

# **OLIVER CROMWELL AND QUEEN CHRISTINA – A SIDELIGHT UPON THE COURT OF SWEDEN 1653-4**

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The beheading of King Charles I in Whitehall on 30th January 1649 made Oliver Cromwell the undoubted military and political victor of the English civil wars, but from that moment the ideological difficulties of the Cromwellians increased rapidly due to the normal problems of any new governing régime in trying to defend itself and to the abnormal sense of shock and unease which the manner of the King's prosecution and death caused increasingly in Great Britain and abroad. Somewhat to the reversal of Cromwell's intended effects of a "show trial", the King's nobility, dignity and even fatalism soon characterised him as a "royal martyr". – In the well-known words of Andrew Marvell,

"He nothing common did or mean  
Upon that memorable scene ...  
But bow'd his comely Head  
Down, as upon a bed."

The exiled royalists upon the continent, though dreadfully short of money, as all of their documentation shows, were nearer than Cromwell in both place and mind to the European royalty, nobility and intelligentsia who were their supporters in their danger; Charles II's court-in-exile issued a spate of proclamations and propaganda against Cromwell, the tenor and tone of which was that Cromwell was a fugitive "mechanick" of little substance and absurd pretensions. Modern mechanics frequently have the rightful status of expert technicians, but Shakespeare's pejorative reference to "rude mechanicals" was a typical word usage throughout the seventeenth century, and when the royalists offered a reward for the capture of Cromwell dead or alive they took care to depict him as no more than a

rough, unskilled yokel and criminal, even though they stated that he had made himself into a murderer, regicide and usurper in addition.

Cromwell was thus something of a “worrying anomaly” among the crowned heads and formal hierarchies of the Europe of his day. Successes and an awesome reputation upon a purely military level could not in themselves render him assimilable abroad, especially when the royalists used their presence upon the continent itself to depict Britain as an isolated island racked with regicidal anarchism.

The subject is a massive one in continental terms, but the evidence of Anglo-Swedish relationships in the short period 1652 – 1654 is of sufficient intensive development to illustrate both the nature and solution of this wider diplomatic problem. In British domestic politics the vacuum left by the killing of Charles I was beginning to be felt by the Cromwellians. They debated what – if anything – might fill the empty place. On 16th December 1653, i.e., in the middle of this short two-year period, Cromwell was installed as “Lord Protector”, the puritan and “leveller” already finding himself necessitated to take steps forward, or perhaps backward, in the direction of monarchy by making himself head of the establishment or state.

Such a trend was by no means obvious among the options open to the Parliamentarians at that time, nor was the setting up of the new “Protectorate” without its difficulties and disputes. It is a matter of speculation to note that the parliamentary system could easily have devolved the position of head of state upon, for example, the Speaker of the House of Commons. At the same time some of Cromwell’s supporters wanted him to become king and popular verses were written in advocacy of this. Others felt that even the title of Lord Protector was either unprecedented or far too near the monarchy which they had abhorred and had sacrificed so much to defeat. These domestic problems were highly relevant to both the time and the persons concerned in Cromwell’s Swedish policy, largely because Cromwell’s need to get accepted abroad, and in Sweden in particular, coincided with an apparent period of comparative coolness over the new Protectoral constitution as between Cromwell and one of his principal supporters and henchmen, Bulstrode Whitelocke (or Whitlocke). If Whitelocke’s appointment as Ambassador to Sweden

was apt in itself it was not without a politic element of luxurious temporary exile from Britain.

