

Chapter 68 : "Public utility"

The (Swedish) monarchy's "public utility" has both domestic and foreign aspects. The domestic aspects have to do with the level of political conflict. The foreign aspects have to do with Sweden's foreign reputation & exports. Below is an outline of what the debate under CG has been about:

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There is a notion that within the country CG is a cohesive force raised above all conflicts by staying outside the party system. He does not vote and he refuses to express his party sympathies. There is nothing to prohibit him, but it seems wisest. When he speaks he is often so woolly in the contours that one can interpret him according to one's own discretion. The "flops" have declined over time. The conflicts which nonetheless arise seem to have to do with him supporting the government's view. It makes him a convenient foil.

Since Sweden under CG has had a minimum of internal conflicts, it is difficult to evaluate CG as a cohesive force. For example, in 1973 and onwards, the issues that divided the nation have been EU, Afghanistan, xenophobia, privatization, employee funds, 68 radicalism, "the green wave" & state feminism. If he has been a cohesive force in these matters, evades my assessment. The information available is that each time he takes a clear stance he has been criticized. For example foreign policy issues such as accession to EU and Sweden's warfare in Afghanistan and other countries; "private" criticized positions such as that his and Silvia's parents' position vis-à-vis Nazism should belong to the private sphere; his aversion to feminism - especially to female succession (it should be cognatic, not gender neutral) & "hunting issues" and the like (read the wolf population). Usually he stays quiet, however.

The alternative description of CG as a cohesive force is his activities as "pater patriae", officiant and upholder of traditions. Through his national tours, municipal visits, study visits, attendances, inaugurations, audiences, memorial speeches etc., CG is considered the person who takes the most interest in what goes on in the country. He pursues a number of worthy but extremely uncontroversial issues. He appears at communal festivities and gives speeches or marks attendance. He protects traditions - all traditions. His and Sweden's stories are told in parallel. This should have some effect. A system of government in which the President is elected would inevitably become more politicized than it is now, because the President will be elected by the political system, whether it be by direct election or by a vote in the parliament. Politics in = politics out.

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On state visits, CG represents Sweden, "Sweden's public image" or "the Swedish brand" and is supposed to spread a modicum of glory over his home country. Formally responsible for the Sweden propaganda is the Swedish Institute (SI). SI finds the royal house hard to handle. On the one hand, CG does not fit their modern world view. On the other hand, CG attracts attention wherever he appears.¹ The mistrust is mutual. CG would rather collaborate with the Swedish Export Association and the Swedish Foreign Ministry. In 2011, SI carried out a study:

¹ Sofia Bergström Malm & Elin Otterman. Sverigebilder - En diskuterande analys av Svenska institutets informationsmaterial. Linköpings universitet, Institutionen för samhällsutveckling och kultur (ISAK), 2009.

In concrete terms, two questions are asked in this year's study on the importance of monarchies for a country's image. In the introduction, the respondents may decide on their "favorability" towards Sweden and other countries. At the end of the study the same question is asked, but the question then begins with the information that Sweden is a monarchy with a royal house. The result shows that a little more than half of the countries become slightly less positive towards Sweden with the information that we are a monarchy (mainly Argentina, Turkey and France (countries with a revolutionary past), while the other half become somewhat more positive or have an unchanged attitude. We see the greatest positive change in Egypt and Germany. Overall, the attitude towards Sweden becomes slightly less positive with the information given.²

SI and the embassies have over the years worked to present Sweden as a social and industrial pioneer. The reason for the need to do that has to do with Sweden's "outsider position". In plain words: Sweden's neutrality during the war and non-alignment after the war have had effects. Those who fought with and against each other became personally acquainted with each other's countries. The Swedes have had to rely on advertising campaigns where CG is included.

Most odd views about Sweden have come from the large country in the west. During their American visits, CG and Princess Christina have had to fight against notions of *the Swedish sin*, of a country of *suicidal recluses*, of the harsh Swedish climate: that *polar bears* are wandering the streets during the winter, that all raw material resources are *socialized* and that the factories are run by *workers' committees*. Like there is an exotic Orient, there is an exotic North.³ The fact that Sweden is still exotic is noticeable by the trend of *Nordic Noire*. CG dislikes that Sweden has become famous for the Millennium trilogy, *Sweden as a haven for hibernating nazis*.

How CG should influence the country's international image is not entirely clear. Perhaps it suffices for him and the others who take part in the state visits to appear normal. SI's current platform "The Swedish image 2.0" is said to be impossible for CG (or any other living being) to communicate. Vague megalomania might be a good description.

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Through his diplomatic position as Head of State CG also opens doors for accompanying industrial delegations. State visits are not sales trips but contact-creating visits or symbolic conclusions of negotiations. The effect of CG's participation is disputed. After World War II - under Prince Bertil's trade delegations - Swedish exports grew twice as fast as Swedish industrial production to reach a peak in 1970 of 2.1 percent of world trade. During CG's industrial delegations, Sweden's export has continued to increase in absolute terms, but has fallen as a share of world trade. In 2006 it was barely 1.3 per cent.⁴ Prince Bertil thus has a good reputation in export circles. CG a less so.

² Thomas Carlhed. Vi mörkar inte undersökning om monarkin. Svenska Institutet, 2011-05-28.

³ Nikolas Glover & Carl Marklund. Arabian Nights in the midnight sun? Historisk tidskrift, 2009, 129:3, s 487-510.

⁴ SOU 2008:90. Svensk export och internationalisering.