

Chapter 55 : “Radio, Television & the Review Board”

Early television shows with CG could be quite light-hearted, in the vein he later himself cultivated. For example, a lark from 1980 where CG and Silvia visited Kolmården and read the weather forecast in Östnytt instead of meteorologist John Pohlman. Nowadays it's bloody serious all the time. The courts official media-history is that SVT until the foundation of TV4, did not report anything except the yearly Året med kungafamiljen. Not really true.

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SR, SVT and TV4 must according to their statutes be impartial. For CG, this implies that for every edition of Året med kungafamiljen or wedding feast, journalists feel compelled to produce some form of scrutiny. CG typically states that he welcomes factual criticism of his activities. So far, however, I have not found any such. The critique of the royal house has the ambition to inform, to mess with it or to entertain. Never to analyse. CG's reaction has been accordingly. A voice from the journalistic bosom:

According to SVT journalist Tom Alandh, it is hardly possible to conduct sensible journalism about the royal house.

- It doesn't matter what you produce about the king, the queen and the monarchy. Everyone thinks it's shit.

* Why?

- Those who want to abolish the monarchy think that you are too kind if you do not say so. Those who are in favour of monarchy think you're doing a shit show if you question it. The expectations are so high when it comes to approaching the monarchy that it is no longer possible to deal with the subject in a normal journalistic way, says Tom Alandh.

In 1978, he made a much discussed film about the Swedish monarchy, which was broadcast on SVT's Studio S. Part of the film was a report from the King's tour on Gotland.

- To my surprise I received an interview with his majesty. I pondered on how to do it, what to ask and how to address him. I had previously interviewed the Prime Minister, the Commander-in-Chief, the Archbishop and Aunt Emma at the long-term care and thought there was no big difference between them and the king. They were all citizens. I therefore chose to address him informally, “dua”, to the great horror of his subjects.

- It was not a stunt to attract attention or to show myself cocky or rude, but a democratic act. In addition I thought it easier to act informal than not. It was a pretty nice and easygoing conversation between him and me. The king didn't care that I addressed him informally.

Others did though. The press wrote about it and Tom Alandh was reported to the Radio Board (which however acquitted him):

[Notification: An uneducated lass from Studio S had the audacity to “dua” the King of Sweden in a report from the King's tour on Gotland. That a subject “duar” the king is a rude beyond measure. I hope that the Court and

the Radio Board stop such a rascal in the future. ... The King's Majesty shall be kept in sanctity and reverence, according to the Law.^{1]}

About 25 years later Alandh decided to make a follow-up (to the film *The King and I* - and the people around him) and contacted the court.

- When I came to an information meeting at the Castle about the King's upcoming program, the then press manager of the court, Elisabeth Tarras-Wahlberg, did not look at me with any joy of recognition and said: What are you doing here? I answered that we would be reporting on the monarchy.

* How did it go?

- It went well. After all, they were quite sympathetic. For example, we accompanied the king to Slovakia. But we did not get an interview, even though almost every journalist that spring got to interview the majesty, even Bolibompa and Skurt.

* What do you think about the media coverage of the Head of State and the Royal Family?

- SVT's coverage of the Royal House is mostly a joke. It is just to look at how selected royal reporters over the years have acted in connection with interviews. They prostrate.

- I think the coverage is nonsense because you do not take the king seriously. If you do a report about, for example, the old lady at the long-term care or the Supreme Commander of defence, you treat the person with respect in tone and tone because you take them seriously.

* It's not happening with the king?

- No, and that was also what I meant in 1978. When I look at the interview afterwards, I see a young man who is quite unspoiled. He is still at the beginning of his term of office and has not been battered by journalists or life. He shows some hesitation and uncertainty before the meeting with a representative of the Third State. But in a nice way. It's a pretty good interview and I think that's because I take him seriously and address him informally. A title is a way to distance oneself from reality and enter fairy tale mode.

