

Chapter 38 : “Brunei & Phuket”

CG, Silvia and Prince Carl Philip spent the New Year of 2002/2003 in Thailand. CG also participated in a Scout event. On January 12, Silvia returned to a conference in London while CG, Prince Carl Philip and a few others continued to the sultanate of Brunei on the north-west coast of Borneo. The visit lasted three days. CG performed some Scout business. He and Prince Carl Philip also participated in a car race with loaned Ferraris and visited the Sultan's car collection, more than 3,500 luxury cars housed in four hangars. Everything was just as exaggerated. The Sultan's palace, the second largest in the world, had 1,888 rooms, 290 bathrooms, and a floor area of 200,000 square meters. At the end, the Sultan proposed that CG should return, but on a proper state visit.

As it had already been decided that CG would visit Vietnam on a state visit next year February 2-6, CG felt that he could combine the invitations and on this return submitted an application to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was immediately granted. (Possibly he asked for the matter orally at a meeting with Foreign Minister Anna Lindh after the Council January 17.)

During the Parliamentary debate afterwards Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds was asked how the state visit to Brunei was decided, but neither she nor the Foreign Ministry's protocol director, Catherine von Heidenstam, was at the time appointed, instead referring to her predecessors Anna Lindh and Karin Ehnбом-Palmquist. It later emerged that in the archives of the Foreign Ministry there was a list of candidate countries but no documents or minutes on how the final selection had been made. According to Foreign Affairs Council Anders Lindén, the Prime Minister's Office was informed and Anna Lindh had given the go-ahead for the election of Brunei in January 2003. When asked how the Swedish Council of State discussed the elections, Lindén replied: The King and Queen were in Vietnam anyway, so we wanted to take the opportunity to open a dialogue with another non-democratic state. In addition, there was an interest from the Swedish business community as Brunei was about to be modernized. The Swedish Foreign Ministry's and Sweden's traditional attitude to dictatorship states was to open doors rather than to isolate and boycott. Therefore, the Foreign Ministry had previously approved royal trips to Jordan and Saudi Arabia.¹

During the year, the Swedish Trade Council (an authority for cooperation between government and industry) sent out requests among its members about the interest in a visit to Brunei as well as Vietnam. One of those interested was the English-based billionaire Sven-Philip Sörensen who planned to form a travel company “Golden Touch Inc.” and wanted to establish himself in Brunei. This was later criticized as a form of cronyism because Sörensen and CG knew each other from before. For example, Sörensen had contributed to Silvia's charity work through a donation to ECPAT. The stage at which Mr. Sörensen expressed his interest, i.e. whether he influenced CG to submit the application for the state visit to Brunei, is not known. As a friend of CG, he may well have participated in the visit January 12-14 2003. In any event, he was reported to have visited Brunei several times during the year to investigate the business opportunities.

As usual during state visits, there was a long period of advance planning. The Vietnam visit was already planned in spring 2003. “The Brunei part of the trip was nailed in September. In November, a delegation of Foreign Affairs and Court officials went to Brunei for a so-called

¹ Björn Hygstedt. Hemlighetsmakeri kring resor ifrågasätts. Svenska Dagbladet, 2004-02-12.

pre-visit, routine prior to all state visits. The King and Queen also received a presentation about the situation in Brunei before visiting, according to Svenska Dagbladet. The King's speech was approved and an information folder about the country was handed over by the Foreign Ministry. Prime Minister Göran Persson was informed about the visit to Vietnam - but not about the visit to Brunei, says State Secretary Lars Danielsson to TV4's News."² Persson later made a big deal about his alleged ignorance of the issue but probably it only means that he had forgotten what was said during the meeting. Persson's closest man Lars Danielsson is probably not the best truth witness either. He seems at that time and also later seen as his primary task to protect his boss. It is common for the receiving country to, a month before the state visit, send journalists in order to introduce the invited head of state and the country from which he comes to the public. However, that was not the case with Vietnam or Brunei.

As the state visit approached, it became known that Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds would only participate in the Vietnam visit and in Brunei would be replaced by State Secretary Krister Nilsson from the Ministry of the Environment. On January 31, 2004, Birgitta Ohlsson, a member of the Swedish Liberal Party, protested against this. Ohlsson had become MP in 2002, was a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs with responsibility for guarding human rights and was also chairman of the Republican Association. Ohlsson's objection was that a protest about human rights conveyed by Krister Nilsson did not carry the same weight as if it had been conveyed by the foreign minister. It is not known if Ohlsson had previously protested the visit in the Committee on Foreign Affairs. At the time, however, it was too late to change the planning.

Ohlsson listed a number of blatant abuses in Brunei. She also pointed out that CG as king did not in any way weigh up the situation as he was not allowed to express any political views. Despite several slings and arrows against CG, Ohlsson's criticism was mainly directed against the government and against Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. Lindh had, however, had died on September 11 the year before in the aftermath of a knife attack which came to paralyse the debate about her guilt.

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The state visit to Vietnam coincided with the 35th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the two countries. In 1969, Sweden was the first country in Europe to establish diplomatic relations with what was then North Vietnam. CG and Silvia arrived late Sunday night on February 1. The official part of the state visit began Monday with a conversation with Head of State Tran Duc Luong. CG got involved in a debate with the head of Vietnam's Communist Party, Nong Duc Manh, which should not have happened. Laila Freivalds took over. As usual it was difficult for outsiders to understand CG's symbolic role.

CG and Silvia then performed the usual chores: visited attractions and shook hands with local potentates. A large number of friendly reviews about Vietnam were delivered by both CG and Freivalds. CG expressed his satisfaction at being met by both male and female party officials and appreciated the democratic atmosphere. He expressed his admiration for the country's economic growth in a troubled world market and promised increased trade with Swedish companies, especially in the data, telecom and forestry sectors. The entourage was extensive: A political delegation, an industrial delegation, an environmental delegation and a health delegation.

² Ingvar Hedlund. Resan till Brunei var kungens idé. Expressen, 2004-02-11.

