

## Chapter 100 : Carl XVI Gustaf (1963-1966) (V) – Citizen Tjabo.

The accounts of Carl Gustaf's schooling at Sigtuna Hum exist as in two versions: Part accounts of his upbringing there and his social life - positive what little was written. From 1963 critical accounts of his suitability to the throne: was he an autonomous individual or a royal puppet? It is difficult to reconcile the perspectives. I assume that the debating climate hardened in 1963 when Författningsutredningen (the constitutional inquiry 1954-1963) presented its (inconclusive) report. The debate on the future of the Swedish monarchy then started in earnest.

The journalists who initially visited Sigtuna did not interview Carl Gustaf himself. Carl Gustaf had a solid reputation as a bad interviewee, basically he said nothing, was barely audible, mumbled bland phrases and looked embarrassed. What was written about him was based on interviews with his environment: his head master, teachers and schoolmates. Carl Gustaf has since explained that it was easier to blend in if he did not think about his future role.

There were rumours right from the start that the reason Carl Gustaf was not interviewed was that he was somehow developmentally disturbed. Perhaps one thought of Gustaf V's son Prince Erik. The journalist Åke Ortmark: "I had heard that he was untalented, even retarded. These opinions circulated not only as gossip at the dinner tables but also at the highest political levels and in serious discussions. Tage Erlander, for example, in his diary March 28, 1960, wrote of a royal 'tragedy'. The old king had insisted on raising the royal age of majority to 25. Erlander thought 'it must surely be the case that the rumours of the late development of the Little Prince and his feeble intellectual gifts speak true'."<sup>1</sup>

By 1963, Carl Gustaf dyslexia was widely known, although detailed information was lacking. Head master Munthe dismissed questions about Carl Gustaf being assisted by school experts and insisted that he was growing out of it. He referred to Carl Gustaf's essays. Special praise was given to an essay about Gotska Sandön which, in addition to being correctly spelled, was considered bearing witness to "an open mind for nature and an admirable concept of humanity".

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Spring semester 1963, the Expressen reporter Gösta Ollén had Sigtuna-duty. <sup>2</sup> He was told that Carl Gustaf was incredibly shy, always felt watched, suffered from performance anxiety and was on edge when noticed. The latter seems to have caused him never performing very well in competitions. For example, he failed when representing the school in shooting and fell in the ski slope. Carl Gustaf was also considered rather soft, for example was upset by quips on his rank of the type "be careful so Husmodern (a weekly for woman readers) does not write about you again...". On the plus side, Carl Gustaf had a distinct sense for details: "If we've been describing an industry with the class, it's 'Tjabbe' who remembers most afterwards."

In the spring of 1964, Carl Gustaf was interviewed by editor-in-chief Stig Ahlgren of the weekly Vecko Journal. It was the first time he was interviewed "for real". What should have been a normal conversation with Carl Gustaf about his then life degenerated almost

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<sup>1</sup> Ortmark, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Gösta Ollén. 17 år i dag. Expressen, 1963-04-30.

immediately into a fight. If you study the interview in detail, it is quite long, the pattern emerges that Ahlgren tries to get Carl Gustaf off balance while Carl Gustaf stares him out: suspicious, prepared for everything and not a little contemptuous. (Ahlgren was old enough to also have interviewed Edmund. He thought Carl Gustaf resembled his father.)

- Does the prince use curlers?

- What? By his tone, I can hear that my shares are touching bottom.

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- The Prince is interested in sports?

- Yes, much, and especially of ...

- No, we're going to do a quiz.

A cloud of disappointment, before switching to a conciliatory smile.

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- I have summarized last years newspaper clippings. Does the prince mind? ...

- Absolutely not.

- First of all: Does the prince use snuff or chewing tobacco?

- What? ... He is sitting there like a living question mark.

- A well-informed weekly has described in detail how the Prince visited an inhabitant of Sigtuna and was offered such.

- Completely invented.

- But surely it is true that the prince while deer hunting in England [1962] has had the blood of the fallen animal smeared on his mouth, it is called the bloodshed ceremony, isn't it?

