

Chapter 104 : Carl XVI Gustaf (1973-1993) (IX) – 20 Years in Office.

Carl Gustaf's formal accession took place on September 19, 1973. The new constitution came into force on January 1, 1975. Carl Gustaf's interpretation of his role was: "In his capacity as Head of State, the King is the symbol of the new Constitution, that is, the symbol of the kingdom. He represents the kingdom as its foremost representative both domestically and abroad. ... The new constitution therefore enables me to meet and get to know personally the women and men who belong to the government, as well as the Speakers and the members of the Foreign Affairs Council. I expect to become acquainted with our problems and with Sweden's constantly changing circumstances."¹

The first year in office was pure habituation. Olof Palme assured him that he was doing well. Carl Gustaf himself was unsure.

Carl Gustaf has invested heavily in doing as good a job as possible. He wants to be a good representative for this country. The tributes in connection with the transfer of the throne and at the tours have touched him deeply. This is testified by those who know him. When as Crown Prince he was out travelling and people cheered, he thought it was embarrassing. "It's not for me they cheer," he said from time to time. It's for the monarchy as an institution and for my grandfather through me.²

In interviews, Carl Gustaf presented himself as a symbol, a figurehead, a representative for the country and declared himself to be satisfied with this role. "I am a symbol. It is better to be outside the problems and politics when society becomes more complicated."³ If you wanted to know in detail what he was thinking, you had to study how he used his time. Republicans had difficulty handling their annoyance. Neither the Communists nor Per Ahlmark came to Carl Gustaf's supper for the newly elected parliament on February 8, 1974. The discussions on the future of the monarchy were summarized in 1976 by sociologist Hans Zetterberg as:

The royal couple could find their role too demanding and resign. To be king and queen in Sweden is a regular job. Like all jobs it should end in privacy after the official duties are over and it must be interrupted by vacations. Without such elementary requirements the monarchy is untenable.

The expressive role of the royalty could be misused or exploited by reactionary circles who encourage the court to overstep its boundaries and move into the realm of politics and executive power. This would quickly raise the demand for a republican constitution. In other words, to survive the royal family must be protected from the most ardent royalists.⁴

Perhaps this is Carl Gustaf's "King's Mirror". In any case, he was keen to have a private life, to take holidays and to keep his distance from the Royalist Association.

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¹ Svenska Dagbladet, 1974-12-31.

² Omar Magnergård. Ett år med kungen. Svenska Dagbladet, 1974-09-08.

³ New York Times, 1976-03-19.

⁴ [Hans Zetterberg.] The kingdom in the polls. Sifo, 1976-06.

On September 19, 1983, the eve of the 10th anniversary of his accession, Carl Gustaf was interviewed by the Expressen journalist and school friend Cecilia Hagen. They looked through a pile of photographs and Carl Gustaf recalled what it had been like:

This is September 16, 10 years ago. The day before, my grandfather, the old king, died. I am the king of Sweden now. I still had not quite understood that. Even if you spend your whole life preparing for the task ahead, you never expect it to happen and you feel ill prepared when it eventually does. The situation felt very unreal and it wasn't until I landed with a special plane on Bromma that I really felt the moment had come, that I really understood that this was it. It was very early in the morning, but despite this, a small valiant group of people had made it to the airport. [Prime Minister Olof Palme was there.] A little girl handed me flowers and then everybody sang "The King's Song". It was the very first time I heard that song addressed to me personally. It was one of the strongest experiences of my life.

Three days later, on September 19, I gave my speech in the Hall of State at the Castle. This was in a manner speaking my coming out, my first real public performance as king. It was, above all, a very important speech for me, and I was very excited about it. I didn't know how my voice would carry, the room has bad acoustics, you have to speak very loudly to be heard, and I had no microphone. It made me very nervous, but as soon as I got started I noticed that it went well and that the speech was appreciated. I know there's a story about me as a little kid saying I didn't want to be king because a king just sits in a chair all day with a blanket on his knees. I thought of Gustaf V. That position had, of course, disappeared a long time ago.

What were my intentions when I stood there and gave my royal assurance? I took my motto. "For Sweden - in our time", at an early stage, and my intentions are expressed in that motto. I wanted to be as modern a monarch as possible and fit into a modern society. A monarchy is for many a rather outdated and traditional institution. And we can say no longer relevant. I wanted to update it, something quite difficult when your entire society is in a state of flux.

