

## Chapter 36 : “Duty, privilege & mental health”

You have to distinguish between official and unofficial privileges. The official legal privileges have been progressively curtailed. Under the old constitution, the king was exempt from excise duties on cars, petrol, spirits and tobacco. A replacement for this is now incorporated in the appanage. Nor did he pay VAT or customs duties on directly imported goods. Nor any charges to the telecommunications company. But TV license. Gustaf VI had the opportunity to make “high priority calls”, i.e. to cancel the current call. There is no indication that CG has a similar privilege. The royal family pays inheritance tax but until 1975 at a lower rate from 1941 25 percent, then 36 percent. All that remains is legal impunity and certain practices. CG has used this for speeding, but the extent is unclear. He often travels in a motorcade where speed is a protective factor. For example, he may use the collective file. When CG is in company with acquaintances, they are said to have the same privileges as himself, unclear though in what way, there is no data.

Among the customs is that CG has the right to the royal waiting room at Stockholm Central and to free railway travel. However, he so rarely used these privileges that they were about to be revoked in 1983. The Stockholm waiting room is located directly adjacent to the large station building, next to the central restaurant. A long marble aisle leads directly to the platforms. The premises are very beautifully decorated with paintings and have a separate room for the Queen.<sup>1,2</sup> Until 1978 he also had his own railway wagon with kitchenette and sleeper, the “blue wagon”.<sup>3</sup> Like many other politicians he also until 1978 had a free-card at Linjeflyg and SAS. Subsequently, he has used Marcus Wallenberg's private jet SE-DEL and Swedish state leadership's Fairchild Metro III, Saab 340 & Gulfstream IV.

The unofficial privileges are many, sometimes involuntary, a few examples:

BOSTON, SPRING 2001. EF billionaire Bertil Hult turns 60 and parties three days for 80 million SEK. After one of the sessions, an after-party event is held in a restaurant in Boston's World Trade Center. The king cautiously hints that “a schnapps would taste good” to the beef hash, but the harsh American alcohol laws make it impossible to continue drinking at this late hour. When it dawns on the zealous restaurant staff who they are dealing with, however, the special treatment machinery is set in motion. The waiter asks the steward who asks the restaurant manager who calls the landlord who calls the head of World Trade Center who calls and raises the mayor who then issues a temporary permit and the evening can continue.<sup>4</sup>

Court reporter Lundgren tells a true story:

- The Queen once told us in an interview that it can sometimes be a bit embarrassing when she goes shopping. Cashiers do not know whether to charge the full price of the Queen of Sweden. But the Queen wants to pay for herself like everyone else, so she thinks that sometimes her situation becomes hard to handle.<sup>5</sup>

Another episode is that Silvia had forgotten her silver shoes when she was about to take the flight to England from Arlanda [1981]. The police fetched them for her

<sup>1</sup> Dagens Industri, 1983-02-18.

<sup>2</sup> Svenska Dagbladet, 1992-06-06.

<sup>3</sup> Svensk Damtidning, 1989:3.

<sup>4</sup> Fredrik Wilkingsson & Filip Hammar. Kungen. Magasinet Bon, 2002:1, s 131-138.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriella Lahta. Kungen gör det inte med sig själv. Newsglobe.com, 2009-12-17.

breaking all possible speed limits in the process. JO was notified but without any measure taken.<sup>6</sup>

The royal children have received free booze from restaurateurs and free brand clothing from luxury shops. It is regarded by the shops as a good advertising.<sup>7</sup>

\*

Prince Bertil also had many unofficial privileges which which have since ceased: “[Prince Bertil's housekeeper] Aina [Nellberg] thinks that the Swedish people are a little silly when dealing with their royalties. Bertil and Lilian were showered with gifts, food and drink, flowers and treats.”<sup>8</sup> It was also expected that she would use her own money when making purchases. Nellberg wanted a household fund for that purpose. The Marshal of the Realm responded by saying that such had always been the case, and besides it was an honour to be employed by the Prince.

Until 1962, Prince Bertil owned some 30 cars. Many of them were very expensive sports models that he got to buy cheap directly from the factory or borrow. He never made a secret of it, but regarded it as a matter of course.