- Never happened. Incidentally, I shot *grouse*.

- Was that when you were going to teach Prince Charles to behave natural?

- Oh, he's natural already. Very natural.

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He who need to be encouraged today is the interviewer, the first to bear the brunt, when virtually all the source material of the tabloids and weeklies collapses and is reduced to mere fiction. In his simultaneously cautious and concise answers, the Prince has revealed a bias towards the Weibull school of source criticism (everything must be checked and double-checked). He continues:

- I cannot imagine ... I don't know anything about... Possibly a small nucleus of truth... Hardly ... Must be invented. ... Fantasies ... and so forth. But always with an amused smile or seasoned with a laugh. Lemon and vinegar but never at the same time. When necessary an anecdote, preferably historical, i.e. unhistorical, is told to gain H.R.H.'s trust. He smiles, as when the interrogator is mistaken.<sup>3</sup>

Carl Gustaf's aversion to journalists and photographers was such that later that year, during a visit to Greece, he swam out and overturned a water cycle with three photographers so that their equipment ended up in the water. Carl Gustaf's teachers at Sigtuna and the Naval academy have also later emphasized how badly affected he was by the journalists. This does not seem to have been so much because of their personal conduct or what they wrote, but to the gulf between his officially decreed democratic ordinariness and the fact that the journalists were interviewing him.

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<sup>3</sup> Stig Ahlgren samtalar med kronprinsen. Vecko Journalen, 1964:17.

At the Parliament's formal opening in January 1965, Carl Gustaf, aged 18, took his Crown Prince's oath of loyalty to be faithful to the King, observe the Parliament's freedoms and otherwise act in accordance with the Constitution. The reason why the heir to the throne came of age at 18 instead of at 21 was to prevent overlong guardianship governments. The ceremony had no constitutional significance, however, since the age limit for royal authority in 1949 was raised to 21 years and 1965 to 25 years. The ceremony had become the equivalent of the sisters at the age of 18 being allowed to wear court dress and participate in the castle balls.

Carl Gustaf was wearing a tailcoat, a chain and Orders. He was still somewhat pimply. King Gustaf VI decreed that the supervisor of the ceremony, Attorney General Herman Kling, should stand on the podium at a level with Carl Gustaf and not at a disadvantage below the throne. Gustaf VI was always very keen on such ceremonial finesse. Carl Gustaf was criticized for his poor diction. He spoke slowly, indistinct and drawled. An upper class Swedish in the English manner sometimes switching to his local Stockholm speech pattern. (Carl Gustaf's diction at the time was actually so poor that he had been expelled from the school choir. Hard to know why though: His ishing or his dyslexia? Carl Gustaf's own version was that the music teacher didn't think he put enough effort into it.)

After this, Carl Gustaf was allowed to sit in at formal dinners. He had a hard time with the table conversation. Such often consisted of him being asked to comment on various topics that he either knew nothing about or was told not to have an opinion on. The Nobel festivities were a double torment. Sometimes in sheer desperation he insisted in on talking sports but the national ice hockey league is perhaps not the right subject at such times. Carl Gustaf both felt like an idiot and looked like one.

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On April 22, 1966, Carl Gustaf graduated from the social branch of the natural sciences. In the oral exam he was cross-examined in geography by Professor Carl-Fredrik Nyholm, in English by Vice-Chancellor Sven Kärde and in Swedish by Educational Official Evert Ullstad. Final grades varied: Swedish Ba, English Ba, German B, French B?, Christianity Ba, Philosophy Ba, Socio-Economic Sciences Ba, History Ba, Geography AB, Mathematics C, Biology Ba, Physics B, Drawing Ba, Music B, Gymnastics AB, Order A, Conduct A.

Within the censor group, a discussion took place if his lack lustre grades in the other subjects really compensated for his C in mathematics. The discussion became public when Aftonbladet had his grades printed and asked a number of teachers for a review, most of whom did not think he should have passed. Carl Gustaf had to put up with being weighed like a piece of sausage and found hollow. He was very offended. (The same had happened to Princess Christina but then Aftonbladet first obtained permission. Her grades also were better.)