It has been 10 good years, I suppose. Ten years goes insanely fast, but if you see them in pictures you realize how much you have experienced. The profession has taken on a different character over these years. The work pace is higher than in grandpa's time. And I'm younger than he was. And I am especially pleased that nowadays we are far more aggressive when we are abroad pushing for Swedish industry. In the past, a state visit was mainly cultural exchange. Nowadays the scope is wider. I am accompanied by representatives of industry and the sciences whenever I travel abroad.

As I said, my role in society has changed because of a variety of laws and regulations. I adapt. I want to do my best for my country and as best I can make it prosper. At the beginning, many people were afraid of this new role, it was written that the industry is exploiting the royal house, but monarchy and business have to cooperate if Sweden Inc shall prosper, and by extension the common man.

Speaking for myself - which I find difficult - I can only say that the days are too short, more hours would be needed, there is so much more I would like to be able to do. I would like to meet more people, make more visits. I would like to be able to say yes to further invitations. No matter how you do it, no matter how you plan it, no matter how

hard you wish otherwise, time is limited. This spring is already fully booked. But in these ten years I have managed to visit a large part of Sweden and some areas even twice. I am just back from my second visit to Finland, for example.

When I started, my main interest was nature conservation, but I don't have to push hard for that any more, now everyone knows the situation and what needs to be done. When you sit like this looking at pictures from these years, you realize what a variety of activities you are involved in and that you have some accomplishments under your belt. But still, as in this picture from Sytertoppen, I would like to backpack by myself sometimes.⁵

Carl Gustaf was also to be officially celebrated. The Palme government made as little of it as possible. Carl Gustaf was invited to lunch in Rosenbad's canteen. He was given the choice between herring buns with corinth sauce and steak Rydberg. It was self-service on tray in a democratic spirit. Carl Gustaf chose steak Rydberg and a cake with the coffee. No speeches were made. The silence became so embarrassing that Marshal of the Realm Sten Rudholm took over, thanked Carl Gustaf for his 10 years and pronounced his and the others respect and appreciation for Carl Gustaf as a person.⁶ It then lasted until 2004 under Fredrik Reinfeldt before he was invited again.⁷

Three years later, on his 40th anniversary, in 1986, Carl Gustaf was satisfied with life. When asked how he experienced his fortieth birthday, the answer was: I've not thought so much about it. Forty years is a good age. It's midterm. You have both a forward and a backward view.

By now Carl Gustaf & Silvia even had an international fan club that used to plan their holidays according to the state visits. It was not a question of stalking but they liked the festive atmosphere.

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The 20th anniversary of Carl Gustaf's accession was a more festive affair than the 10th anniversary. The social democrats were out and the bourgeoisie was in. The day began with "Fädernas kyrka" (the Church of our Ancestors) and an intercession in the castle church and ended with a Lunda-spex (student horseplay) in the hall. It rained heavily but some hundreds of die hard royalists huddling under their umbrellas showed up in the courtyard to applaud him. Carl Gustaf waved gratefully and disappeared into shelter. The thoroughly soaked Music Corps shouted "God save the king" and started playing Carolus Rex. Up in the castle there was a reception with the government and a scattering of MPs. Prime Minister Carl Bildt made a small speech:

Your Majesty! For two decades Your Majesty has now been our king. For Sweden in our time is Your Majesty's motto. Over these two decades, Your Majesty has given us a modern monarchy in harmony with the people's rule prescribed by our constitution. Your Majesty has represented Sweden and what we stand for in a way that has aroused respect and admiration both within and beyond Sweden's borders. For all the efforts made by Your Majesty, we the government and the representatives of the Parliament

⁵ Cecilia Hagen. Intervju med kung Carl XVI Gustaf. Expressen, 1983-09-18 & 1983-09-19.

⁶ Svenska Dagbladet, 1983-09-20.

⁷ Reinfeldt, 2015.

and different parts of society are much obliged and we hope that Your Majesty will continue in the same vein for years to come.⁸

Carl Gustaf in turn, thanked for the trust that the Parliament and the government put in him and the support he had received from his family. "I am proud to be Swede!" he concluded.⁹ Carl Gustaf was presented a gift of several hand-woven damask tablecloths. Then there was lunch in Vita hallen (the banquet hall): Filet mignon, turbot and ice cream.

Afterwards, Carl Gustaf alluded to Hjalmar Söderberg: Being a young monarch was hell because everyone else was older. But now, thank God, he had grown out of that problem. But he was not yet history. That had to wait. Court reporter Omar Magnergård summarized Carl Gustaf's personal development:

In twenty years a man has time to mature. I would say that King Carl Gustaf has become much more open and confident. He's purposeful and energetic to the point of feistiness. But he is also honest and gives is all for Sweden!

