

## Chapter 27 : Sense, sensibility & ceremonies

The Bernadotte court has always been spartan, occasionally pulling out the stops on coronations, weddings, funerals, state visits, receptions, balls, etc. The frugal approach is mostly due to the Swedish & Norwegian Parliament, which where not willing to finance any extravagances. Knowledge of what took place is fragmentary. Per Sandin has in his doctoral thesis depicted how the royal house 1810-1860 opened up to civil society by inviting the bourgeoisie to the court's events.<sup>1</sup> Angela Rundquist has in her thesis about the period 1850-1900 on the contrary depicted how the royal house closed itself off against the outside world and favoured nobility. She summarizes the activities as:

”Excesses in the symbols of power were matched by loss of real influence. ... The period [until the 1<sup>st</sup> World War] has been called the glory years of ”fictional” courts and royal traditions and of old ceremonial staged with an expertise that had been lacking before. One might say that royalty and court were better marketed when the threats [after 1848] to their existence increased.”<sup>2</sup>

A more reasonable description is that the nobility throughout the period lost ground vis-a-vis the bourgeoisie. Birth meant less and less. Merits more and more. The royals surrounded themselves with a retinue of pushed around nobles, who at best ran errands. Everything important was handled by others. A few special studies have been devoted to the ceremonies and the festivities, especially Charles John's coronation,<sup>3</sup> the court dress,<sup>4</sup> the royal's private parties & the formal opening of the Parliament. It is difficult to delimit the subject or extract anything substantial from it. Those who write about the ceremonial would like to see it as a coded story for the initiated. A Freemasonry based on traditions of ancestry, power & status. An art form. A broader definition is that the ceremonial is what emphasizes the importance of an event or is a pretext for gathering and be noticed.

The ethnologist Mattias Frihammar dedicated his thesis to royal ceremonials in the broad sense.<sup>5</sup> This has been a contentious subject from the time of Charles John's first step on Swedish soil October 20, 1810. The special position of the kings must be highlighted, but not to the point of it being ridiculous. The solution has been to switch between the ceremonial and the everyday. In official contexts, there are also four ”protocol departments”: Marshal of the Realm, Office of the Speaker, Department of State Protocol & Army Staff.

Frihammar pushes special status a step further than myself. In his interpretation, the royalty has not only a special status through the office, but also through the notions surrounding the office, ”the royal mystique”. His thesis deals with the ”rhetorical approaches” used to associate the current royal house with its historical and mythical predecessors. This rhetoric includes conduct. Since my own book is about the concrete rather than the ”socially constructed” he is difficult to comment. I myself interpret the monarchy on the basis of Carl Gustaf's motto ”For Sweden - In Our time”, a constant adaptation to the expectations of the day.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandin 2011: ss. 271-274.

<sup>2</sup> Rundquist 1989: s. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Alm 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Bergman 1938; Granlund 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Frihammar 2010.

Regardless of their wishes, royalty must live in a way that is consistent with their station. Preferably in castles. The definition of castles varies, but here is assumed a large building or luxurious villa, with space for servants, representation, etc. The architectural style has varied. There are medieval castles, Renaissance castles, Baroque castles & classic castles. The medieval castles are converted forts with mixed architecture. The Renaissance castles are recognized by their spires and towers. Baroque castles are recognized by their wings and gardens. The Classicist chateaux are more of a utility-based brick colossus. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, castles were also built in a fictional medieval style. The castle Three Crowns (1697) was a Renaissance castle. The current Stockholm Castle (1430 rooms; Completed in 1771) is a Baroque castle.

Charles John utilized Stockholm Castle, Rosendal Castle (a summer palace located on Djurgården) and Rosersberg Castle (his wife's dowager estate). He also built a residence in Kristiania, which was not finished in his lifetime however. Other projects are: Charles John (Rosendal), Oscar II (Sofiero), Princess Eugenie (Fridhem), Queen Victoria (Solliden), Prince Eugen (Waldemarsudde), Prince Wilhelm (Oakhill), Lennart Bernadotte (Mainau; refurbished), Prince Carl Jr (two large villas), Prince Carl Philip (renovation).