Professor Carl Lindroth, who two years earlier had been censor at Sigtuna, later questioned whether everything had gone right. The "gossip" version of events is that the censor group had been hesitant from the outset of passing Carl Gustaf and that one member of the group had suggested that he be "helped along" by receiving easier questions. Hardly anything that Lindroth could know since he wasn't there.

Two years later, the teachers summarized their impressions.<sup>4</sup>

Director of Studies Rolf Hillman: “A nice student. He was like the other guys. He didn't want to stand out from the crowd. Officially, the teachers called him the Prince. Unofficially they thought of him as Carl Gustaf. He was interested in history and the social sciences - like his grandfather the king. Despite all the publicity, he showed great self-restraint. He was not top of his class, but was an easy learner. During his time at Sigtuna the weekly press constantly paired him with girls. But that was not his style.”

Gymnastics teacher Captain Bo Gärtze: “When he came here he was a little overweight and out of shape but that soon disappeared. He was graded between AB and a - one of the best students. His nicest side was that he didn't mind exerting himself. He liked rough work. His best sports were shooting, fencing and sailing. I accompanied the crown prince down to Malmö at the Swedish School Championship in shooting. The Prince was one of the favourites. I felt sorry for him when a spectator burned a camera flash in the middle of his face when he was about to shoot. Of course he missed. Still he ended sixth of 270 starters. But he could have won.”

The censor at Carl Gustaf's high school exam Professor Gustaf Hössjer: “The Prince was a decent student. But he was bad at math. He had difficulties writing and reading. Instead, his memory was excellent. He compensated his disability with tremendous energy. He passed his courses faster than other students. He resembled the present king. I was pleasantly surprised by the Prince.”

Carl Gustaf's newly appointed press officer commander Bertil Erksammar had two press galleries built in front of the school gate. The number of journalists was about 100. The police force was reinforced with the navy military police to 40 men. At 14:45 the press gallery collapsed but was quickly rebuilt. “Someone claimed that a delegate from the Republican Club had been seen sneaking around in the bushes with a small handsaw.”<sup>5</sup> At the mark of 16:00 two black limousines arrived. “Gustaf VI in black coat and hat just back from Brussels, Princess Sibylla in mink, blue silk dress and blue flower hat, Prince Bertil in tan and Princess Christina with her graduation cap on.”<sup>6</sup> Ingrid Björnberg was also there. Comrades Carl Johan Smith and Carl Kleman Jr wore a placard that was a collage of pictures from Carl Gustaf's upbringing attached to an old ski, all by Carl Gustaf's ski instructor Bengt-Herman Nilsson. When the students found out they had passed, they threw huge red yarn balls and embroidered old school caps through the windows. Carl Gustaf was hoisted seven times and photographed. Sibylla and Gustaf VI pushed forward and kissed him. The congestion was such that Gustaf VI started to beat around him (he suffered from a mild form of claustrophobia).<sup>7</sup> 75 percent of Carl Gustaf's flowers were estimated to be from girls. The court then had to wait at the dorm while the students as traditional took a final tour through Sigtuna centre. Carl Gustaf was pulled by his dorm-mates in his sailboat “Flying junior” for the occasion provided with wheels.

Carl Gustaf was then transported to a reception at the castle. He was welcomed in the inner courtyard by the student orchestra “Hornboskapet” (the hornstocks), rumoured to be the

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<sup>4</sup> Bo Axelsson. Carl Gustafs lärare om Carl Gustaf. Kvällsposten, 1968-04-03.

<sup>5</sup> Gits Olsson, Lisa Winnerlich & Bernt von Corswant. Studentprinsen och alla hans flickor. SE, 1966:17.

