

## Chapter 31 : “A King goes West”

*When William Moberg was in America to write his emigrant series, he settled in the “Swedish countryside” in Minnesota. In the autumn of 1950 he visited a neighbour and found the wife in the house completely inconsolable because of the death of Gustaf V. She was in her 70s, had emigrated from Sweden around the turn of the century, become an American citizen, forgotten her own language, not lived a day with Gustaf V as head of state and yet she could say: I mourn him because he was my king. Moberg found it deeply incomprehensible and the episode formed the introduction to his later pamphlet in 1955 “Therefore I am a Republican”.<sup>1</sup>*

25 years later the emotions in the Swedish-American countryside still ran high. In 1974, CG received an invitation from the mayor of Lindsborg, Kansas, to visit the city in connection with USA's 200th anniversary as a nation in 1976. As usual, the court sent out inquiries if there was a wider interest among various Swedish-American associations and institutions for a royal visit and there was. The government gave the go-ahead, and 1975 planning began on both sides of the Atlantic. Lots of people had suggestions on which people CG should meet. Marcus Wallenberg's proposal was to include “Nobel Prize winners, researchers, research administrators, university representatives, leading journalists and trade union leaders.”

Appetite grows while eating. CG's visit to America April 2-28, 1976, became a cross of state visit, national tour and public relations. A smorgasbord of activities. CG arrived with 1<sup>st</sup> Marshal of the Court Björn von der Esch, Head of administration & PR Jan Mårtensson, his adjutant commander Bertil Daggfeldt and his servant Knut Lindell in tow. Also on the plane were 28 journalists and photographers, Foreign Minister Sven Andersson, three people from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an industry delegation and “various people”, among them the head of the Social Security Board Bror Rexed and CG's personal physician prof Gunnar Biörck who would inform the Americans about Swedish health care. CG's bodyguard Karl Gustaf Jansson, “secret Jansson” called, had arrived the week before to coordinate the program with American secret service. As a visiting head of state, CG would have the same level of protection as the US president. This had consequences for the press.

The visit was organized as a flight back and forth across the continent with detours. CG arrived at Kennedy Airport outside New York City and was received by the embassy, ten security men and a handful of American journalists. As usual a toddler was to hand him a bouquet of flowers. These were usually confused by the situation and did not know who would have the bouquet. That was the case this time too. She thought it was so beautiful that she wanted to keep it herself. CG had to coax it loose. The press coverage went wrong from the beginning. It was agreed on with Jan Mårtensson that CG would not give interviews or press conferences during the trip. However, there would be informal contacts so-called media moments. “These would be designed so that The King, upon arrival at an airport or in connection with a lunch, a study visit or similar, convened with the local press for 10-15 minutes and answered some questions.”<sup>2</sup> This seems to have violated American secret service instructions on identity checks and safety distance so that they devoted themselves to preventing the press contacts and at one point actually knocked down a Swedish photographer who came too close. It was also the case that the program was under time pressure and media moments were therefore removed in toto. CG didn't exactly help out. He initially allowed himself to be pushed around between the program points without bothering

<sup>1</sup> Vilhelm Moberg. Därför är jag republikan. Folket i Bild, 1966. [Intervju med Fredrik Peyron i Vecko Revyn.]

<sup>2</sup> Brev från pressrådet Ingmar Lindmarker till kanslirådet Manfred Nilsson. UD, 1976-05-11.

to communicate with the environment. On some occasions he gathered the journalists for informal talks.

Eventually, a number of conflicts of interest emerged. Everyone complained. CG met with President Gerald Ford and also UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim. In accordance with the Torekov compromise, he did not talk politics, which was perceived as strange and frivolous for a head of state. The meeting with President Ford was a symbolic reunion between Sweden and the United States after all the conflicts during the Vietnam War. It was not necessary to say anything and he didn't. He took part in a couple of seminars and banquets arranged by the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce which was considered too little. There was also little information about Sweden's pioneering role as to social issues. CG gave a number of speeches written by Jan Mårtensson, that were considered too stilted – his improvised speech towards the end of the trip was considered significantly better. The diplomats protested that his position required formal speeches. He ignored the surroundings - shook no hands, kissed no children etc., which he defended afterwards by saying that such was his nature and that he wasn't on an election tour. In addition, he claimed, it was enough for him to appear.