\*

It is often pointed out that CG tries to keep a distance between himself as a private citizen and his role as king. He often kids about it. Sometimes it is expressed as him being safe in his role of king and therefore not needing to emphasize it all the time. Personally, I see it as another variant of CG's indirect way of asserting himself. However, it has its value. Silvia has a bad reputation for her habit of demanding protocol even from the servants. This is interpreted as uncertainty on her part and is explained by the fact that commoners who marry into a royal house have a lower status than those who are born into it. Queen Sonja of Norway is reported to behave in the same manner. In the beginning Silvia hoped to stay the way she was. A respectable middle-class girl who happened to have a 9-5 job as Queen of Sweden. This was also in accordance with Queen Ingrid's advice “Be Yourself”. Over the years, however, Silvia's official image has become increasingly queen-like, while information about her private self is completely missing. Here's how it can sound when interviewing Silvia:

Anyone who works at the court or moves in related circles are marvels of discretion. Otherwise they would not last long. “The Queen is not so tall,” says one of these people I have spoken to the past month, one of all those people who say that they have absolutely nothing to say about the Queen. When the person who says that the Queen is not so tall suddenly hears herself expose this, she stiffens, looks horrified, puts her hand to her mouth and implores: - I have never said that, I have never said that the Queen is not tall, you must not write that!<sup>9</sup>

Silvia tries to live up to the expectations of her surrounding world. She reads everything written about her and to her. Probably not very healthy in the long run because of all the

---

<sup>6</sup> TT, 1981-09-16.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Nyhlén. De shoppar vilt - gratis. Aftonbladet, 2004-10-13.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Sidoli. Hushållerska på Villa Solbacken. Hänt i Veckan, 1987:22.

<sup>9</sup> Cecilia Hagen. Bilaga om Silvia: Drottningen. Expressen, 1989-08-06.

conflicting information about how royalty may behave. There seems to be pressure for her to behave royally even in the shower. For example, the criticism from the code of conduct expert Agneta Uddenberg that she should not lunch in bikini as during a holiday in Saint-Tropez.<sup>10</sup> Such has made Silvia and CG spend their holidays at the longest possible distance from home: Brazil, Thailand, Mauritius, the Galapagos Islands, Borneo and the old Swedish colony of Saint-Barthélemy. There they can look as ruffled as they please.

CG has three passports. On state visits, it is the cabinet pass: A large piece of white paper with the text "His Majesty the King of Sweden with court and servants on a trip abroad" folded according to all the rules of the art. On semi-official journeys it is a diplomatic passport. On private trips it is an ordinary passport in the name of the Duke of Jämtland. When he wants to be incognito, CG uses aliases such as Bernard Doth, Carl-Gustaf Adolfsson and Hubert Öland.

\*

Few people behave normally in the vicinity of CG. This is because CG is not consistent in his behaviour. You rarely know who you are talking to. It's like in films about the U.S. military where you often hear the expression "permission to speak freely?" when the underling has something to say to the officer. When CG wants to, he's actually very good at listening and making people relax, but he rarely wants to. CG is king and likes being king. With royalty comes a code of conduct, both for himself and the surrounding area. However it amuses CG to sometimes ignore it.

Dr. Mattias Frihammar started to take an interest in the royal house when he worked as a museum technician at the castle in the late 1990s and became aware of how people behaved:

- I was struck by the strict and basically unrestricted role that King Carl XVI Gustaf had at the castle. How all work could stop as the king passed by, how employees bowed and discreetly whispered "Good morning, Your Majesty". The question that interests me is how this servility and fascination with royalty was possible in a modern and egalitarian country such as Sweden.

- The king as a person does not really need to emphasize his social position, says Mattias Frihammar, just as in the world of theatre, it is the reaction of his surroundings that makes him credible.<sup>11</sup>

In his article "Commonality that arouses desire"<sup>12</sup>, Frihammar is quite explicit about what is going on. He points out that: (1) People are affected by fancy buildings, expensive furnishings and beautiful clothes. (2) People are affected by the fact that a person is well-publicised, has a high social position or belongs to a famous family. (3) The King and Queen insist that they be treated according to their rank. The meaning of this rank is unclear which is perceived as unpleasant. (4) At the beginning of an acquaintance, the subordination king|queen - subject is handled as a question of etiquette. This etiquette is perceived by the subject as a help rather than a humiliation. The royalty's superior social position is treated as a fact of life, not something the royals can influence. They are born or married into it, thus innocent.

---

<sup>10</sup> Karolina Vikingsson. Magstarkt, drottningen! Aftonbladet, 2003-08-09

<sup>11</sup> Caroline Lagercrantz. Taffeltäckare, marskalk och fatbursjungfru. Populär historia, 2004:7.

<sup>12</sup> Mattias Frihammar. Vanlighet som väcker begär. Kulturella perspektiv, 2009:2, s 15-19.

(5) The King|Queen may temporarily disregard the etiquette when it impossible to maintain it, which of the subjects perceives as a relief. (6) With time you get used to the situation and learn to master it's intricacies. You internalize the values expressed by the ceremonial. The need for etiquette wanes. It has served it's purpose.

