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A personal view of

TRETTIOÅRIGA KRIGET

Olle Thörnvall

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# I THE ROOM

On a chilly but beautiful spring evening I am sitting at my writing-desk, looking out the window. The sky is a soft lilac-blue, and a waxing half-moon is hanging over my head. The cherry trees on the other side of the footpath between the apartment houses have just shed their white bloom.

In two days from now it is exactly fourteen years since I moved in here. It means that all the time since Trettioåriga kriget, The Thirty Years War, started anew I have been living in this little one-room flat. Here I have been writing the lyrics to Stefan's new songs and the sleeve notes for our reissued old albums – yes, and a book in Swedish, too, about the long history of Kriget, "The War", as the group is often called.

I arrived here in May 1994, and it was in the following autumn that Stefan, Dagge and Chrille started to jam again, with me listening as usual. We had not been playing together since the early 80's, and you could hear it. Especially Chrille, I think, had not held a guitar in his hands for quite a few years. Nevertheless, they started out on some chords suggested by Stefan on his bass, with Chrille following together with Dagge on the drums. During a couple of rehearsals, we tried to make a new song out of it, although it amounted to nothing in the end and although we did not know if we were serious about it or not. I even wrote some lyrics that included a pre-autumn view from here. That is why I know it was in September. And of course, with hindsight, it was the first step to the song "Lång historia" ("Long /hi/story") and the Kriget reunion.

## THE ROOM

The strange thing, though, is that when I moved in here, by chance I also moved in next door to the flat I had been living in when Kriget after four years of rehearsing and song-writing made their first LP album twenty years earlier, in 1974. On the other side of my kitchen and bathroom wall there is the same one-room flat as this, but in reverse, like looking in the mirror of memory. I lived there a year and a half from the summer of 1973. That means I wrote my first Kriget lyrics in Swedish there, definitely the first ones that were to make it on a record.

This situation sometimes makes me feel like a neighbour to myself, living next door to my youth. I still remember how I wrote some of the lyrics. For Stefan's symphonic and Yes-influenced "Mina löjen" ("My ridicules" or "My smiles") I have a vivid picture of writing out the rhymes on my typewriter, placed on the same small writing-desk I am sitting at now. Another song on the first album, Chrilles aggressive "Fjärilsattityder" ("Butterfly Attitudes"), evolved when I walked to and fro between the room and the kitchen, hearing the riff and our singer Robert's wordless melody in my head, beating the rhythm with my hand on my hip. For the acoustic ballad "Jag och jag och 'jag'" ("I and I and 'I'") on the second album, also by Chrille, I had borrowed a cassette deck and played the tune while sitting with my note-pad in a cheap green arm-chair. For Stefan's elegiac and haunting title song for the second album, "Krigssång" ("War Song"), I alternated between my bed and the writing-desk. However, that was the first song in the history of Kriget where the lyrics came *before* the music and I have no idea where they came from. I was working on another song at the time.

But where is this place I am writing from, then? Well, it is in Saltsjöbaden, a small seaside resort some twenty kilo-

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meters to the east of Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. I grew up here, and so did Stefan. In fact, we grew up as close friends, living in the same place more or less from the beginning. That was *not* here, though, but a couple of kilometers further away, down by The Grand Hotel and the train station by the water. It is a place I will return to. In due time, I will tell you about the other guys, too, but this is *my* view of Kriget and the Kriget story. That is one of two reasons for writing anew about something I have written about before. That is also why I shamelessly start from my room.

The other reason concerns *you!* If you are Swedish like us, and still want to read this in English, that is fine. But I am primarily addressing those of you who are interested in our music but who are *not* Swedish, and so do not know much about either Sweden in general, its rock scene or the history of Kriget or what we are singing about. I ought to be able to furnish some information.

Slussen in Stockholm, The Lock or The Sluice, is where the Baltic meets the lake Mälaren. It is also the small bridge between The Old Town and the South Side of Stockholm. There you can take the bus and the subway to different parts of the city, but also the train to Saltsjöbaden. After a couple of tunnels you will see a few high-rise buildings and an old industrial area, now turned into a mall. Then follows the open sky and some water, here and there a cluster of private houses, then some more high-rises and water – and after half an hour you step off at the end station. You now find yourself in the heart of the old Saltsjöbaden.

You notice the sea breeze immediately. This is not surprising, as Saltsjöbaden is surrounded by water on three sides and the red-painted station house is situated close to the water line. Even closer, on the nearby hill, is the Grand Hotel, which is the heart of the heart of Saltsjöbaden, built in the 1890's. This former recreation ground for the upper classes and the well-to-do is no older than that. And after the salty sea-water and some shores on the further side, overgrown with pines and firs, there is more sea and the forty thousand islands of the Stockholman archipelago, and then only the sea, and then you are in Finland. My parents and I made the journey over there with our eight-meter fishing-boat in 1957, the summer when I was five, and I remember waves like dark, grey mountains, tossing the boat like a small toy.

However, you are not going to Finland, you have just ar-

## A TRIP TO SALTSJÖBADEN

rived in Saltsjöbaden. Instead, you walk back about a hundred and fifty meters and find yourself among some houses on both sides of a road, with the Hotel behind you. You recognize that the semi-detached houses between the road and the railroad are quite new, while the three linked, small apartment houses on the other side of the road are older. In fact, they were built at the very beginning of the 1950's, and in 1953 I moved in there with my parents from Vaxholm, another seaside resort north of Stockholm. My father was a school-teacher by then, and had got a job in Saltsjöbaden. It was in April, and I was eight months old. A month later, the entertainer Frank Sinatra and his wife, the actress Ava Gardner, stayed for a couple of days at the Grand Hotel during his short Swedish tour. As far as I remember, we did not meet.

The road going by outside was called the Stockholmsvägen (the Stockholm road), and the three apartment houses were numbered from the Hotel as numbers 76, 74 and 72 respectively. On the ground floor, there were shops, and then came the first and the second floor where people lived in the apartments. The roofs were flat, so the houses looked like three boxes, placed below the small hill were the white-washed Grand Hotel rose like a castle with small towers and a big entrance.

The residents at the hotel were wealthy people, quite often foreigners, which gave this part of Saltsjöbaden a somewhat more international air than was usually the case in Sweden in those days. You must remember too, that almost nobody even had a TV-set until the late 50's, and even then there was only one channel and not many programs to watch. In the apartment houses, however, there was a mix of not so wealthy people. Many of them worked either as driv-

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ers or conductors on the train to Stockholm, or as waiters, cooks or dishwashers at the Grand Hotel. The hotel workers were often from abroad, smiled at us kids but knew little Swedish, and occupied the one-room flats. You could smell the cigarette smoke and sometimes the alcohol from the inside. Some young women swept by with strange perfumes lingering on the staircase, and after a while they were gone again.

I lived in the house on Stockholmsvägen 72, on the second floor, in an apartment consisting of two small rooms and a kitchen. My father slept in the living-room, where the big old radio was. There was no rock and roll whatsoever on that radio in the 50's, not that I ever knew of, anyway. Instead, my father and mother liked classical music and used to listen to it sometimes in the evening. Sometimes it was broadcasted from abroad. I remember a distant, echoing sound, the rumble of chairs, someone coughing, silence, and then a whining violin before the whole orchestra started. Afterwards, there was a long applause, still with that echo on. It was extremely boring and sad. I decided I never wanted to go to "the Abroad", where everything was grown-up, dull and at a distance.

The house on number 72 was the one the furthest away from the Hotel. The windows of our kitchen and our living-room faced the area behind the house, where there was an old clapboard house from the early days of Saltsjöbaden, with several small flats lodging more not so well-to-do people. However, my mother and I slept in the bedroom of our flat, and its window was on the gable. You did not see the Hotel, which was in the opposite direction, but the road crept by to the right below, further away were the railway tracks, and in the distance you glimpsed a patch of blue wa-

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ter. Immediately in front of the window there grew a big oak. During the twenty years I lived there its green leaves or bare black limbs were my constant companions. It was cut down a couple of years ago, when the new houses were built across the road, but in my mind it is still there. That is why the song "Barndom" ("Childhood") on the latest album *I början och slutet (In the Beginning and the End)* starts – in unrhymed, unrhythmic prose translation:

*The oak outside  
an open window  
the pattern in the rag rug*

Now about Stefan, or Steffe as he is always called. He is ten months younger than I, born in the spring of 1953. At that time his parents were living in Stockholm. However, his mother and her younger sister grew up here in Saltsjöbaden, living with their parents, Stefan's maternal grandparents, in the old wooden house behind my house. The four of them shared one room, with only cold running water in the tap. When the three boxes were built in the 50's, Stefan's grandparents moved into number 76 close to the Grand Hotel, where his grandfather worked as a kind of engine-man.

However, after just a couple of years Stefan's parents were divorced and he and his mother went to live with his grandparents in number 76. That way I came to know him. When his mother met his step-father they moved for a few years to Neglinge some two kilometers from the Grand Hotel, but he was often at his grandparents' who had moved back to the old wooden house in a bigger flat. In fact, he had me and all his old friends down there, so in the end his parents gave up and moved back. As it happened they moved into number 72, where I lived. It was in the winter of 1963-

64, and that would turn out to be an important step on the way eventually leading to the group Trettioåriga kriget.

In the song "Barndom" or "Childhood", there is also mentioned a bakery, the backyard and the forest. These are all facts from when we grew up. Trollskogen (The Goblin forest) was on a steep slope behind the wooden house where Stefan's grandparents lived. It gave place to some expensive villas, but before that we often played there. The backyard was behind the middle house-box, number 74. When Stefan and his parents moved up to the second floor, they had one gable window facing the backyard. We played different ball games there, often with a football, although the ground was too small for a real match – which in those days took place on the then empty ground across the road. In the backyard, we sometimes accidentally smashed a window.

That brings us to the bakery. They made bread, biscuits, cakes and pastry which they sold in the shop on the front side. They also ran a café, which was quite popular in the 50's but then declined. However, the employees' entrance door was from the backyard, and when playing there you sometimes felt the nice smell of newly baked bread in the air. Now and then, a plate of burnt biscuits was carried to the big garbage cans. A few times we picked them up and ate them, never minding the rats.

On the pavement before the café, tables and chairs were placed in summer. In the 50's, "raggare" sometimes showed up, that is, a gang of youths driving around in cars, the boys using grease and combing their hair like the new teenage idol, the American singer Elvis Presley. In Sweden, I think his breakthrough was in 1958, when "Jailhouse Rock" was a hit. It also was a movie in black and white, perhaps his only good one, especially the scene where he performs the title song

and dances with jail bars as background.