- Moreover, this is not about the King, but about the Head of State, our representative. By not taking him seriously, we diminish ourselves.²

The courts aversion is more understandable if you see the films: Alandh describes CG's tour on Gotland in May 1978 as a meaningless pseudo-event and a waste of the taxpayers' money. CG himself is described as socially isolated and surrounded by nobility and money. CG still makes a good impression during the interview. One cannot say this, however, about his Head of cabinet, diplomat Jan Mårtensson, who refuses to answer questions, glares and denies everything. The portrayal of CG's municipality tour to Tyresö in September 2002 was more of the same. The Social Democrats had betrayed their republican ideals. SVT's CEO Eva Hamilton supported a devotional boot licking mentality among her employees. The monarchy was a remnant of the feudal period and was now supported only by conservatives and doddering 100-year-olds. In 2015, Ahland made an effort to also interview Silvia, but received no answer.³

¹ Tom Alandh anmäld till Radionämnden. I: Olle Häger. Kronprinsessan och kungariket - del 1. SVT1, 2010- 06-07.

² Mikael Bergling. Tom Alandh, hovjournalist. Journalisten, 2007-09-25.

³ Tom Ahlandh. Hovet betar sig inte särskilt hövligt. Dagens Nyheter, 2015-02-02.

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CG does no longer hold impromptu interviews, but only grants them after a request and subject to time and interest. The waiting time is often for ever. Jan Scherman, deputy editor of SVT Aktuellt, had stood in line for a long time. On October 3, 1989, before the opening of the Parliament, he renewed his request and received a telephone call, the gist of which was that CG did not feel like it.

Journalist Lars Aduktusson, at Scherman's instigation, still approached CG to ask him how he understood the opening. CG took a few steps back to mark dissatisfaction but responded. His press secretary Kerstin Prissing protested afterwards: "TV's action was inappropriate. One should not just approach the king on live television and ask him questions without giving him time to prepare himself. It is better if the journalists first approach someone in the king's surroundings and ask if it is convenient for the king to answer questions."⁴

CG's press conferences can become very strange. If you want a straight answer you can whistle for it. CG and Silvia have set up a system to request the questions in advance, rewrite them to suit whatever they want to say, leave the room if journalists insist on asking something else and only give personal interviews to the journalists they trust. A very elect bunch. The remaining requests are handled via group interviews or by interviewing people in the Royal Family's surroundings. CG's press department explains this by saying that they want journalists to give an objective description of the activities of the royal house. Not everybody can be trusted to do this. The King and Queen's latest strategy is to carefully and in murderous detail admit what is already known.

There is a large turnover of "court journalists" which makes for an awkward press coverage. Simply being able to conduct the interview counts as an achievement. It is a question of knowledge. The subject is too narrow and too arcane for the journalists to bother with. They are content to ask general questions about most anything that comes to mind. There is a desire to reach the King and Queen's inner thoughts, which is to be done by making them speak freely from the heart. This is also to hide the fact that you have not done your homework. Silvia, in particular, is therefore allowed to wallow in platitudes, old hat and whatever she feels like for the moment. Actions have consequences however. If you interrupt CG or Silvia, you probably have, because of their long memory, difficult to say who hates journalist the most, made yourself impossible. Annette Kullenberg comments:

The representatives of the mass media have accepted an outmoded court etiquette and avoided doing their journalistic work. This gives the Queen an unique advantage. Day after day, week after week, interviewers have licked up her establishment views. ... If one compares the Queen's position with that of an elected female politician, the situation is grotesque. A politician must be accountable, explain herself, analyse her positions, face opponents and take the fight. Queen Silvia's task is to smile and look friendly. So far, so good. But she has now expanded her duties and participates - unchallenged - in the public debate.⁵

Here and there it emerges that the news value of CG & Silvia's activities is often deemed non-existent. Much of the information in recent years has only been published on the court's website. This is professional but not the video recordings which have received much criticism.

⁴ Expressen, 1989-10-04.

⁵ Annette Kullenberg. Knäfallet. Aftonbladet, 1993-12-29.

According to one report, this is due to the fact that CG employs smaller firms which do not dare direct him.

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CG has been imitated by comedian Bo Parnevik. They met in 1975 at a gala at Oscarsteatern. CG was initially puzzled but then shook hands laughing with his doppelganger. Parnevik sang "Om jag var en Svensson, tjabbe, tjabbe, dabbe, dooo" on the song "If a were a rich man". Other imitations have had more teeth. In 2005-2006 TV4 aired a comedy show Hey Baberiba which featured a recurring parody of the Royal Family as a reality show. CG was played by Peter Magnusson. He was presented as stubborn, resentful, shy, non-confrontational and with a total inability to express itself. The ratings were well over the million. CG comments:

(The king cowers on the sofa, and his eyes turn black.)