Things were also going on in Stockholm. On Tuesday morning (Swedish time) Birgitta Ohlsson and the head of the Royal Court Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg were interviewed by the host Lotta Bouvin-Sundberg in the program God morning Sweden. Ohlsson was presented as a Liberal anybody. At no time during the interview did it become clear that she was chairman of the Republican Association. Both guests were therefore uncertain in which capacity they had been invited. Throughout the interview, Tarras-Wahlberg tried to explain how a state visit is made and it's purpose. Ohlsson tried to talk about the Sultanate's violation of human rights. What Bouvin-Sundberg wanted with the interview was not clear. The atmosphere became tense and Tarras-Wahlberg overbearing. Parts of the interview, those where Tarras-Wahlberg was at her snottiest, were afterwards published:

- Yes, Brunei is a country where 80 percent of criminal cases are judged by caning, a country where there have been major dictatorial problems since 1962.
- You read that?
- Absolutely.
- You've been reading about Brunei.
- Yes.
- I think you should then devote yourself to reading a little about what you should do in the Swedish Parliament.
- My mission in the Parliament is, among other things, to work in the foreign affairs committees with issues concerning human rights and to combat dictatorships in the world.³

- It's very strange that you are engaged in Brunei right now. You are well known for engaging in all issues that get publicity on. Especially when it comes to the monarchy. I have a feeling that you are more concerned about removing the king than with Swedish foreign policy.⁴

[The head of the Royal Court's information centre, who, unlike the king, has not been handed the job in inheritance, but is supposedly qualified for the assignment, tells us that the claim that Brunei is a dictatorship is greatly exaggerated, because in Brunei there are eight newspapers, and that is indeed more than in Sweden. Yes, she actually said that. ... Mrs. Tarras-Wahlberg, who affects a way of talking so condescending and nasally superior that a parody no longer is possible, obviously thinks it appropriate to talk on television about the stupidity and ignorance of a democratically elected MP who uses sources such as Amnesty International and the State Department for her information about Brunei, while Mrs. Tarras-Wahlberg herself knew how things really were. She probably feels, after so many years in the service of the royal house, that a little of the blue blood has entered her and given her the power and knowledge from a higher force and thus also the right to say whatever enters her mind.⁵]

Tarras-Wahlberg later regretted that she had been provoked "by her [Ohlsson's] rabid approach" to Brunei. Normally, she would have accompanied CG, but it clashed with other commitments (she had accompanied Crown Princess Victoria on a trip to Egypt) and her colleague Cathrine Broms replaced her. So it was not Tarras-Wahlberg's responsibility and it showed - she was ill prepared. "She showed a devastating lack of understanding of the criticism," says PR consultant Paul Ronge. - Her statement hurt the royal house almost more

³ "Godmorgon Sverige". SVT, 2004-02-03.

⁴ Terese Christiansson & Markus Wilhelmson. "Drottning" Elisabeths tuffa tid. Expressen, 2004-02-15.

⁵ Marie Söderqvist. Det blå blodets privilegier. Expressen, 2004-02-11.

than the king's own. Either she's overrated or she's not used to being at the receiving end.”⁶ It was speculated that she was suffering from the effects of her recent divorce from the tax lawyer etc. Björn Tarras-Wahlberg.

The original interview is quite long, four pages in print. The part relating to CG's role in state visits is brief. Ohlsson believed that: (1) It is pointless, even offensive to the public sense of justice, for states to be represented by unelected Heads of State. This was true for both Sweden, Vietnam and Brunei. (2) State visits to non-democratic states are a PR stunt where CG is used to legitimize oppressive regimes. This applied to Vietnam, Brunei, Laos, Cuba and other states. (3) In the absence of Foreign Minister Freivalds from Brunei, The rank of State secretary Nilsson is so far below CG on the diplomatic scale that the situation becomes unreasonable. CG is being forced into a political role which he cannot have under the Torekov compromise. (4) The money spent on the visit to Brunei by the Swedish State could well be put to better use.

Tarras-Wahlbergs responded with a mixture of personal insults and assurances that CG adhered to the Torekov compromise: that he was aware of the difficulties of state visits and fully capable of dealing with them, that the visit was largely financed by the Sultan himself and that Mr. Ohlsson's interpretation of the diplomatic protocol was ridiculous. All this caused some bad blood – it was even called Tarras “Brunei-gate” - and possibly brought more attention to the Brunei visit than would otherwise have been the case.

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On February 7 CG and Silvia left for Brunei. Some members of the business delegation had also chosen to return home or remain in Vietnam to conclude negotiations. In Brunei CG and Silvia were received at the airport by Crown Prince Al Muthaddee Billah and one of the princesses. They were then driven to the official welcoming ceremony with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah. Thousands of schoolchildren lined the road. CG awarded the Sultan the Seraphim Order and received a corresponding Order in return. Queen Raja Isteri had to make do with the Order of the North Star. Brunei and Sweden had established diplomatic relations as early as 1984, but this was the first state visit, although Prince Bertil made a detour there in 1982. After two hours, CG and Silvia each continued with an official program. CG inspected the Scout business. Silvia visited a mosque. Then there was a banquet. CG presented gifts to the Sultan, including a model of the regal ship Vasa.

A total of ten Swedish industry leaders took part in the visit, including Sörensen, sat in seminars and got acquainted with people. Sörensen signed a contract with the Royal Brunei Air which gave him the general agency for the sale of trips to Brunei in Sweden. The Foreign Ministry had provided them with a memo urging them to limit their conversation to golf and business. At the official welcome banquet on February 7, CG made a speech about the importance of democracy and the value of protecting the environment. The speech had been approved by both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the royal court. The government's representative, State Secretary Krister Nilsson, criticized Brunei's human rights violations.

8 o'clock in the morning of the second day of the visit (Swedish time) a satirical episode was broadcast in the program Public service in SR P1. It was a parody of Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg and the king, whose first line was: - I'm on Twilfit and trying out swimwear. Am I going to Brunei or what is going on? Tarras: - You are to meet the Sultan. But for God's

⁶ Terese Christiansson & Markus Wilhelmson. "Drottning" Elisabeths tuffa tid. Expressen, 2004-02-15.

sake, don't say anything stupid when you're there! The King: - I can't promise that, you know that! Prophetic in the extreme was the later judgment.

On February 9, a press conference was held in the antechamber of the Sultan's guest palace. On the spot were CG, his information secretary Cathrine Broms and three Swedish journalists: Lars Gunnar Erlandsson (SR), Michael Töpffer (Expressen; free lance journalist living in Thailand) and Catarina Hurtig (Svensk Damtidning). In Vietnam Erlandsson had asked CG which countries he should not visit in his capacity as king. CG replied that it was for the State Department to decide. None of the journalists were satisfied with CG's evasive answer. However, the atmosphere was relaxed. Below are Töpffer's two questions and CG's answers transcribed verbatim from the tape:

Töpffer: I'd like to know a little... I understand that Your Majesty has been here before on a private visit, what has Your Majesty's relationship with the Sultan? Can your majesty tell me a little about it? Was it private or was it also, sorry, official but part of a private relationship?