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Art historian Britt-Inger Johansson has written about Charles John's "housing career".<sup>6</sup> He had through his intercourse in noble officer circles acquired a cultural polish, but until his service as Vienna ambassador mainly lived in the field, in barracks, hotels or as a lodger. As his position improved, the houses became larger and better furnished, but Charles John seems to have been genuinely uninterested. "[He preferred to be able to] switch between a simple private life in the bosom of his family and a General's existence surrounded by his staff, his military family." As a Swedish heir, however, he was forced into a more splendid existence. Johansson refers to the American anthropologist David Kerzer about the importance of demonstrating your position by means of ostentation, rituals and everything else you can think off. However, everything is relative:

"He did not entertain any costly mistress. The court had no orchestra, ballet or hunting staff. He did not collect any art or furniture. What he spent money on was his summer castle Rosendal, which like La Grange was decorated in a simple style "rather a villa for a nobleman than a palace". He commissioned portraits for gifts & some statues of his predecessors. He read a lot of history, geography & classics. Travel & representation were the main expenditure items. His receptions were lavish in the style of the French salons, presumably modelled on Mme de Staël (writer), Juliette Récamier (socialite), Pauline Borghese (Napoleon's sister), and the Princess of Chimay (Marie-Antoinette's lady-in-waiting) whom he had frequently visited in France. In the autumn of 1816, Charles John employed 34 people: Head waiter, chef, pastry chef, nine servants, five kitchen assistants, three wine waiters, two water carriers (there was no running water), hairdresser, four couriers, two writing assistants & another five people (among them the son's teacher)."<sup>7</sup>

Although he was uninterested in art, Karl Johan is usually associated with artwork: Älvdalens porphyry<sup>8</sup> with a manufacture of art and furnishings (in the family's possession 1818-1856) &

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<sup>6</sup> Johansson 2008 & 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Girod de l'Ain, 1968: s. 55. [Min översättning.]

<sup>8</sup> Sandqvist 1991.

the Charles John style in architecture & furniture (c. 1810-1850). The French Empire was a kind of Roman Emperor style. The Swedish Empire (the Charles John style) was a continuation of the Gustavian rococo. There are two porphyrs in the oversized French empire style commissioned by Charles John himself: The Rosendal vase (1823-1825) & the Charles John sarcophagus (1844-1852).

- Rosendal, originally a smallish building, burned down in 1819 and was replaced with a garden castle. The ornaments included the so-called Rosendal vase, which was an enlarged copy in porphyry of an ancient vase. The original had been found during excavations at the Herculaneum. The production employed 40 men during two years (=3500 day works). A porphyry block of 100 tons was sawn and ground to weight 9.3 tons and dimension 2.67\*3.59 meters. The transport from Älvdalen to Stockholm took five weeks and required 200 men.
- The porphyry sarcophagus was a slightly enlarged copy of the sarcophagus of the Roman military commander Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa (63-12 b.c.) - known as general & administrator. The production lasted 1844-1852, but it was not in place in the church at Riddarholmen until 1856. The weight was 16 tons.

Charles John also commissioned Niklas Byström to produce statues of Gustaf II Adolf, Charles X, Charles XI, Charles XII, Charles XIII & of himself (as Hercules & as commander) and Bengt Erland Fogelberg to produce statues of Oden, Tor & Balder. All in colossal form. Charles John's simple habits of life existed in parallel with an apparently grandiose self-image.

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Princess Victoria's private court emphasized Gustaf (V)'s role as heir to the throne & *pater familias* and her own role as housewife, the unrestricted mistress of the household and hostess. This was most easily done at Tullgarn. At Stockholm Castle, she had competition from Queen Sofia. The protocol at Tullgarn was that Gustaf held service every Sunday for the family and servants, that everyone stood up when he entered the room and that the servants as he approached them interrupted their work for some form of reverence. "In this cozy world [Tullgarn], formality and simplicity existed side by side in a rather puzzling way. Whenever outsiders were present or it was a question of representation, the strictest rules were observed, everything and everyone would be solemnly correct by the book, rank was meticulously maintained, each knew his place and appeared gripped by the seriousness of the moment. A certain old-fashioned, solid pomp was observed, which certainly did not prevent a hearty and almost exuberant kindness from the host."<sup>9</sup> Victoria's ambition was to micro-manage the household, whether from bed or by letter. No will but her own was allowed.