In the Swedish countryside, CG was entertained with cultural events to the extent old-fashioned in its folksy jingoism that the journalists found it ridiculous. They laughed but did not write what they thought. The readers were also not told what CG thought because all such issues were considered indiscreet. Nor did CG want to talk about himself. The journalists stumbled around. What appeared in the papers was a mix of CG's official program and whatever else he was doing, "CG by night".

At the beginning of the trip, Jan Mårtensson was asked if CG would go to a discotheque. No, he replied, the king no longer does that. But that he did. While in Philadelphia he was in the hotel room watching a couple of American primaries, in Seattle he was at the Pioneer Banque jazz club listening to Charles Mingus. In San Francisco, CG encountered an acquaintance, singer Barbro "Lill-Babs" Svensson, there in her professional capacity, who stood shivering as part of the welcoming committee and invited her to dinner at the Bohemian Club and then at a nightclub. (Apparently, she had been contracted to sing at a previous New York event.) The next day he met an old school friend Nina Petersén and spent a late night at Sausalito "pub" together with 20 guests and of course the whole security apparatus. Upon arriving in America, CG met actress Liv Ullman, who had returned to Los Angeles in time to be invited by CG to lunch at the Warner Bros. studio and have dinner with Danny Kaye. At Danny Kaye's, CG also met Jack Lemmon and his wife Felicia Farr. Farr had some similarities with Lill-Babs, both were tough broads in luxury packaging. Come half-time April 15-16, CG visited the winter sports resort of Vail where he met other old acquaintances. In Chicago Sunday April 18, after a private dinner at Consul General Andersson, he, his entourage 12 males and security 8 males visited discotheque Faces. CG wanted some female company and tried to persuade the waitress to join the group but it was against the rules. The tour operator, Consul Jacob Ankarcróna reportedly called some female acquaintances. CG was tired, had a mild cold, listened to the music and watched the others dance. A blonde at the place attracted press attention but no one knew who she was. Perhaps it was his schoolmate from Sigtuna Anna Wachtmeister who officially was on the trip as a journalist for Hemmets Veckojournal, unofficially accompanying her parents. Mårtensson was embarrassed about the nightclubs and the women, CG was after all about to get married, and he refused to comment. CG himself was more communicative: "You can not sit in the hotel room and rot the whole trip." Given the writings the next year about the matter, perhaps he should have done just that (see chapter 45).

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Tours of this kind are surprisingly tiring because of all the impressions. However, CG had the routine pinned down after 11 national tours and five state visits. "I glide through the program" was his answer to a question on the topic. This meant looking interested but avoiding getting involved. You accepted your impotence. All important decisions were already taken. You surrendered yourself to your officials and to fate. Some elements were short due to delays. He walked through the Chicago Museum of Modern Art in 11 minutes. CG made a joke about it at the end of the trip: "I heard a story the other day about two ladies who told me that they had seen a Boeing plane land but immediately take off from an airfield somewhere in the United States. One lady then said to the other. It must have been the Swedish king." Because the visit was so long and extensive, 400 security officers and 1,500 police officers were somehow involved. The core was only 25 however. Reportedly one of them a woman. The 25 followed followed their instructions to a T: §1 was apparently to never leave the protected object alone and §2 to keep him/her/it away from potential threats, which meant not shaking hands, not receiving flower bouquets and avoiding nearby scrubs. CG got extremely tired of them.

The transports took place with a chartered Boeing 727, a helicopter and in one case with a flotilla of small air crafts. The airline had assigned CG all its pilots and flight attendants of Scandinavian descent. In Seattle the ambassadors wife Ulla Wachtmeister held a small ceremony launching the plane on its round trip by naming it "Friendship Sweden" and uncorking a bottle of champagne. CG initially shook hands with all 50 journalists, security officers, etc. but afterwards ignored them. He was criticized for not using the downtime on the plane for press conferences, but probably he slept. It's hard to see how else he would have been able to manage. Most of the trip there was only time for three hours sleep per night.