Cecilia Åse wants to extend this reasoning to the monarchy as a whole. Since CG cannot help that he was born into his position, according to her he will not attract criticism from his surroundings.<sup>13</sup> The republicans argue in the same way. They criticize the constitution, not the royals. I myself have no such scruples, because the biography is about how CG manages his heritage. The constitution I take more or less for granted.

In his doctoral dissertation<sup>14</sup>, it is much more unclear what Frihammar wants to say. There is no hypothesis and no summary. The servility is part of the air you breathe. Perhaps he differentiates between CG as a supervisor and CG as a politician:

- What the King and Queen cannot do is to become “royal” in public. The ethnologist Mattias Frihammar says that they then have problems with their influence. A measure of democratic coating is needed.

It is hard to see how CG could ever avoid behaving “royally”. It is his normal state. At the castle he does as kings have done at all times, surrounds himself with doormen and a protocol so complicated that the environment becomes unsure how to behave. He only acts democratically when he is forced to do so or can gain an advantage. He never behaves superior or snotty, but he insists on the protocol. Court reporter Margit Fjellman put it as that royalty = kindness to all + clearly noticeable distance. King Gustaf VI had it more than all the royalty she had ever met. “With time an almost spiritual quality.”<sup>15</sup> CG is not a very flexible person and definitely not so at home. If you want to spend time with him, you have to adapt. The most vulnerable are the employees in lower positions and the journalists.

By insisting that CG as a person, i.e. the way he behaves, has no meaning, Frihammar makes the reactions of the surrounding incomprehensible. It all comes to a series of mystifications:

- People today know that the royals are like everyone else, but still act as if they are not. This happens in the big, as well as in the small, says Mattias Frihammar.

But the royalty also do something to people, according to Mattias Frihammar. When they act in a way that shows that they accept that there is royal supremacy, inequality and social differences are justified by a distanced and humorous approach [as a form of social lubrication].

- Through royalty, people establish an individual and collective history and in that process clear social categories and hierarchies are established. The royal mystique is not in the royal bodies, but in everyone around them acting as if the magic really existed, concludes Mattias Frihammar.

---

<sup>13</sup> Cecilia Åse. Monarkins makt : Nationell gemenskap i svensk demokrati. Ordfront förlag, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Mattias Frihammar. Ur svenska hjärtans djup : reproduktion av samtida monarki. Stockholms universitet, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Margit Fjellman. Gustaf VI Adolf. Närbilder av kungen. Bonniers, 1973.

- People make royalty a magical piece of the puzzle in an otherwise rational world. By acting as if the royals are extraordinary, they are also perceived as such. The attractive royal mystique appears in the encounter between notions of royal commonality and royal uniqueness. Through memories of historical kings and relationships with current and future royal figures, collective immortality is created, says Mattias Frihammar.

This is society as a self-playing piano. One gets the impression that Frihammar joins the old saying, "Wherever slaves are, masters will soon arise to oppress them". My own attitude is rather "Masters do not wear swords for the fun of it". (But this belongs to a later discussion on social cohesion.)

There is no deviation from the code of conduct. Even CG's old nurse Ingrid Björnberg kept her distance and her book about CG and the Haga-princesses is personal without ever becoming critical. The same applies to the immediate circle of friends. CG is addressed as the king. Silvia is addressed as the Queen. Even in the sailboat. Friends usually claim to help CG and Silvia have normal relationships. This is nonsense. There is never a critical word. It is not the case that the circle of friends actively kiss ass. CG and Silvia are allergic to this. It is the case that a facet of normal relations between people has been axed. CG and Silvia, for their part, feel that they treat everyone democratically equally. If you're not royal, it doesn't matter what you are. There are no arguments. If CG or Silvia are dissatisfied, the person is not invited. Court journalism has similarities with Kremlinology. You learn to decipher the blanks.

\*

The disadvantage of being king is minimal criticism. It is rarely the servility that surrounded Gustaf VI where all dissenting sentences were expressed in code language but for example personal criticism is not welcome. This appears to have been evident, for example, in CG's public speaking which over the years has deteriorated significantly without anything being done about it: "You see the difference, don't you? In 1976, the King speaks freely without a script and without seeming plagued by the situation. In 2009 it is almost painful to see the king talk, it is as if he was forced to deliver this Christmas speech. He doesn't like it. With over thirty years of the habit of delivering speeches, the king should be extremely skilled. He is not, and I wonder why."<sup>16</sup>