Victoria's external court operated somewhat differently. She described it in 1910 as "You spend time with your peers, you keep court for the ladies of society, but you give orders to your ladies-in-waiting." Everyone who has ever met her has emphasized her worthy stance, that she took great care to give the person her full attention, that she always knew the right words and that it was difficult to remain her enemy when she turned on the charm. She considered sense & sensibility as "hers". Sometimes she could be persuaded by the environment on grounds reason, but in etiquette matters she only bowed to Gustaf & Oscar II. Victoria saw her biggest embarrassment in this area as misusing the address "Ni". The "Ni"

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<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm 1938: s. 30.

reform had been introduced shortly before her arrival in an attempt to simplify the etiquette, but since subordinates were still expected to use the title when addressing a superior, it never caught on. The address "Ni" was instead perceived as a marker of superiority and an insult. Victoria dwelt for several decades on this error in judgment.<sup>10</sup>

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Possibly - it is difficult to find information about who decided what – Victoria at the transfer of the throne made an effort to modernize the court ceremonial. She seems to have changed the ceremonial during childbirth, church-taking and baptism. Only medical staff and the father were allowed to attend childbirth. The rest would wait in a separate room. The church service - a thanksgiving service - was abolished. The baptism still took place in Vita havet, a large room at the Stockholm Castle, but the mother was now allowed to bring the child to the priest herself. The Queen used to carry the baby, and the mother was not even allowed to attend the baptism being for several weeks "unclean".

Other changes included Victoria's introduction of a parade cour with deep bows and curtsies as the persons passed. During Queen Sophia, the persons crammed up against the walls while she passed. The parading was a forced rationalization caused by opening the court:

"The rank requirement [to be presented at the court] is reduced. It now includes, first and foremost, of course, the wives of the excellences, i.e. the ministers of state and foreign affairs and the Marshal of the Realm; further the wives of the ministers, all wives and unmarried daughters of Swedish nobles; further the wives and unmarried daughters who are not nobles, but whose men or fathers hold the rank of Adjutant General and beyond; further the heads of the war schools, heads of regiments and other commanding officers, and holders of certain higher orders, at least first class commanders. The last year this has been extended even further, so that now it would be hard nigh impossible to arrange the cours in the old way, when H.R.M. went up to each of those introduced and addressed a few words to them. Such a cour would have to be repeated many, many times in order to give precedence to all who wish it. However, the now customary parade cours allow a large number of ladies to be presented at the same time."<sup>11</sup>

The statutes of the Order of the Seraphim were amended so that even the Queen could wear it. Sophia received her order retroactively. The castle balls were modernized so that the MPs were offered supper and those who wanted to dance could do so. Even the dances were modernized - twostep & bostonwals were allowed (although it was probably due to Victoria's sister-in-law Princess Ingeborg). There is no record that Victoria herself took part in the dance - presumably she would then have had to dance with everyone and in order of preference. The dress code was unchanged: Tails & long skirt.

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And Gustaf V himself:

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<sup>10</sup> Fjellman 1954: ss. 107-108.

<sup>11</sup> Comtesse G. "Ceremoniel och dräkter vid det svenska hovet." Bonniers Veckotidning, 1926:4, ss. 20-21.

”A long deceased sharp judge of character, vice district judge Marcus Wallenberg, who had known the king for a long time, in a conversation with me summarized his opinion in the words: ”He had tact.”

He had tact and this manifested itself in a variety of hardly noticed details. Thus he was extremely careful not to emphasize anyone in particular nor criticize anyone. When asked for an award or public recognition, the King always carefully considered whether the measure could create a ”precedent” or whether someone else could have the same claim to be remembered. But even in daily life, he was equally cautious. How many times did I not see when he, on entering a gathered dinner party, reserved a fraction of a second to identify the guests, so that he could greet them in the [rank] order that everyone found natural. And when he joked, it was done in a good-natured way, that could not hurt anyone. ”But then get up out of the pit, Garvis”, he once said, when he was about to visit a Swedish national football team and had to bow to the short-grown football idol instead of the reverse.

But the word ”tact” does not cover it all. He was than that. He had a distinctive sense of fair play and demanded the same back. His questions were honest and he wanted an honest answer to them, not flattery or evasion. Nor did he tolerate bad-mouthing of somebody absent. If it happened, the guilty party was immediately reprimanded.”<sup>12</sup>

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Even the distaff side had its representational duties: For example, Princess Teresia, who had never moved in large company, received guidance on how to act as a hostess: ”For example: if possible to direct some friendly words to each present in a company. It didn't have to be much, but it would leave behind the feeling of personal contact, to have been observed and not just be air.”<sup>13</sup>

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The inter-war years, the ceremonial court died. Victoria was sick abroad & Gustaf V uninterested. After the war, under Gustaf (VI), there was a short lived revival. The MP's visits after the ceremonial opening of Parliament were resumed. Also, the so-called ”presentation Cours” for noblewomen and wives of senior military officials, officials and politicians. (The minimum requirement for participation was that the man had the rank of colonel or an equivalent Order.) You first left your card with the Mistress of the Robes in her apartment. You were then presented by somebody already presented. A court dress was initially compulsory, optional from 1952.