The press restrictions meant that the most comprehensive presentation of CG during the American trip was a translated interview in the business magazine Sweden Now. CG spoke about the difficulties of his profession. To be interested in everything and to always have an intelligent question at hand, even about machines that you did not understand one iota of what they did. His grandfather had advised him to listen rather than speak and not to take himself too bloody seriously. Two wise councils that he intended to follow. The Bernadotte-life was long and it was important to keep going until the end. CG also talked about the discomfort of being constantly compared to its predecessors. He was who he was. He was not interested in the past like his grandfather, but in the here and now, which meant trade and industry, but that was by chance rather than design. He lived in a different time than his grandfather and with different demands. He was a democratic monarch in a democratic state. If he visited a factory, he sat down with the workers. That would have been unthinkable for his grandfather.<sup>3</sup> May 3 The Times wanted to interview CG for a thematic issue on European monarchies, but he refused because it could set a precedent. There was talk of giving the newspaper 30 minutes in secret. The theme was that during the year nine of Europe's 10 royal houses had visited the United States.

A further feature was a lavish documentary about CG's activities which was supposed to have been shown on a number of American television channels. It was only shown in Minnesota however. The documentary was recorded in 1975 by TV's Sven Lindahl, funded by CG himself and distributed through Polymedia, a now defunct subsidiary of Philips and

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<sup>3</sup> Lars Westman. "Is it fun to be king?" Sweden Now, 1976:1.

Siemens. It was also supposed to be shown on Swedish TV but that didn't happen.<sup>4</sup> The film was so patriotic that Lindahl afterwards had a reputation as an illegitimate brother of CG.

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Because of the disagreement over the purpose of the trip, it was difficult to evaluate whether it was successful or not. The Foreign Ministry considered the visit a foundation on which to build. Part of a diplomatic process. Renewing old contacts and creating new ones. A formality or social rite one might think but the Foreign Office was in the construction business. One brick was added to the other. Courtesy was never wasted. The Embassy considered the most important long-term effect of CG's visit to be that the fund for student exchanges and travel scholarships between countries was replenished. Work in the quiet during and after the visit was more important than “trumpeting”.

During the visit, decision makers and the public had been informed about Swedish business and society. The effect of this was difficult to determine. The most important thing was that it took place. The speakers were always disappointed afterwards. The audience was never as interested as they themselves were. There were also limits as to how CG could act during a visit. He must take an interest in the country he was a guest in. It would look strange if he only participated in Swedish export ventures and spent his time applauding Sweden.

Under the new constitution, the CG had mainly ceremonial duties, which meant that all events in which he himself was the protagonist were, by definition, ceremonies. The Swedish diplomatic corps appears in planning the visit as being so matter of fact that they did not understand to make any use of CG's ceremonial role. The objective, insofar as it is apparent, was to avoid putting the spotlight on CG himself but on the program. This was built on tourist attractions, CG's special interests in agriculture, motor racing and skiing, and meetings with Swedish-Americans. CG found the trip very instructive, which was later commented on that if he had no functions where this knowledge was of use, it was still wasted money. Regarding the Swedish-Americans' enthusiasm for their king, it seems to have served no purpose in Swedish foreign policy. CG's passivity was seen in that light. He didn't understand what he was doing there and that was noticeable.

Since the Swedish journalists were mainly interested in CG as a person, what he said, thought and did, not in Swedish business and society, their reporting was perceived as irrelevant to the visit and part of the “domestic discourse” rather than of foreign policy. The embassy received letters asking about the journalists disloyalty and hostility. Since the American journalists received much of their information from their Swedish colleagues, it also spilled over into their reporting. This lack of relevance was later interpreted as a failure of the Swedish court to get its act together and communicate it. However, some statements about the mood in Minnesota found favour among the heart-land readers: “Even a thoroughly democratic sceptic would have been impressed. The local citizenry outdid itself in producing a thoroughly acceptable version of royal pomp.”

When evaluating the visit, the embassy counted newspaper articles and analysed the content. All said and done, they were rather satisfied. Whether this was justified or not is impossible to determine. The same kind of objections have come back year after year about CG's state visits, county visits, municipality visits, Royal Technology Missions, presences, audiences etc.

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<sup>4</sup> Dagens Nyheter, 1976-01-27; Expressen, 1976-02-28; Aftonbladet, 1976-03-28 & 1976-06-11.