He is always in focus. Over time, he has become a really good actor. He always seems interested in his surroundings. His handshake is real. Soon he will cross his arms over the chest - a favourite position it seems - while listening. He is often well read. His questions, in particular concerning environment and technology, may be unexpectedly straightforward and difficult to answer.

All that said, his body language reveals a certain reserve. The king lets few people get near him. Privately, he is said to be funny, spontaneous, much for practical jokes. But in official contexts and with the media's ears and eyes on him, he rarely unbuttons but is a stickler for formality. He avoids spontaneous gestures and anything "gimmicky".

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Queen Silvia is more public-friendly. She stops next to schoolchildren and singing choirs and old people in wheelchairs. The king, on the other hand, is often satisfied with a measured wave and then quickly continue the path he is expected to follow.

I remember that Sven Jerring managed to get a few words out of Gustaf VI Adolf during an excavation in Italy. [Error. It was Gösta Ollén.] The journalists never asked the old king questions or challenged him in any way. Such were the times. King Carl Gustaf, like the rest of the royal family, on the other hand now and then, when they feel like it, give interviews. Really a necessity for those who want to work "For Sweden - in our time!". I have had the privilege to follow King Carl Gustaf on most of his Swedish tours and so far on 37 state visits. There's always a press meeting.

In the beginning at the state visits, the questions mostly concerned their children. Did the King and Queen call them? Did they have time to shop for presents - and if so, what? Nowadays there are questions about the Queen's hats and dresses. Th king is miffed: Is nobody interested in my own suit? I am so pleased with it myself, he ironized during the state visit to Norway in June [1993]. Hardest to answer are the mandatory questions about what the King and Queen liked best? The answer is always that everything has been "nice and interesting". What else can they say? What

⁸ Inger Nildén m fl. Kungen, drottningen och barnen 1993. SVT1, 1994-01-01.

⁹ Omar Magnergård. Honnör för 20 år på tronen. Svenska Dagbladet, 1993-09-16.

would it look like if the King stood up and said that the hours in Trosa were exciting, while Nyköping had nothing good to offer. Or vice versa.

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In his early years, he probably wondered how to manage his popular grandfather's inheritance and at the same time innovate, living up to his motto. But as he has kept on saying: He had to do it in his own way. He has done so and he is very careful to continue doing it. No off-pist digressions! The king knows how he wants it and is adamant about it. The court knows.

Interest and respect for him and his actions have increased considerably in recent years. Queen Silvia has, of course, played a major role in this. - She is my best adviser, the king himself has said at some point.¹⁰

If this sounds a little bit awkward, it is. In another context Magnergård has expressed it such as despite his 20 years of court reporting, national tours and state visits, Carl Gustaf was still a riddle. On Carl Gustaf's 50th birthday three years later, Magnergård's editor-in-chief Mats Svegfors wrote a corresponding article. Despite good intentions, it became as lame as Magnergård's. Svegfors apologized: "At the same time, it is somewhat difficult to capture the king in the form of an interview. He is a very enthusiastic person. Quick to catch on. Quick to laughter. His authority is only rarely demonstrated but is actually very clear. ... King Carl XVI Gustaf does not playact king but is. He is not king during work hours and private citizen otherwise. He is not dressed up as king for a spectacle at the Opera. He was not elected king after being a town councilor in Borgholm. ... Carl XVI Gustaf actually is king, from birth and 24/7. ... And being king is something real and at the same time different – even in the mature welfare democracy of Sweden. ... Sweden is our cultural community: Our language, approaches, values and not least experience. The monarchy is part of this sphere. And by belonging to this sphere the king, more than any other Swedish person living or dead, represents Sweden."¹¹ The rest of the interview boils down to the fact that Carl Gustaf is genuinely interested in the world he lives in.

The conflict is quite obvious. Magnergård stubbornly sticks to Carl Gustaf as a person and does not understand the surrounding's or even his own interest in a mediocre performer. Svegfors oscillates between regarding Carl Gustaf as a person, as such interesting and knowledgeable but hardly unique, and Carl Gustaf as a national symbol and never the two shall meet. Svegfors is a royalist, among others things chairman four years of the association The mounted royal guard, but this seems only to have contributed to the confusion.