Originally, therefore, Whitelocke was a somewhat reluctant Ambassador. His mission to Sweden was during the northern winter of 1653–4, a very timely absence in the midst of Cromwell's constitutional changes. Diplomatic courtesies between Cromwell and Christina, though normal in any conventional international context, seem initially without integrity in the light of their respective ideologies and characters. David Ogg's concise and unsympathetic judgement of Christina admits her rare combination of athleticism and intellectual patronage, but denies her the patriotism, common sense and responsible attitudes which he sees in Queen Elizabeth I of England (Ogg, D., *Europe in the Seventeenth Century*, 9th edition, 1971, pp. 445-6). He dates a decline of Sweden from Christina's reign and draws attention to her arbitrary cruelty in suppressing representations from her subjects – a form of absolute behaviour which Cromwell might have been expected to compare with the policies of his defeated enemy, Charles I. Cromwell's rebellion against Charles was apparently not only personal but was part of an ordered dislike of monarchy itself; eight major charges against kingship appeared in a London pamphlet of 1658 which purported to summarise the "arguments urged by the late Lord Protector against the Government of this Nation by the King or such person..." (see References). Though it is arguable that a "Lord Protector" is himself classifiable as a "such person" within the meaning of this pamphlet, four of these arguments (neglect of the people, increased numbers and corruption at court, uneconomical extravagance and voluptuousness) could have been applied by any puritan to the court of Christina. It is thus of special interest to envisage how Cromwell's diplomatic approaches would relate into such a courtly context.

The Ambassador himself was experienced in delicate negotiations. Bulstrode Whitelocke lived from 1605 to 1675, which makes him one of the great survivors of English political history. He rose to be keeper of the Great Seal for Cromwell, and was from a family prominent in the law and judiciary, particularly in London and the south Midlands of England, a major sphere of his family's local influence. His mother's maiden name was Bulstrode; he was of

Merchant Taylors' School, Saint John's College, Oxford and the Middle Temple. This background was important to his Swedish appointment, not only because of its implications in law and diplomacy but because the Middle Temple and other legal circles in the reigns of the early Stuarts (James VI and I and Charles I) were well-known as centres of political controversy and were warily treated as such by those sovereigns. As early as 1633, nine years before the civil wars, Whitelocke was deeply involved on behalf of the Middle Temple in arranging for the performance of a masque before Charles I and his queen. Though Whitelocke was always proud of his abilities to compose music and to write, this event was hardly primarily an entertainment at all, but was more of what might now be seen as a political test or demonstration of loyalty – in this case, to the Stuart crown. Every word and gesture in it would be scrutinised so as to prove the ideology and commitment of the participants and to assure the King, whether truthfully or not, that the legal profession was not a centre of subversion. Such formal events – masques, receptions, processions – were typical of what might be termed the open and often-dangerous expressionism of seventeenth-century public life. These surroundings contributed to Whitelocke's own qualities to shape him into a clever and practised trimmer.

The mission to Sweden allowed Whitelocke to present the ideology of Cromwellian puritanism in an attractive and appealing disguise, but with a hard centre of uncompromising "Cromwellianism" which was as much concerned with strict rules of personal conduct as with international policy. It may seem remarkable that the Cromwellians could command any decorative resources as a façade to their severe reputation as roundhead militarists, but there is wide evidence from many authorities that they certainly accepted civilised graces as externally-applied elaborations, providing these were not a diversion from their central and often fanatical ideology underneath. Such a limitation deprives any aspect of cultural life of its freedom to develop its own intrinsic integrity, but luck and wise appointments did contribute to the outwardly-cultured tone of Whitelocke's entourage. Participants were ranked in a somewhat bureaucratic hierarchy and were briefed as to their behaviour before they sailed for Sweden. Sir Henry Wotton's definition of an ambassador as "an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country" may refer to normal

governmental untruths, but the definition could include what Saint Paul might have called “chambering and wantonness” as an adjunct to political persuasion. Whitelocke was determined that his mission was to be free from such licentiousness; his memoirs of Sweden include numerous instances of his stress upon a high moral tone and of his positive provision of innocent leisure-time activities for his entourage (Whitelocke, B., *A Journal of the Swedish Embassy ...by... Whitelocke*, London 1772).

