

Chapter 53 : “Nina Eldh”

October 1, 2004, Tarras-Wahlberg resigned CIO, as it appears as a consequence of the Brunei scandal, and was replaced by chief press officer Anne-Christine Jernberg (1955-), most recently from Dramatiska Teatern. Tarras-Wahlberg continued as Marshal of the court with the task of special adviser on communication issues and coordinator of CG's and Silvia's speech writing. New chief press officer was Nina Eldh (1946-). Jernberg had for some time suffered from multiple sclerosis, however, wherefore Nina Eldh January 1, 2006, took over as CIO. (An alternative explanation for Tarras-Wahlberg's departure is a conflict between her and Silvia, there were rumours about such a conflict even before Brunei.¹ Perhaps she had been too proactive.)

Nina Eldh came from Sony Ericsson. For once, a recruitment company had been employed. She was not a royalist, but as a Swedish industrial official she was loyal to her employer. Her background was a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Gothenburg, consisting of literature history, art history, English and information technology. During her studies she was involved in the peace movement. After that she worked as an immigrant teacher and as an informant at Göteborgs spårvägar, the Nordic Council of Ministers, Consafe, SAS, Nokia, Ericsson and Sony Ericsson. “I think the basis for a good informant is that you know the company's activities. Accessibility and clarity are also two golden rules. ...”² This may sound reasonable but one must not forget that an informant is a person who sells information & also deals with corporate branding and crisis management. Furthermore, the line between information, public relations, advertising, lobbying, marketing, journalism and disinformation is not entirely clear. As a precaution, Nina Eldh used to end her assertions with, “It is the truth and I always tell the truth.”³ Maybe so. But she had no special powers:

Resumé has been in contact with people who have been involved in the recruitment of a new head of information at the court. The instructions from the court to the elite recruitment company Micaël Berglund Executive Search have been clear. The court does not want an offensive and strategically thinking public relations person.

- Therefore, one cannot expect that the media picture will be better than before, Resumé says.

According to Resumé, the contact between the King and his closest colleagues is not particularly developed. They simply dare not advise the King on media matters.

- The King does not want to be instructed in public relations matters. I find it difficult to be an adviser to the King because he does not want any advice on media matters, says a person who has been in touch with the process. In the information policy of the court, which Resumé has read, it is clear that the staff must answer the media's questions. But there is nothing about the staff actively pursuing issues. Therefore, the position of the Head of Information of the Court spans many areas. On the one hand, statements are to be prepared for international media during state visits, and on the other hand, comments are to be made about the Crown Princess's jewellery selection in *Svensk Damtidning*.

¹ Stephan Mehr. *Leve Drottningen! Kungariket, kärleken och pressen. Drottning Silvia säger sitt.* Månadsjournalen, december 1993:12.

² Lena Katarina Svanberg. *Nina Eldh. I: Rubiner & (o)slipade diamanter.* Norberg, 2007.

³ Johan T Lindwall. *Victoria – Prinsessan privat.* MånpoCKET, 2010.

In their recruitment work, they have also not made any demands for coping with the court's future challenges:

- The issue of increased support for a republic among members of parliament was not even raised. Instead of seeing how to actively influence the image of the monarchy, the same person who believes that the court's future public relations work is jeopardized says. For the incoming spin doctor of the court, Nina Eldh, it is thus a challenge to shoulder Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg's mantle.⁴

In 2008, a number of conflicts were reported in the information department and several people left. Tarras-Wahlberg also left. It seems to have been a power struggle and a generational shift. On January 1, 2011, Nina Eldh also left and was succeeded by Bertil Ternert from SAS but with a military background. Ternert revealed that he (like all previous information officers) was asked to make the press write more about the royal house's regular activities.

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In 2007 under Nina Eldh, the information department worked as follows:

The King leads the [planning] meeting [at 10 o'clock every Tuesday].

- Media issues are always an item on the agenda. Among other things, we go through interview requests. If it's a yes, we'll make an appointment and prepare the interviews. If the king says no, nothing will happen, says Nina Eldh.

- We receive about 250 written interview requests per year, primarily to the King and Queen. When I started here, I talked to the King and Queen about how we should handle interviews. I suggested that I should preselect those requests that I thought were appropriate. No, they said. We want to see everything.

- They have a great interest in media, read many newspapers and follow what is written and talked about. We often discuss the content of the article and why it is written the way it is. Once every six months the press department discusses policy.

- When Journalisten this spring asked for an interview with the CIO about the work at the information department, it was not she but the king who in the end decided whether there should be one or not.

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- When I previously worked as a press and information manager, I have always said to CEOs and others that we have the press we deserve. If a CEO cannot tell what a certain business or business is about, without the newspapers getting it wrong, it is at least as much the CEO's and the information manager's fault as the newspaper's. That is not the case with the royal family. I don't always think the family deserves what it's written about it.

Every day, the information department of the Royal Court receives an e-mail report on what has been written about the Royal House in the Swedish media during the past 24 hours, especially online. Previously, the court also subscribed to a clip service from Observer, but found it too expensive.