* I see The King gets angry just by me mentioning the program "Hey Baberiba"?
- I find it appalling. Many times when I meet young people, they ask me what I think of "Hey Baberiba". And they say I'm being bullied.

* They feel sorry for the King?
- Yes, that's the case.

* Is it bullying of the royal family?
- Of course you can joke about us royals. You should be able to tolerate a joke, but not when it goes on and on, because then it amounts to personal persecution. It is not much fun the day after, to stand up in some context and give a serious talk. And then a lot of children writhing off laughter just by me showing up. (The king laughs heartily.) I feel a little like Martin Ljung. You laugh as soon as you see him because you know he's funny. So it's a little difficult. If the purpose has been to ridicule us, it has surely succeeded.⁶

The royal house has also appeared in Sveriges Radio's satirical program "Public Service" with predecessors in 1986 and onwards. Impersonator Rachel Molin: "Since they do not have so much real power, it becomes all the more interesting how they behave, talk and dress." Writer and Comedian Mattias Konnebäck: "The King is a very funny person, articulate and inarticulate at the same time. But if you only show his shortcomings, it becomes personal persecution and not fun any more."⁷

One of the "Hej Baberiba" sketches had some reality background: In the September 2005 issue, the Solo Girl monthly magazine reported:

...about the king's mistresses: There has long been speculation about the king's possible infidelity. According to rumours, he has an apartment at Odenplan in central Stockholm where he discreetly manages his small sidesteps. The apartment was also used by his father and grandfather for the same purpose. And what kind of girl does a man like King Carl Gustaf prefer? Besides Silvia then, apparently, the talk of the

⁶ Henrik Frenkel. Jag som chef. Chef, 2007:4.

⁷ Peter Letmark. Humorprogram ökar kungahusets popularitet. Dagens Nyheter, 2010-06-01.

town is about the three media profiles Anna Järphammar, Camilla Henemark and Anna Lindmarker who got themselves, ehrrm, a royal ride.⁸

The editor-in-chief, Annika Leone, seems to have quite promptly received a lot of critical e-mails, which she dismissed with the statement that the king did not have a special position. "You have to tolerate gossip."

The rumour about CG and Lindmarker was all the way from 2001 - published in Flashback's newsletter - and had been waltzing around mainly the German gossip press since then.⁹ The closest one can come to an explanation of the origin is this posting on the website Passagen under the heading "Secret gossip": "The reason the rumour arose is as follows: One of the king's drivers or bodyguards lived at the same staircase as Lindmarker, which meant that a car that could be connected to the king often stood outside the house. In addition, a friend of the king, I do not know who, also lived in the said house for a period, which led to the king also being seen there a couple of times. But, it wasn't Lindmarker he visited. In addition, it is said that the rumour reached Silvia's ear, after which she called an uncomprehending Lindmarker and gave her a hefty scolding. Whether that part is true I do not know, but it would be fun if it were so."¹⁰

Lindmarker, who was news anchor on TV4 and thus a public person, experienced the whole thing as extremely unpleasant. The rumour followed her where ever she went. In her own channel, the comedy program "Parlamentet" joked about it by repeatedly naming her and the other women while claiming their right to be anonymous. Lindmarker tried to joke back. She and a colleague (dressed as Silvia) performed for example at a party where they claimed to want to share CG in a "Threesome of the Monarchy" and performed a tribute to CG's genitals on the melody "Such as a man can". Lindmarker described CG's nuts, powers of erection etc. in loving detail.¹¹

Finally, she tired of it all and reported "Parliamentet" to the Review Board and Solo Girl to the Publicist's Ombudsman (PO). PO referred the matter to PON (the jury). Parlamentet was acquitted. Solo Girl was convicted. The magazines defence was that Solo Girl had not fabricated the information itself, but had merely acted as conduit for various printed, electronic and oral sources without taking a position on the truth. As evident these were gossip, rumours and guesses. But this was immaterial. The justification given by PO and PON to convict Solo Girl was:

Among the values that together shape press ethics and good publicity practices, the pursuit of truth is the foremost. Solo has freed itself from the demand for truth and instead built parts of its journalism on gossip. It is not an expression of a responsible attitude to the publicist task. If the rumours coherence and perseverance would be a sufficiently strong publicist reason to spread them further, the future of press ethics would indeed look bleak.