I was too young for the movies, but I still heard the song – and others, too. The café had a jukebox inside, which could be heard out on the pavement, especially in the summer when the door was open to let in the air. Also, I had an older friend in number 74, who miraculously had a small gramophone and some records with Elvis. His father worked as a bartender at the Hotel, while his mother was beautiful and used a certain perfume. I remember looking at the EP record cover of "King Creole" with Elvis there. I found him good-looking and his looks were mixed with the music and the perfume of my friend's mother – and I could not sort it out for myself. I was seven years old and I was embarrassed.

When I was ten my father moved from my mother and me. That is how it looked and that was what I was told, but now I think my mother told him to leave. It was clumsily done and before I understood that my father lived somewhere, where I could visit him, I was devastated. Afterwards, the feeling lingered. Nothing was funny anymore.

I had another friend down by the Grand Hotel. His name was Bengt-Arne or Benke for short. He was a year older than I. As a child he had suffered infantile paralysis or polio and now moved with some difficulty. He was clumsy and if he stumbled and fell, he could not get up by himself, you had to help him. Some of the older guys teased him and were quite cruel, but Benke was a fighter, although he could not run after his enemies. He also was far too slow to be able to punch anyone, but if he got you in his grip he did not let go. He held on like a bulldog.

Benke's father worked on the railway, maintaining the cars, as a kind of technical factotum. They had lived in the old clapboard house behind my house, but now they had moved

to number 76 and a flat on the first floor. In the summer of 1963 I started visiting Benke quite often. The reason was that in the small bedroom, where he and his mother slept, he had a gramophone. He had some records I had heard at my other friend's earlier, but also some new ones. No doubt this was because of his polio. He could not be outdoors and play as easily as me and the other guys. But he liked music and had some musical talent, although I did not think about such things then. He could hum melodies.

Number one at Benke's place in the summer of '63 was "Just like Eddie" with the English one-time-hitters Heinz and the Saints (Heinz himself being German by birth). It was a hit in the charts, too, in England and Sweden, but I did not know about that. And I did not know it was a homage to the early American rock and roll singer Eddie Cochran, who at age twenty-one had died in a car crash while touring England in 1961. But I did vaguely recognize the phrase "Come on, ev'rybody!", which singer Heinz yelled before the short guitar-solo break. That had been Eddie Cochran's first hit. Now Benke yelled it too, sitting on the bed, holding his hand like he had a mike in it – and to my ears it sounded pretty good.

This, of course, is part of the background for the song "Benke" on the album *I början och slutet*. However, sometime in September or October that autumn I came to Benke one day and was let in by his mother. Benke himself was sitting on the bed in his room, holding a small single record clumsily in his hands. When I entered he slowly looked up. I asked him what he had there.

– It's these new guys everybody's talking about.

I looked at the record: "She loves you" with four young men called The Beatles. Never heard of them.

– Play it, please!

And that changed my world for ever. It was the best song I had ever heard, bouncing along at a brisk tempo, tough, fresh, both jolly and sad, sung with the most fantastic voices. I asked Benke to play it again, and again. I did not know anything at all about the group, I did not even know what a pop or rock band was supposed to be, but suddenly they looked marvellous with their hair combed down in a strange way on the cover photo. And for the first time since my father had left I felt happy. There was a world where something was catchy and smiling and worth living for, after all. Naturally, I did not think about it like that at eleven years of age, but that was what I slowly started to feel and that was what it was to mean to me in the coming years.

Before Christmas, Benke got an LP album too with them, called *With The Beatles*. At about the same time, Stefan moved into number 72, and it turned out that he too had heard about them and liked them. There also was another boy living next door to me called Pär. He was only seven years old, but he had a small battery-driven gramophone, and now his parents gave him an EP with "The Liverpool Sound" that included "She loves you" with The Beatles.

At about the same time we discovered that there were several programs with pop music, mostly charts, on the new radio channel, the P 3. Soon Stefan also got a gramophone, an old huge piece of furniture from some relative of his. It held a radio and an old tape recorder, too, so he could actually tape songs from the radio. Marvellous!

And then the pictures! In the red train-station house there is a café now, but in those days it was a waiting room and a press agency news-stand. There we found English pop fan magazines like *Fabulous*, with lots of pictures to cut out and nail on the wall. When we got older, Stefan in particu-

lar continued buying magazines there, but in due time he switched to the "serious" music paper the Melody Maker. As he later formulated it, musically that news-stand was our window on the world.

Sometime in that magic year, Stefan, Pär and I decided to form our own pop group. None of us could play anything and we had no instruments. Indeed, except for Pär's dad, a big cheerful man who was a train driver and played the accordion when he had had a couple of snaps, we did not even know anyone who owned an instrument. So we started the same way as so many kids start, by putting a record on the gramophone and miming to that, using badminton rackets as guitars. I had three of my mother's sofa cushions for drums.

For Christmas gift that year, I too had a gramophone. By then, my new idols were The Rolling Stones and my first record was a hit compilation album with them called *Around and Around*. I played it constantly. I stood at the bedroom window on the gable and looked out on the frozen afternoon sky and the black oak shrouded in white snow. Then I opened the window, like a mouth, and turned up the volume:

*I said the joint was rockin'  
goin' 'round an' 'round,  
yeah, reelin' an' rockin'  
what a crazy sound,  
an' they never stopped rockin'  
'til the moon went down!*

But of course, I did not care for the words, which I no more than half understood. I just loved the insistent beat and the twanging, electric sound of the guitars.

In 1965, both Stefan, Pär and I got an acoustic guitar. We had no one we could ask about how to play them, but one afternoon I detected you were supposed to press down the string on the neck of the guitar and strike it at the same time to get a note. After that, I immediately set about figuring out the simplest chords from a book I had bought. I sort of led the way in that respect, not because I was more musical than the others (I was not), but because I was almost a year older than Stefan, which meant something at that age. In the autumn, both Stefan and I started taking guitar lessons in the Swedish municipal school of music. Typically, Stefan left after a year while I continued. To the bitter end, I might add.

Our nameless trio still rehearsed in our bedrooms at number 72, but we had started to play ourselves, although we almost never got through a song. I think the first one we succeeded in playing was "Sleep Little Girl" with the Swedish group Tages. They were a Beatles-imitating pop band from Gothenburg, Sweden's second biggest city, who had won a competition called "The Beatles of the /Swedish/ West Coast". Now I played the three chords in the song on guitar while Stefan sang and Pär – who was too young to know any English – joined in the chorus. When Stefan's female cousin Louise was ten she was allowed to have a birthday party at her paternal grandmother's house and we played at it. That was our first gig, in the spring of 1966.

Our equipment at that time was very limited. We had small, simple microphones, about the size of a thumb, that

you just hung below the strings on the guitar. They cost less than two Swedish crowns each, not even half a dollar. For amplifiers we used old radios, so that I plugged into the big, brown, wooden-cased apparatus that my mum and dad had sat at, listening to classical music from "the Abroad". Stefan had got an old amp, a loud-speaker and a mike as a Christmas present. They produced no more volume than our ordinary voices, but when you sang in the mike it sounded a bit electric, just as the faint but edgy ting-a-ling from the miked guitars, and that was fantastic.

Later in 1966, we added drums. That came about by pure chance. Pär's school teacher had an eleven-year old son, Mats, whom she one day said played the drums. We told Pär to ask her to ask him to come see us. This he did. We were in my bedroom, and his set was restricted to one snare drum and a cymbal. But he held the rhythm at least as well as we did.

Now we were four. When Mats got a bass-drum to his kit we could not remain in our bedrooms. However, Mats' father was dead and Mats lived with his mother and his older sister in a detached house in a part of Saltsjöbaden called Baggensudden. They had a garage and there we put up our things. By that time, we had voted Pär the bass guitar player of the band. He had no bass, but instead we tuned down the lower strings on his acoustic guitar. As a consequence, he was now out of tune. But it was the most "bassy" sound we could get and that was what we wanted.

There were other boys in Saltsjöbaden who had formed a pop band or dreamt about doing it. For example, Pocke and Magnus were in the same class in school as Stefan. Both of them had parents that were artists. Pocke's dad was quite well-known. He has made the big glass sculpture in the middle of the square called Sergels Torg in central Stockholm.

## GLORIOUS WAR

Both Pocke and Magnus lived in old wooden villas, not far from the Grand Hotel, so I knew them well, too. They made their own tape recordings with a couple of friends.

Then there was Benke. Or rather, he had been singing with some guys who played covers of The Kinks: "All Day and All of the Night" and such stuff. In 1966, however, he was sacked, and when autumn came he had moved with his parents to somewhere else. We never saw him again. But in the late 60's a mutual friend met him in Visby, the largest town on the island of Gotland, Sweden's largest island in the Baltic. Benke had been born on Gotland, so now he was back where he started. In the spring of 1970 he was nineteen. A week later, he died in his sleep. I think a vein burst in his brain. He was even two years younger than Eddie Cochran.

The band Benke was fired from continued for some months before they broke up. I bought the electric guitar from their lead guitarist in the spring of 1967, at about the time "A Whiter Shade of Pale" was climbing the charts with Procol Harum. It was a white Hofner, and it cost me three hundred Swedish crowns, that is, about fifty dollars. Later, I borrowed his amp too. In the autumn, Stefan bought the red Kent bass guitar from the bass player of the same ex-band, now for two hundred crowns or about thirty-three dollars. At that time, Pär had left for good and Stefan and I played as a trio with Mats on drums in his garage. It was no regret to us. Just before I had bought my guitar, in late May, I had seen the new three-piece band the Jimi Hendrix Experience set the cold evening on fire on an outdoors stage in Stockholm. We did not sound a bit like that, we were still just kids doing covers, but it was a new dream.

However, through a mutual friend I also met another drummer when school started that autumn. It was Dagge. He

was the same age as Stefan, born in 1953. He had spent his first years in the Stockholm suburb Midsommarkransen. His father was a classic composer and in 1963 the whole family moved out to an apartment in Neglinge in Saltsjöbaden. Dagge's first instrument at that time was the violin, but he had started to sit in on the drums with the school jazz band in Samskolan, the school where we all ended up. He too had a snare drum and a cymbal, at least he could borrow it, and we played together a few times with one or two other guys.

The ones who really were into rock music at that time were Magnus and Pocke, Stefan and I. In 1967-68 Flower Power or psychedelica turned us on – as the catch phrase had it then. That meant mostly American bands like The Doors, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, Love and Spirit, but also Pink Floyd from England. On the other hand we followed the blues-rock bands too, and although the blues was a black American form of music, what we listened to was mainly the white British blues-rock groups. It had started with Eric Clapton playing with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, then his trio Cream, then the Fleetwood Mac with Peter Green. In March 1969, I saw a new British guitar group supporting the American hippie group Country Joe and the Fish. They were called Led Zeppelin.

