

## Chapter 13 : “1971/73 – In the waiting area”

After his royal majority, the media image of CG was supposed to be adjusted to fit his new station in life. Swedish Radio dumped this honourable task on the journalist Lars Ulvenstam (1921-), PhD on the subject *The ageing Selma Lagerlöf* and a veteran of the weeklies. Ulvenstam had a hard time walking the line between the new interviewing technique of “colloquial confrontation” and the old technique of encouraging the subject to speak from the heart. CG eventually took pity on him:

LU: Has the prince by now been cured from his renown shyness? It is, of course, a handicap when performing his duties.

CG: Yes, I think so. It is not a disease but a character trait. But I think I got the hang of it now.

LU: What caused it to disappear? Did something change?

CG: I suppose it was caused by always being watched. You always knew that every thing you said would be discussed ad nauseam. That every gesture you made was studied for hidden meanings. That was the feeling you had anyway. But now I have stopped obsessing over it. I try to be the best version of myself or rather be myself.

LU: ...

CG: Most people treat people they know in a different manner, than those they don't know. So do I. ... Still, I think it depends on how you behave. If you're a little hesitant. If you're a little stiff, that's when people also get stiff. But if you act natural, talk on everyday subjects and accept them for what they are, then you are treated the same by them. Someone standoffish can actually be very spontaneous and have a lot to give, when encouraged to speak.

LU: Is it problematic for the prince never to open his beak on political issues?

CG: It is clear that political or rather party political issues are often touched upon in my interviews. In such circumstances I find it very difficult express an opinion however, since a king and also a crown prince, should be completely apolitical. If I were suddenly to start speaking about party matters and show my colours so to say, it would cause trouble both for myself and others. Likewise if I avoid answering. It would be construed as ignorance. When possible I tow the line.

LU: ...

CG: Why do I find it so nice here at [the estate] Stenhammar? Because here you leave the Stockholm troubles at the door and can be yourself. You don't have to worry about the press, for example. Many times, even if you do a job right, the articles have an ironic slant. My family feels persecuted. I myself has been spared but my mother has had a hard time of it. It doesn't seem to matter what she has actually done. Being German is enough. The press also have has a lot of strange questions: Do I read morning papers? Do I ride the metro? I do not know how to respond. And then the perennial subject of my girl friends, that I now a days avoid to comment on. You get a little angry when it never ends.

CG: [Sweden] is a monarchy. The [monarchy] is an old tradition. The fact is that one scarcely dares to use the word tradition, but I do not understand how a country can

live without its traditions. In such case there is nothing to base your life on. For me, it would be like trying to walk on water. No solid ground.<sup>1</sup>

CG impressed the female part of Sweden. "I get about ten letters a day from different women - all over the country. Some offer marriage. Others just write a few lines and say they appreciate something you have done. I apologize for not being able to reply to these fan letters. But it's fun to receive them. Many include photographs."<sup>2</sup>

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At the death of Prince Wilhelm CG inherited the lease of Stenhammar, but didn't have the time to get involved in the day to day operations. He and comrades visited it from time to time. He furnished one of the wings – a hall, two living rooms and three bedrooms – with furniture from Ulriksdal Castle, a large oriental carpet in blue and pink and a newly purchased Oscar Törnå painting. In 1971 he was at least able to operate a tractor during the spring sowing. CG had simple habits both at the Castle and at Stenhammar, neither chambermaid nor servant. He often cooked himself. This was partly a necessity. Until his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary he received 100 thousand a year from the Sofia Albertina Foundation. Then 150 thousand in appanage. This had to cover everything.

On September 12, 1971, and two months running, CG replaced Gustaf VI while his grandfather was travelling in England and Italy. In addition to the "governing", viz. to act chairman at the cabinet meetings and sign its decisions, he practised at the Foreign Ministry. Prince Bertil intervened six days in October, during which CG would attend the celebrations for the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire. CG was also booked on things like the Music Academy's anniversary, the Swedish Academy's formal session, the Nobel party etc. Since Sibylla was seriously ill, it was often Princess Christina who was allowed to join him. With university studies in 1968 and only three years of age difference, Princess Christina and CG had much in common. Both thought of themselves as some kind of student radicals:

### CG

VJ: What about the student riots and their demands for participation?