CG: It is clear that... we have met in different contexts in Europe and... not only in Europe, but in Japan, and when it comes to official occasions and in that way we have met on several occasions before. And of course, when you have these trips you take the opportunity to talk, talk, about your respective countries and be proud of them and say "Next time come and see me" about, huh, so that of course it has been nice to be able to come out, uh, to come here, to get an invitation from the Sultan And it's great that we're here. But we are not here alone, but we have with us a large, extremely large delegation from Swedish industry. It is probably one of the biggest, ehhhh, trade delegations they have received here, I would think. And that shows the great interest on the Swedish side. We also discussed... or ehhh, I suggested that we... return visits are quite important to link these opportunities, and I hope that they will come with a delegation eventually to Sweden.

Töpffer: The Sultan has been accused of being a non-democrat who rules his country with an iron fist, is there any difficulty in socializing and negotiating with such a leader?

CG: I don't, hah, for various reasons I haven't had, so to speak, that, uh, that feeling.. but... *I feel rather the opposite, that he has colossal close... it is a small country, eh, you must have it in, in, the ulterior mind and understanding also and, uh, long history. And he has tremendous proximity to, to the people. He is, uh, first, take as an example on his birthday which is in June so he receives 40,000 people here, it is Open House, on his, uh, palace, which is then large, of course, because otherwise you do not have room with 40,000 people. He greets 20,000, handshakes 20,000, every other, uh, two consecutive days, and offers a big buffet. Yes, the whole family, then they go every, after that, on a fourteen-day tour, equivalent to a national tour as we do. That they make every year to everyone, ehhhh, it becomes quite... to every village basically and greets every single resident in, eh, handshakes and then there is all the possibilities for a close direct communication with all his in-residents in Brunei, so I feel it as a very close very close, and every Sunday after the visit to the mosque that they participate in, they have one, he has one, what do you say, yes, an open audience where anyone can come and greet him and express their wishes and, yes, both complain about so, I may, so one So it is a more open country than any other where*

one can imagine, where the contact between his, yes, when the sultan and his ministers is a very, so to speak, close cooperation, and therefore there are very short decision paths, so that when it comes to the sultan he then takes the decisions together with, with a Council of his then experts on these matters, so that I experience mutual trust and cooperation at all, at all levels. It's actually quite amazing. One wishes that it could be so in a, uh, ordinary society, but for practical reasons but here is a small relatively homogeneous society and I have a great respect and understanding.⁷ [My emphasis on the parts of the interview that were later broadcast in Aktuellt, SVT1.]

SRs responsible editor later complained about the interview: “He starts at one end and adds to it bit by bit. If you break in with supplementary questions, it becomes quite confused. He starts at something he wants to talk about, but then he backtracks. We had difficulties picking ten consecutive seconds to make a trailer.”⁸ Catarina Hurtig agreed: “It's difficult to interview the king. Although you get verbose responses, the individual parts do not add up. The answer starts in one way and often ends in another, and when you replay it you find that your question has not been answered. The up- or downside is that it allows you to quote him in many different ways. ... This out of context sentence about the Sultan and his closeness to the people is an example of how it can end up: 4-5 minutes of disconnected sentences and a very skilled reporter from Swedish Radio who caught it on tape and when replaying it found a way to connect the sentences that actually made a sort of sense, but not in the way the king had intended.”⁹ An edited version of the interview was published in full in Svensk Damtidning.¹⁰

When leaving, CG and Silvia were interviewed by Radio Television Brunei. CG hoped that Brunei would continue to develop its eco-tourism and attract Swedish visitors. He also spoke with enthusiasm of a possible exchange program for business representatives and students between Brunei and Sweden. Silvia, for her part, praised the sultan's management of Brunei's cultural heritage and his efforts for the country's young people and disabled people. Then they continued to Bangkok, Thailand, where Silvia was to sign a collaboration agreement between the World Childhood Foundation and the Thai League for the Promotion of the Status of Women under the patronage of Princess Soamsawali.

A general description of the visit was sent in P1 8:15. An excerpt of the interview was sent in P1 12:30:

[Töpffer:] The Sultan has been accused of being a non-democrat who rules his country with an iron hand. Is there any difficulty in socializing and negotiating with such a leader?

[CG:] I haven't had that feeling for various reasons. The opposite is true. It is a small country with a long history and he has a tremendous proximity to the people. For example, on his birthday which is in June he receives 40 000 people, it is open house at his palace, which is great of course otherwise you do not fit 40 000 people, he handshakes with 20 000 two days in succession. It is a more open country than one could imagine.

⁷ Michael Töpffer. Intervjun med kungen – ord för ord. Expressen, 2004-02-11.

⁸ Janne Sundling. Färre kungsord i framtiden. Resumé, 2004-02-19.

⁹ Catarina Hurtig. ”Kungen och vi : mer närgången men mindre granskande journalistik.” Publicistklubbens debatt 2005-10-17.

¹⁰ Catarina Hurtig. Läs kungaparets egna ord om statsbesöket. Svensk Damtidning, 2004:9.

Meanwhile, the journalists at P1, SVT1 and Expressen contacted different people for telephone interviews. The interviewees listened to all or part of the original interview and were in varying degrees critical. A short version of the interview (the italics above with embedded comments) was broadcast in Aktuellt 19:30:

[CG:] It is a more open country than any other where one can imagine. [Lena Scherman:] The Swedish king is with pomp and splendour on a visit to the small sultan Brunei in Southeast Asia. Here the Sultan is an autocrat and Amnesty has strongly criticized violations of human rights but the king sees nothing worth criticizing the Sultan for. [CG:] I rather experience the opposite, that he has ... tremendous closeness to, to the people. ... first, take as an example of his birthday which is in June so he receives 40 000 people here, it's Open House, on his, uh, palace. [Carl Söderbergh, Secretary-General Amnesty:] I was sad to hear what he said about the situation in Brunei and what he said it being an open society. In recent years, we have seen several cases of Christians, among others, who have been detained on charges of carrying out so-called cultural activities. [Lena Scherman:] The government representative during the trip was a State Secretary from the Ministry of the Environment who has criticized the lack of human rights in the country but the king has nothing but good to say about the Sultan. [CG:] Then they go every, after that, on a fourteen-day tour, corresponding to a national tour like we do. That they make every year to everyone, eh, it becomes quite... to every village basically and greets every resident in, eh, handshakes.¹¹

[The journalist Lena Scherman SVT - responsible for the feature - was married to Jan Scherman TV4, who has also made himself known for attacking the royal house.]