SVT broadcast a long interview with Carl Gustaf and Herman Lindqvist. The two trotted around the castle - very fancy interiors - while Lindqvist tried to make Carl Gustaf speak. Carl Gustaf's response to everything was of the type "I don't know. I cannot answer that. It was a difficult question. I have no opinion on that." The press reactions afterwards were acidic: "Royal interviews are hardly journalism, they are an entire art of their own, more like ballet or shadow boxing. Like a frustrated boxer, Herman Lindqvist circles his opponent, without getting near enough or in the right position to deliver his punches. It's an uneven match; Herman wriggles, meanders and reformulates while the king remains boorish: uninterested, disconnected and uncharismatic. Difficult questions receive uninteresting answers; lighter questions receive even less interesting answers. In fearing to offend anyone, the country's head of state chooses to completely erase his own personality. Only after

¹⁰ Omar Magnergård. 20 år på tronen - med tiden. Svenska Dagbladet, 1993-09-12.

¹¹ Mats Svegfors. Svenska Dagbladet, 1996-04-27.

mature consideration dares he reveal his favourite predecessor and then balks at revealing his favourite country. Every scrap of information is loaded with consequences.”¹²

Those who were closer to Carl Gustaf than Magnergård and Lindqvist, for example the Expressen journalist and school friend Cecilia Hagen, thought that from his 50th birthday, they saw a change. “He did not grow up until then.”¹³ Another journalist thought he had noticed the matter already during a state visit to Norway in 1993 when Carl Gustaf joked that everyone was interested in Silvia's clothes but none in his own suits. “He has learned the difficult art of holding on to his dignity while being a happy bloke.”¹⁴ And Carl Gustaf's friends: “The 50th anniversary celebration became a turning point in Carl Gustaf's life, his friends agree on. When the king looked out over the cheering crowds at Lejonbacken and Norrbro he realized how popular he had become.”¹⁵ Björn Vinberg refers in his biography to an interview in 1991 that he claimed to be a watershed:

* How will the environment be affected if we join the EC?

- We are not the largest country. That is half of it. But if we are involved, we can exercise influence with the knowledge Sweden has on the subject. It is better to participate than to remain on the sidelines.

* So he thinks we should join the EC, and dares to say so. Nowadays, he often speaks about political issues in the 150 speeches he makes every year. For a long time, the speeches were innocuous in the extreme and mostly about caring for each other. But in recent years they have been about our attitude to refugees, our bad work ethic, Swedish whining, AIDS, weapons development, the relationship between the superpowers, the war in the Middle East, the stock market, etc. What is the reason for this change?

- The speeches are not meant to have any party political content. However, today people are better educated, better informed and more more involved in the social debate. It would be strange then if the Head of State did not express his views on certain major issues that people are wondering about and which concern them.

- I express my personal opinion. Then others can put what I say in a party political context.

* But refugee policy, work ethics... Where draw the line?

- A monarch must be objective. It is very difficult. I am not interfering in the political game. And the refugee issues are more about compassion for each other than anything else. We all have a Christian background about helping one's neighbour in difficult situations.

* How does the monarchy need to be reformed in order to be “For Sweden in our time”? ...

- I want to do what is right for Sweden right now. “In our time” means that I want to live in the midst of it, and neither lead nor follow. It requires sensitivity. ...

- But being in the midst of time is difficult, terribly difficult. A lot of ceremonies here may seem strange. For a while, we seriously considered abolishing the court stable. But then we found that the horses and the ceremonies associated with them are

¹² Peter Öhman. Kungen svarade egentligen inte på något. Expressen, 1996-04-26.

¹³ Expressen. Kungen 60 år, 2006-04-29/30.

¹⁴ Suzy Persson. Om Carl Gustaf. Hänt i Veckan, 1993:26.

¹⁵ Expressen. Kungen 60 år, 2006-04-29/30.

cultural carriers, a living museum that it is important to protect. A country with no culture of its own lacks roots. [To abolish the Royal Stables was a savings proposal from 1959 by the Republican August Spångberg (s).]

* How will the monarchies be affected by a future united Europe? Will you be governors then?

- No, I think our role will become ever more important, as symbols of the identity and social history of the countries. A monarchy is a collecting symbols. In a united Europe, it is important to defend true nationalism even more. I don't think there will be an equalization in the way that many people write.¹⁶

Another commemorative book on the 50th anniversary was the biography of journalist Lena Rainer, "For Sweden - Carl XVI Gustaf in our time", a compilation of newspaper clips, interviews and beautiful images but with a certain distance. "The king is two people. He distinguishes between his role as king and his role as a private individual. As king, he is extremely dutiful, well-read and ambitious, but shy. Privately, he's funny, light hearted and spontaneous. Many try to blur the line, not knowing better, but they learn. Friends, who seek eye contact in an official context, he ignores."¹⁷ Carl Gustaf's brother-in-law Tord Magnusson agreed - maybe it was he who was interviewed:

* Tell me...