”This years cour [1946], as the so-called unofficial cour two years ago with several hundreds presented, took place in Victoria salen, impressive in all its ugliness: the plush, velvet, carpets and mosaics. But to me the cour in Vita Havet was even more stately: a single undulating wave of black-clad ladies with white and black-squared puff sleeves and three-meter-long trailers, which were carried up by the lady next in line in order to keep the correct distance. And so you paused for a while in front of the gallery with the royal ladies and did the hovering, which they had practised for weeks, deep, deep to the floor, and at the same time feared that you would never get up again

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<sup>12</sup> Nothin 1955: ss. 311-312.

<sup>13</sup> Lewenhaupt 1942: ss. 18-19.

or that an accident would happen to the lady who presented you - which even occasionally happened on the slippery parquet floor.

After that, tea is served in Queen Sophia's dining room. The royal ladies preside at their separate tables reserved for the top-ranked. The rest of us sit where we please.”<sup>14</sup>

The presentation cour satisfied the practical need to give access to the castle balls. In 1962, however, Queen Louise abolished the cour and replaced it with “democratic ladies' lunches” for professional women (she herself trained as a nurse at the English Red Cross), which was then copied by Sibylla, and which seems to have inspired entire generations of noblewomen to obtain vocational training: preschool or primary school teacher, advertising, bank teller, Barlock business school, housewife, nurse, physiotherapist and what else.<sup>15</sup> Some of them later worked for Silvia.

“In the State Calendar of 1957, the royal court still occupies nine pages with some hundred names of people with brilliant and historical titles. This is the ceremonial court, whose creator is Queen Christina who had the Spanish model in mind, a starry dome over the earth bound working court. The stars are rarely lit - only at the ceremonial opening of the Parliament and on foreign state visits - and those attending attend it at their own expense. It is the ancient kingdom of Sweden's way to manifest itself and its traditions outwardly.

It seems that the stars now are fading though. One cannot escape from the impression that the recent change of throne has brought a radical change to the Swedish court, the first radical court since Queen Christina. The number of pages in the National Calendar with the list of the Lords and Ladies of the Court is decreasing year by year. The ranks have been reduced by half.

The rationalization of the court has been carried out so discreetly that hardly anyone has noticed it and we have been spared the noise, fever and paroxysms that can follow an inevitable moulting.”<sup>16</sup>

The tradition of the cour survived until 1972, when the diplomatic wives were introduced to Queen Louise and later Princess Sibylle before attending the royal dinner. Then it was over.

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For a long time, the public was adamant that the royal house should be “kept in sanctity and reverence”. In 1968, when showing his Uppsala apartment to the television reporter Björn Anderö, it angered old timers that he did not address Carl Gustaf in the old way but as “Your Majesty”. In 1978, when SVT journalist Tom Alandh in an interview addressed him with the informal “You”, an upset audience reported him to the radio committee. According to an opinion poll, 14 percent considered subservient behaviour more appropriate.<sup>17</sup> 2004, at the Athens Olympics, it was still not considered appropriate when sports commentator Peter Jihde did the same. Jihde escaped the radio committee though. Carl Gustav's behaviour during interviews has become increasingly disrespectful. Nowadays, it varies between

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<sup>14</sup> Vecko Journalen, 1946:5.

<sup>15</sup> Vecko Journalen, 1962:8.

<sup>16</sup> Hans-Eric Holger. I fest och prakt. Vecko Journalen, 1957:51/52.

<sup>17</sup> Sifo, 1978-04. I: Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter & Svenska Dagbladet, 1978-05-30.

ignoring the question, leaving the room, some court official breaking in, answering evasively or scolding the journalist, who is then blacklisted.