CG's statements were commented on by Birgitta Ohlsson in P1, SVT1 and Expressen:

- I think that it is an extremely embarrassing statement on the part of the King. Above all, it is very sad for Sweden. Sweden is supposed to be a country that is a spearhead of democracy and human rights. The King has no right to express political opinions. Now he does so and at the same time praises a dictator, says Birgitta Ohlsson.

* What are the consequences of such a statement?

- The whole journey in Brunei has demonstrably become a PR stunt for an extremely dictatorial and closed state, led by a sultan who has several ministerial posts himself and a parliament that has not been active since the 1960s. It is very sad that Sweden is sending out such sad signals, she says.

* What does it mean for Sweden in terms of domestic policy?

- The Social Democrats have long said that Sweden will take a stronger stance on value related issues. But now you see that we are demonstrably still in the same trap. I think it's sad, she says.

¹¹ Lena Scherman. Statsbesök i Brunei. SVT1, Aktuellt, 2004-02-09.

* But you can't blame the Social Democrats for the king's statement, can you?
- No, but it has been proven that the king has visited a dictatorial state without a senior minister. In Vietnam, Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds was present. Then it was a different matter. This time he has gone alone without a minister, says Birgitta Ohlsson, member of the Swedish Liberal Party.¹²

- Sweden has a political policy that we should react against violations of human rights and make demands for democratic reforms during state visits to such countries. Since the king is not authorized to do it, he should be accompanied by a minister who can, says Ohlsson. - Or he should not go. Secretary of State [Krister Nilsson] does not have high enough a rank, she continued.¹³

A number of Republicans added their two cents worth: Social Democratic Party leader Marita Ulvskog, Social Democratic Minister for Public Health Morgan Johansson, various party leaders, etc. demanded CG's resignation, apology or that he at least learned the noble art of silence. Even Fredrik Reinfeldt (m) was critical: "The King shall not comment on the political system of different countries. It is a political issue that the King, with the tradition that we have, should not have any opinion on."¹⁴ The following day, Tuesday February 10, Birgitta Ohlsson reported both Göran Persson and Laila Freivalds to the Constitutional Committee to see if they had fulfilled their obligations under the form of government.

During the journey from Brunei to Thailand CG could not be reached by phone. In Bangkok, Tarras-Wahlberg informed him of the unexpectedly strong reactions to the interview and CG told her that he considered himself misunderstood. He had answered a question about his personal views on the Sultan, and had no idea that it would be interpreted as his view of the Brunei form of government. A little late in the day though: "When I reached him the storm was in full swing and it was difficult to make your arguments heard."¹⁵ The accompanying three journalists tried to get another interview but CG refused. Neither of the journalists had expected the strong political reaction.

Yet another day later, Wednesday February 11, Dagens Nyheter e-mailed interview questions about the matter to all 349 members of the Parliament. 198 respondents (57%). Six out of ten MP's considered that CG's statement had weakened the position of the monarchy.¹⁶ On the same day CG's plane landed at Arlanda. CG shivered in the cold while waiting for his Mercedes (it was 12 degrees below zero). Inside he was told by Ingemar Eliasson & Tarras-Wahlberg what had been happening. Eliasson had a written statement with him that CG approved. On arriving to the Castle, they read the newspaper clips, played the radio interview and watched videotapes of news broadcasts from the last few days. Tarras-Wahlberg then had to interpret what CG had actually meant. The simplest would of course have been for CG to attend a press conference and explain it itself. The Tarras-Wahlberg version was not exactly conclusive. My own interpretation is that CG (a modern European) in Brunei felt that he had ended up in a museum:

* What did the king mean by his statement that Brunei is an open state?

¹² Vladislav Savic. Kungen får skarp kritik för uttalanden om Brunei. SR, Nyheter, Ekot, 2004-02-09.

¹³ Resan kritiserades. Expressen, 2004-02-09.

¹⁴ TT, 2004-02-09.

¹⁵ Ellen Grefberg. Tar inte en kula för kungen. Nyheter24, 2013-09-28.

¹⁶ Ewa Stenberg. Riksdagsmän klandrar kungen. Dagens Nyheter, 2004-02-11.

- The King said that he had been fascinated by the conversation he had had with the Sultan, when the sultan told him about the contact he has with his citizens, the open audiences. That is a way we do not have in our part of the world. - Every Sunday after the visit to the mosque he has an open audience where anyone can come and express their wishes, and probably complain too. So I feel that in this way it is more of an open country than anything else you can imagine.¹⁷

Asked afterwards about the matter, Tarras-Wahlberg did not believe that her presence in Brunei had changed the course of events. "I might have sensed something. I could have imagined that interview would be misunderstood. I hadn't aborted it, I don't think you should do that with microphones and everything, but I had possibly raised the issue and said that this might be misunderstood and added a bit to the answer."¹⁸ She thought it would be a long time before CG made another press-statement.

A number of articles were published about the Sultan and his family that made Birgitta Ohlsson's criticism seem quite courteous. The Sultan and his family were considered to suffer from "imperial madness". If a subject wanted to meet the Sultan for an audience, they had to crawl in from the entrance, a distance of 50 meters, to kiss the ground at his feet. Then they had to exit backwards because it was forbidden to turn your back.¹⁹ As for his brother, he had a view of women taken from the Middle Ages, he had, for example, kidnapped foreign women to his parties, taken their passports, threatened them with "snuff films" where women were beaten or murdered and then forced them to perform indecent dances for the guests and to have sex with them.²⁰ "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," as Lord Acton expressed it.

Göran Persson informed CG that they would meet as soon as possible, which seems to have been at lunchtime on Thursday February 12. Before that he did not wish to speak on the matter. CG also kept quiet, but not his friend millionaire Sven-Philip Sörensen who on Wednesday 11 appeared on TV, for some reason dressed in tuxedo, and expressed his enthusiasm for Brunei. He called on all journalists to write about the fantastic golf courses and eco-tourism instead of about dictatorship. There were completely untouched jungles down there. He would arrange trips there in the same way as Princess Christina's husband arranged trips to Mauritius.²¹ It sounded off key. Later it was revealed that he had not been aware of the indignant reactions.