- I like those who are progressive and want to create something new.

VJ: Is it possible to be progressive and heir to the throne at once?

- Yes, but I'm not going to do a revolution. (The Crown Prince laughs.) As to the rest, I do not like to use the word progressive. That's one of those dangerous words.<sup>3</sup>

VJ: What do you think of your own generation?

- It's okay. It wants something. It revolts against conditions, which one should revolt against. It is good that the young people are engaging themselves.<sup>4</sup>

He took sides with the activists in the demonstration the night of May 11-12, 1971. There are also reports that in 1974 he refrained from attending the opening of the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Tomas Dillén & Lars Ulvenstam. Personligt med Carl Gustaf. SR, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Arne Lennberg. Rapport från en vecka med kronprinsen. Lektyr, 1971:40.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Andhé. Kronprinsen mot väggen i exklusiv intervju. Vecko Journalen, 1969:17.

<sup>4</sup> Allan Beer. Aldrig har kronprinsen talat så öppet. Allers, 1969:2.

hotel chain Ramada's facilities in Huskvarna on the grounds that the king should not act as inaugurator to American big business.<sup>5</sup>

### Princess Christina

VJ: You notice that she is a bit anxious not to be lumped with her mother or to be classified as a conservative. She'd rather be called a radical – radical, maybe with a sprinkling of conservatism here and there?

- You can be radical without abolishing the monarchy and without joining demonstrations. The miniskirt [her own] is just for show. The adjective radical is too extreme, liberal is a better word for my position.

VJ: When I try to pin down the princess' opinion on the monarchy, she replies smiling: - I am a Royalist, of course! If I were to take the opposite view, I would both throw away my cake and eat it ... with republican ideas, I would be a distortion of my true self. I would probably feel disappointed ... to be dismissed from my position... it would feel like a personal failure, if the monarchy was to be abolished.<sup>6</sup> But of course we royals try to make something different of the monarchy today than twenty or fifty years ago. ... My brother and I often discuss how we can make the best of our position. We have a responsibility to manage our heritage, we must help each other to do it.<sup>7</sup>

Princess Christina had been doing public relations and semi-official state visits since 1965 and was used to performing as a “deputy princess” with all that implied: “It is so obvious that you serve as a symbolic figure. It's not me they're interested in, not Miss Bernadotte but the princess. 'It doesn't matter who comes; as long as he or she is royal,' one often hears ... well, then the idle one goes.”<sup>8</sup>

In the spring of 1972, CG studied economics at Stockholm University. It was a half-semester introductory course at the Faculty of Law. Since CG followed the instruction without being enrolled, the details are unclear. He did not receive course grade but “he wrote the exam and was approved by a good margin, his paper belonged to the top third.”<sup>9</sup> In the spring of 1973 he possibly read a course in business economics at Handelshögskolan. He also studied French. On June 5-16, the UN's first environmental conference took place in Stockholm. CG thought it was an important task for Sweden and also for himself. Later in the summer he practised at a London bank. Sibylla had had surgery for a stomach tumour. She lost weight and didn't look good. Everyone including herself pretended that it was nothing serious. CG got questions about death. He didn't know what to say: “Yes death is something I kick in front of me, I haven't met it at close range yet.” But then it came. On November 28, 1972, Sibylla died and Princess Christina assumed the position of “First Lady of the Realm” with the approximate job description “acting Princess” in the same way that CG was “acting King”. Over the years, Sibylla had accumulated a number of honorary memberships, patronages, chairmanships, etc. These were now transferred from mother to daughter. Christina had to buy “princess clothes”, meaning dresses with jackets that she otherwise would not have bought. She was promoted to hostess at official dinners. Some of the assignments she kept until Crown Princess Victoria and Princess Madeleine came of age.

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<sup>5</sup> Året Runt, 1976:14.

<sup>6</sup> Margit Vinberg. Vart går Christina. Vecko Journalen, 1966:52.