The information published has not been found true. On the contrary, the newspaper has emphasized that the information is not true. The published falsehoods lack public interest. In this case, no public interest arises even though the subject is a public

⁸ Om kungens älskarinnor. Solo Girl, 2005:9, 2005-10-10. [Ej inkommit till KB.]

⁹ Flashback News Agency, # 140 [Del 2], 2001-04-25.

¹⁰ Passagen, "Hemligt skvaller". Missuppfattning. "Fläsket", 2004-03-23.

¹¹ Håkan Isaksson. Hon sjöng om kungens pung. Expressen, 2005-11-30.

person. The falsehoods are highly intrusive. Their publication reflects an editorial stance that is oblivious or cynical, possibly both at once.¹²

Leone was a self-made journalist without special training who worked at Vecko Revyn as an assistant, reporter and editor from 1994 to 2003. She became known as a columnist, specializing in low blows. As editor-in-chief of Solo Girl, she resigned shortly afterwards. She now works at Expressen.

The “new” gossip journalism of the Solo-type was discussed on October 17, 2005, at the Publisher's Association. No representative of the court or Solo Girl attended despite being invited. Catarina Hurtig, host of “Kungligt” at TV5, referred to an earlier discussion at Svensk Damtidning about Wilkingssons & Hammar's article in the magazine Bon 2002. The conclusion of that discussion - unclear on what basis - was that their readers were not interested. Personally, she thought it was important to review the royal household's social circle to find skeletons in the closet, but that any scoop would “bring down” the royal house she found delusional. Just look at Mette-Marit and the Norwegian royal house!

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On January 17, 2008, Stina Dabrowski wanted to include a representative from the court in her program “Fjäsket för kungahuset” to counter the prevalent criticism of the court's press policy. Nina Eldh initially expressed a very positive view, but nevertheless cancelled. Dabrowski appears to have called Tarras-Wahlberg, who frankly declared that “it was decided by royal seal”. Nina Eldh stated the opposite that the king had nothing to do with the matter. “We have been asked if we want to participate and have declined.” Dabrowski afterwards claimed that she was lying. “I've got the impression before that they don't want real journalism near the royal house. As soon as it is something that they suspect might resemble it, then they make sure to stay away.”¹³ Maybe so. The program revealed that journalist Annette Kullenberg thought the journalists grovelled, that Robert Olsson, program manager at SVT, was of the opposite opinion and that the journalist Catarina Hurtig during her time at Svensk Damtidning personally saw some grovelling of the first order, even contributed some herself, but that the most important factor in her view - as she had previously pointed out - was that her readers were uninterested in Annette Kullenberg's investigative journalism, but wanted escapism.

The fact that Nina Eldh did not come had a long history. Dabrowski had in 1986, at the time of the 10th wedding anniversary interviewed Silvia for the program “20:00 Special”.¹⁴ She visited the castle a few days before the interview for them to get acquainted. As usual, she had to submit the questions in advance. The interview itself took place in a studio where Tarras-Wahlberg attended and decided what should be deleted. Dabrowski immediately deviated from the agreed questions: “We live in a world governed by reason, everything is rational and logical. And then there is an institution that is old-fashioned, irrational, and almost mythical and that is the monarchy. What is the Queen's view of this?” The interview never really recovered. However, one important thing made clear was that Silvia agreed with CG that Sweden should not have a female succession: “[Queen: I think] it's a very difficult task for

¹² Allmänhetens pressombudsman (PO) & Pressens opinionsnämnd (PON). Exp nr 79/2006 Klander för rykte om kunglig romans.

¹³ Anders Sandqvist. Hämnades på kungen. Expressen, 2008-01-18.

¹⁴ Stina Dabrowski. Stina möter Silvia. SVT1, "20:00 Special", 1986-06-19, kl 20:00.