Upon Carl Gustaf's accession to the throne, the royal etiquette was relaxed. In 1973, Carl Gustaf abolished the practice of bowing or curtsying every time he was in the vicinity - "the reverence". It embarrassed him. Respect was enough. In 1976 Marshal of the Realm Gunnar Lagergren introduced the informal "You" for employees addressing each other. For Carl Gustaf, the you reform meant that he was addressed as "the king" (not his highness or the equivalent) and that the staff did not need to request an audience but just knock on his office door. Silvia responded to a question about the reverence that it didn't particularly concern her, "you get used to it". In 1978, when she received her own court, she introduced it every morning for her employees. The inconsistency of the etiquette makes the staff prefer to avoid it. It can go as far as hiding in the toilet.

The ceremonial was flexible. Normally Carl Gustaf does not accept group visits, but he made an exception for three classes of Sami schoolchildren. The Labrador Charlie sneaked along and joined the children. Charlie was then appointed royal castle dog with the task of being patted at children's receptions.

As Queen, Silvia must for the first in her life take an interest in how she dressed. The mantra was that "a queen's evening clothes should be politically correct". People around her now afterwards claim that this should be interpreted as the Queen not wanting to appear like a fashion victim, but can by all means dress moderately. Be that as it may, the wedding dress was obviously the first try, simple cut but expensive fabric. Complete with a jewellery in the area of 5-10 million. In less solemn contexts, it was often a pastel-coloured cocktail dress with a hat according to the English model. It was all about being recognized.

In official contexts, the courtiers wore court uniforms. Most of them were from the late 19th century and heavily worn and patched. The ladies-in-waiting used their own evening dresses and a badge but easily disappeared in the crowd. In 1988, Silvia and Princess Christina gained support for a special court dress. The new court dress, similar to the old from the days of King Gustaf III, was sewn up in dark blue velvet, a two-piece jacket with grilled puff sleeves and two kinds of skirts: A straight, barely floor long, for tuxedo occasions and full-length for formal occasions.<sup>18</sup>

The mutual protocol between CG and Silvia was extensively discussed. They agreed that CG would be first served at official events, Silvia at family events. The Court is full of such arbitrary rules that are sometimes communicated to the public. For example, the more times you attend official dinners, the closer you are placed to CG.

At national festivities, Silvia usually wears the Sweden dress (composed in 1902). This is a formal costume model folklore with blue skirt, yellow apron and a blue or red bodice with motifs of daisies. The costume was long forgotten and did not become official national dress until Sweden's national day in 1983.

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The Riksdag's formal opening with the vanguard of castle guards is documented from 1747. At the end it was a "ceremonial reserve". Tail coat, uniform and Orders were mandatory. In

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<sup>18</sup> Granlund 1994.

itself it was quite short, barely an hour, but was extended by a leading service and trailing lunches and receptions. Queen Louise and Sibylla swept in with tiaras, shrouds and two pages each to keep track of the elegance. “When Karl XI's soldiers enter the Hall of State to a heroic military march, when the Queen makes her three curtsies [for the diplomatic corps and for the first and second chambers who bend their heads], when the King's Anthem starts the seconds before the king enters and bows to the people, then even the Republican club should be impressed.”<sup>19</sup> Then Gustaf VI exchanged pleasantries with the elected and read out the government declaration. The republican MPs hatred of grovelling had some impact. They did not attend, ignored the dress code or skipped the formalities as in this renown case:

State Councilor Ulla Lindström, one of the initiators and later member of the constitutional inquiry, tells in her memoirs what happened when she refused to curtsy Queen Elisabeth on her state visit. *Expressen*: “She greeted her in the usual manner by a slight bow: 'looking her straight in the face' as the newspapers of the following day expressed it.”<sup>20</sup> - Ulla Lindström: “The next two days, two parties crystallized: curtsians and anti-curtsians. The “Curtsians” were shocked to the core by the shame that Ulla Lindström brought upon the Swedish nation. ... The curtsians didn't have words strong enough to describe my despicable behaviour. They wished that they had been standing behind me, when I visited Elizabeth, they would have kicked me in the behind so that I got on my knees. Socialist devil, dog cunt and cumbucket, born by my milkmaid mother fornicating a hunting party, I should return to the factory from where I came (?) and not demonstrate my lack of upbringing to the divine Elizabeth.”<sup>21</sup> Lindström was unmoved by the criticism: “I don't curtsy for my king so why would I do it for a 40 year younger girl even if she has charm.”<sup>22</sup> (It sounds better in English: I can not give her more honours than I would my king! On Elizabeth's second visit in 1983, all five women ministers in the government of Olof Palme refused to curtsy, instead ticking their hands slightly. Not the same uproar this time around though.) Sometimes, however, the obligation to conform takes precedence. In 2012, former chairman of the Swedish Republican Association Birgitta Ohlsson (fp), in her capacity as EU minister, attended Princess Estelle's baptism and took the opportunity to curtsy before Crown Princess Victoria. Maybe in jest, maybe not. The only Councillor of State who did so, it seems. The Republican Association knows to much about the ways of royalty, and sometimes it bites you in the ass.