The following day CG and Persson met together with State Secretary Lars Danielsson and Marshal of the Realm Ingemar Eliasson. Persson, who in 1996 had himself been criticized for a corresponding statement about China ("For me, it is extremely striking what political stability means for economic development when you see the Chinese example.") had full understanding of CG's situation. Persson summarized the meeting by saying that CG perceived itself to be misunderstood. They had discussed the protocol for future state visits and agreed on that during state visits the government would always indicate in advance what Swedish interests it was intended to serve and that there would always be a responsible minister in the delegation who dealt with issues of a political nature. Persson also urged CG to issue some kind of denial, which CG did. It looked like this:

¹⁷ Karin Klarström & Fredrik Lindén. Kungen beklagar sitt uttalande om Brunei. Aftonbladet, 2004-02-10.

¹⁸ Terese Christiansson & Markus Wilhelmson. "Drottning" Elisabeths tuffa tid. Expressen, 2004-02-15.

¹⁹ Ingvar Hedlund & Kassem Hamadé. Vill du träffa sultanen av Brunei? Expressen, 2004-02-11.

²⁰ Karin Klarström & Magnus Sundholm. Jag hölls som sexslav i sultanens palats. Aftonbladet, 2004-02-10.

²¹ Christian Holmén. Kungens vän tjänar på skandalresa. Expressen, 2003-02-12

Now that the Queen and I have returned to Sweden following the state visits to Vietnam and Brunei, we have carefully read the reactions caused by a reply I have given to a question asked at a press briefing in Brunei on February 9. I would therefore like to clarify what I have said and what I really think.

After the state visit to the Sultanate of Brunei and the meeting with its head of state had ended, I was asked whether there had been any “difficulties in socializing and negotiating with such a leader” who, as was said, “governs his country with an iron fist”. To that question I replied that we as guests had no difficulties, we were met with great kindness and warmth. I added that I noted that the Sultan's meetings with his citizens are very extensive at receptions and trips around the country. Of course, I have not made any statements about the situation regarding democratic freedoms and rights in Brunei.

Sweden's principled view of these issues was expressed in an official speech on February 7. In that speech, I expressed the Swedish Government's view of the importance of democracy and the rule of law and of every person's right to express their opinion. Furthermore, at the press conference, I only wanted to talk about the Sultan's personal contacts with his citizens, which is, of course, another matter, which should not be confused with the issue of the state of democratic freedoms in the country.

It is regrettable that my answer to a question on this subject has been misunderstood. I am Sweden's Head of State and represent, with loyalty and own inner conviction, nothing but the high values upon which our country's constitution is based.²²

After 45 minutes Persson exited CG's office. At the press meeting afterwards, he said that CG had been in a good mood during the meeting and that the importance of what had happened in Brunei should not be exaggerated. The meeting was recorded by Lars Danielsson but the notes were classified because they concerned a foreign power. The debate suggested that CG's state visits should only take place with approved regimes. Other state visits were to be led by the Prime Minister. Carl Bildt (m) was interviewed: I have no comments other than that state visits should be polite to the host people. Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg was interviewed the following week:

“We in the management team [the King and Queen, the Crown Princess, the Marshal of the Realm, the Chief of Staff and the State Wife] have had many long discussions with the King and Queen about the event and how our organization should work,” says Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg and the voice sounds tired. She has learned two lessons from the King's visit to Brunei. “One is that the statement was not made from a political perspective and the other is that the media always has it's own version of the truth,” she says.²³

Political scientist Professor Leif Lewin had his own interpretation:

I believe that the misconception concerns the word “open” and the concept of “open society”. For many politically interested, the concept of an open society is

²² Dagens Nyheter, 2004-02-12 & Hovets hemsida.

²³ Dagens Industri, 2004-02-20.

synonymous with a democratic society. Karl Popper's book *The Open Society and its Enemies*. When the king was asked that question, he probably had no deeper thought of Karl Popper's theory of science, says Leif Lewin, who believes that the king instead thought of the sultan's parties and the concept of "open house". - As host, the sultan is apparently open in the sense that he invites 20,000 guests.²⁴

The Swedish political scientist prof Olof Petersson made it clear that "the Brunei crisis is the beginning of the end for the Swedish monarchy":

The King's competence has been questioned after the trip to Brunei. It may seem rude even heartless, but paying attention to the knowledge and judgment of the Head of State is an inevitable consequence of our present system of government. Our constitution does not permit a royal faux pas of this kind, writes Professor Olof Petersson. Both the King and Göran Persson have broken the dictum that the Head of State must always consult the Prime Minister prior to a state visit. Persson has lightly dismissed that paragraph. It shows that the constitutional crisis is deeper than I thought, writes Petersson.²⁵

Other comments breathed some fatigue. The former rector of Uppsala University, Professor Stig Strömholm, pointed out that CG was actually a product of the much-acclaimed Torekov compromise. Just as ignorant of the realities of politics as the Constitution wanted him: "The mistake is that the 1974 form of government keeps him so far from all important affairs of state that he risks being ignorant of situations where anything but half baked comments would be better – why not silence."²⁶

My own thoughts are about the interpretation of the quotations. By pulling CG's quotes out of context and instead inserting others' comments and reactions (also printed out of context) the meaning of the quotes changes. It is a dishonest way of working.

On March 9, there was a debate between the closest interested parties (Freivalds, Ohlsson and some others). Carl B Hamilton (fp) pointed out that in the famous UD binder there was actually a text that was similar to CG's statement. Freivalds protested that the binder had to be viewed as a whole with both positive and negative aspects of Brunei included without any political considerations. Ohlsson was at the end quite satisfied: "Everyone now knows that the Sultan of the country rules with unrestricted power. The Sultan is both head of state and prime minister, finance and defence. Since 1962 [when Brunei came into existence], there has been a continuous state of emergency, The Brunei Parliament is suspended. Civil political rights are restricted. Caning is carried out in 80 % of criminal cases. Women are discriminated against. Homosexuality is forbidden. Christians are discriminated against; For example, churches must not be built. It is good that this has become known."²⁷

The Constitutional Committee's ruling was a mild euphemism by Göran Persson and Laila Freivalds: "On state visits, as elsewhere, it is the responsibility of designated persons to make political statements. The committee believes that a distinction between political and ceremonial elements should be made easier to uphold if a minister participates, which also seems to be in line with government thinking."²⁸

²⁴ Göran Persson mötte kungen på Slottet. Expressen, 2004-02-12.