These puritan standards of education and discipline bring into focus one of the most notable of Whitelocke’s staff, Nathaniel Ingeley or Ingelo. As well as being official chaplain and Master of the Music to the expedition Ingelo had an even wider versatility. Later ages might have recognised in him the qualities of a travelling-manager or sports coach who ensures that those away from home do not give way to discouragement or local temptation. In grimmer terms he may be seen as Whitelocke’s travelling ideological officer, maintaining the purity of the Cromwellian “party line”, briefing the Ambassador himself on this and obtaining as much intelligence and information as possible whilst in Sweden. (Whether or not even Whitelocke himself was under Cromwellian surveillance from within his own entourage is an entirely open question.) Ingelo’s linguistic gifts were impressive. As Whitelocke says, “He was perfect in the Latin tongue, conversant in Greek and Hebrew and could speak good Italian.” The Italian influences already in evidence at Christina’s court made this language very useful.

Ingelo emerges from Whitelocke’s *Journal* as a remarkable and somewhat sinister paragon. He was, in fact, a Scottish divine from Edinburgh University, at least by education and temperament. He lived from 1621 to 1683 and had Bristol connexions (Crossley, J., editor, *The Diary... of Dr. John Worthington*, vol. 1, pp. 35-36); certainly he was an “Anglus” or Englishman in Class 53 of the Edinburgh Divinity Faculty, a student of Duncan Forester, Principal and Regent. Latin and English puns were made upon the words “Ingelo”, “Anglus” and “angel”. On 29th September 1641, just before the civil wars, Ingelo appeared in the register of Laureations of his university on subscribing the customary Latin vow to remain in the truth of the Gospel “against Papal usage and all heresies” (A

*Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties... of the University of Edinburgh...*, Edinburgh, 1858). Whitelocke describes him as a Fellow of Eton College, with which he was connected during his adult life and at his death. By 1645 he was incorporated into a Cambridge degree and was Dean of Queens' College, Cambridge. Andrew Marvell's poem to him was inspired by the Swedish expedition and has informative modern commentaries (Marvell, A., *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*). Among the Cromwellian academics who dominated Cambridge and carved up its preferments among themselves Ingelo earned a respected status, including a later Cambridge Doctorate of Divinity, for his intellectual attainments contributing to puritan theology and aesthetics ([Ingelo, N.] *Bentivolio and Urania...* by N.I., D.D., London, 1660, preface). Throughout his life he was esteemed for his domestic virtues and modesty of demeanour, Whitelocke himself describing him as "a person of admirable qualities in the work of the ministry and of honest life and pleasing." We know from Whitelocke that Ingelo preached in Hamburg with a voice of light timbre and that he shared Whitelocke's literary and musical interests. The Ambassador, working closely with his Master of the Music, "carried persons and instruments with him for that recreation."

In this and in all other details the mission seems to have been extremely well prepared; the journey to Sweden and the colourful formalities of the Ambassador's progress there betoken an expensive enterprise which can fire the imagination with the local atmosphere of the age. As an example, the approach of Whitelocke's ship and its passage through dangerous echoing narrows were heralded by his trumpeters. As liveried servants of the Commonwealth they wore an extravagant and ostentatious livery including satin doublets in the characteristic blue of the Cromwellians, lace-lined grey cloth trunk breeches, cloaks lined with blue plush, and their stockings long and of blue silk. It may be wondered whether these liveries needed to be supplemented for the Baltic winter. In addition to the preliminary expenses and overheads an ambassador was liable to incur extra spontaneous costs in reciprocating local good will. At Gothenburg, for instance, Whitelocke was visited and entertained to a concert of sacred music by men and boys, about twenty in number, whom he presumed to be a local church choir. "The end," he reports, "was a reward of

eight rick's dollars."

One of the questions bearing upon the spirit of the whole mission was how an ambassador negotiated with an almost absolute monarch of the age, such as Christina. She certainly seems to have given much of her personal time to the diplomatic corps, and therein lay an obvious danger, in that mistakes can much more easily be corrected among underlings than at the level of what was later known as a summit. Whitelocke tells of his great wariness not to offend, especially as the honouring of protocol was, in itself, cheap and easy; he says that in Sweden matters of ceremony were in great observance and the neglect of them "highly resented and offensive." Ambassadors to the Swedish court could be assisted in these diplomatic niceties in at least two ways, firstly through the court master of ceremonies and secondly within the diplomatic corps itself. In interviews with Queen Christina, therefore, an ambassador might be representing not only his own country directly but other ambassadors and nations indirectly; from this may be derived a practical rule that the more tricky and absolute is the disposition of any head of government, the more likely it is that the diplomats will make local *ad hoc* alliances to deal with her.