<sup>7</sup> Lars Torekull. Christina gör svensk PR i USA. Vecko Journalen, 1972:44.

<sup>8</sup> Margit Vinberg. Vart går Christina. Vecko Journalen, 1966:52.

<sup>9</sup> E-brev med uppgifter från prof em Claes-Henric Siven, inst för Nationalekonomi i Stockholm, 2013-01-16.

CG was asked what he remembered about his mother. CG replied that she was very considerate, soon to laugh, wanted to have the family around her and was more interested in disciplining his sisters than himself. He also said that she kept a distance from her children but cared about their formal education, upbringing, social behaviour and dress code. She probably had more in common with CG's sisters than with himself, but her love for the Öland nature had been passed on to him. She also had an interest in music. "My mother had an outstanding ability to look humorously at life and to create warmth and comfort around her. My happy and carefree childhood and upbringing I have her to thank for."<sup>10</sup> CG also had some criticism. The total depoliticization of the home environment. He imagined that if his father had been alive, there would have been someone to discuss with.

CG's "media image revaluation" continued unremittingly:

Carl Gustaf's education has gradually slipped into professional practice, or rather, his schedule is interspersed with continued military training and representation duties of various kinds. Receiving ambassadors, attending church events, opening sporting competitions, farm and forest weeks at different parts of the country, eating lunch with governors, visiting regiments, universities, travelling to Oslo and laying a wreath on Haakon VII's grave, providing lunch for the Polish Prime Minister, giving an audience to Patriarch James III of Damascus, etc. The pace was hectic.

Carl Gustaf does as a grandfather, carefully determines the contents, context, political discourse etc. of events where he is booked. It happens that he asks the inviting party to visit the castle in advance in order to inform him. So were a couple of people from the Society for Anthropology and Geography up at the crown prince some time before the annual meeting, where he would hand out medals, receive a book about Nordenskiöld and "Vega" and give an acceptance speech after the food. At such informal meetings - he likes geography - Carl Gustaf is at ease, humorous and charming.

To appear in learned societies at such a relatively young age - which of course begs comparison with King Gustaf Adolf - should produce stage fright. But Carl Gustaf has not only defeated his shyness, he is becoming a good and amusing speaker who deserves warm applause. Often, no one knows in advance that Carl Gustaf will say something when he taps in the glass and improvises. He also extempores prepared speeches, as he with his word blindness is reluctant to read from full manuscripts but confines himself to an abbreviated manuscript of the main points.

At a formal gathering at the Academy of Sciences, where he is "Swedish Honorary Member", the Crown Prince brought two speeches, one solemn, but, he said, searching his pockets, when I found the atmosphere so congenial "I will use the second speech instead".

He not only looks at the festive outwork, but takes the initiative to deepen his knowledge of institutions, organizations, companies etc. He has formed an idea of the Academy of Sciences' activities and in doing so he has taken an interest in the foreign engagement, mainly the international research institute for insect biology in Nairobi, which is an important part of the struggle to help developing countries. At some times Carl Gustaf has at his own request been included as one among many when the

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<sup>10</sup> Christer Nyblom. Kronprins Carl Gustaf inför 25-årsdagen. Hemmets veckotidning, 1970:17

Stockholm Chamber of Commerce made study visits to Pripps, Skånska Banken and Kema Nord. It might be added that Carl Gustaf read economics last year to increase his knowledge, which allows him to ask relevant questions on economic subjects.

His clothes, private and military, he has sewn at MEA and Steens: For civil use he chooses classic fabrics, flannel and pinstripes, which are sewn in classic models with a modern cut. He is thrifty, not stingy but dislikes extravagances.<sup>11</sup> [Later, CG bought his clothes at Rose & Bom, “a place where you buy good, Italian quality clothes at low prices”. Princess Christina used to give advice, in urgent cases the adjutant or Ingrid Björnberg. CG drew the size 50B and had broad shoulders.]

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Some time after the volcano eruption in the Vestman Islands, Iceland, on January 23, 1973, CG was on a tour there. The eruption lasted almost six months, and much of the island was covered by lava and pumice. Extremely dramatic.