²⁵ Olof Petersson. Kungens kompetens måste ifrågasättas. Dagens Nyheter, 2004-02-17.

²⁶ Stig Strömholm. Låt kungen utöva makt. Svenska Dagbladet, 2004-02-19.

²⁷ Riksdagens protokoll 2003/04:79. Tisdagen den 9 mars. Kl. 14:00-15:54.

²⁸ Konstitutionsutskottets betänkande 2004/05:KU20.

Afterwards, an analysis was made of the articles in Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter and Expressen, which was summarized as follows:

Although the three newspapers are considered republican, it became clear that there is only a comparatively small debate about the Swedish state, and that it is not unusual for a writer to speak out against the Brunei affair, but still see no reason to exchange the monarchy for a republic. However, this is often not explained.

The lack of a major debate on the monarchy-republic issue in the press therefore seems to be due to a kind of vicious circle in which the people and the press influence each other. The majority of Swedes want to retain the monarchy, and therefore there will be no major debate about the state system in the press. At the same time, the reason why so many Swedes want to retain the monarchy may be that there is not much opportunity for opinion forming in the press.²⁹

Another reason for the debate becoming so infected was that this was not the first time that CG had been criticized for something similar. He had made a much criticized visit to the Shah of Iran in 1971 as a replacement for King Gustaf VI. The headlines about that visit were like, "While people are tortured in Iran: The Crown Prince goes to the Shah's party to that beats all records for gluttony" & "Unbelievable waste. The caviar alone costs what Denmark annually gives Iran in development aid". The number of guests were 3000. The final bill was 250 million SEK. On his return CG was met by a posse of outraged journalists whom he dismissed with: I am too tired to answer. But people have got the wrong idea. We all felt like one big family.

The criticized state visit to Saudi Arabia in 1981 is already described. In the autumn of 1993 CG and Silvia also made a private trip to Bhutan in the Himalayas following a state visit to India. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck campaigned for ethnic cleansing to preserve the country's Buddhist character. It was also forbidden to possess TV and radio sets, presumably so that the population would not be impressed by the democratic revolt in the neighbouring Kingdom of Nepal – Republic from 2008. CG refused to comment on these visits. A documentary of the visit to Bhutan was, however, shown the following on TV.³⁰ It emerged that CG met King Jigme Singye Wangchuck during a trip to Japan and kept in touch. He and Silvia had intended backpacking with friends, something like Sarek, but the king's hospitality swelled the entourage to 60 people: caretakers, carriers and soldiers forming a two kilometer tail. As regards reports of human rights violations in the country, CG had spoken to the king himself and also to people he had met during the trip and could attest that the reporting was excessive. Be that as it may, King Jigme abdicated in 2006 in favour of his son, autocracy was abolished and, from 2008, the country is a parliamentary democracy. A royal reversal under the gallows.

At some point, criticism of these visits had to take place. The fact that this happened in connection with Brunei seems somewhat coincidental. The 2004-2008 constitutional review was not authorized to investigate the monarchy. A number of frustrated Republicans found an alternate venue. The criticism of CG is often of this kind. A kind of mirror fighting. When the

²⁹ Hanna Schüle. Den svenska monarkin – Ett försvarbart statsskick? En normativ analys av den svenska monarkin och en innehållsanalys av tidningsartiklar om Bruneiaffären. Lunds universitet, Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, ht 2006.

³⁰ Kungaparet i Himalaya. SVT1, 1994-01-16, kl 19:15-20:00.

Republicans do not get enough support in the Parliament for their political cause, it becomes personal criticism of CG in the press instead. CG and Silvia were both very hurt by what they perceived as completely unjustified attacks and that no leading politician stood up for them. As the saying goes: “The worst thing is to be hung in silence. The silence of your friends.” CG's own version conveyed to Herman Lindqvist and SVT was:

The King tells us that he raised the issue of human rights in Brunei with the Sultan at the table, whom he describes as a “quiet, timid and reclusive person”. The Sultan explained to King Carl Gustaf that no death sentences had been imposed in Brunei after the British protectorate had ended. But that it was necessary for the small and rich country to protect itself against all kinds of terrorists and criminals who would otherwise settle there. The Sultan was concerned for the safety of his subjects. Therefore, the country must show a hard facade, all in the sultan's opinion.³¹

CG: “It was really a series of misunderstandings from all parties. Then it was fun to exploit it. If you want to destroy something, you do it. It was a normal state visit. Brunei took offence and now keeps it's distance. A good opportunity has been wasted.”³²

Göran Persson himself commented in an interview on March 1, 2004:

EF That there will be such a debate about the king now is probably also a sign that the criticism against him is close to the surface. There are perhaps many who have wanted to chop on something that the king has said.

GP There is something new, there is. And the new thing is that you have a young generation of politicians across the spectra who have a similar conception of the state, that is the new. And it is possible that something new is emerging, that it in turn is a reflection of an opinion that exists and that has started to move, it is possible. If that is the case, then this issue may well be in a new situation, but by then I am no longer involved, and others will be responsible for it. But I do imagine that the Court understands that an opinion is forming right now that goes far beyond the confines of the left-wing parties - the Social Democrats, the Green Party and the Left Party - and that there are also leading liberals. I also find a few centrist members, not many Christian Democrats and Moderates, but there are some there too. So it is a new situation. And almost every faction of the Liberal Party leadership has been crystal clear in this context. So the opinion is not as clear as before, at least not in this circle. But if you go out and ask the people themselves, you don't see any major movements.

...

EF What does it say about the social climate that a statement gets such a proportion? Is it becoming increasingly common for debates to be held on the basis of a single resolution?

GP It is much easier to make mistakes now than before, it is easier to trip. The new thing here was that even a right-wing leader [Fredrik Reinfeldt] went out and spoke out. I can't believe he made that assessment, I thought it was strange. That is perhaps

³¹ Herman Lindqvist & Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg. Carl XVI Gustaf - Porträtt i tiden. Ekerlids förlag, 2006.

