expansion. The county’s weakness could and should be turned to its opposite with mental strength training and strategic drive.

Bernadotte’s spiritual testament expressly claims the Scandinavian peninsula, that is, the united kingdoms of Norway and Sweden, to be of importance for the development of events in the world. He also speaks of “our history”. This is connected to how the king in an extremely deliberate manner had merged his own figure together with the history of his new countries. But this too was a part of the clash of giants: Napoleon had taken over control of the revolution’s France and made use of the country’s historically grandiose self-image for his own purposes. Francocentrism was re-interpreted by a non-royal noble from the new French territory of Corsica and it gained further nourishment when Napoleon generously and not without cause compared his rule with the great worlds of antiquity and his own figure with the creator of Hellenism.

Napoleon’s expansive power had no like in its day, and Bernadotte did not challenge him on that point. On the other hand, he was eagerly awaited, admired and needed in a Sweden that suffered badly from the loss of the eastern half of the realm, Finland. The reconstruction of the former Protestant great power’s pulverised self-image took place on two fronts, one geopolitical and the other symbolic. On the one hand, with the help of the Russian tzar he succeeded in bringing about a union between Sweden and Norway in 1814, on the other he used mythology and allegory to portray the position and importance of his joint kingdoms as the natural result of a long and magnificent history. One of the ways in which he could do this was by allowing himself on repeated occasions to be personified as the Asa god Odin and the Scandinavian people’s mighty rejuvenator.

The allegorical identification with Odin was well chosen. The ancient Nordic mythology could be portrayed as independent in relation to the Greco-Roman tradition, although it was in practice interpreted in the idiom of classical art. Through the divine figure of Odin, Bernadotte could present himself as someone who could create a strong future from a magnificent ancient past and a weakened present day.

The mythology was especially beneficial to the picture of Sweden as an established centre-point in the northernmost parts of Europe, in a sense an
equivalent to Napoleon's annexation of francocentrism in the context of a classical style. The loss of Finland is compensated in such a perspective by the union with Norway. This did not however work so well in the west. From the Norwegian horizon, the newly-won freedom from Denmark was decisive, and a strong emphasis on Sweden's role in the union was directly unsuitable. A strong self-image in Sweden was thus obliged to build upon the equal standing of both kingdoms in the union. Luckily, the Norwegian nation offered a possibility to symbolically refer to a powerful past in order to point towards a similarly powerful future. The medieval Norwegian royal power could be utilised to appease the critics of the union with their siren calls of independence, while at the same time the ancient Nordic mythology could be utilised to bond the two kingdoms together. These possibilities were used in the arts as well as in rites and ceremonies.

Napoleon's politics had a very visible side in the militarily marked environments that came into being in the European courts. The Empire style brilliantly joined together symbols of power and cultural conquests in the field with local traditions and material. The magnificent French state apartments could combine water gilded bronze with the favourite material porphyry in a classical idiom with a strict and martial appeal. The Russian palaces could display large showpieces produced in water gilded bronze combined with malachite and other characteristic Russian stones in a splendid show of the capabilities of the tzar's imperial realm. The Empire style spread internationally, and was re-interpreted locally. It is extremely likely that the Empire style would in any case have found its way to Scandinavia and an expression adapted to local conditions. But since the royal settings were renewed during this era, there is cause to reflect upon how the local Empire style was influenced by Bernadotte's own political ambitions.

Bernadotte's use of ancient Nordic mythology was described as early as more than one hundred years ago by art historians and literary scholars. It has not however been examined as a deliberate political alternative to the French Empire passion for all things classical in general, and the way Napoleon used Greco-Roman antiquity in particular. The final dictation's words about the history of the Scandinavian peninsula since the days of Odin and Bernadotte's place in it, could perhaps have been dismissed as a self-glorifying rationalization if it had not been for the fact that the newly-elected crown prince had from the start understood and become involved in the potential of
the Gothicismus movement (Sw: Göticism). The old king knew what he was talking about, and he knew it too as the newly-arrived crown prince.