- Sometimes he startles you. One gets the impression that it is not even the same person. It is often at the very moment of opening. You feel it in the air, so to speak.

* How do you feel the change?

- I see it in his way of walking, in his way of looking at me or at my wife [Princess Christina]. I can't exactly put my finger on what it is but it's definitely a difference.

* Is it the body language?

- Yes. And the way he greets people. What the eyes say.

* If we flip the situation and you meet privately. How is it then?

- Then it's like meeting any old friend. Sometimes effusive. Sometimes just friendly. You notice that he has switched to private mode. Perhaps it is in his nature to relax.¹⁸

A total of four folios of material about Carl Gustaf, 800 pages, was published. Journalist Per Svensson, Republican and later author of a biography on Edmund, leafed through the stack of books and tried to summarize the message: Carl Gustaf wasn't just king. He was also a father, angler, cooking enthusiast, boat owner and he loved Daim. Svensson did not believe that the role of king in the long run could sustain this much trivia - even if it as here was formulated as divulged state secrets - but there he was wrong.

On May 13, there was a debate at publicistklubben about how the media had managed the event. The title was the usual: Do journalists fawn over the King? 1994-1997 the republican Annette Kullenberg was chairwoman, but she was unusually subdued this time. The most considered views were held by Lena Rainer. She told the audience about some of her ideas: You should write about Carl Gustaf's advisers, about the policy for which invitations he accepted and about the envy of the rest of the business community on the Wallenberg family's intimate relationship with the royal house. In the future, however, she intended to

¹⁶ Anna-Maria Hagerfors & Bengt Falkklo. Nu sitter kungakostymen. Dagens Nyheter, 1991-03-31.

¹⁷ Lena Rainer. För Sverige - Carl XVI Gustaf i tiden. Sydsvenskan, 1996.

¹⁸ Björn Carlgren m fl. Kungen 50 år: Lillprins, kronprins och kung i tiden. SVT1, 1996-04-28.

stay far away from the subject. In her circles Court reporter was synonymous with intellectual corruption.

In time for Carl Gustaf's 50th birthday, a translation of the English historian Peter Burke's book "The fabrication of Louis XIV" was published. Ludwig XIV's propaganda centre "The little academy" received its exact counterpart in the Swedish court's newly created information unit under Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg. More about her later.

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Carl Gustaf's position as a purely symbolic head of state proved difficult for the outside world to understand. He was assigned greater importance abroad than was envisaged in the Torkov compromise. Three examples:

United States of America

In the winter of 1975, when Richard Nixon had resigned and almost all American soldiers had left Vietnam, Pehr G. Gyllenhammar and Peter Wallenberg tried to help the royal house defuse the frosty Sweden-America connections. The federation organized a delegation of prominent Swedish industrialists who would travel to the United States on a charm offensive. With Prince Bertil leading the delegation, the White House hoped to meet President Gerald Ford to mark the start of a new era "after Vietnam".

Both the new Swedish ambassador Wilhelm Wachtmeister and his colleague in Stockholm did their best for Ford to receive the Swedish Prince. Probably that's why the rather blue-eyed Swedes thought they would be welcome in the White House. But there was never any real basis for that optimism. Documents from the White House and the State Department that I found in Gerald Ford's presidential library show that the Americans were, from the outset, cordially uninterested in the whole idea.

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But in Stockholm there were already rumours that Prince Bertil would meet President Ford and the matter was becoming embarrassing for both directors and diplomats. In a final attempt to get a meeting, the King Carl XVI Gustaf helped out. After a royal dinner at the castle in early February, the king summoned the American ambassador. What the King says in such contexts is never recorded by the Swedish Foreign Ministry and does not end up in any Swedish archive. But thanks to the American ambassador's report, we know what happened: "The King said that he and Prince Bertil must of course be above politics, but that he was nonetheless concerned for good relations between Sweden and the United States and that Bertil had been placed in a difficult situation."

Ambassador Robert Strausz-Hupé immediately pointed out to the King that in that case Sweden should "avoid statements that could damage good relations". The king "agreed" the ambassador proudly reported. To save what was possible, Strausz-Hupé proposed to his bosses in Washington that a meeting with Vice President Nelson Rockefeller be arranged instead. This attempt too came to naught. ... The prince and his directors had to settle for the fact that the senator and former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who had many Swedish Americans among his voters in Minnesota, arranged a meeting with the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. With some diplomatic

ingenuity, Vice President Nelson Rockefeller was also “accidentally” present during that meeting and had the chance to talk economy with Swedish visitors. But it would be another year before a prominent Swede could feel truly welcome at the White House.