<sup>6</sup> Dagens Nyheter, 1966-04-23.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Jägerblom. Han tycker om att vara kung. Vecko Journalen, 1972:45.

world's oldest of its kind, that prided itself on honking “rather than good” which was a correct description. Six dressed-up bearers with a gold chair borrowed from the opera and dressed with birch leaves and balloons was brought forth and Carl Gustaf received an honour lap around the inner courtyard before being transported up to the reception. The six were Carl Gustaf's at the time best friends: Carl Gustaf Ekman, Carl Banér, Carl Kleman Jr, Carl Adam Lewenhaupt, Johan Beckman, Fredrik Skiöldebrand and Carl Johan Smith.

The reception was in the yellow salon. The family and those who had dealt with Carl Gustaf during his childhood, the servants, the Broms-teachers etc., were there. Gustav VI raised a four-fold cheer and everyone toasted him in champagne. The sisters gave Carl Gustaf a signature ring that he had wished for, in gold to be carried on the little finger. Three weapons were engraved: The coat of arms of Sweden, the Pontecorvean coat of arms and a reindeer symbolizing the home-county of Jämtland. The photographers were free to mingle with the other guests. Some 70 people turned up and stayed for supper. Sibylla paid with her own money. The next day, there was a formal student dinner in Sigtuna Hume's gymnasium. Gustaf VI, Sibylla and Princess Christina attended. Then the student parties took place. Carl Gustaf was accompanied by a girl in a chequered coat, whom schoolmates refused to name. On May 14, Sibylla gave a prom in the White Sea for 167 guests. Princess Christina delivered a versified tribute speech.

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The Education Council was later blamed for everything that went wrong for Carl Gustaf at Sigtuna. The verdict was: “A number of well-meaning people without relevant competence”. In particular, it was critiqued that despite Carl Gustaf's uneasy behaviour in public and poor diction, the Education Council had not hired a psychologist or voice coach. According to journalists, Carl Gustaf was so keen on following the etiquette that he did not notice when people greeted him. He had difficulty reading. He stuttered. The heavier the pressure, the worse it got. Sometimes it was as painful for the environment as for himself.

In the summer of 1966 Gustaf VI appointed Sibylla's chamberlain Count Gösta Lewenhaupt, head of Swedish IBM and former member of the “Youth Council”, head of Carl Gustaf's personal court. What Lewenhaupt did in this position is not known. It has been said that he spread “modern ideas” i.e. acted as one of Carl Gustaf's many advisers.<sup>8</sup> Rumour has it that he communicated the court's official position on Carl Gustaf to the press:

If you compile initiated reviews of his [Carl Gustaf's] personality, development and way of working, you get the following official version:

- He is considered fearless, casual and experienced. The efforts of the court and relatives to “shape his public image” are largely considered successful. The Crown Prince is likely to become a democratic king, who can socialize with everyone. He no longer has difficulty maintaining a consistent attitude towards the outside world.

- He is characterized as persistent, stubborn and competent to make his own sensible decisions. However, the general impression is still a certain smoothed-out nondescript personality. His relationship with the public is almost “photographic” [=the public only knows him by appearance]. Not many people know his views. The

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Jägerblom. Vad är det för fel med kronprinsens uppfostran? Vecko Revyn, 1967:31.

court polishes his profile to reverential blandness. Any attempt to identify who [he] really is meets resistance from the court.

Only kind judgments are officially sanctioned.

- The intellectual capacity of the future king is considered acceptable. It contains definite opinions on universal issues; views which - clearly stated - in no respect would prejudice the position of the monarchy. His orientation is conservative.

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- He is friendly, polite, ubiquitous. Behaves timidly. Has a distinct sense of right and wrong. Does not take advantage of his position but is aware of the possibilities.

- Studies his schedule and adheres to it; Always find out who attends semi-official events and knows in advance what subjects to converse with them about. Although he finds individual details boring, he is in the habit of implementing them without a sour face, yes, almost cheerfully.

- Practical. Less interested in theoretical issues. Has trouble with casual handwriting and with expressing himself in writing. Better in speeches (that others draft).