From April 9 to May 25, CG participated in a rehearsal exercise on the torpedo boat Vega. He was a signal officer, in charge of a radio telegrapher, a cadet, and three signalmen. Mondays and Fridays were spent on cabinet meetings and official appearances. On April 24, the police announced that there was a terrorist threat from the organization Ustasha to kidnap him. Outside the military base, he had reinforced security. On May 21, he went directly from the Gålö base to the Castle to participate in the first satellite picture telephone conversation between Europe and South America. Prince Bertil was in São Paulo, first row of the auditorium, and managed to transmit a “Hello”. It caused some controversy that CG arrived at the coastal fleet ball at Berga Castle without a table lady. It probably had something to do with Liv Porjé and Silvia Renate Sommerlath. More about them later. He declared himself tired of being connected with different women.<sup>12</sup>

The renovation of his 12-room apartment at the castle taking a year was finally completed and in the spring CG could start filling it with suitable furniture.

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During his summer visit at Sofiero in 1973, Gustav VI fell ill with bleeding ulcers the night between August 17 and 18. It had happened before and he didn't think it was serious but it was. On his way out to the car, he could still walk, he said he was in good spirits. Then he was driven to Helsingborg's hospital and his personal physician Gunnar Biörck came down from Stockholm. Biörck then lived at Sofiero but spent his waking time at the hospital. The press officer Bertil Erksammar also appeared. A large crowd of Sweden's most skilled specialists gathered around Gustaf VI's sickbed. On August 21 he underwent surgery. The operation lasted three hours. The next day, he asked for newspapers to see what was written about him. He gradually got worse. By that time, CG and the closest family had gathered. CG and Princess Christina came by plane from Stockholm. CG from a military course at Solbacka grammar school. Prince Bertil and Lilian Craig from the Riviera. Lilian Craig was not allowed to sleep at Sofiero but was accommodated in a nearby villa. However, she and Prince Bertil were photographed together several times.

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<sup>11</sup> Beatrice Glase. [Vår nye kung.] Vecko Journalen, 1973:39.

<sup>12</sup> Expressen, 1973-05-17.



Gustaf VI's health was communicated via daily bulletins. No interviews were given. The journalists tried to get some meat by checking the duration of the visits by stopwatch. Hospital employees were offered money to tell what was going on. A photographer climbed the roof and got a picture of Gustaf VI's hospital room with a telescopic lens. CG alternated between Sofiero, the waiting room of the hospital, the cabinet meetings and other missions. He tried to avoid the photographers. When Gustaf VI during a temporary improvement learned that CG was mostly sitting in his room staring into the wall, he asked Prince Bertil to take him to the golf course at Båstad. CG, who did not play golf, trailed those who did. It looked like he was talking to himself. "The Crown Prince is deeply touched by the King's severe illness and has difficulty relaxing at Sofiero. He accompanies his uncles on car trips, he walks, reads and confers with the Marshal of the Realm and the head of his personal court. Yet time is slow, the worries grind. No one knows his thoughts."<sup>13</sup> Later CG told that he was completely paralysed. Until then, he had successfully avoided thinking on ever becoming king. Now he stood there with his youth and his mistakes and his shortcomings. Better prepared than he was now, he would never be. Princess Christina took him for walks in Sofiero's garden. She held his hand and they talked quietly about everything that was and that was waiting. He watched the live broadcast of the ongoing hostage crisis in the bank vault at Norrmalmstorg. The days passed. King Gustaf VI showed signs of improvement that did not last. Princess Christina couldn't take it any more and went home. At a short extraordinary meeting on September 4 at 10 a.m., the entire national government was formally handed over to CG. He had been deputy since King Gustaf VI was operated on but that was a formality during the summer break when Prince Bertil was on the Riviera. CG then alternated between his duties at the castle, visits to his grandfather's sick bed and following the motor races at nearby Knutstorp.