Carl XVI Gustaf himself broke the ice. In April 1976, at the age of 29, he became the first reigning King in Sweden to visit the United States. President Gerald Ford received him. The Vietnam War was over. The photos of the King and the President in the chairs in front of the fireplace in the Oval Office was the official confirmation that a new era had begun.¹⁹

Soviet Union

The State Visit to the Soviet Union in 1978 illustrated the fact that Carl Gustaf as head of state, regardless of the Torekov compromise, was expected to have a political role and to pretend otherwise only created difficulties: For example, prior to 1978, Andrei Sakharov, winner of the Nobel Prize, wrote to him to use the state visit to help an incarcerated dissident and the Swedish journalists tried to make Carl Gustaf criticize their hosts during the state visit. Carl Gustaf could only answer:

- They have invited us on this trip to show us their country. And we have accepted. This gives us the opportunity to show that Sweden is on the map. You meet and talk, you get along and you make new friends. - And at the same time you (journalists) are also involved and it gives you an opportunity to be participate and observe. There have also been journalists from the Soviet Union in Sweden. It is a mutual exchange.

What, then, is the king's attitude to the human rights he is constitutionally prevented from speaking about? - Yes, of course I'm not completely blue-eyed. I know what's going on. However, I am not the one who has to deal with these discussions. It is the Minister for Foreign Affairs [Karin Söder] who has.²⁰

Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko later wrote in his memoirs:

Scandinavian kings do not take part in the practical affairs of state but somehow stand above them. Only the Swedes really understand how this works and foreigners have a hard time trying to fathom it. One thing is clear, however: the monarch is expected to carry out many duties aimed at maintaining foreign contacts.

In 1978 Moscow received the young King Charles Gustav XVI. His visit was to some extent a landmark in Sovjet-Swedish affairs, as it showed that Sweden was genuinely interested in developing a businesslike relationship with her eastern neighbour.

¹⁹ Staffan Thorsell. Den diplomatiska frosten tinade långsamt. Företagsminnen. Tidskrift från centrum för näringslivshistoria, 2008:3.

²⁰ Bo Kage Karlsson. Kungen summerar Sovjetresan. Svenska Dagbladet, 1978-06-15.

When I spoke to the King again in January 1984, during my visit to Stockholm for the opening of the conference on strengthening confidence, security and disarmament in Europe, he was quite definite about this: "I am in favour of businesslike relations between our countries and for their improvement."

He did not avoid discussing political matters either. When our side raised them, he responded eagerly. It seemed to me that the limitations placed on the Swedish monarch were becoming less rigid – if not constitutionally, then at least de facto.²¹

Carl Gustaf's outspokenness extended as far as an official dinner in March 1987 with the wife of the Soviet ambassador as dinner partner, even criticizing his own role as king. She summarized the table conversation as: "Al in all, he doesn't really understand what... kings still are good for. Are they simply a tribute to the traditions and habits of the nation and the people. He thinks so himself, but what will his children think? They are growing up in another world."²²

Iraq

In 1990, some 90 Swedish citizens were detained in Iraq. Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson wrote a personal letter reminding Saddam of Sweden's long-term peace work in the Middle East. The letter allegedly contributed to the release of the Swedes. In 1993, Saddam Hussein insisted on something similar:

The former ambassador Hans Ewerlöf had just taken up his duties as First Marshal of the Court when he was assigned to go to Baghdad to deliver a letter from the King of Sweden to the President of Iraq. This in the hope of unlocking the three Swedish Ericsson technicians who, after straying into Iraqi territory, had been in prison for a year, sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for espionage. The letter was written by Prime Minister Carl Bildt and read:

Mr. President,

As you know, just over a year ago, the three Swedish citizens Christer Strömberg, Leif Westberg and Stefan Wihlborg happened, by mistake and without malice, to enter Iraqi territory. They were sentenced by Iraqi courts to seven years in prison unconditionally. They are serving their sentences in Abu-Ghraib prison. I know that they have been well treated during this period. But of course they suffer a lot from being separated from their relatives far away in Sweden and they want nothing but to return to their country. Traditionally, relations between our two countries and peoples are good. With that in mind, and with this letter, I would ask you, Mr. President, to pardon my compatriots so that they can be reunited with their relatives.

