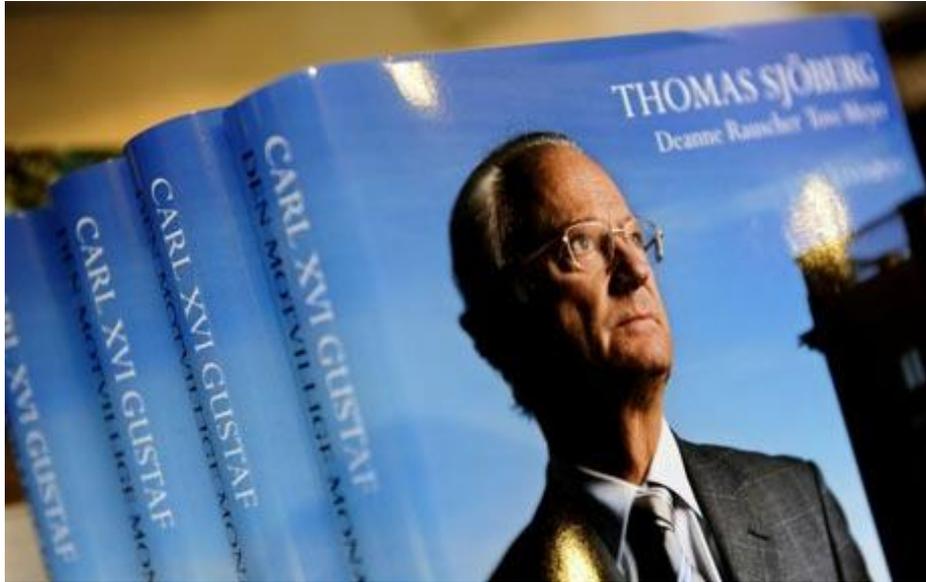


Swedes in shock at King Carl Gustaf sex scandal

Sweden has been shocked by revelations about their quietly dignified King.



The book has caused uproar and dominated the country's media Photo: AFP/GETTY

By Harriet Alexander and Marcus Oscarsson

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Five months ago, the Swedish royal family was the toast of Europe. All eyes were trained on Stockholm as the glamorous Crown Princess Victoria wed her long-time boyfriend in a fairy-tale ceremony, and the world's press clamoured for a glimpse of the elegant Swedish royals and their regal guests.

Now the international media is again camped outside the gates of Stockholm's Drottningholm Palace – but this time for far less congratulatory reason.

Revelations last week that the King of Sweden once enjoyed romps in seedy nightclubs owned by shadowy underworld figures have eclipsed the sparkle of July's wedding. King Carl XVI Gustaf, the stern-looking, bespectacled monarch who is honorary chairman of the World Scout Foundation, has found himself thrust uncomfortably in the spotlight following the publication of an unflinching book, *Carl XVI Gustaf – Den motvillige monarken* (Carl XVI Gustaf – The reluctant monarch) which catalogues his past predilection for wild, alcohol-fuelled orgies and naked jacuzzi parties with models.

The book has caused uproar and dominated the country's media, leading to nationwide soul-searching about the 64-year-old King's role, reputation and right to privacy.

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"Strip clubs, illegal clubs, rented ladies who are naked under their fur coats. Women were simply desserts, used as sweets to be served with the coffee," wrote Katrine Kielos in the daily *Aftonbladet* newspaper.

"The royal family has always been viewed as an august, fabulous family. But these allegations are so grave that our trust in them is seriously damaged," said Jenny Madestam, a political analyst. "The King is not even denying it."

Indeed, the King's bizarre press conference on Thursday – held in a forest after an elk hunt – only served to fan the flames of interest.

"I have spoken with my family and the Queen and we choose to turn the page and move forward because, as I understand, these are things that happened a long time ago," he said – standing in a field, still dressed in his wax jacket and hunting clothes, among a sea of camera crews and reporters.

His handling of the book's publication has shocked some observers.