A tendency to speak silently and inarticulately is being worked away, mainly through "natural development".<sup>9</sup>

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That Carl Gustaf's problems would disappear by themselves was a pious hope often repeated by people who should have known better. Carl Gustaf claims to have suffered from reading difficulties and severe shyness up to the age of 50:

Depending on how you define it, 4-8 percent of the population suffer from dyslexia. No clinical description of what Carl Gustaf is suffering from has ever been released, perhaps not even made, but most of his known intellectual flaws seem to relate to his dyslexia: Diffuse notions of word sound structure, unclear articulation, lack of verbal short-term memory, slow access to vocabulary & dyscalculia. However, Carl Gustaf appears to have a mild form and has improved significantly with systematic literacy and pronunciation training. His spelling remains lousy but he now has help from the spell checker in Word. Data on when the disability was detected or diagnosed are uncertain, all ages between six and 16 years have been mentioned. Probably Carl Gustaf's documented obstinacy has to do with his dyslexia. Eve Malmquist's doctoral thesis from 1958 concluded that dyslexia was not a neurological problem but could be addressed with the right pedagogy. In Carl Gustaf's case, the pedagogy seems to have been cramming. The more effort you put into it, the better.

Later parallels were drawn with Karl XI's reading and writing difficulties. *Läkartidningen* (1961) published an article on the subject by chief physician K O Granberg & historian Alf Åberg. The preamble pointed out that word blindness usually

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<sup>9</sup> Jackie Lindberg. Får kronprinsen rätt utbildning? *Vecko Journalen*, 1966:33.

decreases with age. Whether this was an effect of a maturation process or of hard work was not evident in the article but Carl Gustaf's training officers repeated it later as a mantra.

Carl Gustaf has never given any explanation of his poor mathematics grades. His mathematics teacher Morgan Kjellerås blamed Carl Gustaf's lack of interest and aptitude. Carl Gustaf's classmate Anders Gruffman blamed Kjellerås for being a bad teacher. Hard to tell. Others have praised Kjellerås for his thorough knowledge of the subject. Maybe Carl Gustaf was just unlucky. 1964/65 when he needed help several people in the Education and School Council died or moved on: Head master Arne Munthe died. His housefather Sven Lindestad quit. Head of class Olof Storm quit. Director at the National Board of Education Nils Gustav Rosén quit. In 1965, Prince Wilhelm & Queen Louise died, leaving Sibylla with other things to think about than Carl Gustaf's schooling. In any case, she was uninterested in mathematics. Carl Gustaf's language skills were more important. Rosén's successor Hans Löwbeer visited Sigtuna on November 6, 1965 and was treated to Kjellerås critique but by then it was too late to do anything about it. During the spring term of 1966, Carl Gustaf received extra lessons in mathematics so as not also to fail at the naval warfare school.

Carl Gustaf blames his shyness on growing up fatherless. It is not entirely clear what he was missing. He is alleged to have relied on various "father figures": Edmund's adjutant Malcolm Murray and later his "uncles" Hans Wiberg, Hans Skiöldebrand and Bengt -Herman Nilsson. Carl Gustaf has never commented on these relations. After becoming king, he was asked about his family relations: He dismissed Prince Bertil as uninterested in himself and King Gustaf VI as from another period. There were discussions that Carl Gustaf's female-dominated upbringing had "emasculated" him. It is unclear how. Carl Gustaf has never said or even indicated anything in that direction. However, his environment was later keen to point out his "male" traits: That Carl Gustaf was a lively chap who fought with both neighbouring boys and schoolmates. Carl Gustaf never confirmed that picture. What is confirmed is that Carl Gustaf was a sensitive and difficult child, so dependent on his nanny Ingrid Björnberg that he panicked when she went on holidays and that he had no comrades of his own apart from those his mother chose for him. My own interpretation is that Carl Gustaf from a young age experienced himself as socially isolated, vulnerable and miss-understood. A father or an older brother, an heir to the throne like himself, would have been able to understand and defend him. Perhaps Carl Gustaf was also naturally shy, but in the definition of shyness is included regarding the environment as a threat which it definitely was.