As you might have noticed, I have just started to talk about the music as rock, which was what we listened to and tried to play. But in Sweden, the phrases "pop music" and "popband" lingered on until the early 70's as the etiquettes for all kinds of modern, electric music. At that time a Swedish music scene with groups playing and singing in Swedish had started to emerge. Some of these constellations were closer to folk or ethno music, but others were not. At least

the latter must in retrospect be termed rock bands and they did not sound like the music in the charts.

Back in 1968, Stefan, Mats and I had stopped playing together. Mats would disappear for several years, and when he returned it was as a keyboard and sax player. As such he would join Kriget, but not until 1977. For my part I continued playing classic music in the guitar school. A couple of times I played with Dagge, but mostly I sat on the bed and improvised solos in the Clapton vein. Stefan had joined his schoolmates Pocke and Magnus in a group called Erkson Drive Car.

This group was in several ways the immediate precursor of Kriget. Besides Stefan on the bass Pocke played lead on a homemade electric guitar and Magnus sang – or talked. They also had a drummer, Johan, whose paternal grandmother was a famous Swedish textile artist. Johan was a kind of artist *in spe* himself, already a skilful drawer. He lived in Solsidan in Saltsjöbaden with his parents and four brothers in a big red-brick house, verging on a mansion or chateau. It was beautifully situated by the water, the perfect place for parties, and at one of them Erkson would play out in the garden. Kriget too would in due time play there – *inside* the house, up on the second floor or something like that!

The inspiration for Erkson was to a large extent the American psychedelic scene. But they made their own songs – or rather, Pocke made them. Looking back, that was perhaps the most important thing with Erkson. No more covers! They rehearsed in the Samskolan and played two gigs there in the great hall.

Another important thing was that Magnus was a colourful frontman, but no singer. Instead, there was another guy with a good voice and technical ability, although in truth it

was more opera aria than rock. This was Robert. He was from Vienna in Austria and had come with his mother to Sweden and Saltsjöbaden in 1966. They landed in an apartment behind the big hospital, not very far from the Grand Hotel. Stefan's cousin Loise lived on the same block, and during the school year 1968-69, Robert was in the same class as Stefan, Pocke and Magnus. It was inevitable that they would ask him to sing a bit with Erkson. Not too much, just the choruses where there was a melody to keep.

In June 1969, I suffered an accident, which put an end to my guitar playing. That was what I meant earlier with "the bitter end". While out swimming in Saltsjöbaden I was run over by a racer boat and my left arm was damaged for good. I was lucky in literally emerging alive, as I slid under the bottom of the boat and appeared at the back where the motor with the roaring propeller was. If I had got my head in it I would have been killed instantly. As it turned out, the propeller caught my left arm instead and tore off its muscles, nerves and artery. The blood gushed, Stefan, Pocke and other guys watching from shore saw the water turn red. I soon would have died from loss of blood instead, if not the fucking idiot that ran over me happened to be a doctor. When I was pulled into the boat, he found a piece of string to draw tight around my arm and lessen the flow of blood. When we reached harbour he called for an ambulance.

A week later I returned from the hospital with my left arm plastered in a heavy bandage. This was immediately before Midsummer. I stood in the window, looked at the green oak and thought about my situation. I had wanted to become a guitar player, that had been my only dream, apart from girls. But the guitar now seemed to have drowned in the waves. When the winter holiday came, I had to go to the

hospital to get another operation and a new plaster.

In the meantime, I started playing the harmonica. I also turned my guitar the other way around and tried to play with my right hand on the neck and strumming the strings with a plectrum fastened to my left thumb. But I had no sense of feeling, no strenght or steady rhythm left in that hand and apart from having to learn anew, it did not sound at all like what I had been used to.

However, in the winter when I got the new plaster Ersson made a demo tape. They were now reduced to a trio with Pocke on guitar and vocals, Stefan on bass and Johan on drums. As can be heard from the demo, they still sounded childish, but things had started to happen. Stefan's bass is obviously on its way. When asked, he likes to point out as models some of the bass players from the American West Coast bands, for example Phil Lesh in the Grateful Dead and Jack Casady in Jefferson Airplane. I think he is right in this and it is interesting, because later, when Kriget really got going, he would turn out to have a knack for inventing riffs, but the inspiration for them never was from anyone's bass playing.

The demo was made in the attic at a friend's house and the technician was Dagge. He put up what mikes they had and ran the old tape recorder, with tapes on reels, and used a reverb echo they had borrowed. It was a pointer for the future, for Dagge was as much interested in recording music and in studio technology as in playing the drums. In the summers, he already worked as a sound engineer at the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, and in 1981, when Kriget split or took a long vacation from itself, he continued working as a recording engineer and producer. In the end, he and a friend set up their own studio, Decibel Studios at Slussen, close to

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where the train for Saltsjöbaden leaves. That is where the two recent studio albums with Kriget have been made, recorded and produced by him.

When the demo with Erkson was finished, everyone involved was pleased with it. We decided we would listen to it at Jåpe's and Hasse's place. The two Persson brothers lived with their parents in a house on Baggensudden, neighbours to Mats. Jåpe and I were in the same class at school and Hasse was two years younger. Now they also invited a friend, who was in the same class as Hasse. His name too was Dag or Dagge, the same as drummer Dag, and to distinguish them, let us call this new Dag "Krok", which after awhile became his nickname. He too lived in a house on Baggensudden and his father was a succesful piano-playing band leader, in younger years in a jazz group, but now mostly conducting his own dance and big band orchestras. Krok himself played the piano, but only classical pieces by Chopin and others.

In the spring of 1970, Erkson were supposed to make a new demo, this time in a small cellar in the Samskolan. But things did not go very well and their equipment was left standing together with Dagge's small recording outfit. One day Dagge, Krok, Stefan and I decided we would just go down and jam a little for the fun of it. A couple of weeks later we did it again. It was the first time ever with a group for Krok, the first time for me playing the harmonica, whereas Dagge at last got a chance to drum a little himself. The veteran was Stefan, who besides playing the bass guitar and adding lead guitar furnished some vocals on a couple of twelve-bar blues standards.

One nice and warm evening in early June, at about the time school was out for the summer, we were at the Pers-

son brothers'. While we were having coffee in the kitchen Pocke suggested that *all* of us should form a group. Not the Persson brothers, who did not play anything, but the rest! We found it a thrilling idea, and a couple of days later we stood in the hall of the now empty Samskolan, up on the stage where there was a black grand piano for Krok to play. Stefan played bass guitar, Pocke lead and they shared the vocals. I played the harmonica and at times I also added some notes on my upside down, left-hand guitar. Last but not least, Dagge played the drums and so did Johan, which meant we had two drummers. It was a group that sounded quite original from day one.

On the very first occasion, we started with two songs, one by Pocke and one by Stefan. The one by Pocke would eventually be dropped from the agenda, but Stefan's effort, the first song he ever wrote, remained. It had a kind of theme in chords, played in a quintuple time rhythm that in the last analysis – via King Crimson – could be traced back to the classic composer Ravel's famous *Bolero*. Then followed a vocal part with some "insane-sounding" changes suggestive of early Pink Floyd, then a small but effective chromatic riff which was Stefan's own invention.

This would turn out to be an important song in the Kriget history. I know I suggested the title "Amassilations", a word not to be found in a dictionary but that I nicked from an LP album with an English blues-rock group called Pulse (they had a harmonica player). So I suppose I also suggested the construction "to amass", which *can* be found in a dictionary, but apart from that the lyrics, such as they are, came from Stefan, who also sang them. In that version it can be heard on the CD album *Glorious War*. But when the song hung on, I later re-wrote the lyrics completely in Swedish – not that

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that made them any the better – and called it "Perspektiv" ("Perspectives"). Under that name it can be heard in a live version both on the CD *War Memories* and from another occasion as a bonus track on the reissued CD album *Trettioåriga kriget*.

In the original version, I think from the first day in the hall of Samskolan, Stefan wanted a break with just the drums, and then he would do a bass solo on top of that before the "normal" song returned for another round. That is what you hear on *Glorious War*. But somewhere around the middle of the 70's the "Perspektiv" version was finally dropped – except for the bass solo, which started a life on its own instead. A version of that is found on *War Memories*, called "Act of War", and as such it has found its way even into some of the gigs from these last few years.

Back in school in autumn, we continued making songs and rehearsing at the Samskolan. That was when Stefan and Pocke found our name during a history lesson: Trettioåriga kriget, The Thirty Years War. The real war by that name was fought in Europe between 1618 and 1648. At that time Sweden was at its height as a big power, and that was why we chose the name. To our ears it sounded pompous and very Swedish – and that was how we wanted our music to sound too at that time. We had no clue whatsoever about unhealthy nationalism or war propaganda. Least of all did we think about the fact that the Thirty Years War had been a religious war between Catholics and Protestants of the Christian creed. On the contrary, I think no one in the group was religious, I certainly was not. If we had a common ideological point of view at all, we were all pacifists. Nevertheless, we found it a good name.

Friday the 18th of December 1970 we did our first gig as

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Trettioåriga kriget. It was at the local youth centre, situated in the cellar of a newly built mall called the Tippen as it was erected on an old dump or refuse tip. The previous day we had brought our equipment there and put it up at one end of the dance floor, as there was no stage. The piano was borrowed from the restaurant in the mall, Pocke and Stefan had their own amps, but my harmonica came out together with the vocals through a PA with two home-built loudspeakers, one on each side. As we had no monitors – we had never heard of that – I had some difficulty in hearing what I was playing. This was cumbersome, as I of course could not see anything either with the harp in my mouth. Where actually was I?

When the disco music was turned off and it was time to enter we were quite nervous. Then we walked "on stage", that is, out on the floor, where the young audience, many of them our friends, literally sat at our feet. Wisely enough, we started with Stefan's "Amassilations", and apart from a few mistakes we got happily through it. When it was time for the bass solo, Johan alone kept a steady rhythm on the snare and bass drums for a couple of bars, then Dagge fell in with a kind of supporting rhythm – by then he had the black Ludwig drums he still plays – and then Stefan rumbled away on the bass on top of that. I was still shaky where I stood listening, but at the same time I felt proud. It was good, damn it!

The second number was by Pocke. It was a kind of signature tune, entitled "The Thirty Years War" – in English, as the little singing we did was all in English at that time. It was a good song, with a theme and a vocal melody in F minor, reminiscent of both folk music and a military march. It was sung by Pocke and the lyrics were by him and me in collabo-

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ration. We had concocted them just a week before the gig, when we suddenly had realised at a rehearsal that the song we were playing did not have any words to it. It had sounded quite okay as it was. It shows how unimportant we found not just the lyrics but vocals in general. First verse:

*Glorious war,  
pride of our nation!  
Brave Swedish soldiers  
long time ago!  
God bless the days  
of the Thirty Years War!*

Like "Amassilations" it was well received by the audience, who applauded, whistled and shouted. And so it went on for three more numbers. When the last chord had died away we ran out to a room "backstage", happy and relieved. We had made it, we had actually made it!