"Now is the time for the King to be quiet and give no comments. Instead, he says yes to a press conference in the middle of the forest where anything can happen. It is like playing Russian roulette," said Paul Ronge, a PR expert, in the *Svenska Dagbladet* newspaper.

"His statement can be interpreted as a confession. It is beneath his dignity to even comment a gossip book about his private life. Now the plug is gone and the papers can print page after page with material from the book.

"For the royal court to handle the issue like kindergarten behaviour, without responsibility is very serious".

Indeed, the allegations that the king frequented Mafia-run clubs and used the state police to hide the evidence are extremely serious.

The book's authors, Thomas Sjöberg, Tove Meyer and Deanne Rauscher, spent two years unpicking the complicated story behind the throne.

"He was only 27 when he took office, in the midst of his bachelor years, with girls, booze and 'the lads'," they wrote.

"Then he suddenly became king, and had to promise the people to be a loving father. It was a totally

When he suddenly became king, and had to promise the people to be a loving father. It was a totally unreasonable promise that he stood and gave in the state room."

Mr Sjöberg, a leading interviewer and investigative journalist, originally decided to look into the rumours of a dark private life that had long been muttered in Swedish society – enlisting the help of researcher Tove Meyer and former social worker Deanne Rauscher.

Together they set about lifting the veil of secrecy that hung over the palace.

"That was what I originally wanted to find out: how could such a young king handle a role he has not been allowed to grow into?" said Mr Sjöberg.

It was Ms Rauscher who interviewed many of the women who had been involved with the King.

From her two-bedroom antique-filled flat in Stockholm's upmarket Östermalm area, Ms Rauscher pieced together the testimonies of the women who had partied with the playboy monarch - including Camilla Henemark, a Swedish-Nigerian pop singer and model who had a year-long affair with the King in the late 1990s.

The authors write that the King "had fallen in love like a teenager" and that the Queen, his wife since 1976, knew about the affair but was powerless to stop it.

In an interview before her relationship with the King was known, Ms Henemark spoke of her spiral into depression around the end of the affair.

"It had been a party all the time and lots of champagne and money," she said.

When her modelling and pop career faded, she said: "I became distant and drank constantly. I sank deeper and deeper into depression and hated the world.

"I was thinking about suicide."

Last week Mr Sjöberg and Ms Rauscher took to a houseboat, sheltering one of the women who revealed details of her trysts with the King.

"It has been very stressful," Ms Rauscher told *The Sunday Telegraph*.

The authors also uncovered evidence of how a Serbian gangster, Mille Markovic, hosted parties for the King and his friends at an underground club in Stockholm, below the National Police Department.

Mr Markovic described how the club had a jacuzzi inside, and the girls invited to the parties "threw off their clothes and sat in the men's laps".

In the evenings the women were assigned their rooms. "It was not formally mandatory, but there were name signs on the doors showing who was going to sleep with whom", said one of the women.

Mr Markovic told a Swedish newspaper yesterday: "I've got live evidence. The entire world will see. This is no fake but real facts. I can prove every single thing."

But perhaps one of the most intriguing elements of the scandal, for those outside the Scandinavian country, is how the Swedish population have reacted.

Over 80 per cent say that the lurid allegations have not changed their perception of the King – and almost 50 per cent say that it is wrong for journalists to look into the private lives of their royal family.

Upon hearing about the book, producers an investigative news programme met with the authors - only to decide that they weren't interested in investigating the royal family.

Thomas Sjöberg, the book's author, admits that the royal family are seen as being above criticism.

"If it would have been the PM, he would be forced to resign the following day," he said.

"There would be a public outcry, severe political consequences for Sweden, political chaos and a constitutional crisis."

But despite the media whirlwind, Swedes seem very relaxed about their head of state's behaviour.

"All the negative PR experts commenting on the King's meeting with the press are totally wrong," said Brita Svensson, a royal correspondent.

"It was no fiasco, no disaster, not unprofessional nor a huge embarrassment. It was completely brilliant. Carl XVI Gustaf was himself.

"The King is ruling. Half of all Swedes say they have very good or good faith in the King. That is a sensational result for a 'Reluctant Monarch'."