The meeting with Saddam Hussein took place in a palace in Baghdad in 1993. It lasted about a quarter of an hour and was undramatic even though the security arrangements were extensive.

²¹ Gromyko, 1989: ss. 218-220.

²² Pankin, 2004: ss. 31-38.

- There was no mistake that you were dealing with a dictator. Everyone around him was trembling. They were terribly afraid of him. Against me, however, he only showed that he appreciated that the matter was moved up to the level of Heads of State,” explains Hans Ewerlöf, who turns 75 years old on June 19.

- It was at the government's request that I went. All attempts to secure the release of the three had failed. But it had become clear that if the king wrote a personal letter to Saddam Hussein, from head of state to head of state, there was a chance. The king of course complied. And to further emphasize the personal, the handover of the letter would not be by diplomatic means but by His Majesty's Emissary - that is me.

The meeting was preceded by three days of negotiations with the heads of Saddam's staff.

- But everything went well and it was very satisfying to be able to leave to leave Baghdad with the three Swedes, explains Hans Ewerlöf before adding thoughtfully:

- I'm probably the last Swede to shake hands with Saddam Hussein.^{23,24}

Carl Gustaf's efforts for the Iraqi Swedes were welcomed but also raised Republican concerns. A number of interviews with Leif Lewin, Olof Ruin and other political scientists were summarized as: “There is a symbolic value in the monarchy that in certain situations can be exploited for the good of the country and Swedish citizens. The condition is that such royal propositions are made in agreement with the government. And it must not become a habit.”²⁵

The state visit before Brunei that generated the most emotions is that in Saudi Arabia on February 21-24, 1981. The country was then ruled by King Kahlid, hardly enlightened but definitely despotic, misogynistic, filthy rich and supported flogging and the death penalty in all possible contexts. On a recent visit by King Juan Carlos of Spain, his wife Sophia had been completely neglected. It was assumed that the same would happen with Silvia. Carl Gustaf was received at the airport by Crown Prince Fahd with Silvia reverently a few steps behind. Silvia was muffled up according to custom and showed neither ankles, arms nor neckline. She had to travel in a separate car and eat with the women in the seraglio. Carl Gustaf had to eat with the men, which was memorable in the wrong manner. Fifteen dishes Saudian home cooking with mineral water. The Saudis had bowed to the Swedish demands as far as Silvia and Carl Gustaf having a common program. They visited various industries, etc. Silvia turned up the charm so far that King Kahlid actually recognized that she existed. Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg remembered a tent dinner with the King and Crown Prince Aziz in the desert outside Riyadh with Silvia dressed up as in a thousand and one night. Wonderful is short though. They had a following of male journalists who devoted themselves to Carl Gustaf. There were also women journalists but they were assigned to Silvia. The last day in the flight hall she sat for herself. The photograph is more than revealing. This was Silvia at her grimmest. The general opinion seems to have been that the treatment of Silvia was an affront to the country and that everything was Carl Gustaf's fault. Carl Gustaf was intransigent: “The common people are completely alien to Western ways of

²³ TT, 1993-09-23.

²⁴ Monika Frime. Före detta ambassadören och hovmarskalken Hans Ewerlöf fyller 75 år. TT Spektra, 2004-06-18.

²⁵ TT, 1993-09-23.

life and culture. That is something we have to accept. Their religion is their law.” Foreign Minister Ola Ullsten agreed. “You have to take the custom where you come. If the host demands the submission of woman, it becomes submission. That is how international relations work.”

Over time, when the hosts have gotten to know Carl Gustaf better, they have subjected him, his state visits and Sweden in general to friendly criticism. As it seems on wet evenings after the third whisky. This is also part of Carl Gustaf's duties.

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Carl Gustaf summarized his situation in a 1981 American interview:

According to Carl Gustaf, the success of the Spanish King [Juan Carlos accession 1975] appears to have had an influence on the general attitudes towards monarchy. But Carl Gustaf said in an interview that other factors were at work as well: It's a time of decreasing development and the politicians are blamed for everything that goes wrong and they have a tough time explaining themselves. On the other hand, people think: "A monarchy – it's there and it's there to stay."

A canvas in June showed that the King and Queen inspired a third more confidence than other public figures in the country and that about three quarters of the sample preferred the idea of a king to that of a president. That was an increase of 10 percent in three years.

What the Continental monarchs have in common, in addition to their firm popular base, is their extremely cautious attitude towards the attempted exercise of power or splendour. They dole it out slowly, having learned that both can be used to greatest effect in small amounts.

...

