

DUMELA



Newsletter from Botswana Sweden Friendship Association No 2/2011



A 30-year long journey from Botswana to Zimbabwe

Abstract from speech at the Annual Meeting of BOTSFA 26 March 2011 by Sten Rylander

Let me make a few touch downs on our long journey – still somehow continuing, although we are now formally in active retirement and free birds – which started in Botswana in 1979 and ended in Zimbabwe in 2010.

When arriving in Gaborone in September 1979 we had no idea that this would be the beginning of a life-long engagement in Africa and particularly southern Africa. I came from 10 years' work on North-South issues in the Foreign Ministry and had no prior field experience in Africa. The immediate impression was very positive: this is a strong and independent-minded people and the country – having gained its independence without a harsh colonial experience – was run by clever leaders and by a small and efficient civil service. Sir Seretse Khama was still there when we arrived although he passed away less than a year later. What I remember is the close relationship with some of the very able Permanent Secretaries, who were involved at the time in our bilateral cooperation: Lebang Mpotokwane, Charles Tibone, Sam Mpuchane, Ken Matambo, Baledzi Gaolathe and Moses Lekaukau. Among the strong Ministers we dealt with were Archie Mogwe, Dr Chiepe and Quett Masire. Sweden was deeply involved in supporting water supply, education, regional development (district development and town and regional planning through DTRP) and also culture. Botswana was the first country which received SIDA assistance to culture: the National Museum, National Archives and library branch offices in rural areas.

What I have often been thinking about in hindsight is the fact that all the important things that the international donor community focused on much later

Dear BOTSFA members!

May is a busy month for BOTSFA. Association dues are collected. A new Board was elected at the March AGM. Members living in Sweden are preparing for the summer break. But something else is happening that is vital to the existence of the Association – the new Board is preparing a program for implementation and looks forward to any ideas you may have of making BOTSFA a more vibrant association.

BOTSFA has today more than a hundred members, but there is room for more. One of the Association's objectives is to »disseminate knowledge of Botswana in Sweden«. The previous years' activities have built a good foundation for information exchanges among members and friends of Botswana, but there is considerable work ahead. www.botsfa.nu, the website is being continuously updated to provide you with current information; the friends of Botswana informal Get-togethers are open to your participation; the photo competition awaits your contributions; projects to help the plight of the needy await

your generous support, for example Bright Faces Daycare Centre; and Dumela Newsletter and web-Magazine invites you to send articles on any topic.

This issue of Dumela Newsletter highlights the longstanding development cooperation between Botswana and Sweden, as laid out in the articles by Mats Ögren Wanger »Sweden goes Botswana«; Sten Rylander »A 30-year long journey from Botswana to Zimbabwe« and Kerstin Jackson Main »Cantus Choir visits Botswana«.

Wishing you a Happy and Bright Midsummer!

Julia Majaba-Järtby
BOTSFA
Chairperson



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PHOTO COMPETITION 2011!!!



Sweden goes Botswana

TEXT AND PHOTO **Mats Ögren Wanger**

On March 22, at 10.30 a.m., King Carl XVI Gustaf touched the grounds of Botswana for the second time in 34 years. The sight of the President of Botswana, Ian Khama, and the King, walking side by side on the red carpet, under black umbrellas, to music played by the Botswana Defense Force orchestra, was spectacular.

After the welcoming ceremony at the airport, the King was escorted to the President's Office for a tête-à-tête meeting. The President and the King sat in a blue Bentley, followed by a procession of cars with ministers, diplomats, and journalists from Sweden. Along the streets and all over, the blue and yellow Swedish flag flew high next to the Botswana blue, black and white flag. There was no doubt about the state visit and its importance to the two countries.

As a member of the Board of BOTSFA and editor of Dumela Newsletter, I was exclusively chosen by Lena Jern, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to take pictures of the King and the President at their private meeting. When the pictures had been taken, and before the doors closed, I could hear the King saying to the President »I understand that you are an outdoor man«. »Yes indeed, I am«, the President replied.

At the state luncheon at the Grand Palm hotel, both the President and the King spoke about the long history of friendship between the two countries.

– Botswana and Sweden have a long history of friendship and solidarity underpinned by shared values of democracy, good governance and the rule of law, respect for human rights, and the continuous pursuit of sustainable development, said President Khama.

– Let me take this opportunity Your Majesty, to express our profound appreciation to the Government and people of Sweden for the invaluable support they have availed to this country over the years. Without Swedish assistance in a number of fields, Botswana could not have made the developmental strides that it has achieved to date.

– During the next few days, as you travel across the country and interact with our communities, you will notice that the area still retains much of its rustic beauty and charm. This is the result of a deliberate policy aimed at maintaining a balance between human development and sustainable ecotourism and conservation.

King's speech!

After President Khama's welcome address, the King of Sweden spoke.