This can be seen in the close and confident relationship which Whitelocke struck up with Don Antonio Piementell, the retiring Spanish ambassador to Sweden. Piementell was in the Queen's confidence and, at a later court entertainment, after he had taken his official leave of her and was therefore unable to attend the event, he was allowed to watch it from a tiring room and to look after a vizor from one of the Queen's masqueing disguises until she required it of him. The Spaniard found that the mouth of the vizor contained a valuable diamond ring and that the Queen later assured him that she would never ask him to return an item such as this which she had deposited with him. Whitelocke obviously found his friendship with Piementell not only diplomatically useful but enjoyable. The two men had lengthy discussions punctuated by Whitelocke's domestic entertainment, thus ensuring that Piementell could inform Christina of Whitelocke's views and the nature of his cultural tastes.

Such information was of significance because, as in the courtly events which Whitelocke had arranged as a young London lawyer,

ideologies and standards were under constant surveillance. In one case the master of the ceremonies complained that Whitelocke had not accorded the title of "Excellency" to visiting senators and had not shown them the courtesy of accompanying them to their coaches when they left his lodgings. Whitelocke made some apology for this, pleading lameness, but added a counter-complaint that the visitors had been too closely surrounded by their servants for him to meet their eyes without obstruction, and that he himself was no stranger to civilities; he stated that he was more likely to accord the disputed title to the senators if it were more frequently accorded to him as the Ambassador from a Commonwealth, which made him the equal of an ambassador of a single prince – an interesting defence of collective government in view of Cromwell's quasi-monarchical pretensions at that time.

Hazards of protocol were created for the Ambassador. At a court ball he was placed in a situation in which the participant would naturally dance, and he did so, also quite naturally. Christina later confessed to him that this was a deliberate trap; Whitelocke quotes her as admitting that the Hollanders had reported to her that "...all the noblesse of England were of the King's Party and none butt Mechanicks of the Parlement party and not a gentleman among them." This was the voice of the exiled English royalists, clearly heard in Sweden through Holland. The Queen had thought to try and shame the Ambassador if he could not dance, but she now saw that he was a gentleman and had been bred a gentleman. These rituals of mature people of high estate correcting one another on matters of daily behaviour seem to have created no lasting mood of animosity; the accepted atmosphere of courtly intrigue and bizarre symbolism may act as a reminder of how close the situation and usages at Christina's court were to the fictional Elsinore in the Denmark of Shakespeare's "Hamlet"; Shakespeare's knowledge and verisimilitude seem accurately corroborated in Whitelocke's experiences.

The Ambassador's puritan God must have been very much upon his side in presenting him with a golden opportunity of enforcing his principles. The first of January of that year, 1654, occurred on a Sunday, a rare coincidence which enabled him to indulge the heaviest strictures against any attempt to involve him in seasonable



celebrations upon the Lord's Day. Initially there was great confusion at court, since Christina was not certain whether Whitelocke's displeasure was with herself, or with New Year celebrations in general, or with the trend of the diplomatic negotiations. Whitelocke carried his point by explaining his view on Sunday observance clearly and directly: "To have balles, dauncing and such pastimes I humbly apprehend to be displeasing to God... upon other dayes, dauncing and other harmless and honest recreations are and may be used."

Perhaps the most adamant of Whitelocke's puritan principles is one of which the historical significance has been somewhat forgotten, viz., an abhorrence of the custom of drinking healths, especially when accompanied by fanfares and drum rolls. Formal toasts are of long tradition in Scandinavia, but in Whitelocke's England these and other laudatory ceremonies were highly and often deliberately divisive, for no puritan could in conscience take part in them. The more extreme royalists discredited their party by trying to force "loyal toasts" upon puritans, particularly when the latter were perhaps alone and unprotected, and obvious by the sobriety of their dress. With typical rashness William Pryne, the puritan pamphleteer and a legal colleague of Whitelocke's, had dared to dedicate to Charles I a pamphlet called "Healthe's Sicknesse", reinforcing the thesis that the pledging of healths was so sinful that it would convert or transubstantiate the effects of the wine into an evil potion destructive of the drinker. This theory at its most intense was more than a principle of abstention in its view of such toasts as devilish anti-sacraments, in which the drinker drank his own physical demise and spiritual damnation. The policy of Whitelocke himself on the subject confirms the words given by Shakespeare to the black-clad puritanical Hamlet, talking of an imaginary Denmark and its toasts on a similar occasion:—