**Future Promise Personified**

The vision of the powerful rejuvenator coming in from outside to resuscitate a country's inherent yet dormant strength and self-confidence is attractive. But can one person alone meet such highly-set hopes as to the future? For Bernadotte himself, who had a first-hand knowledge of Napoleon's transformation of the revolution's reign of terror into an expansive empire, the answer to that question must have been 'no'. One person alone can change the world, but is dependent upon others if the result is to last.

Napoleon's violent policy of expansion was just as monumental as that of Alexander the Great. The changes were carried out on a scale, and at a speed, that brought the surrounding world into a state of shock. He ruled his empire with the help of an exceptional capacity for work and a wide talent as well as through delegation and endowments to family members and trusted colleagues. He introduced a mixture of nepotism and meritocracy. He crowned himself in the presence of the pope and thus insulted the throne of St. Peter. During the course of the journey the great changes were bound to come into conflict with the pre-revolutionary power factors – the royal houses, the nobility, and the church.

Bernadotte's choice of path can advantageously be described in contrast to Napoleon's procedure. Bernadotte had the great advantage of having been involved in the French expansion and been able to reflect upon the emperor's forms of government. Besides which, on account of his service as marshal and commander of armies he had acquired useful experience from the field. Most important of all was undoubtedly that he could form his view of how to govern knowing what had happened to the empire. When Napoleon lost everything after the hundred days in 1815, Bernadotte was still formally only crown prince in the newly united kingdoms of Sweden and Norway. It was then apparent that France's relation to the continent's oppressed realms would have to be reestablished, or rather created anew with due regard to the interests that Napoleon had ignored. This was to be the task of the Congress of Vienna. Bernadotte's task was to consolidate his position with due regard to the restored Europe. Military merits had to give way to administrative
ones, the army commander’s strategy to be exchanged for a monarch’s stability pacts and interests of continuity. It was important to leave the Napoleonic inheritance and create a Scandinavian legitimacy. Since Bernadotte had his career in France to thank for his position in Scandinavia, the legitimacy would have to be sanctioned through his descendants. A dynasty would have to be established.

The Dynasty – a Guarantee for the Future

If a single person will not suffice to permanently revitalize a nation, how then should it come about? The answer of the time was that the rejuvenator’s role must be combined with that of the founder of a dynasty for this to be possible. As in all other respects, Bernadotte’s pattern of action can be compared to Napoleon’s as a guide to how he judged the tenability of the various alternatives.

Napoleon’s desire to establish a dynasty is not visible early in his career, since the course of events does not allow him to adopt the role of a royal figure until 1804. As early as March 1796, he had ensured the availability of important persons by allying himself to Rose (Joséphine) de Beauharnais, 33 years old, mother of two children and widow of viscomte Alexandre de Beauharnais who had been sent to the guillotine. The marriage was a springboard; it gave him a ‘ready-made’ family and a social stage. It served its purpose right up to the time when the need to establish a dynasty took precedence – 1809. The crowned empress was then cast off in favour of a legitimate imperial daughter of the house of Habsburg, Marie-Louise of Austria. In this way, he managed to get a son who united an old and a new royal house and was called the ‘King of Rome’ (Duke of Reichstadt).

Bernadotte had married Desirée Clary back in 1798, after Napoleon had broken his engagement to her and instead married Joséphine. In 1799, the couple’s only child was born, Oskar, with neither royal nor noble ancestry. When Bernadotte acquired royal status as Crown Prince Charles John in 1810, this came about through adoption. As early as in the Örebro agreement about the inheritance to the throne, his own son was regarded as a dynastic advantage. In connection with the adoption, Oskar became an hereditary prince. Regardless of whether Bernadotte reflected upon what Napoleon was doing at the same time to found a dynasty, he did not follow the French
emperor's example despite the fact that he in practice lived apart from Desirée and could have felt the need of several heirs in an age when infant mortality was high even in the most affluent circles of society. Instead, everything came to depend upon Oskar.