Also Silvia's public speaking has also deteriorated. In June 1977, her knowledge of Swedish was good enough for her to take her mother to Millesgården and simultaneously interpret the Swedish guide to Portuguese. The interviews were then still in German or English but from the following year in Swedish. In interviews from the early 1980s, she speaks clearly and distinctly without hesitating. Then it gets progressively worse, blurrier and she searches for words. She explained her mediocre Swedish to the effect that she did not start learning the language until she arrived in Sweden and that she was prevented by her obligations to devote herself to the language full time. Various people have pointed out that this can only be half the truth. When her language classes ended after about five years, she seems to have received no criticism of the environment. She does not read Swedish books, she says she starts on them but never finishes them. Because of her bad vocabulary, it's obviously too laborious. She only reads simple text like magazines. Her grammar and pronunciation are also poor. There is often the wrong word order and German emphasis on 's' and 'r'. She would need several months at a language laboratory. Also her German has gradually deteriorated so that she speaks slower

---

<sup>16</sup> Flashback. Den stora skvallertråden om H.M. Konung Carl XVI Gustaf. "zwoig", #1382, 2009-12-28.

and with Swedish emphasis. She spends a lot of time abroad with her organizations and with her family in Brazil. At least one month a year. Self-discipline has obviously not been enough to maintain her language skills.

No strategy discussions seem to be taking place within the court. All the ideas I have found are from Gustaf VI's time. However, because the conditions are similar, this has not caused any complications. Come then, Brunei.

Here one might ask how can our king make such a false and clumsy statement? My personal view is that the Swedish monarchy has been allowed to become more and more unrealistic thanks to the fact that it has given the royal family tasks in which it will not be possible to participate in various free debates. Ola Lindholm, who led the televised tribute show "Congratulations Victoria" during the summer of 2003, apparently has similar views when he says in Expressen: It was hard to keep from laughing. They're like a bunch of cartoon characters, except for Victoria, who has some human features. That is why I think it would be good for both Sweden and the royal family if they could participate in various debates. By participating in different debates, people become more aware of the views of others and gain a better understanding, while sometimes discovering that they themselves do not have the same opinions as they thought they had before a serious debate. Unfortunately, our King has not been given the opportunity to participate in such debates where he can develop his way of thinking and has unfortunately been called an incompetent head of state by among others the DN's editorial on February 11, 2004.

If he were a clever and cunning debater, it is extremely doubtful that he would be presented as an such an incompetent head of state. Some people think that there should always be people around the king who help him when he gets questions. Personally, I think that this way the King is prevented from developing his own ability to speak, and I look forward to the King choosing (when the Constitution allows) to finally come forward and participate in various debates. A week after the king's comments [on Brunei], a determined Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg says that it will be a long time before the king will speak again!! Personally, I find it very puzzling that a lady-in-waiting should decide when a king should make statements or not.<sup>17</sup>

Since CG is surrounded by servants, adjutants, bodyguards and generally helpful people, he rarely does anything himself. He has joked about how he gradually became more helpless in everyday life. Maybe he can still fry an egg, maybe not.

Since everything because of security issues has to be planned and announced in advance, CG and Silvia have become unused to spontaneous initiatives. They rarely go out. Enclosed in their bubble, the whole family is suspicious of the outside world, possibly by all rights: "No one should be able to feather or buy into our circle of friends. We choose ourselves who or whom we want to associate with, regardless of background or money."<sup>18</sup> This social circle contains no intellectual persons, however.

\*

---

<sup>17</sup> Peter-Nikitas Samiotakis. Vi kan inte ha en statschef som är diktaturanhängare. Geocities. Odaterad. (Omkring 2004.)

<sup>18</sup> Johan T Lindwall. Victoria – Prinsessan privat. Månpocket, 2010.

Being royalty often has consequences for your education. It is not such an advantage to be *crème de la crème* as one imagines. It kills motivation. It's fine as long as there's external pressure. At university level, however, it is assumed that students are self-sufficient, which royalty often is not. They live in a court bureaucracy. For example, Princess Christina complained that Sibylla took her home from Radcliffe College after only one year: "The studies in Sweden did not go well. I needed a mandatory schedule like in America to get something out of my hands. I can't handle a free schedule. Nothing will come out of your hands if you do not have the pressure to be present at a particular workplace at certain times of the day. At least that's how it is for me. Some advantages you have [however] as a princess: You don't have to declare your income or expenses, that's nice. And you get better treatment here and there."<sup>19</sup> Additional benefits were to live a life that was both pleasant and interesting.<sup>20</sup> This with pleasantly ruled out the effort that often had to be made to get something done. Royalty easily become dilettantes and "almost's" (almost made it). It later emerged that contributing factors were the lack of time due to the representation, that she was treated quite harshly at the seminars and that she was afraid of the criticism she would get when the paper, as said and done a first, was leaked to the press. She eventually dismissed herself as an academic "drop-out".