After that the winter vacation followed, Christmas came, and the snow fell on time that year, white and silent. We had left our amps and instruments at Tippen, in an adjacent room, where the local children's theatre club dwelled. There was a tape recorder there, a piano too, although slightly out of tune, and space enough to set up our drum kits and amps. The local library was overhead, but it was closed during Christmas and New Years time. And – Kroks mother was a driving force in the children's theatre, which meant we could borrow a key and use their room as we wished.

So we decided to make a demo. We started on Boxing Day and completed it a week and a half later, when school started anew. Once again, Dagge did all the recording and editing work at the same time as he played the drums. He

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had two ordinary tape recorders and an echo consisting of a large metal sheet. First we did the background, everyone playing at the same time as on a live gig. Then he ran that background on one of the tape recorders and re-recorded it while we put on vocals and solos or added an acoustic guitar by Pocke or whatever.

We did four songs, three of them from the gig. The only really new piece was Kroks piano concerto, called just "Konserten" ("The Concerto"). It consisted of three parts or movements, and had grown from the second movement, which we had started rehearsing before the summer holidays. The star in it was Krok himself, naturally enough, with a lot of cadences and thundering chords, but also some themes, where I could assist on the chromatic harmonica. It is a composition where the two drummers are put to good use, creating a heavy beat, sometimes in triple time.

We were extremely content with the demo. I found it obvious that the record company we sent it to would accept it. But they were of a different mind. Soon afterwards, Pocke and Johan left, and the demo sunk into oblivion. Johan, of course, would return as the art work master of Trettioåriga kriget, but the demo remained stacked away. In 2004, however, thirty-four years later, Stefan Dimle at Mellotronen finally released it. That was when it received its title, *Glorious War*, taken from the signature tune. It is literally a teenage work, with flaws and influences audible everywhere. But that is how we sounded on our first gig.

From an international point of view, Sweden is an unimportant country in the north of the world. Geographically speaking, you cannot really call it a small country as its area is larger than quite a few others, but its proportions are like Stefan in Kriget: long and thin. From the south to the north it spans 1800 kilometers, and except for the north with its forests and mountains it is limited by a coastal line everywhere.

However, the population is just about nine million people, about one to one and a half million of them immigrants. This means Sweden is far from overcrowded. A hundred years ago, most people lived in the countryside, working in different manual jobs at farms, but nowadays, the countryside is abandoned. Instead, people cluster around the few bigger cities like bees around a hive. But the big cities in Sweden are not so big. The largest is Stockholm, with a population slightly more than one million people.

This also means there is a lot of unspoilt nature and beautiful scenery in Sweden, and the forests and meadows, lakes and rivers, shores and islands are mostly silent places. There is an image of the typical melancholy Swedish temperament and its sad folk music, and perhaps there is some truth in it. It has been said, also, that Swedish people do not believe in God, but in nature as a god, and perhaps there is some truth in that too. At least the differences between the seasons make us acutely aware of nature. Just think about the midnight sun during the short summers in the north.

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Historically, we have left no lasting mark on other nations. If there is anything that Sweden or Scandinavia in general is known for, it must be the vikings. They occurred mostly in the years from 800 to 1050. They traded with other nations but just as often murdered and plundered. They were good ship-builders and sailors. You found them everywhere along the European coast and into the Black Sea. In fact, the Norse viking Leif Eriksson also reached America around the year 1000. Some forty years later, the Swedish viking Ingvar den Vittfarne (Ingvar the Wide-travelled) led a fleet to the Caspian Sea during a five-year journey, rolling the boats on logs across the mountains. Most of his men were killed, not in fight but by "diseases from women", probably syphilis. Among the dead was Ingvar himself. He was twenty-five years old.

There are a lot of runic stones from the 11th century, some of them telling about Ingvar. But the oldest stones were erected in the 8th century. They carried no runes but pictures, and accordingly are called picture-stones. They are mostly located to the island of Gotland. One of them inspired me to write the lyrics for "Ryttaren", "The Rider", on the *I början och slutet* album. On top there is a warrior on horse-back, probably riding to Valhalla, where the dead dwell. Below him there is a ship full of warriors on rolling waves. The song is placed as a kind of stone on the album, too, gathering up the travelling theme and a song such as "Benke", not least because Benke was born and died on Gotland.

It was not until the 16th century that Gustav Wasa gathered most parts of what is now Sweden into one nation and "saved us" from the Danes. Therefore, he is looked upon as our founding father. His grandson Gustav Adolf (Gustavus

Adolphus) was the king leading the country in the Thirty Years War. He was actually killed in that war, in 1632, when he due to bad eyesight rode into the enemy camp in the gunsmoke and mists in the battle of Lützen in Germany. Still, Sweden was on the winning side and a political and military power to reckon with in the Europe of those days.

Because of that, we needed people who could represent Sweden in political and diplomatic issues, and we also badly needed some cultural varnish. Gustav Adolf's daughter, Queen Christina, managed to talk the famous French philosopher René Descartes into coming to Stockholm. He was the one who tried to ground all knowledge in the axiom that to doubt my own existence I first have to exist and so I cannot doubt it: *Cogito, ergo sum* – I think, therefore I am. However, this insight did little to help him against the wintry cold in Sweden. He soon died here of pneumonia in February 1650. It is our only contribution to Western philosophy: killing off the guy who tried to prove his own existence. I find it symbolic.

In the second part of the 18th century, the king Gustav III (Gustavus the Third) entered the throne. He was interested in cultural matters. His ideal in that respect was France, and he did what he could to copy its art institutions. We got a Royal Dramatic Theatre, a ballet and an opera, and he encouraged musicians, painters and writers. He also founded the Swedish Academy, the folks dealing out the Noble Prize. In many ways, our cultural heritage goes no further back than that, and it shows. Swedes in general are not interested in art but in sports and beer-drinking, and the average Swedish taste is quite crude.

On the other hand, since the beginning of the 19th century we have enjoyed two hundred years of peace! In the

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20th century, we managed to stay out of both the First and the Second World War. Especially during the second one a lot of refugees came to Sweden instead. That is a trend we have continued. Whenever there is a bloody war going on or an oppressive military dictatorship coming to power somewhere in the world, you can be sure we will receive a lot of people from those countries. For better or worse, the idyllic Sweden that I and my friends in Kriget grew up in no longer exists.

During the 20th century, Sweden has also been invaded by the culture and subculture of the USA. Teenage culture in particular is copied from the USA via TV-series, movies and all sorts of trends, whether it be wearing jeans, saying "fuck" or "shit", eating hamburgers, practising with a skateboard in a pool or whatever. A big part of it is of course rock music. Rock was born in the USA and is ultimately an American phenomenon. On the other hand, The Beatles from Great Britain remain the most important group in rock and pop history, and the 60's, the 70's and the 80's saw a crowd of other English bands, who were popular in Sweden.

We had Swedish guys copying the American rock and roll stars right from the start in the 50's. These were working-class kids, with little schooling, apparent in their awkward handling of the English language on the cover records they made. In the 60's, as I have already said, British pop music swept over Sweden too, and we had a lot of imitators. The aforementioned Tages was the best of them together with a group called The Hep Stars. They were from Nacka, which is the bigger municipality that Saltsjöbaden belongs to. After a few cover hits, their keyboard player started making their own songs, and they had hits with them too.

The name of the keyboardist was Benny Andersson. In

due time, he and Björn Ulvaeus and their wives Agneta Fältskog and Annifrid Lyngstad started the group ABBA. After winning the Eurovision Song Contest with "Waterloo" in 1974 – another battle – they would become our largest selling international pop artists ever. In the 80's and the 90's they were followed by Roxette and The Cardigans, though none of them reached the fame of ABBA.

However, this was strictly pop music for the charts, made according to international formulas and sung in English. This of course does not mean that it was impersonal or that you could not detect any Swedish traits. On the contrary! ABBA:s songs have very much their own, unique style in melody and harmony, and the two female voices create a vocal sound that is theirs only, and that obviously was a decisive factor in the well-deserved success of the group. But as I have already hinted at, at the end of the 60's another kind of music scene slowly started to emerge in Sweden.

In the autumn of 1967, I had seen the quite original duo Hansson & Karlsson perform live two times at the Konserthuset (the Concert Hall) in central Stockholm. They consisted only of hammond organ and drums and were instrumental, to a high degree playing what came into their minds at the moment. In September they supported Frank Zappa's group The Mothers of Invention, in November they supported Cream. Both times I found them as interesting as the head-lining act, guitar freak as I was.

In September 1968, I heard International Harvester support The Doors at Konserthuset. They slowly built up long instrumental improvisations on just a simple tune or theme, and sometimes it sounded like Swedish folk music, sometimes like rock. Or say that the melody was folk music, the beat was rock. They would later re-name themselves

Träd, Gräs och Stenar (Trees, Grass and Stones) and must be counted as one of the very few original Swedish groups when judged from an international perspective.

Then there was Pugh Rogefeldt. His first LP album *Ja, dä ä dä* (the title being a dialectical version of *Yes, It Is*) was out in the spring of 1969 and is generally considered the first Swedish rock album with lyrics in Swedish. He sang and played the guitar and made his own songs – a very playful and personal mix of pop, rock, folk ballads and children's tunes. On the album the bass and the lead guitar was played by Jojje Wadenius from Made in Sweden, the drums by Janne Karlsson from Hansson & Karlsson.

In the summer of 1970, a manifestation of new music and a new way of looking at things took place in the open air, on the soft grass of an open ground called the Gärdet in Stockholm. To be precise, there were two festivals there that summer, the first starting on June 12th. It was a free, anti-commercial three-day festival, and some of the artists were professionals, but many were what we in Sweden call "happy amateurs". The driving force behind it was Bo Anders Persson, the guitarist of Träd, Gräs och Stenar, who were among the bands playing. The foremost inspiration must have been the Woodstock festival in the USA the preceding year. It was none of its purpose, but I think it helped in establishing the vague distinction between pop and rock in Sweden.

In retrospect, the Gärdet festival has been called the starting point for the Swedish "progressive musical movement". This was something entirely different from what outside Sweden is called progressive rock. I have to say something about it as it was a constant factor in Sweden during the 70's.

On the international scene "progressive" music nowa-

days means anything musically more ambitious than pop or pre-fabricated hits for the teenage charts, be it heavy metal or fusion, folk or ethno, psychedelic or symphonic rock. In some of the genres it is an axiom that the musicians are technically skilled – indeed, the great drawback is that often they are no more than that.