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Carl Gustaf participated in the 1974 formal opening of the Parliament according to the old ceremonial. In next years new ceremonial, Carl Gustaf and his family arrived at Storkyrkan escorted by his guard. They participate in a joint service. Carl Gustaf then entered the Parliament alone, opened the session at the request of the speaker and made a speech. The ceremony ended with the national anthem and Carl Gustaf departing the premises. Finally the incumbent government made a courtesy call at the castle. The symbolism should be that Carl Gustaf is requested by the Parliament to attend, not as before that the Parliament is forced to attend at gunpoint. The ceremonial has increased over time. Nowadays it is music, children's choirs, floral arrangements, honour guards and dressed up MPs. The

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<sup>19</sup> ”Höken”. Riksdagens högtidliga öppnande. Svenska Dagbladet, 1964-01-12, s. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Expressen*, 1969-01-09.

<sup>21</sup> Lindström 1969.

<sup>22</sup> *Kvällsposten*, 1976-01-19.



League of Humanists under Christer Sturmark (who incidentally also is a Republican) wants to abolish the initial service.

Carl Gustaf's first opening speech on January 10, 1975, read: "Mr. President, esteemed Members of Parliament! Allow me to express a warm hope of success for the Parliament in its work to benefit our Sweden and its citizens, to protect the individual and to contribute to creating a happier world for all people!" In the following years, demands were made for a little more substance. By 1991/92 the opening speech had grown from five to 67 lines. Carl Gustaf was always fully guarded with the contents. Both the Prime Minister, the Speaker and a number of MPs and experts read and commented on the speech before it was held. Nevertheless, the throne speech was perceived by some as political:

"So it is a very clear tendency for longer and longer speeches. So these speeches are taking more and more political positions. Not only in terms of substance, but also in terms of the choice of subjects - which subjects are included and which are not, the order of the subjects and the space available for each subject. There is no doubt that the King's speeches have become political. The content and the place where it is held cannot be interpreted as anything else than that the speaker wishes the forthcoming decision of the Parliament to go in certain directions. This is basically something different from the time when the king read [the old] throne speech. Everyone knew then that the opinions expressed were those of the government, not the king. It was a result of parliamentarianism.

But whose opinion is now being promoted when the King's speech differs from the government declaration? The important document is, of course, the latter. But the Parliament may still be interested in knowing who is responsible for the king's speech. ... Is it the King who is putting forward his purely personal views (much like when he goes out to the media with views about conditions in Norway)? Or is it the court administration that makes some kind of document that should be a compromise between the old throne speech and the king's private opinion? The government is clearly not involved, it cannot reasonably produce two documents for the same occasion. One by the prime minister and one by the king. This confusion did not exist when the king read out a government document."<sup>23</sup>

The matter was investigated in 1999 by the Parliament's investigation service. The average length 1975-1982 was 106 words, 1983-1990 278 words and 1991-1999 549 words. It seems that at the beginning of 1990 this led to a mini-crisis. Speaker of the Parliament 1988-1990 Thage G Peterson:

"After pressure and a great deal of unrest in the ranks, I called the leaders of the parliamentary groups, the Vice-Speakers and the Bureau of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs to a meeting about the King's opening speech. The Liberal Party's Ingemar Eliasson was the most critical. 'The King gives too long speeches. He is very close to the constitutional limit. This year he crossed that line. We want the Speaker to act.' Swedish Conservatives' Anders Björck: 'I share Eliasson's criticism and summary. It's the national meeting that opens. The members of the Parliament shall be at the centre, not The King.'"<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Hans Lindblad (fp). Motion 1991/92:K312 Riksdagens öppnande.

<sup>24</sup> Peterson 1999: ss. 440-441.

The other parties were also critical, but if you are symbolic Head of State, you have to accept that the symbolism is examined with a magnifying glass. What is important is not what physically happens, but the importance that the environment attaches to it. Some things are unsayable. But that you don't know until afterwards.

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