– Mr. President, relations between Sweden and Botswana go back a long way. More than 150 years ago, a Swedish adventurer and businessman Charles John Andersson came to today's Botswana. He was the first European to reach Lake Ngami from the west coast in 1853, and the first

Swedish citizen to visit your country, said King Carl XVI Gustaf.

– A »modern-day« Andersson was Gus Nilsson, who sadly passed away only a few weeks ago. His nursery enterprise – Sanitas – is a landmark in Gaborone today. It is an excellent example of how a meeting between our countries can bear fruit. The work and legacy of Dr. Nilsson will stretch far beyond the borders of our two countries.

The state luncheon ended with the national anthems of the two countries, led by an orchestra.

In the program there were many highlights for King Carl XVI Gustaf's visit. However, while the spirits were high the whole time, it was considered a pity that Queen Silvia could not be part of the visit, due to illness.

At Sanitas Nursery and Tea Garden, the Nilsson family had prepared for the royal dinner for weeks. The family gathered in the evening to greet the King, who was accompanied by two ministers, the Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson and Eskil Erlandsson, Minister for Rural Affairs. Also present were more than thirty executives from the Swedish industry, as well as representatives from government agencies. Dumela later learned that the atmosphere had been very relaxed, and the King had been very amused from watching the service staff in the kitchen drinking beer straight from the bottle.

Last time the King and Queen

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Silvia visited Botswana in 1976 – on their honeymoon. They stayed at a tented camp in Linyanti, later named Kingspool after their visit. For the state visit, the King and official Swedish delegation stayed at the legendary Chobe Game Lodge. The program included a seminar on sustainable tourism and the King was taken on a safari cruise on Chobe River.

I wonder what made the strongest impression on the King on Chobe River – the wild animals or when he found out that there was a »spy« sitting next to him? The »spy«, Oratile Khama, daughter of former Ambassador to Sweden, Sekgoma Khama, had listened attentively to the conversation in Swedish between the King and the ministers and high ranking military officers. Then suddenly Oratile Khama commented on the discussion, in Swedish! This was a big surprise for the King. He nicknamed her – »the Spy from Sigtuna Boarding School«, the same school that the King had attended.

There was significant coverage of the state visit in the local media. The King was described as a modest and easy-going Head of State. The appreciation was mutual – the King said before leaving that he had had a real good time with the open and friendly people of Botswana.

Hopefully it will not take another 34 years before the King and the Queen return to Botswana! ▲

elsewhere in Africa were already there in Botswana from the beginning: democracy (in a double sense including the unique kgotla system), transparency, national ownership and joint accountability. One of the few problems that the Government at the time had difficulties dealing with was how to work with the San population – or the Remote Area Dwellers as they were then called. As we all know this problem has remained up until today – and it was only very recently that the San people gained final victories in the highest courts of the land, getting access to continued life and water boreholes in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve area. My heart has always been on the side of the San on this one and I am one of many international friends who celebrate their victories with them.

The closeness to apartheid South Africa was of course obvious at the time. Sweden was deeply involved in supporting ANC and SWAPO in Botswana and elsewhere. During our stay the refugees were moved to the Dukwe camp in the north but contacts with key ANC people working underground remained. Joe Ghabi – later to be killed in Harare – and his wife Aurelia were dear friends. We also provided substantive support to ANC in Lesotho, then represented by ANC icon Chris Hani. We all remember the cruel attacks by the apartheid regime in Maseru and Gaborone in 1982 and 1985. One who perished in Gaborone was our friend Thami Mnye, the famous artist who was also involved with the SIDA-supported ANC art collective MEDU. In the early 1980's I channeled Swedish funds to ANC and Chris Hani in Lesotho; they were at that time preparing the ground for what would become the new United Democratic Front structures in South Africa.

Next stop on the long journey was Angola, where I was Ambassador 1985–88. Berit worked for SIDA at the Embassy handling Swedish funds to SWAPO and the ANC. It was quite a contrast to come from rural and peaceful Botswana to Luanda with around 3 million people and to a tense civil war situation. The two superpowers at the time, the US and Soviet Union, were heavily involved. Also the UN with Martti Ahtisaari and Bernt Carlsson played an important role in the complicated negotiations that took place and which led to Namibia's independence in exchange for the withdrawal of the Cuban troops from Angola. Sweden was very active during this process and we had close contacts with the ANC and with the SWAPO leadership.

We then moved to Namibia where I became the first Swedish Ambassador. Berit worked for UNDP with aid coordination in the new National Planning Commission.

Sweden was involved in supporting the transport and education sectors, as well as the establishment of the new Central Bank. Thanks to good and responsible leadership Namibia got off to a positive start under the new SAPO government with a heavy emphasis on broad national reconciliation. It was a true privilege to represent Sweden in Namibia at this pioneering time.