This heavy-headed revel east and west  
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations;  
The clepe us drunkards...

Once Whitelocke had expressed any clear principles such as these to Christina she was more than competent; there were special procedures to ensure that his scruples were respected. For example when a court reception was to be held on 6th April 1654, the Queen's

major-domo or master of ceremonies, Vanderlin, undertook special negotiations beforehand with Whitelocke, as possibly with the rest of the diplomatic corps. The reception was so arranged that there was no encounter between Whitelocke and the Danish ambassador; though Latin was available the entertainment was made wordless and was confined to dance and music, thus eliminating possible linguistic misunderstandings and the dangers of offending puritan ideology or other nations' diplomats. Fancy dress was worn and a form of masque was performed in which Christina herself danced firstly as a Moorish lady and then as a citizen's wife. The highly ethical subject of the entertainment showed that this was one court play at least which was to have no offence in it; it illustrated the vanity and folly of all pretensions and worldly things, a somewhat penitent theme in such rich and courtly circles and, of course, highly in accord with Whitelocke's religious principles. When asked his opinion of the entertainment he was able to tell Christina that any of his countrymen might have been present at it without any offence.

Such mutual satisfaction shows the highly sophisticated outworking of human relationships at this high diplomatic level, at which every care was taken to ensure that individuals and nationalities were placed in situations in which they had both the need and opportunity of defining themselves. There were numerous compensations for the many resultant moments of stress; there were magnificent exchanges of gifts. Nathaniel Ingelo brought Cromwell's portrait to Christina, with appropriate verses; she presented him with a magnificent gold medal for himself. Even the humblest members of the diplomatic entourage received presentations or were able to exchange mementos with their own colleagues at court. Whitelocke had sufficient time to observe for himself the patterns of Swedish life, such as the ceremonies of the Riksdag or assembly. Above all, Whitelocke and Christina, at least, were anxious to reach an accommodation with each other and were able to do so; treaties were signed between Cromwell and Sweden that April to cover friendship, freer trade and freer navigation – results which cannot have been entirely applauded by Denmark, with which Cromwell's relations at the time were not very cordial.

The Ambassador and his entourage may indeed have felt satisfied

with their experiences of Sweden as they made their leisurely progress home through northern Germany, their travel lightened by receptions or reunions with old friends of royalist, as well as parliamentary, times. The Anglo-Swedish treaties may certainly be regarded cynically, for not only were Cromwell and Christina of contrary persuasions whether in personal ethics, political aims or religion, but Christina was already planning her abdication and retirement to Rome. It is unlikely that the two rulers themselves were in a position to see the matter in this light, since the manner of their self-definition and aggrandisement towards each other suggests a form of diplomatic bargaining which was basically self-defensive and consolidatory and thus they inclined to stop short of trying to proselytise or subvert each other in any deep ideological sense. They both possessed the somewhat unusual quality of a measure of inward questioning on religious matters which, though it led them in totally different directions, resulted in Whitelocke's mission to Sweden becoming innovative by virtue of the number of matters of personal conscience which were discussed.

A special irony of this stately mission is that Cromwell himself proved to have only a few more years to live, and that after 1660 Whitelocke was fortunate to escape the fate of those few dedicated regicides specifically exempted from the restored Charles II's Act of Oblivion whereby the King refrained from prosecuting the majority of Cromwell's supporters. Whitelocke had time and freedom to reflect and refine his memoirs. The dedicated puritan never forgot the airs and graces of Christina and her expressive court.

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