³² Mats Nyström: Kung i tiden - Intervju med Carl XIV Gustaf inför 60-årsdagen. SVT1, 2006-04-30, kl 20:15-20:45.

also the point to note, that there are very few who have their own views in such contexts, the battle lines are long since drawn.³³

How it ended up with the Swedish business is unclear. In any case, the majority of the companies were satisfied with the Brunei visit itself and the business contacts that were then established. CG then stayed away from the country. When Brunei's heir prince married later in the year, he was instead on a state visit to Iceland. To make everything a little more complicated for Sweden's republicans, the Sultan convened his parliament in July for the first time in 40 years. Maybe an effect of CG's visit. In 2013, the Sultan announced that he would introduce Sharia law with the usual set of penalties: Stoning, mutilation, flogging, etc. Probably his subjects are not as docile as they appear.

When you read the contributions afterwards, you have to agree with Persson. It is striking how lame the defence of CG was. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the CG, through his initial visit to communist Vietnam, had alienated his political friends. If you are politically naive, there are consequences. The "Brunei-crisis" did not affect the support for the monarchy as a form of government (Appendix 1: Table 4) but the confidence in CG himself declined sharply and did not recover until the "tsunami-speech" the following year (Appendix 1: Table 2).

* * *

The Brunei affair had an aftermath of sorts. Sunday December 26, 2004, 1:58:50 Swedish time a powerful earthquake occurred in the Indian Ocean near Sumatra and caused a tsunami that came to drown almost 300 thousand people in the area, among them 543 Swedes who were holidaying in Thailand. In addition, 1,500 Swedes were more or less seriously injured. As communications were cut, it took several days for the Swedish Government to realize the extent of the disaster.

On the morning of October 27, CG was first at the office at Stockholm Castle and then at Princess Christina's house at Beylon in Ulriksdal Castle Park. At lunchtime, the Chief of Administration Gunnar Holmgren of the Council of State called CG's Chief of Staff Frank Rosenius and informed him about the tsunami and about the deaths of Swedish citizens. CG asked his court marshal Johan Fischerström to contact Prime Minister Göran Persson's State Secretary Lars Danielsson for more information. He wanted him and Persson to meet at the castle. Persson would give a combined TV interview and press conference at 16-17 o'clock and was unable. Danielsson called CG and gave him what information that the government had, not so much so it turned out. More information came through the TV news. CG then went home to Drottningholm castle.

The following days he was kept informed. He was present at Arlanda when the first Swedes came home in the middle of the night and he visited the crisis center at Arlanda and the children who had been admitted to Astrid Lindgren's children's hospital. On January 4, the first coffins arrived from Thailand but by then CG was on his annual skiing holiday in Storlien January 2-5. On Saturday May 8 CG and the rest of the family participated in a number of ceremonies at the Swedish Cathedral Church.

³³ Erik Fichtelius. Aldrig ensam, alltid ensam. Samtalen med Göran Persson 1996-2006. Norstedts, 2007, sida 411-424.

CG was also asked to deliver a memorial speech on January 10 at the Stockholm City Hall together with Persson and Archbishop K G Hammar. 1,200 people were invited. Everyone was in mourning. The government sat at the front of the blue hall near the stairs. Poems were recited, then music and speeches. CG started:

We have gathered to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives and those who are missing following the disaster in South-East Asia. We are thinking of all those who are dear to us, who, only a few days ago, were a natural part of our family, circle of friends, school class or siblings, but who are no longer in our midst. We have gathered here today to support and try to help each other in this difficult time.

What can we say to each other, and what can I say, that can be of help to you? It feels as if the words have lost their meaning, or as if they have never existed, the words that could express our grief, regret, impotence and anger. Silence feels like the only real language in the face of all this incomprehensible, overwhelming and inexplicable.

Rather than making speeches, I would actually like to try, more tangibly, to give warmth and new security to all those affected. I would like to be there for anyone who wants to tell you about their experiences if this paradise that suddenly turned into hell.

But I only have words to convey to all of you who have been affected, our will share your grief - now while the shock is still with you.

I hope that in this way I can give you hope that one day the pain will go away and light can be discerned in what is now darkness.

Words will have to suffice as consolation.

Now a new semester begins in the country's schools, after a Christmas holiday that did not turn out as we wanted. In many schools, benches will be empty. They will never again be used by those children and young people who, only a few days ago, were sitting there thinking vividly about the present, the future and life. We'll never know what they could have done with their lives. Nor will we ever be able to thank them for the friendship, joy and vibrancy they spread around them.

How are we going to carry that missing? How are you sitting on the bench next door and you parents, siblings, relatives, teachers and leaders to cope with the loss?

I wish I had a good answer. Imagine if I, as the king in the fairy tales, could put everything right and end the story with "that then they lived happily ever after". But like you, I am only a grieving, seeking fellow man.

Let us all help each other. We adults want to listen to you, who are children and young, to your stories about what you have experienced and feel. Show us your drawings, your tears, your grief and your anger. We adults are here to protect and help you.

But you can also help us adults. You do it by being with us. Faced with the incomprehensible, we are adults, too, as children, who do not have an answer as to why things happen that we do not want to happen.

Many children have lost one or both of their parents. I think I know what that means. I was such a child myself. My father died in a plane crash when I was very small. So I know what it means to grow up without a dad. Compared with many other children, I was certainly well off, but for a child, a lost parent is always irreplaceable. I know something about that missing.

I would therefore ask you, all the adults close to these children, to be sensitive to what they say and signal. To give them the answers they are asking for, carefully and seriously. Uncertainty can sometimes cause more anxiety than knowledge.

I, like many other men of my generation, are unaccustomed to show emotion. But I want to say to everyone who feels like that:

Dare to show weakness, warmth and emotion. Let us dare to help. We are all just people, without certain answers to questions about why life, which can be so fun and pleasurable, suddenly turns out to be cruel and incomprehensible.

But being human is still very big. We can be in comfort and support in the most difficult stages of life. In the grief when hopelessness seems to have a firm grip on every minute. Let us put our masks to one side and dare to be our fellow human beings.

If we succeed, we can grow from the terrible that has happened a new faith, a new hope, a new community and a new confidence in the future.³⁴

The speech was well received. Who had written it was unclear. Acting CIO Ann-Christine Jernberg was suspected³⁵ but it seems to have seen the light of day in the normal manner: "The Marshal of the Realm [Ingemar Eliasson] wrote a first draft and kept a close communication with [the Marshal of the Court] Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg. - But it was mostly the King's own work, she says."³⁶ It was assumed that CG had learned from his speeches on account of the "laser-killer" Aussenius attacks in 1991/1992, the Estonia accident in 1994 and the discotheque fire in Gothenburg in 1998. On these occasions he made similar, though less acclaimed, speeches. CG had also given a speech at Olof Palme's death in 1986 and Anna Lindh's death in 2003. Others have suspected "a monarchist agitation" by Eliasson who had a background as a politician.³⁷ Eliasson's memoirs give another picture. He's so short of an agenda that he must be acquitted.