Next stop was Tanzania 1998–2003. Sweden always enjoyed a very special relationship with Tanzania. One who played a role in this was the Swedish missionary and politician Mama Barbro Johansson, who introduced Julius Nyerere to Tage Erlander and Olof Palme. Tanzania went through a very difficult period 1985–95 with huge economic problems and deep aid dependency. It was my pleasure to work with President Benjamin Mkapa to turn this situation around. Tanzania developed to become the positive example of the new process of national ownership and joint accountability. Memorable events from our time in Tanzania was working closely with Nyerere on the mediation regarding Burundi (where Nelson Mandela took over after the death of Mwalimu in October 1999) and support to the Mwafaka process regarding the problems in Zanzibar.

Following a brief stint as EU mediator in the Darfur conflict in the Sudan I then came to my last and most difficult posting as Swedish Ambassador in Zimbabwe 2006–2010. It was difficult to come in with the Swedish legacy of close cooperation with the liberation movements in Southern Africa and to be confronted with so many negative and frustrating developments: political killings, torture, massive abuses of human rights, intolerance and lacking leadership. It was obvious that bridge-building among Zimbabweans was necessary before any solid bridges could be built to the international community. After long and protracted negotiations under the leadership of SADC and President Thabo Mbeki a Government of National Unity (gnu) was established in 2009 but the political tensions remain and the future is still uncertain. SADC – now with President Zuma as the main operator – has an important role to play to take Zimbabwe back to normalcy.

During our stay in Zimbabwe I had many reasons to reflect on my past in Botswana and on Botswana's responsible and courageous stance in the region. Botswana and Ian Khama have been the only ones who have been speaking out loud and clear against the violence and misrule in Zimbabwe. And President Khama is now an admired hero among many Zimbabweans. This makes me proud of my own Botswana origin. ▲

Cantus Choir visits Botswana

TEXT AND PHOTO **Kerstin Jackson Main**



Practising together with KTM Choir

I have two sisters, both brilliant singers and members of great Swedish choirs.

In 2005 my youngest sister came to Botswana with her choir, Nicolai Chamber Choir. They performed together with Gaborone Choral Society led by Andy Batshogile at Westwood School Hall. It was a wonderful evening, and the Swedish Ambassador at the time, Annika Jagander, gave an inspiring speech about the power of music. Everyone in the Swedish Community was present.

In April this year, it was time for my other sister's choir, the Cantus Choir, to pay a visit to Botswana and bring a taste of Swedish music to Botswana audiences.

A year of preparation, both mentally and financially, made this visit a reality. Cantus Choir consists of 22 members but only 15 singers were able to make the trip. In Sweden, the choir sings in churches and at special functions, private and by invitation. The choir has existed for 30 years. During the last 15 years it has been under the direction and leadership of Ms Vera Belin.

At a very early stage in the planning, it was clear that they would arrive during the Maitisong festival a well-known and very popular an-

nual cultural festival here in Gaborone. Obviously we had to involve the choir in these festivities. Also the Maitisong Hall would be open for a performance.

The Cantus choir arrived with PULA – rain! The Swedes didn't seem to mind a bit, this was to them like a Swedish summer, not hot, just warm with scattered showers, the rain a bit more violent and heavier maybe.

At Sanitas Garden Centre they had two performances outside in the Tea Garden where, in spite of the temperamental weather, people had gathered for lunch and to be entertained by the choir. The Cantus Choir sang mainly Swedish tunes with a light and spicy touch, and Swedes in the audience felt emotions rise, making their eyes tearful. The concert ended with »Den blomstertid nu kommer« and »Vintern rasat ut« on demand from the Swedes. Sanitas was a perfect venue and, as always, the »Nilssons« went out of their way to make these occasions memorable. The choir raised 1000 Pula, which was donated to the Music Camp of Botswana.

After the two concerts at Sanitas, it was time for the big concert at Maitisong. The Cantus Choir performed jointly with the famous KTM choir under the leadership of Mr Disho Luka. Andy Batshogile was the director of ceremonies. A wonderful evening that ended, as usual, in a happy Botswana dancing frenzy.

After the three hectic days of performing, the Cantus Choir took off for Tuli Safari Lodge where they had a wonderful African experience. They came back with great stories of the encounters with wild animals, and admiration for the local guides. All had thoroughly enjoyed singing and



dancing with the locals.

The last performance of the choir was in the Anglican Church on Good Friday. I had chosen the church where Andy Batshogile is responsible for the music. I also had had long chats with Bishop Mwamba who was very enthusiastic about the prospect of having a visiting choir giving the service extra angelic power. It was a three-hour long service in the church filled with people. That day was beautiful, inspiring and thoughtful.

Easter Saturday was a day of rest and gave the choir members a chance to visit Gaborone and its surroundings. In spite of rain, some of them went to Gabane to have a look at the Kgotla and the pottery there. Others went to the Main Mall and the Museum, which unfortunately was closed, and so was Botswana Craft. However, the jewellery shop in Riverwalk had a successful day. Three Botswana diamonds found a home in Sweden.

A very happy choir, filled with memories for a lifetime, left Sunday morning. Who knows, one day they might come back to experience other parts of Botswana.

PULA – rain! was pouring down as the Cantus Choir left Botswana. ▲

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