Victoria to handle. But thank God the Bernadotte usually live to a very old age. Stina: So if the Queen had the choice, the succession would stay male? Queen: Yes, but the people of Sweden have not chosen that and then we must accept it.”

When the interview ended, Silvia recounted her mother's story about the two frogs: “Once upon a time there were two frogs that had fallen into each glass with cream. One frog sighed, and said, well, that's it, gave up and drowned. The other frog jumped and jumped and jumped, and finally the cream had been whipped, and the frog could climb out of the glass. The first frog was you,” said Queen Silvia, “and the other frog, was me.” The parable is a bit difficult to interpret in the context. Obviously Silvia thought Dabrowski a “loser”. Dabrowski's interviewing technique, a give and take from both parties, was also not something Silvia appreciated: “I admire those who respect others and hold back their own person and personality. I also make these demands of myself.”¹⁵

There were no more interviews with the royal house. The following year Dabrowski tried to interview CG but he refused. She returned almost once a year for the next 20 years with the same negative result. The luncheons with Tarras-Wahlberg were nice, however.¹⁶

[This seems to have been the last interview recorded in a studio. Silvia is carefully made up and lit, much like in a 1930s studio film, and exudes an intrusive beauty and sexualized charm. She may not have much to say, but that is ignored for the privilege of looking at her. The later interviews were recorded at the Castle in more relaxed conditions.]

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A quaint neither-nor-interview by sports journalist Mats Nyström could be enjoyed at CGs 60th birthday. Afterwards it had a reputation as both devotional, patronizing and frivolous:

The King had selected Grafikens hus in Mariefred, complete with white painted floor and wall paintings of the archipelago as the place. We got a light hearted moment between men about football and research and the ingredients that characterize the polite, lightly drunk conversation on the jetty on a midsummer night: in summary, some faith in the future. But just as the king began to feel safe, Nyström wanted something else. He wanted a modern interview, something different from the polite New Year programs that SVT boss Eva Hamilton once was criticised for.

Is the king a feminist? What does he remember from the early years? What is a good leader? Issues that all relate to contemporary debate and that the king has been exposed to enough times to with some effort cross over to the other side. But when Nyström then began to mix nonsense questions about hot dogs and AIK with a request to reproduce not the most successful, but the most failed state visit, the King lost his cool. Concerning the circumstances surrounding Brunei, he would not respond. In the end, there was much the king did not want to answer. And just then the question of what he thinks about the sketches about the royal family in “Hey Baberiba” came up. He didn't like them. But he didn't want to say that. When Nyström thanked him for the interview they had definitely left that pleasant jetty.¹⁷

¹⁵ Christine Samuelsson. Silvia - Drottningen. Svensk Damtidning, 1981:15. [Intervju med drottning Silvia.]

¹⁶ Stina Lundberg Dabrowski. Stinas möten. Eget förlag, 2006, s 225-230.

Listening to the interview doesn't improve it. Mats Nyström mixes serious and easy questions that CG refuses to answer. It is rare to experience as much concentrated insolence as CG here shows. He clearly deserves his declining popularity.

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From 1967 to 2013, the Review Board has convicted eight programs in connection with the Royal Family. The crudest was a feature from the youth program "Vågspel med luren" 1982-05-03 in P3, where you could call in contributions to an answering machine. The entry began with the words "Make a call: but I guess you can't broadcast this kind of thing" Then a speech choir chanted:

Hell, society is shit. Hell, society is shit. The Reichstag building is going to blow up. Palme is gay and everyone else too. I hate everything like the devil, and I don't have any money. Put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth. The king is a fucking loser. Put explosive in his mouth. Blow the shit out of everything. Wallenberg is brain dead. Society is a shithole. Your bed is a pisser. Put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth. Fucking pensioners they're not doing any good. Put them on an ice floe so they can drift away to sink and die. Fucking bastards. Solitary confinement is too good for Bohman. Put explosive in the king's mouth, put explosive in the king's mouth and light the fuse. Bang.

The program makers defended themselves by saying that it was satire.

¹⁷ Linna Johansson. Intervjun med kungen blev en svettig sak. Expressen, 2006-05-01. [En recension av Mats Nyström: Kung i tiden - Intervju med Carl XIV Gustaf inför 60-årsdagen. SVT1, 2006-04-30, kl 20:15.]