³⁴ H.M. Konungen: Tal vid ceremoni den 10 januari 2005 i Stockholms stadshus över avlidna och saknade i katastrofen i Sydostasien. [Det tal som framfördes skiljer sig på mindre punkter ifrån den skrivna versionen.] (Källa: Hovet.)

³⁵ Annette Kullenberg. Katastrofen i Asien tillåts sälja monarkin. Republik! Nu!. Odaterad. (Förmodligen 2005-01.)

³⁶ Expressen, 2005-01-17.

³⁷ Expressen, 2005-01-17. 1039 Jörgen Hermansson. "Därför får inte kungen själv bestämma över sitt privatliv". Dagens Nyheter, 2011-12-06.

Afterwards, a great deal of analysis was published of CG's rhetorical efforts to capture the mood.^{38,39,40} Consensus seems to have been that CG skilfully blended Ethos (morality) and Pathos (emotions), and that in this crisis he became a gathering force by “rhetorically” leaving his elevated position and becoming part of the grieving people (and that this was accepted). A Sifo survey showed that 27 percent of the population through the speech gained confidence in CG.⁴¹ Laila Freivalds who had visited a theatre performance on the day of the tsunami did not escape so easily. The fact that she did not know where Phuket was and that she judged Thai doctors as capable as Swedish doctors to care for the wounded led to her resignation. As the old saying goes: “There is no justice in this world, and thank God for that.”

CG was also interviewed by Dagens Nyheter where he said that something should be done then, now, immediately, anything, rather than waiting for complete information.⁴² This interview was published the day the speech was held. The history of the interview is a bit obscure. Journalist Maria Schottenius had sent a request which remained pending until Jernberg, probably on CG's initiative, contacted her. The questions seem to have been reformulated to suit the occasion. Marita Ulvskog, the Social Democrat's Party Secretary, claimed in the interview that he had violated the Torekov compromise but this was ignored even by the leader of the left-wing party, Lars Ohly. Norwegian political scientist and monarchist Carl-Erik Grimstad even claimed that the Torekov compromise must be interpreted as a royal right to “warn” the political system when it did not work properly.⁴³ CG's position on his 60th anniversary was: It is one of the monarch's greatest tasks, to be able to help in such difficult situations. However, he had an apology published on the court's website for the newspaper article being perceived as criticising the government.

In 2005, the Swedish Emergency Preparedness Authority published a report on how the tsunami was monitored in the Swedish media.⁴⁴ The monitoring was summarized as a balance measure of percent positive minus percent negative elements. In the newspapers CG got +34, on radio & TV -50. The articles were also reported according to content: CG's competence -20, Commitment +71, Responsibility +33, Initiative -60, Unspecified +12. The corresponding figures for the government were: In the papers -81, on radio & TV -95: Competence -77, Commitment -65, Responsibility -96, Initiative -85, Unspecified -67. The corresponding figures for Göran Persson & Laila Freivalds personally were: In the newspapers -89/-86, on radio & TV -100/-100. The Emergency authority also looked at who said who. Not unexpectedly, the political opposition was the most negative (-98) and the government itself the most positive (-37). The Authority summarized: “Overall, the reports show that the media's image of a government that is not assuming its responsibilities and a number of authorities that are not involved corresponded well to reality.” Perhaps a bit too self-critical - for example, it was long unclear where all Swedes were touring. Meanwhile

³⁸ Per-Anders Forstorp. Retorik och tsunami (1): »Den kungliga vanligheten» i talet vid tsunamikatastrofen – en nyordning i den kommunikativa monarkin? Department of Numerical Analysis and Computing Science. IPLab262. September 2005

³⁹ Daniel Kanje. Bara den som älskar sörjer. En retorisk analys av minnestalen till flodvågskatastrofens offer, i Stockholms Stadshus, den 10 januari 2005. Göteborgs universitet. Institutionen för svenska språket. C-uppsats. Hösten 2005.

⁴⁰ Erik Winerö. Sagokungen i vågornas skugga. Retorikmagasinet, 2005:28. [Analys av kungens Tsunami-tal den 10 januari 2005.]

⁴¹ [Sifo.] Aftonbladet, 2005-01-13.

⁴² Maria Schottenius. DN's intervju med kungen efter katastrofen. Dagens Nyheter 2005-01-10.

⁴³ Carl-Erik Grimstad. [Debattartikel.] Dagens Nyheter, 2005-01-23.

⁴⁴ Tomas Andersson Odén, Marina Gersetti & Ulf Wallin. Tsunamins genomslag – En studie av svenska mediers bevakning. Krisberedskapsmyndigheten. KBM:s temaserie, 2005:13.

a number of Swedes had to accept care from Thai doctors and wait a few days for their return journey.

There was a great deal written about this being CG's revenge for Brunei, which appears to have originated from information from the "King's immediate circle" that CG was extremely hurt that the government did not support him at the time. It was also possible that there was a personal or political conflict between Göran Persson and CG since he was a Republican. Persson himself found the writings misleading. He and CG had a functional relationship according to the Constitution's requirements, not a personal one. They communicated when necessary, personally or by telephone, but usually via their officials. Both were keen to stick to the Torekov compromise. Political scientist Prof Olof Ruin explained how dangerous a political conflict would be for CG: "An open conflict between the King and the Prime Minister would of course pose major problems ... And if the king would accidentally or consciously tell which political party he sympathizes with, the whole system falls. He then paves the way for a conflict which in the long run would lead to the abolition of the monarchy ..."⁴⁵

*

On February 17-19, CG and Silvia visited Thailand to thank everyone who contributed to the relief efforts. It was an official visit but not a state visit. Participating minister was Attorney General Thomas Bodström. There was a simple ceremony at the resort Khao Lak. CG and Silvia published full-page newspaper advertisements thanking King Bhumibol, the Thai people and the Church of Sweden for all their help. CG promised to donate 100 new fishing boats to families in the Nam Kaem area and some of his friends promised to donate another 100. The matter was not settled until 2008 when CG decorated four Swedes for their efforts.

⁴⁵ Niklas Svensson. Hämnden är ljuv... Expressen, 2005-01-16.