The 70's progressive movement in Sweden, however, was often amateurish. By some at least, it was considered very good to be bad at singing and playing. I think the idea was that technical skill was elitistic and bourgeois, whereas being a bad singer was deemed working-class and authentic. Or funny! A lot of people seemed to find it more important that something was funny than that it expressed emotion, mood or thought.

Perhaps you can guess that there was a politically leftish tendency in the Swedish progressive movement. Still, in its infancy it was funny and something refreshing, a kind of hippie and psychedelic legacy. In just a few years time, though, the centre for the movement changed from Stockholm to Gothenburg on the West Coast and Malmö in the South. At the same time, the political ideology hardened and started to dominate the music. The focus was on the lyrics, which should express left-wing values. It ended up the way all revolutionary movements end up, with the Stalinism of the Soviet Union, although in a harmless way.

In Sweden, we sometimes try to distinguish between the international and the Swedish meaning of the word "progressive" by calling the former "prog" with one "g", the latter "progg" with two "g":s. Anyway, the Swedish progg dominated the Swedish rock scene in the 70's and when punk rock came it was mostly the English variety with a political message we took to our hearts.

To me the Swedish prog movement was a problem. I shared some of their left-wing political ideals, but mostly I did not like their music. And I could not see any value in itself in amateurism. I was into rock music and later literature because I loved it, and if something I loved *sometimes* was accomplished, technically skilled or intellectual – then that must be a good thing too, *sometimes*.

My personal ideal was *definitely* elitistic. The same way I would have wanted to be the best sportsman if I had been into that, I wanted to be the best in music and later literature. It did not matter that the cultural sphere was tied to style, taste and artistic values which never could be pointed out and counted like goals in a football match. I wanted to create a masterpiece! My foremost reason was the love of music and literature in itself. I would rather create a masterpiece no one recognized than getting a lot of money for things I myself knew were rubbish.

There is one special strand of music that must be mentioned in this connection. The king Gustav III encouraged among others the luteist and song-writer Bellman, called by an English author "genius of the Swedish rococo". His songs were often parodies and the lyrics as important as the tunes, which often were borrowed from France. From him and from folk ballads you can trace a Swedish heritage of songs where the stress is very much on the words. In the 1960's this melted together with different kinds of troubadours and protest singers in the early Bob Dylan vein. This in its turn seeped into rock music and created what in Sweden is called "visrock", that is "rock ballads" or singer-songwriters in a folk-rock-dylanesque genre. The focus is on the lyrics – just as it was in the prog movement – and the musical structure is often reduced to a repetition of verse-chorus.

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The music and the musical arrangements are seldom creative or original. Often the whole band could be replaced by a rhythm guitar. It is very popular, though, and as a lyricist myself perhaps I ought to be satisfied. But I am not. To me, ambitious or poetic lyrics can be very fine. But they can never make up for boring music – or a vocal delivery which does not add anything to what you experience reading the words.

When Pocke and Johan left Kriget the remaining four of us continued. In the summer of 1971, Stefan, Krok and Jåpe and I went to London for two weeks. One night at the legendary Marquee Club on Wardour Street in Soho, Stefan and I saw the just as legendary band The Van der Graaf Generator. They were at work on their masterpiece then, the album *Pawn Hearts*, and to both Stefan and me their concert remains as one of the best we have ever seen – and we have seen and heard quite a lot.

Back in Sweden, we knew we had to get somebody else for our group. In the autumn we asked Robert to join us on vocals and guitar. He did not know much about us as he had been away during our creative period the autumn before, having skipped school for awhile and working as a deck-hand on boats destined for the Netherlands and England. Nevertheless he agreed.

Once again we were at the Tippen before Christmas. It was our second gig ever and the first with Robert. This time the event was taped, but the sound quality of the recording, and of our stage equipment in itself I guess, is below standards. In spite of that, you can hear the atmosphere and the enthusiastic audience. We were introduced by a friend working there, and we always said that if we ever made a live album it would begin with his introduction.

The first song started with only me on the chromatic harmonica, Dagge on the drums and Steffe on the bass, which he by then had changed for the Fender Precision from

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1963 that he still uses, at least on recordings. We banged and rattled away for quite awhile before Robert entered and in the best of operatic voices bellowed three verses with my pompous puberty-lyrics, still in English. The song was called "Confusions" (always the deep plural!) and it lived up to it. The whole operation took twenty minutes. After that Krok entered, pipe in mouth, waved to the audience and peacefully sat down to perform his concerto.

The third number was Pocke's "Thirty Years War", but without Pocke. Then followed a number by Dagge, lyrics and all, called "I've Got No Time". For that one, Stefan sat down and switched to the acoustic guitar, Krok picked up his flute and I put on Stefan's bass guitar and plucked desperately at three or four notes with my damaged hand on its neck. The song had a written vocal melody that Robert handled quite well.

The fifth and last number unfortunately did not get on record as the tape ran out. Otherwise, it is the first performance of the first version of "Ur djupen" ("Out of the Depths"). After "Amassilations", it was Stefan's second song. At that time, it had some nonsensical lyrics by him in English and was accordingly called "Under the Pendent Roof". It would have been fun to have Robert's early impersonation of Ian Gillan of the Deep Purple saved on tape, as his screams were already there, regardless of the lyrics.

The following spring we ran out of steam. Listlessly, we started on a new tune by Stefan, his third ever, but it was mostly a heavy riff, using the chromatic scale that he was fond of in those days, and which forced me to play the chromatic harmonica all the time. I think no one then could have guessed what a relatively prolific song writer he would turn out to be, least of all he himself. Neither could anyone have

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guessed that the song in question would eventually wind up, much changed and rearranged, as the opening number on the self-titled debut album with Trettioåriga kriget in 1974.

A giant step towards that was taken in the summer of -72. Krok and I had both decided to quit, but as most solos were played by me on the harmonica I promised to hang on until we had found a replacement in the shape of a real lead guitarist. That spring both Stefan and Dagge took their "studentexamen", and during the summer Dagge worked as usual as a sound engineer at the Swedish Broadcasting System. Another engineer doing the same was Chrille. Dagge asked him to audition for us, and as soon as I heard him plug his old, orchestral Hofner guitar into the borrowed amp and hit a note I knew we had found what we were looking for.

Chrille, or Christer according to the birth certificate, is the same age as I, born in 1952. He grew up in the southern Stockholm suburbs of Fruängen and Västertorp. His father played the contrabass and was a professional jazz musician. He accompanied the bop saxophone player Charlie Parker when he played in Stockholm in late 1950 and had actually been working for Krok's father in his band. Chrille started playing the acoustic guitar at the age of eight. He went to the municipal guitar school, but did not like it and found an old lady who taught him classic guitar privately instead. He is good at that and reads music quite well, as does Dagge. However, on the electric guitar, he is self-taught. He did not start to play it until about the age of sixteen, in 1968.

In his early playing with Kriget Chrille is obviously influenced in his solos by lead guitarists such as Ritchie Blackmore in the Deep Purple. Since then, he has developed a sensitive and tasteful style of his own. As Stefan puts it, he is the prima ballerina of the group, dancing his way, weaving

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intricate patterns, taking and giving cues, but never lowering himself to an ordinary chord. There have been times when Robert has said in desperation that he can use anything as a background for working out his vocals except Chrille's guitar playing, because he never sticks to the basic harmonies.

Anyway, we did not need much discussion in deciding upon Chrille after having jammed with him a couple of times. What did not occur to us was that from Chrille's point of view it was just as much a question about us auditioning for him. He already played with a group, with his younger brother on the drums and a guy on the bass. They had played a gig or two at their local youth center. But no one sang in that band and they were good jammers but had no real ideas for songs. That was what he thought we had: ideas! And ambition. And a singer.

So, Chrille started with us and I decided it was time to leave. It was a good decision. They immediately set about rehearsing and making some new material in the small cellar in Samskolan, where we had played with Krok two years before. In the autumn of -72 they played two gigs at Tippen with the new and "classic" line-up: Stefan bass, Dagge drums, Chrille lead and Robert vocals. It was close to the power trio concept, and it has remained at the heart of Kriget's work ever since.

Both gigs were taped. On the first of them, on the 10 of November, Stefan's new riff had been turned into a song. The vocal part and two small verses, for the first time in Swedish, had been added by Chrille, and then Stefan and he had worked out other ideas, no doubt helped by Dagge. It was mostly the three of them that rehearsed at that time, as Robert was busy on his own, mainly with girls, I think. He was a charmer in those days, was Robert. On the gig, however,

he was present and sang. Except for the lyrics the song had already got the aggressive, slightly hysterical form in which it is an opener on the debut album under the enigmatic title "Kaledoniska orogenesen" ("The Caledonian Orogenesis").

On the second gig, two days before Christmas, they introduced another new song. Once again, the musical ideas came from Chrille and Stefan, working them out with Dagge, and once again, the vocal part was Chrille's, once again including a couple of verses in Swedish, sung by Robert. And once again, except for the lyrics the whole song was there, and it would be the concluding track on the first LP album, by then called "Handlingens skugga" ("The Shadow of the Act").

Winter vacation followed for those still at school. One of them was Krok, who did his last year. Now he took the opportunity to lay down some work on his special project. It was a recording of his concerto, in yet another version and with his flute instead of my harmonica in the themes. He did it at the hall in Samskolan, where the grand piano was. Kriget helped him out and at the same time they recorded "Under the Pendent Roof" and "I've Got No Time". Both these are on the album *War Memories*, and they return as bonus tracks on the digipack edition of the debut *Trettioåriga kriget*. They make up Chrilles first recorded appearance with the band, when he had been with us only five months. Krok's concerto in this final version remains a hidden treasure.

The following spring they started rehearsing in an old dilapidated mansion, close to the big hospital. Some young people lived there, in what in Swedish hippie language was called a "collective", but a couple of rooms were empty, with sagging wall-paper. They rehearsed in one of them. Before Christmas, they moved again, this time to an disused air-raid

shelter in Saltsjöbaden. It had been set in order by a hobby band playing jazz, but Kriget soon took it over. As it was located underground, we referred to it as Grunden, "The Ground". They would remain there until 1981 and would record their third, fourth and fifth LP albums there. I cannot look at those records without sensing the mixed smell of concrete, mould and the coffee percolator in an adjacent room.

The villa with the collective was later torn down and a new house erected. But during their relatively short stay there, Kriget completed two important songs, Stefan's "Mina löjen" and Chrilles "Fjärilsattityder". Personally, I prefer "Mina löjen". It has a theme built around a simple tonal figure, almost a rhythmic hook, which is played in unison by the bass and the guitar – and the drums really – and cleverly varied. Then some vocal verses follow leading to a beautiful, mildly sad chorus. This breaks off abruptly for the instrumental middle part, where there is both a short bass solo within the song and a longer guitar solo following the harmonies. Then the vocals return, and after that the initial theme comes back, building up to the climactic final chord.