The Swedish royal family that had been deposed in 1809 continued to live on the continent. The Gustavian hereditary prince Gustav was born the same year as Oskar and his very being was a threat to the planned Bernadotte dynasty, even though the 1809 protagonists had every reason in the world to keep the former hereditary prince away. While crown prince in 1812, Bernadotte took definitive steps to keep the pretender to the throne and his family at a distance, and at the same time a decree was issued to prevent sympathizers within the country from keeping in touch with them. Another measure was to send Oskar out on a courting journey as soon as possible to guarantee a third generation for the dynasty. The result was figuratively and literally an alliance in the spirit of Napoleon.

In Munich, Oskar found the granddaughter of the Empress Joséphine, with the same name. Joséphine the younger was born in 1807 as the eldest daughter of the former emperor's stepson Eugène de Beauharnais, duke of Leuchtenberg and prince of Eichstädt, in his marriage with Augusta Amalia of Bavaria. The marriage, entered into in 1822/1823, was an unusually symmetrical alliance. The bride's mother belonged to the Bavarian royal family, and the bride groom was a crown prince, while their respective fathers were marked, if not created, by Napoleon. Queen Desideria, once Napoleon's abandoned fiancée, now became mother-in-law to the daughter of the son of the Empress Joséphine. Bernadotte, who at that time had his position of power intact and had managed to survive Napoleon by two years, now through his son's mother-in-law became allied to the old royal house of Wittelsbach. Oskar's bride was one of Napoleon's triumphs — she was physical proof of the fact that the old and the new Europe had mixed their blood. But the bride was also a triumph for Bernadotte: by way of her mother, she could display an ancestry going back to the old Swedish royal house.

From May 1826 to August 1831 Crown Princess Josefina (Joséphine) gave birth to five children, four of whom were sons, and thereby succeeded in ensuring there would be sufficient heirs (according to the principle of "an heir and a spare") to the newly-founded Bernadotte dynasty. Abroad, the dynastic puzzle being pieced together continued to create interesting new
combinations that were of importance to Bernadotte’s endeavours. The primary object of his concern was still Prince Gustav in Vienna. With the birth of his first grandchild, the hereditary prince Charles (xv), on 3 May 1826, the matter became more topical than ever, since the hereditary prince was the first member of the new royal house of Bernadotte to actually be born in the joint kingdoms of Sweden and Norway.

In November, 1830, Prince Gustav married his 19-year-old cousin Luise of Baden and thus re-entered one of the ruling royal houses as consort. This fact was censored in the Swedish-Norwegian official yearbook. In the entry for the house of Baden, to be more precise the information about the eldest of the children of the Dowager Grand Duchess Stephanie, ‘Lowisa’ (i.e. Luise) was listed as unmarried year after year. In 1832 their son Louis was born and died, and 1833 saw the birth of their daughter Karola, later queen consort of Saxony. None of these children are named in the official yearbook of Sweden-Norway. The manipulation of the yearbook brings us to the question how far Bernadotte drove his dynastic interests in the double monarchy with the help of laws and decrees, or through control of the mass media of the day, respectively. It is clear that his dynastic aim necessitated a control that conflicted with the idea of the freedom of the press.

The Role of Continuity for the Success of the Dynasty

In the letter Gustaf Löwenhielm wrote to G. F. Åkerhielm from the riksdag in Örebro in 1810, he posed many serious questions concerning Bernadotte’s future in Sweden:

But how the hell can anybody imagine that any good can come from such an obsessed and unnatural choice? [...] How shall people communicate, when lords alone can speak with their King: for it is not to be expected that he will ever learn Swedish: [...] How long will Bernadotte accept the limits of our constitutional leash? [...] Will he mess about with the Constitution? What about freedom of the press? [...] If [Bonaparte] dies, where will we then stand with our French Sergeant on the throne? [...] Won’t that then make us look a fool before the whole of Europe? Who will help us then? Is it not bound to result in a total carve-up?