- We have the major Swedish newspapers, including foreign newspapers such as the Financial Times and The Economist and archive what we find interesting. Every week we make a special compilation of what has been published, which is sent to the king's and the queen's office, says Nina Eldh.

⁴ Claes de Faire. PR: Kungen vill inte ha pr. Resumé, 2005-10-13.

- The compilation does not include the gossip magazines. We have them here and we save them, but no more. We are looking for the serious reporting, breaking news and longer articles, but also opinion pieces, editorials and sketches. There are actually interesting articles written about the royal couple. Not everything is gossip and speculation.

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Nina Eldh says that she regularly meets with editors-in-chief and other journalists to discuss the press coverage of the royal house. Meetings are held either at the castle or at the respective editorial offices.

- Sometimes it is they who contact us, sometimes the reverse. There are usually a few meetings a year.

* Which journalists do you meet?

- I do not wish to go into that.

* Is the king involved in the contact with the newspapers?

- Sometimes. But it's not that anyone is summoned to the castle to receive a scolding for what she or he has published. The meetings are mainly for us to understand each other's way of working. Similar meetings have been held for years.

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* What media are boycotted by the court?

- We are not boycotting anyone. Why should we do that? However, the King and Queen do not give interviews to gossip magazines. We want the interviews to be about the King and Queen's work. It is clear that we choose the media that take these issues seriously, says Nina Eldh.⁵

And 2010 preparing for Crown Princess Victoria's wedding:

Compared to the situation when the King and Queen married in 1976, most things have changed. Nina Eldh sees an explosion in the number of media channels. And a 24/7 update requirement.

- We no longer know the reporters who write about us. There are so many of them.

* Does the court have difficulties keeping track?

- We try to put our ear against the rail and keep up. We get news clips electronically twice a day. It is impossible to follow everything in the social media. We are constantly expanding the capacity of our website, yet it does not always suffice. When we posted the news that [princess Madeleine's] engagement was broken, it went down. As always with major events, we had informed TT, however. So the news came out quickly anyway.

* What do the media want to know?

- Everyone wants to interview the Crown Princess couple. We have had a hundred requests. It would not work to say yes to everyone. There will be two interviews in the printed media. One interview in a regional newspaper and one in a metropolitan newspaper. TV4 currently broadcasts a documentary where the Crown Princess is interviewed, the radio will broadcast one as well, SVT airs a documentary by Olle Häger.

- Interest in the royal house in general is also growing at the time of the wedding, says Nina Eldh. We answer many questions about history, cultural heritage and the state. The castles have a record number of visitors.

* How much are the royals in control?

⁵ Mikael Bergling. I kungens tjänst. Journalisten, 2007-09-25.

- Every week the management team of the court, where I am a member, has a meeting with the King and Queen. They are very interested and want to know of each request for an interview. Whether it comes from Tomelilla stamp club or the BBC. Recently there have been 30 requests each week.⁶

The fact that CG and Silvia no longer know the reporters interviewing them and vice versa has obviously impacted the reporting for the worse. The “intimate” stories of recent years have been made by former employees of the information department, such as retired Vecko Journalen journalist Barbro Hultman.

No details are known about what is discussed at the meetings between CG and the press. It seems to have been mainly about the children. CG summoned the editor-in-chief of the major newspapers and asked them to leave the children alone until they reached maturity. That was how it came to be. Similar meetings were held ahead of Victoria coming of age, her Yale studies and her wedding. CG then appealed for “the greatest possible objectivity”. Apparently he wanted to avoid the kind of writings that Diana Spencer and Sarah Ferguson had to endure. No guarantees were given but the press coverage of Victoria has been very courteous.⁷ This seems a violation of the freedom of press act but has never been an issue. The weeklies are dependent on their court contacts and reluctant to take conflicts. Not so the dailies.

There are also reports that editors of the tabloids have been summoned to the castle and scolded by CG personally for various articles. It can not have been very common. What I found is that in 1993 the editor-in-chief Mattias Hansson, satirical magazine Z, received an invitation from CG to discuss press ethics at his office at the castle. There was no scolding, but according to Hansson it felt like a “diplomatic power display; CG going medieval on his ass”.⁸ The cause seems to have been a montage of a pregnant Victoria in underwear. More often, the “king's law firm” sends letters of protest - it has happened, for example, to the gay site Sylvester.se for their writings about Prince Carl Philip (see chapter 62) - and Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg has called Aftonbladet, Damernas Värld and other newspapers objecting to various articles. There is a tradition of editorial self-censorship and there are many rumours circulating about what is not printed for fear of repercussions.

⁶ Lasse Granstrand. Presschefen. Dagens Nyheter, 2010-05-16, s 17.

⁷ Monica Wadsted. En gnagande oro. Svensk Damtidning, 1994:4.

⁸ Karl-Johan Bytner. ”Jag fick en upprumpning i Östra Valvet.” Resumé, 2010-11-04.