From this point of view, the frenetic activity displayed by CG and Silvia is remarkable. It seems to have sprung from a mix of inferiority complexes, self-assertiveness, diffuse performance requirements and a willingness to structure life. They can never be sure that they have done enough. In connection with the Henemark affair, CG stated that he wanted to compensate for the possible damage caused to the monarchy by further increasing the work pace. One gets associations to the proverb "When you only have a hammer, the whole world looks like a nail". Something seems wrong.

What CG feels the worst is constantly being watched and that everything he says is over-interpreted. This he has been saying ever since high school. Since CG later made a point of never explaining himself, leaving that to a spokesman, one might say that he partly has himself to blame. The little he himself says explodes like cannon shots, a little more statements would dilute the effect and possibly be easier to handle.

\*

All the royals in this biography have emphasized the importance of looking humorously at life. If you take every conflict seriously, you won't live long. Humour is an armour but is also a neighbour of self-contempt. Humour works through self-denial - a devaluation of one's own person. CG claims to be humorous about the most intimate claims of his lack of intelligence and his loose living. Throughout his childhood, he has also been asked to disregard his own needs and feelings. The future of the Bernadotte dynasty was more important than his personal well-being. However, there are limits to what can be swallowed. In 1969-1971, in the run-up to the Torekov compromise, CG seems so "slow" in the interviews that he most likely suffered from a depression.

There is a humanist criticism of a monarchist system of government as being hostile to human beings, with its unequal treatment of from birth and the unreasonable demands that are made upon them regardless of fitness to the task. Democracy would also be preferable to the royal

---

<sup>19</sup> Kerstin Hallert. Svenska Dagbladet, 1973-08-01.

<sup>20</sup> Allers, 1969:31.

house if they wanted a life. I haven't been able to locate where the criticism comes from but for example Prince Bertil used to make fun of the arguments: He had never met a monarch who would rather be a citizen. The current wording of the criticism is that the constitution violates human rights, such as the freedom to choose one's future, religion and bride.

At the time of Princess Estelle's birth, the university lecturer in personality and developmental psychology Bertil Persson & the court reporter Johan T Lindwall were interviewed on the subject.<sup>21</sup> Persson was not aware of any research on the psychological problems of royalty but believed that the motivation for the assigned role was not very high in the beginning and that they were uncomfortable with the situation. However, like others, they eventually adapted. From that point of view, royalty was not at all unique. Lindwall agreed with the description: Both CG and Crown Princess Victoria had told him that during their childhood they never considered whether there was an alternative. Everyone they met took their future for granted. The conflicts came when, after graduation, they met new people with new ideas and began to reflect on their situation. But nobility obliges, they reasoned. If they were chosen by fate, they would somehow have to manage. Like most royals, they seemed to espouse a stoic philosophy of life. The quote below has never been cited by CG or anyone in his family but gives an idea of what it is about:

”Life becomes, as the Stoics more than once tell us, like a play which is acted or a game played with counters. Viewed from outside, the counters are valueless; but to those engaged in the game their importance is paramount. What really and ultimately matters is that the game shall be played as it should be played. God, the eternal dramatist, has cast you for some part in His drama, and hands you the role. It may turn out that you are cast for a triumphant king; it may be for a slave who dies in torture. What does that matter to the good actor? He can play either part; his only business is to accept the role given him, and to perform it well. Similarly, life is a game of counters. Your business is to play it in the right way. He who set the board may have given you many counters; He may have given you few. He may have arranged that, at a particular point in the game, most of your men shall be swept accidentally off the board. You will lose the game; But why should you mind that? It is your play that matters, not the score that you happen to make. He is not a fool to judge you by your mere success or failure. Success or failure is a thing He can determine without stirring a hand. It hardly interests Him. What interests Him is the one thing which he cannot determine - the action of your free and conscious will.” (Gilbert Murray. The Stoic philosophy. IN: Humanist essays. London: Unwin books. 1964)

Or in modern wording: Play the game for something else does not exist.

CG: You have to be goal-oriented or you will not achieve anything! ... In my position you can't start crying when the going gets tough. You have to continue. Anything else is unthinkable.

SM: But you can cry even if you're the king?

CG: (Laughing) No, you can't... That's simply unthinkable!<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Jenny Rickardson. Psykologin bakom en prinsessas födelse. Modern psykologi, 2012:2,

<sup>22</sup> Stephan Mehr. Intervju med kung Carl XVI Gustaf. MånadsJournalen, 1996:5.