This almost desperately sharp wording has a skinless and topical tone. In 1810

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10 Söderhjelm (1939), pp. 231 ff.
nobody could know what would happen with Napoleon, with Europe, with Sweden, with the deposed royal family, with the constitution, with freedom of the press. The country was in a precarious situation, and the election of Bernadotte could be its salvation just as well as it could mean that Sweden could fall apart, like Poland.

Bernadotte came to Sweden when Napoleon was at his zenith. Everything he did as crown prince stood in relation to what he had experienced in France before 1810, and was applied in a society that had developed completely different legal principles and forms of government than those he had himself learnt. He was almost fifty years old and the Swedish language was completely alien to him. The faith that he had in his own ability, reasonable or otherwise, was thus one of his foremost assets. On many earlier occasions he had shown himself capable of correctly assessing a situation in the field. That was an ability of which he had an eminent need in his new home country.

The newly-elected crown prince did not throw the baby out with the bathwater. He knew that the men who ruled the country spoke French and were indispensable as interpreters and intermediaries, and they knew that this made him dependent upon them. In that respect his situation could not be compared with Napoleon’s, and one of the consequences was that representatives of the old nobility could count on retaining their prominent position. Carl Axel Löwenhielm recalls in his memoirs what he said during the agitated days in Örebro in 1810 to an enthusiastic liberal nobleman, Captain Påhlman, who anticipated a social transformation in the republican spirit: “You are cheering now, but you are fooling yourself about the future, it won’t be you and your party that will acquire any intimacy with Bernadotte, and that is because you do not know French, whereas I and my brother, who are against this choice, will become his leading favourites.” And he adds: “What I said then, came completely true…”

The language question continued to be of primary importance for the distribution of power during all of Bernadotte’s time in Sweden. His dependence upon the French-speaking elite automatically led to a slower social transformation than that which he had been a part of in his country of origin. The mutual dependence between him and his closest advisors must have clarified the shared wish to rebuild the national self image, stabilize relations

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with foreign powers and retain domestic political calm. The continuity between old and new rule came over time to benefit the establishment of the new dynasty. None of Gustaf Löwenhielm’s desperate future scenarios came true. Union was entered into with Norway, Gustaf Löwenhielm successfully represented Sweden and its new dynasty at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the death of Charles XIII was followed – according to plan – by the coronation of Charles XIV John in 1818, Napoleon died during his imprisonment in 1821, the marriage contract between Crown Prince Oskar and Joséphine of Leuchtenberg was a success and their five children a triumph for the succession to the throne. The Swedish lords retained their privileged position with the king without any revolution breaking out and Sweden enjoyed peace with other countries.

So did this long series of happy circumstances come about by chance? Continuity and perseverance showed themselves to be a recipe for success for both the wielding of power and the establishment of a dynasty. Bernadotte’s strategic and administrative talent was sufficient for the task of establishing a dynasty in a foreign country, and his son was competent to take over after him.

Posthumous Reputation

In other words, Bernadotte succeeded in not only surviving Napoleon. He also survived the return of the old Europe in 1815 and successfully established a dynasty. Can one thus say that his final dictation and spiritual testament was correct?

As long as Bernadotte was alive, thus even while he lay on his deathbed, his royal status could protect him from the objections of the surrounding world. But the image that was created after his death was dependent upon several factors: his son Oskar, the comments of the press, the analyses of historians and the way the memories of the people were passed on. Nor was his posthumous reputation the same in Sweden, Norway and France. It is thus a task for historical researchers in our time to examine the founder of the dynasty with an eye for the complexity of the subject and with an awareness that the man’s posthumous reputation and written history do not make the task easier.