The 13<sup>th</sup> the end seemed to be approaching. CG held an improvised 20-minute cabinet meeting at Bromma airport where decisions were taken on the issues to be dealt with at the next meeting, before moving on to Sofiero. The 14<sup>th</sup> he was called several times to the deathbed but had to turn back. At 17:30 on the 15<sup>th</sup> the death struggle began and lasted until 20:35. Those present at the moment of death were CG, Princess Christina, Queen Ingrid, Prince Bertil with Lilian Craig and the counts Sigvard and Carl-Johan Bernadotte with wives Marianne and Kerstin. Some 60 journalists from the newspapers, Sveriges Radio and Svensk Television were gathered in the hospital court yard. Several hundred people crowded behind the barriers. The air was humid. The direct cause of death was pneumonia. After Gustaf VI's death, CG entered the infirmary and stroked his grandfather over the hand.

King Gustaf VI had for several years planned the ceremonial of his death in detail. His "Plan for Future Throne Change and Royal Funeral"<sup>14,15,16</sup> from May 1969 was now put into effect: Marshal of the Realm Admiral Stig H:son Ericson exited the hospital and announced in front of the journalists and photographers that: "King Gustaf VI Adolf has today, Saturday September 15, 1973, at 20:35, died in peace." Then a very pale CG and his relatives exited into the hospital yard. The relatives stayed at the gate while CG slowly approached the photographers. There was complete silence. Only the sound of shutters and the film cameras could be heard. He was illuminated by the floodlights and the occasional photo flashes. He was dressed in a gray suit, blue shirt and patterned tie. As usual, he kept his hands on his back. King Gustaf VI's sister Queen Ingrid of Denmark and Princess Christina joined him. Bertil

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<sup>13</sup> Svenska Dagbladet, 1973-08-26

<sup>14</sup> Ulf Björkman. Kungens adjutant. BNL förlag AB, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Kjell Fridh. Gamle kungen : Gustaf VI Adolf - En biografi. 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Kabinettskammarherren amiral Erik af Klint m fl. Plan för framtida tronskifte och kungabegravning. 1969-05.

Erkhammar shouted in a command voice: "The king is dead, live the king!" The spectators tried to cheer. CG smiled weakly, ticked a quiet thank you and entered his car that had been idling for hours in order not to be completely cooled out. One last night at Sofiero remained. Then there were complications ...

Barely had Bertil hailed the new king before he was cornered by the television staff. They were in trouble. Everything was carefully prepared for announcing the death of the old king. Ongoing programs were to be replaced by funeral music, an extraordinary newscast and a portrait of King Gustaf VI Adolf. But now the TV had no sound to for news. In the commotion, no one remembered to awaken the sound engineer. He was sleeping in a caravan behind the hospital when Stig H:son Ericson read his bulletin. The Marshal of the Realm without sound - the disaster felt close. However Bertil and the sound technician returned to Sofiero. He knew that the mourners were at the table and that the steward was a former boatswain from Bertil's submarine crew. - No, I can't disturb them, he told Bertil. But tell the Marshal! It concerns the nation's good reputation. Bertil was adamant. Stig H:son Ericson came out, was informed of the situation and then and there in the dark of night time and again and at different speeds repeated what he had said at the hospital gate. The first time the sound did not match the lip movements, nor the second or the third time. Nervously, the TV people tuned the picture but eventually the sound synced. The news began with Stig H:son Ericson's announcement. No one could have guessed that his words were not authentic.<sup>17</sup> [An alternative version is that the sound engineer Boo Thorin was taping another event and that there was no extra microphone.]

At the time of death, all entertainment establishments were closed: taverns, dance rooms, restaurants, cinemas and theatres interrupted their performance. Prime Minister Olof Palme was informed only a minute after the death took place.

On the morning of September 18, Gustav VI's body was transported to Stockholm. Bishop Olle Nivenius read a short prayer and nurses, doctors and assistants in white coats formed a hedge from the hospital gate. When the car slowly started rolling, someone took up the hymn "Lovely is the earth". The trip back to Stockholm took a day. The last mile, people stood in multiple lines holding torches, lanterns or just a candle.

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<sup>17</sup> Omar Magnergård. Svenska Dagbladet. Odaterad. Omkring augusti 1973.