What does he do? On whose initiative? Is it worth the money? Some answers are delivered later in this book.

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Prince Bertil had visited the Swedish-American areas around Minneapolis-Detroit-Chicago in 1938, 1948, 1958, 1966 and 1975. CG visited them in 1976 and in connection with the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1981, the Scandinavia Today program in 1982, the New Sweden initiative in 1988, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bishop Hill in 1996 and the 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ship Kalmar Nyckel's arrival in Delaware in 2013. An older generation of diplomats criticized CG for allowing his visits to be governed by local jubilees. Their state usefulness was unclear.

The biggest of the events was the New Sweden initiative 1988 - the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Swedish landings in Delaware combined with a year-long PR campaign for Swedish industry. The planning started in 1985. In May of that year, the Swedish National Committee for New Sweden '88 was formed with speaker of the Parliament Ingemund Bengtsson as chairman. In the United States, a similar committee was formed, led by Swedish-American billionaire Curtis Carlson. There were also 106 local committees. In 1988, this resulted in over 1,100 events in 110 cities in 28 states. Attention was at it's peak during CG's & Silvia's visit on April 10-27. This visit was also not called a state visit but had the same character. Foreign Minister Sten Andersson was present. CG & Silvia began by meeting with President Ronald Reagan and then crossed the continent. There was a lot of handshaking. About 10 thousand people. The Wilmington tent lunch was chaotic because the participants stole each other's seatings to get as close to them as possible.

The impact of CG's state visits are often taken for granted. But not this time. The original American articles of the year measured about 500 column meters. Half were written during the 17 days CG & Silvia toured the country. The New Sweden Committee consisted of the Swedish Industry Association, the Swedish Trade Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Swedish Industry Association investigated what the home opinion thought: 88 percent considered it very or rather important that Sweden showed itself. 74 percent knew why CG & Silvia were doing in the United States. 93 percent thought they did a very or quite good job there.<sup>5</sup> No evaluation of the venture as such was ever done but expectations seem to have been low enough for everyone to be satisfied:

Chairman of the Swedish Industry Association & New Sweden's working committee, Peter Wallenberg, presented the level of ambition as follows: "Some 50 seminars will illustrate changes in Swedish industry, the Swedish leadership model, research in close cooperation with companies and environmental aspects of industry. But exhibitions, seminars and other official events pale with time. It is the personal contacts with Americans that last."<sup>6</sup>

Chairman of New Sweden's Swedish Executive Committee Peder Bonde spoke about the target group: "We are primarily aimed at policy makers, mainly business people. We are especially addressing those who have no prior knowledge of Sweden and Swedish industry. ... It is estimated that only 4 percent of Americans know anything

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<sup>5</sup> Industriförbundet. Kungäpprets resa i USA. Sifo, 1988-05-06.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Wallenberg: USA-kontakterna kan ej överskattas. Nytt från Industriförbundet, 1987:19.

about Sweden. The task is to broaden this base and increase their susceptibility to more information about Sweden.”<sup>7</sup>

Afterwards the Swedish-American Chamber of commerce organised a panel discussion with a number of CEOs of Swedish subsidiaries. “Several of the 40 participants found it difficult to gain an understanding of the size of the American market and what was a reasonable level of ambition for a venture to make Sweden better known. However the 40 participating company leaders appeared to agree on that the New Sweden year was worth the SEK 50 million it cost.”<sup>8</sup>

The on the spot writing reflected the organizers' lack of ambition. Everybody felt a little disappointed. As a democratic head of state, CG was expected to address the entire American people. Not just to a small group of Swedish Americans & businessmen.

As usual, CG's speeches were criticized. CG's 1<sup>st</sup> Marshal of the Court Jan Kuylenstierna subsequently invited foreign correspondent Thomas Nordegren to the castle to explain the reason for the formulaic platitudes - that CG sometimes made so many speeches that it was difficult to avoid rut. Nordegren, who thought he would be scolded, was offered coffee and the atmosphere was unexpectedly cozy.

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<sup>7</sup> New Sweden '88. Nytt från Industriförbundet, 1988:3.

<sup>8</sup> Facit av New-Sweden-året. Nytt från Industriförbundet, 1988:19.