"Mina löjen" and "Fjärilsattityder" are both on the first LP, but in the beginning the tunes had different lyrics and titles. Stefan had put together a few lines for his song, whereas Chrille's song had words by Dagge and a melody by Robert. Robert has worked out quite a few melodies throughout the years, but he seldom if ever gets any written credit for it.

During the autumn they recorded these two songs and sent them to two companies. One was a new progressive company – prog with two "g":s – called Silence, the other the supercapitalistic, multinational CBS (nowadays Sony).

## THE CLASSIC LINE-UP

At Silence some brownie put the tape in a drawer where it was forgotten and they never answered. CBS answered promptly and sent a guy to listen more closely to the group. This meant that when Kriget had just moved to their new rehearsal site they got a recording contract.

When Stefan and Dagge had spoken to the friendly boss at the Swedish department of CBS, they happily returned through the streets of Stockholm, where the white snow was on the ground. In mock desperation they told each other they only had four songs: "Kaledoniska orogenesen", "Mina löjen", "Fjärilsattityder" and "Handlingens skugga". How on earth could you make an album out of that!

My reasons for leaving Kriget were partly negative, partly positive. The main negative reason was not being satisfied with playing the harmonica. I did not matter how much I labored with the instrument, filing the reeds to get more solo notes, putting harmonicas in different keys together to get more chords. It still was not like playing the guitar, and that was what I really wanted to do. Also, I had started to find my harmonica a limiting factor in Kriget's music. This was even more apparent when Chrille joined the band. I proved right. The minute I left the others flew away in directions that would not have been possible before.

The main positive reason was that I wanted to become a poet instead. It had begun the last year in the Swedish "gymnasium" (the sixth form or senior high school). In fact, I wrote my very first poem when we were working on *Glorious War*. Afterwards, I was not sure it was a *real* poem. It had come to me so easily. But of course it was a real poem. Only, it was not a good poem. I had tried to copy the tone of T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men", which we had read in school, the same way I imitated tunes or ideas from groups I liked when I wrote my songs for Kriget.

After that, I started studying English at the university of Stockholm but left at Christmas. The following spring I stayed at home, trying to write poetry and reading avidly, mostly poets. I also decided I wanted to study philosophy at the university. I was interested in existential questions about the meaning of life, the nature of the "I" and the inner essence

of reality, if indeed there was such a thing. I do not believe in a God or Supreme Being, whatever that might mean, but I do have a strong metaphysical bent. I think I might be called a logico-spiritual person.

It was against this background I left Kriget when Chrille came, and in the autumn I turned to philosophy. It suited me perfectly. I soon found out there were evening courses you could follow. Back home I wrote poetry and “read much of the night”, and somewhere before dawn I went to bed and slept until about noon. I remember telling Stefan about this back at number 72 one day. He just looked at me, unconvinced, and said nothing.

As a result of this, I did not listen to Kriget for quite a while. After the summer of 1972 I did not hear them again until May 1973. One afternoon, I followed them to the mansion with the “collective”. They performed their four new songs, the ones they later counted as self-evident for their debut album. I was knocked out. I could not believe it was my friends sounding like that. It was aggressive, innovative, uncompromising. My emotional reaction made me pace around restlessly on the floor before them, while my head filled with strange, abstract pictures.

However, one thing did *not* impress me: their lyrics. I did not say they were rubbish, although that was what I felt, but they did not at all match the ambitious level of the music. They did not catch the hormonal, neurotic and self-assertive mood of it. Besides, there was far too little for Robert to sing. It was not only unfair to him, it was a malproportion! It might be a good structure for one song, but not all four of them.

We agreed that I should write the lyrics instead. At first I looked upon it as a spare-time job beside my *serious* poeti-

cal work. Helping the old pals, you know! My own poems were modernistic, with obscure metaphors in unrhymed free verse. With Kriget it was a question of rhythmically determined verses and rhyming. But I had no conception about song lyrics having to be *easier* in any way than a poem. As a result, I wrote some lyrics on a level of complication more suitable for the printed page.

However, I did not theorize about it, I just started rhyming. It did not occur to me to borrow a tape recorder, so I could sit at home and listen to the songs and Robert humming the vocal melodies. Instead, I went to a couple of rehearsals and then I wrote from memory. It was quite natural for me, as I was deeply into music.

Speaking about that, it was the same with Stefan's song-making in the earlier years. He worked out all the riffs and themes in detail and kept everything in his head. That was a feat as some of the tunes he came up with was fairly complicated, for example "Mina löjen" or "Röster från minus till plus" ("Voices from Minus to Plus"). On the other hand, in those days he could make a vocal part with only chords for Robert to fill out. I think "Krigssång" was the first song where he wrote the melody in advance, probably because for the first time he got some lyrics first. Nowadays, it is the other way around. The melody and the basic harmonies, perhaps a theme or a riff, whatever sets the mood, are what is most important, whereas he sometimes leaves much space in the arrangement for the others to fill.

I started to work on the lyrics at about the same time as I moved from number 72, in the summer of 1973. The area I came to was newly-built. That was when I arrived in the one-room flat next door to the one I am sitting in now, writing this. I was twenty-one that summer and disliked liv-

ing on my own. Now, looking out through the greenery on the sunny, light-blue afternoon sky in early June, I cannot understand my younger self.

The four new songs I started with had the vocal melody set in advance. I prefer that. It is technically more of a challenge to be forced to follow the twists and turns of a pre-set melody. Besides, writing without the music first is technically easy but always involves the risk of restricting the music instead. Sometimes it works out fine nevertheless, like in “Krigssång”, but at other times the result is stiff and boring. Another aspect is that I find it easier when I have the mood or feeling of the song to go by. Sometimes, when Robert or Stefan hums the melody, I can almost hear the words in their humming. This has been even more so since we started anew. When Stefan introduces the song to me I sometimes just *know* there are some lyrics there already, waiting to be detected.

Back in 1973 I took the opportunity to air a lot of opinions on life and society in general, just the way a young person might do who suddenly gets the chance. As I had not written lyrics in Swedish before I was clumsy and had to learn the tools of the trade, and you spot traces of that everywhere. On the other hand, everything was fresh, not one single rhyme had been used by *me* earlier, so I just plodded away.

The original poem “Mina löjen” is by Johan Henric Kellgren, the greatest poet of the Swedish Enlightenment in the 18th century, bar Bellman. In his poem he heaps ridicule on quite a few things, although he likes to choose lofty targets such as mankind in general. Sometimes, though, he is quite specific. I had read the long poem in school and now I did not just steal the title but the whole idea of satirizing con-

temporary ways and manners. My targets are political power, money, religion, optimism and pessimism in the first part, the average Swede and his son and daughter in the second, and in the end the pessimist returns. Obviously, he is my voice, although he says he sings about something cheerful to avoid being beaten up. After that his choruses follow with half-revolutionary slogans. It was my concession to the Swedish prog movement.

The lyrics for the other three songs were in the same vein. Suffice it to mention "Kaledoniska orogenesisen" or "The Caledonian Orogenesis", which I wrote somewhere around Christmas. The title was Stefan's contribution. He said I could choose any subject but that was to be the title, which he explained as referring to the geological period in the history of the earth, when some mountain chain was created. Stefan is a dentist in his civilian life, but before he started studying for that he tried a few weeks as a land-surveyor at The Royal Technical College, and that was where he got the title.

I associated this with the outburst of noise beginning the song, and wrote some lyrics alluding to the creation of the band, the song, the singer's voice and the lyrics themselves. In a book, that would be called metapoetry, but what it ought to be called in this connection I cannot imagine. Even the quotation, in English, from Genesis' "The Battle of Epping Forest" on their then brand new album *Selling England by the Pound*, was a wink for the initiated. It was about one Harold Demure, from Art Literature, who when the big battle starts runs up a tree from where he: "fires acorns from out of his sling". I found this a suitably ironic allusion to summarize the efforts of The Thirty Years War – and me.

However, we needed a couple of more tunes to fill an

album. That was why I rewrote Stefan's lyrics in "Under the Pendent Roof". My original title was in latin, "De profundis clamavi". It is from the catholic mass and means: "Out of the depths we are calling unto You". The way I remember it I got the idea from Robert's screams, and every stanza has the same scheme: "If – if – (then) out of...". For once, the lines are unrhymed in original, but the translation here of the second stanza lacks rhythm too:

*If the towers of the air are leaning towards their fall  
if the circle of days escapes from your hand  
out of the depths we're calling unto you!*

As can be seen, it is just vague, atmospheric painting. I would not quote it if it was not for the fact that "Out of the depths" is still the tune Kriget usually close their gigs with. For the album, however, they had trimmed it down to just the vocal middle part, the reason being that CBS wanted at least one short track, if they were going to release a single. They never did, but Kriget continued using the song on gigs. There it grew longer again via new, improvised ideas, and so it received the form it now has had for a long while. It is quite a journey for a song from 1971.

However, the shortened version was not enough to complete an album. There had to be one more track. So Stefan very consciously sat down and composed exactly that. Then I wrote the lyrics, working from Robert's humming in the first three parts, inventing unrhymed but loosely rhythimized free verse for the remaining two parts. The result was "Röster...", "Voices from Minus to Plus", which probably is the most "avant garde"-piece of rock we have done, loaded with chromatic riffs and themes and just one break too many. The lyrics are very cryptic. They might just as well be in

a book, and sometimes they almost are, but not one written by me.

The first round in the studio was set for May 1974. At that time Kriget had began gigging. The first occasion outside Saltsjöbaden had actually been sometime in November 1972, after the debut gig with Chrille at Tippen. It was in Bredäng, a southern Stockholm suburb, where Chrille knew the manager for the local youth centre. The first real gig in central Stockholm did not take place until the 19th of January 1974. They supported a band at a disco called Groupie, that had been popular in the glamrock heydays. It was a good gig, with a loyal crowd from Saltsjöbaden enthusiastically filling the floor in front of the small stage.

On the 20th of May, on Stefan's twenty-first birthday, they made their debut on a live national radio program in the P3 channel. However, at that time they had already begun work in the studio. It was located in Sundbyberg, which in reality is a western suburb of Stockholm, and was owned by a company called Europa Film. They started Wednesday the 15th of May and worked for three days laying down all the background tracks. Then they had two more days after the radio gig, and another two in late June, to complete solos, vocals and other overdubs. In early July the last two days were booked for mixing. Whereas Kriget in practise decided everything during the recording sessions, during the mixing it was the other way around. According to Dagge, the studio in itself was completely dead, like playing in an aquarium, and that describes pretty well the sound on the finished album. A disappointment.