King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, whose popularity has increased visibly since his marriage to a young German woman and the birth of their two children, is probably the most antipodal figure among European monarchs in relation to Juan Carlos's direct political role.

He maintains that his political functions have been reduced more completely than any other monarchs in Europe. ... In Sweden, since a constitutional change in 1974, the King does none of this [governing]. There is no more throne speech to Parliament and there are no more laws to sign. Although he holds the highest rank in the military, the King is no longer Commander in chief of the armed forces. Yet he says: "It takes a sharp political mind to be a non political king. Sometimes I feel I'm getting worse at not saying what I think."

Advice Not All That Welcome

When Carl Gustaf asserted earlier this year that Sweden has to be more aggressive and inventive in order to sell their products abroad, there were some people who took the remark badly.

Sitting with a reporter at his summer home on Öland Island, he said there were other ways than through public statements to become involved in issues of importance. "You sit and talk to people and you can make your opinions known," he said. "This you can do. I see a lot of people. That's the job. We discuss. They inform me. We exchange views. Sooner or later they have an idea of what the King thinks."

...

Kings like Juan Carlos and Carl Gustaf do not make a cult of being the royal Everyman, but a clear statement of their lack of interest in extravagance of any kind is part of their style.²⁶

There are two series of measurements from this time: Firstly, a series of opinion polls on support for the monarchy as a form of government, which fluctuated between 64 and 83 per cent (Appendix 1: Table 4). Secondly a series of Sifo measurements about Sweden's most popular man 1984-2007 where Carl Gustaf until his 50th anniversary in 1996 increased in popularity to become Sweden's most popular man (Appendix 1: Table 1). The maximum support of 75-83 percent was from Carl Gustaf's accession. Between 1986-1995, there are no measurements, but based on the 1985 and 1996 measurements, 68 percent appears to be a reasonable value. Support for the monarchy was highest in southern Sweden and lowest in northern Sweden. In 1992, a Sifo survey was carried out about Carl Gustaf's "influence, power, clout" or whatever. He was regarded as the country's third most influential public figure after Carl Bildt and Pehr Gyllenhammar.

Alternative ways of measuring support for the monarchy gives the same result: In 1973, 64 percent of young people aged 18-29 believed that Sweden would still be a monarchy in 1983. In 1983, 90 percent of young people aged 18-29 believed that Sweden would still be a monarchy in 2000.²⁷

A ranking of the royal family in 1981 placed Silvia first (49 percent) and then Carl Gustaf (40 percent).²⁸ A similar ranking in 1996 placed Silvia first (25 percent), then Crown Princess Victoria (19 percent) and then Carl Gustaf (12 percent).²⁹ The support for monarchy as a mode of government has always been greater than the support of individual members of the royal house.

The monarchist mystique was still so strong that when Expressen in 1990 published the number to Carl Gustaf's answering machine, 20 thousand calls were registered per hour and the number had to be switched off.

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The restoration of the monarchy in Spain in 1975 and Cambodia in 1993 were among the few highlights of the monarchy as a form of government in the first 20 years of the Carl Gustaf. The restoration was interpreted in the debate as a result of General Franco and "Brother number one" Pol Pot managing to prevent the normal political development of their countries. Otherwise the monarchies suffered. Afghanistan and Greece became republics in 1973, Ethiopia in 1974, Laos in 1975 and Iran in 1979. A number of countries also chose to withdraw from the Commonwealth. After the fall of communism, some Eastern European

²⁶ John Vincour. Europe's Royalty: Bit Threadbare but Still Strong. The New York Times, 1981-07-25.

²⁷ Dagens Industri, 1984-01-05.

²⁸ [Hans Zetterberg.] The kingdom in the polls. Sifo, 1981-06-29.

²⁹ Vem av kungahuset är mest populär? TV3 & TT, 1996-04-06.

claimants tried to re-establish themselves. In 1997, Leka Zogu of Albania forced a referendum, which he lost. Jean-Bédél Bokassa proclaimed himself Bokassa I of the Central African Empire in 1976 but was overthrown in 1979. In 1996, there were 44 remaining monarchies: Those of the Commonwealth with Elisabeth II as joint ruler (16), the European constitutional monarchies (10), the Islamic monarchies (10), the East Asian monarchies (4) and four others. Carl Gustaf had the most contacts with our Nordic neighbours and with Thailand. He had met King Bhumibhol and Queen Sirikit already in 1960 during their state visit to Sweden. As a whole, because monarchs normally sit for life, Carl Gustaf has better contact with monarchies than with republics.