The cover was made by Johan: a circle with a sword against a starry night-sky and a logotype with the band's name. Both sword and logo have since then become trademarks of Tret-

tioåriga kriget. On the reissued digipack CD edition you do not see it but on the original vinyl cover the sword and the sky are made up of countless infinitesimal points. The inner sleeve picture uses the same technique. It was hard work for Johan, who took the cue from the Swedish poet and painter Folke Dahlberg. Incidentally, Dahlberg belonged to the same modernist movement from the 40's that had inspired me, and I knew his work, too, but Johan and I never talked about it. We just knew where the good stuff was.

The album was out in August-September 1974. It met with fairly good reviews, and some papers hailed it as the first Swedish LP with "hårdrock", literally "hard rock", which meant the heavy metal or almost heavy metal of those days. The exception was my lyrics, which mostly were dismissed as pompous nonsense. I was accused of sitting with a dictionary, looking up strange words. The idea apparently was that anything that transgressed the reviewer's knowledge of language must be spurious.

On August 10 and 11 there was a new Gärdet Festival. By then, the concept had survived itself, but we took the opportunity to play when invited. Among the other groups was Kaipa, led by guitarist Roine Stolt. Among his later musical projects I think the (in the international sense) progressive group The Flower Kings is the most well-known. Anyway, we played as the last band on the first night, Saturday. It was a good gig, but a gang of "raggare" wanted good ol' rock 'n' roll and there was a fight. Jåpe and Hasse assisted Kriget in those days, Jåpe as roadie, Hasse as mixer, and now Jåpe fought the gang leader who tried to drag him down from the stage.

Jåpe soon received help from people around him and in the end the mounted police arrived, but Kriget did not

notice anything and just played on. I *did* notice, but the velvet summer darkness had fallen and I sat on the grass at the back of the quite large audience, entwined with my girl-friend, both modestly drunk. So I just remained seated, which was a coward thing to do.

This girl-friend of mine was called Bitteli. We had met early that year, at about the same time as Kriget did their gig at Groupie, and our relationship would last five years. She was a sweet and lovable girl, but six years younger than me, only sixteen in 1974, and wanted us to be together all the time. That was one reason I did not go with Kriget when they started touring Sweden in the autumn. Another reason was an obscure idea of mine that as a poet wannabe I should remain hidden. From what, you might well ask, but that is also the reason there are almost no pictures of me from the “poetic” days, neither alone nor with the rest of the band.

Except for Robert and Chrille none of the others had a steady girl-friend right then. Before September that year they had done ten gigs, then came the LP album and the rest of the year they did twenty-four gigs. First they went to the north of Sweden, drove all night in a Chevrolet Apache, with Chrille practising scales on his Hofner all the time. Then to the south, where Jåpe at high speed missed a turn sign or something so he drove the van right out into the bush and into an empty school-yard, where they stopped. But no one was hurt.

And so on. On the 20th of December, they played for the last time at the local youth centre at Tippen in Saltsjöbaden, where we had made our debut four years earlier. Much had happened, and little did we know we were still only in the beginning.

## WAR SONG

When I was writing "Röster..." in my room, I suddenly got an idea, turned over a new page in my note-pad and wrote down the lyrics for "Krigssång" ("War Song"). As I remember it, it was just a few minutes work. Afterwards, I thought that maybe it was possible to use the result, but I was not sure. Could three simple four-line verses really qualify as lyrics for something as complicated as a song by Kriget usually was?

The lyrics were strange, even to me. Apparently the setting is somewhere in the north of Sweden, in a mine, and it is night. The "I" of the song is someone down in the mine, sitting by a fire, engaged in some magic business that will make him rise. The lyrics seem to describe this movement upwards, out of the mine, and I suppose it is symbolic. The triple-time rhythm, the metaphors and a few words that I invented myself as I went along make the lyrics a kind of incantation. It also makes them even more meaningless than usual to translate. Nevertheless, here they are:

*Sitting and crouching, a war song I'm forging  
down in the dark mine, where night has no morning  
Sitting and crouching, in fire I'm mumbling  
Down in the dark mine the walls will come tumbling*

*Sitting in hell where I sputter and sparkle  
Shoot like a flame from the mine-mouth of darkness  
Sitting in hell where my heart I am shaping*

## WAR SONG

*Shoot like a flame at the night-sky that's waiting*

*Out of the riddle of night I'm delivered*

*Forcing the statues of power to shiver*

*Out of the world-hell of days I am flying*

*Down in the dark mine the dark mine stands crying*

I gave the lyrics for Stefan and Dagge to read one afternoon when I was down at Grunden. I think it was just before they went into the studio to start recording the first LP. Stefan said he would take care of the lyrics, and the three of us agreed that the *next* album would be named *Krigssång*, that is *War Song*.

Stefan probably wrote the tune during autumn: a characteristic bass riff and a vocal melody reminiscent of a Swedish folk ballad in a minor key. They arranged and rehearsed it down at Grunden, and when I heard them perform the result there one evening I was overwhelmed. The song was in 6/8 and built up slowly, sank back and built up again, thus perfectly mirroring the night mood, the suppressed threat and the rising movement. In the climactic ending Stefan sang the words with Robert in falsetto upon that, and then Chrille concluded with some wailing guitar notes. No one remembers exactly when it had got its final form, but on a tape from a gig in March -75 it is definitely there.

For Chrille's "Jag och jag och 'jag'" ("I and I and 'I'") I borrowed a swaying cassette deck and listened to Robert humming the melody accompanied by Chrille. The important thing was the mood and the lyrics begin: "The question itself becomes its answer: Sketching a life to see who it was". The verses following indicate the seasonal round of the year, as painted by a romantic "I". The chorus is more philosophical,

speaking of the circle or sphere of the "I", at the same time commenting upon the language used. The conclusion follows logically: I and I and "I". Stefan and Dagge adding their voices to Robert's in the chorus fit nicely into this. So does Chrille's beautiful classic solo on the acoustic guitar.

In the first weeks of 1975 I moved to a three-room flat in Saltsjöbaden that I shared with Jåpe, who still worked as a driver for Kriget. In reality, my girl-friend came to live there too, which I used as an excuse for laying my hands on the largest room. At the same time, I wrote some lyrics I called "Metamorfoser" ("Metamorphoses"). As I wrote them after my girl-fiend had fallen asleep one night you might expect some jubilant hymn to love, or at least sex. Instead, they take a pessimistic view of society and politics – I actually had a bad headache – and sees everything changing into the same. Apart from some puns they do not say much. I find it more interesting that I chiselled out the form the way I did, thus determining the metamorphosing movement of the music. It is accredited to Chrille, but it was just as much Dagge pasting together different ideas from Chrille into a working unit.

One day in April I came walking from the Old Town in Stockholm towards Slussen. Suddenly I felt a wisp of fresh sea-breeze and thought: Damn it, it is spring, after all! That is the whole subject of the lyrics titled "Mitt mirakel" ("My Miracle"). They appeared in my head while I kept walking. I gave them to Dagge, who wrote a nice little song for them, with a guitar theme and a riff evolving from it. The arrangement of this riff allows for some thoughtful drum fills, and when recorded Chrille added a short but fiery solo that I count among his bests.

During the summer, Kriget were supposed to go into the

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studio to record their second LP album. Once again, we had what we thought were four strong songs, and once again we had no more than that. It was not quite enough to fill one side of an LP. Even if they jammed in the studio – which they in fact did, thus creating "Murar" ("Walls") – they could not do it for a whole second side. Someone had to come up with something.

And someone did. After a good gig at a pub in the small town of Tranås on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May Steffe was sitting by himself backstage with a guitar. There he hit upon what was to become the introductory riff of "Krigssång II" ("War Song II"). He also had an idea about "something bigger" or "more" than an ordinary song – not that Kriget ever were noted for the ordinariness of their songs, but he was aware of the shortage of LP-material. During the following few weeks he kept working on it, and although they probably rehearsed one part after another, every single idea was his, as well as the overall structure. Nothing was jammed into existence. The resulting composition spans eighteen minutes on record.

In the middle of June a few of us went for three days to a small summer house that Stefan's parents rented in the country outside a small town called Katrineholm south of Stockholm. Stefan had brought his acoustic guitar and on the last day, with everyone suffering from a hangover, he played the vocal part for the new composition. It did not sound like anything in particular to me, and as I had not heard anything else I was a bit worried.

However, a couple of days after we had come back I went down to Grunden one afternoon. They performed the whole song, with the vocal parts put in place and with Robert humming the melody lines he had worked out. I was

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impressed and immediately went home to my room. Words started to come up during the way and back home I sat down in my cheap green arm-chair and more or less wrote the lyrics down in one go. The verses once again satirize the average Swedish man, mister Standard, and his wife, like in "Mina löjen". But the choruses satirize "Me and my friends", who satirize mister Standard and think we know the answers, and yet do not do anything about it, except to talk and then go out with the girls and get drunk. Today, I cannot help finding it childish, but that summer I was twenty-three and believed I expressed important things, important to me and my friends, that is.

Then I had a bit of luck. There also was a middle part where Stefan wanted vocals and which just consisted of a riff he played on the bass. I do not remember if Robert already had sung or rather spoken anything there, but now I found some verses I had written in a note pad. They were about environmental damage due to the modern Western way of life and with some minor changes they fitted perfectly into the rhythm of Stefan's riff. I found it a suitable background to the satire upon mister Standard and us.

The last chorus alludes to the first "War Song", and in spite of the self-mockery here in "War Song II" "*we mean what we play*" – or so it says. Of course, none of us could imagine that it would turn out literally true and that we would still be playing together more than thirty years later.

In July and August, Kriget went down into the underground studio Polyvox in central Stockholm. It was a hot summer, and the air stood still, but spirits were good. They knew they had good material and for once they all marched in the same direction. Due to the disappointing sound on the first album, Kriget wanted to produce this one themselves.

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The friendly boss had allowed that, and the sound engineer was his son Peter, a nice guy at about our age and good at what he was doing.

Mostly they worked daytime and started as usual with the backing tracks. No one remembers any particular order, but I am pretty sure they began with "Krigssång", as I heard a raw mix of it one afternoon before anything else. The background for "Krigssång II" took two days, as they had to cut it up into four pieces to get it right. Then it was time for the overdubs. For my part I was there only once, when Robert did some of his vocals. Then there were solos, some added Mellotron and so on and so forth. Chrille still had his old Hofner, but he borrowed a red Gibson SG from Peter that can be heard on "Krigssång" and "Mitt mirakel".

While they were recording in the studio Johan came down for the cover work. He made a lot of small sketches, which in the end he collected on one side of the inner sleeve. As a matter of fact, there are some other pictures there too, decipherable for the initiated as belonging to the world of Trettioåriga kriget and friends. For the front cover, instead, he drew four pictures in black and white from photos of Kriget on stage, taken by a friend. He worked meticulously, and obviously not everybody realises they actually are drawings. For the back cover, he made a variant of the sword from the first album within its nightly circle. It was very tasty and arty – to use an expression Johan dislikes – and it added to the aesthetic dimension of the album as lined out by the music and the words. This, of course, would be anathema to some critics, but that was what we were after, and I think this once we achieved it.

The mixing was done by Kriget and Peter together. Then the tapes were sent to the Netherlands to be turned into

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a record disc. But Peter went there and got a test copy, and when Kriget heard it they decided to master it themselves. Peter took care of that, put on some more treble and so on, and as a result the album *Krigssång* still sounds very good today, more than thirty years later.

If someone had asked me what "Krigssång" was all about I would just have described the feeling of something rising upwards. Had I been pressed for concretes I might have suggested it symbolized the uprising of the oppressed, whether they would be the working-class, the third world or whatever. Although I did not see it as some kind of self-portrait it nevertheless might be self-referential for Kriget too. After all, it was the opener on what many consider our best album.

During the autumn of 1975, Kriget continued gigging. On the 6th and 7th of September, they played in Copenhagen in Denmark for the first time. They also supported the American group Blue Öyster Cult, on the 22th of October at the big Scandinavium arena in Gothenburg, the next day at Olympen in Lund. That autumn they also introduced on stage a small Elka keyboards, as a substitute for the Mellotron string machine they had used on the albums. In the studio, Chrille and Dagge and Robert had alternated on the Mellotron, on stage Robert took care of the Elka.

The *Krigssång* or *War Song* album was not out until February 1976. It met with fairly good reviews, with the usual exception of my lyrics, which were branded pretentious. But nothing much happened. As with the first album perhaps two thousand copies had been made, but it would take a long time before they were sold out.

This, of course, was a disappointment. At least Dagge and I believed the title song "Krigssång" simply *must* be a hit, because it was so good. But although it was aired a few times,

it was nothing of the kind. That made Dagge start thinking about leaving the band. He thought we had done as well as we could, and when that obviously was not enough it seemed meaningless to carry on. However, he kept his thoughts for himself, and during the summer he would change his mind.

The reason was that Kriget suddenly got the chance to do some gigs in England. It felt almost unreal. With the exception of ABBA, who was beyond compare, in those days, most Swedish rock groups stayed in Sweden. They certainly did not go to England, which to us was as much the cradle of rock as was the USA. It was very far from the situation nowadays, when a good progressive or heavy metal band can build up an international reputation and tour the world and play festivals without even being mentioned in the Swedish media. Partly, this was because Swedish groups in the 70's often sang in Swedish, and many of them were too amateurish to be taken seriously anywhere else. But the situation in itself was different too. There was nothing like the internet, which has changed everything into a global market available for everyone, and thus has reduced the importance of commercial record companies as well as critics.

Anyway, it was not because Kriget was known in England that they got the chance. Instead, there was something called Dansk konsertbyrå (the Danish Concert Bureau) in Stockholm, which mediated tour exchanges between Swedish and English bands. A guy who worked there managed to get Kriget the opportunity to support English artists, mostly a musical comedy act called Alberto y Lost Trios Paranoias. They were to play for forty-five minutes and they could not count on any encores. Nevertheless, the tour was set for October 1976 and they got a list including mostly universities and polytechnics. In the end, they played thirteen gigs.

Kriget rehearsed a lot during August and September. Earlier on, you get the impression from old tapes that they changed the order of the songs from gig to gig, but now they had a set program. That included "Krigssång", the acoustic "Jag och jag och 'jag'", the bass solo from "Perspektiv", now preceded by a short comic strut called "Alpen Funk" where Robert yodelled, and a long version of "Ur djupen". They actually started the first gig with "Krigssång II", but it did not work well so they dropped it and replaced it with "Mitt mirakel" or "Metamorfoser", in all likelihood starting with "Krigssång" instead. The program included "Mina löjen" too, but I had written some new lyrics in English, in the same vein as the old ones, and called it "On Going to England". I also had tried to translate "Krigssång" and "Krigssång II", with *really* incomprehensible results, but the rest was in Swedish.

Kriget did not have to bring any PA system, but they brought their backline, in case Albertos did not have any equipment fit for real rock music. They also brought their instruments and Chrille had a new guitar, specially built for him. It was good, but almost too heavy to use on stage. Everything was stuffed in a Chevrolet Apache, and off they went. There was to be a lot of practical problems with that car during the following month, but Jåpe drove it, and brother Hasse took care of the mixing.

They were stationed in a run-down house on 203 All Souls Avenue, London North-West 10. Except for one or two times they returned there every night after the gigs. The first gig was cancelled and so the debut was on October 6, at Brunel University in Uxbridge, a London suburb, where they supported a group called AFT. Two days later they met Albertos and supported them at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. Then it was time for Sunderland Polytechnic

in Sunderland, a port on the North Sea coast, below the Scottish border.

The gigs got better and better. At Sunderland they did the encore they were not to count on, and they had to decline doing yet another one. Then followed Oxford Polytechnic, Warwick, Middlesbrough, Sheffield Polytechnic and University of Surrey. At Reading there was a power cut in the middle of the gig. The instruments went dead and also the spots on stage. Albertos' manager advised them to stop, but they carried on acoustically with Robert yodelling and the ballad "Jag och jag och 'jag'", and the audience seemed to like it. Two legendary rock places they played after that were Greyhound at Croydon and Barbarella's Club in Birmingham. In Cardiff in Wales they went down very well, and then they finished the tour at Kingston Polytechnic in London, afterwards clinking glasses of champagne backstage.

All these years later, you cannot help wondering if Kriget could have taken the step up on an international level if they had stayed on in England. In the Melody Maker Karl Dallas wrote about the second album that "the power of the music is tremendous" and singled them out as one of the most promising groups for 1977. On the other hand, the first signs of the punk "revolution" were already in the air in London that autumn, and it might well have been that Kriget with their ambitions and their relatively high standard of technical skill soon would have been looked upon as a dinosaur of a bygone rock age, albeit a very small dinosaur.

Anyway, they returned to Sweden. Hasse had left a couple of gigs earlier, as he studied to become a doctor and had to get back to his courses, while Stefan, who studied to become a dentist, was on the brink of being expelled, because he had simply left without giving any notice. Dagge

wanted to get home and work as a sound engineer. Robert, on the other hand, wanted to get home so he could leave the band. That was what he told them when they got back. On top of that, back in Sweden they got the boot from CBS. Headquarters in the USA had decided to make the Swedish department more commercially successful, and so the boss who had given Kriget their contract was told to leave and take his artists with him.

Bad as all this was, I did not really care. I had my own problems, which were a lot worse to me. I do not think they began with me being run over by a boat and being nearly killed, but that surely did not make them any the better. On the surface, I braved it well and fooled even myself. But after leaving school, at the same time as I became interested in poetry and philosophy, I began being afraid of death. After the accident I had been neurotic in school too about things like tests and grades. But now I started to imagine I was going to have a heart attack (at twenty!), or die from cancer, or catch some infectious, lethal disease. As a result, I started washing my hands all the time and took showers that could last for an hour.

The final blow was dealt indirectly by my studies in philosophy. In the autumn of 1975, with the *Krigssång* album in the can, I started studying literature at the university beside philosophy, where I was supposed to do a long paper as a kind of exam work. I had decided upon a philosophical analysis of a purported parapsychological phenomenon called precognition. This means foreknowledge of a future event acquired in a non-normal way, for example via dreams or a mediumistic prophecy or whatever. I soon detected that most reported cases concerned bad things, mostly someone dying. After that, I soon got afraid of having some kind of

foreknowledge myself of my own death. That way I became afraid of my own dreams, and I developed a special way of naming dates and hearing some fateful phrase, that I upon waking immediately took as a sign that I was going to die then.

Albert Camus, the French author, somewhere says he is against capital punishment. This is because it involves knowing that you are going to die at a certain time and that, he says, is something unbearable. I think he is right, only, that was the way I lived those years. In February 1977 I broke down completely with fear and had to be taken to the psychiatric clinic, which in those days meant the mental hospital. I was there until early April.

When I came home I was still very shaky. Meanwhile, Robert had returned to Kriget and they kept trying out new ideas at Grunden. But their career had reached a low-water mark. They had no contract and it would take some time before I was back in the writing business. Still, things were not entirely dark.

In fact, this is what the title suite on *Elden av år* (*The Fire of Years*) twenty-five years later is about, and it uses the very tunes they came up with at the time and then forgot. But a lot of other things would happen in between.

While Kriget were rehearsing for the British tour, Stefan made a new song called "Dagspress" ("The Daily Press/ure/") to some lyrics I had written one day on the beach. While they were away, I also wrote some verses entitled "En kväll hos X" ("One Night at X's Place"), the background being a couple of autumnal parties at Mats' house on Baggensudden, where we had rehearsed ten years earlier. When Stefan got the lyrics he already had an independent bass riff and an idea for a tune. So they tried to put them together, and Robert found a melody that linked words and riff in a nice way.

When I cracked up, they continued trying out new ideas down at Grunden. During early spring they collected them on tape, backing tracks without vocals, waiting for me to get better. Then they forgot them, and when I finally heard a selection on a cassette tape in late July, some ideas were out, others were in, and in the end I only could write the lyrics for one of them. It was a heavy-footed song by Stefan that they for some reason expected much from at the time. It was my first lyrics after my stay at the asylum, and they were coloured by that as well as by my new work as a nurse's assistant at the big hospital in Saltsjöbaden, and accordingly called "Den stora kliniken" ("The Big Clinic"). They were not good, and later I changed them for "Stan tur och retur" ("The City and Back Again"). In that shape the song would end up on the third album, still heavy-footed and charmless. Today it is almost forgotten.

Apart from that, I could hear that the last track on the

cassette should remain an instrumental, and that its title should be "Andra sidan" ("The Other Side"). I thought of the shores of Saltsjöbaden and also of the beyond, the purported realm after death – which I in no way believed in. The tune was made by Chrille and Stefan at Grunden, one evening when Stefan had borrowed Robert's guitar. It had a silently ringing melancholy that I found congenial to my own feelings as I sat in the small room at my girl-friend's parents', where I had moved in for a couple of months.

By that time Mats had joined forces with Kriget. His original instrument was not the drums but the clarinette – and he would later become a music teacher. As a rock musician, however, he played the keyboards and some saxophone. Since 1974 he had played with Pocke, Kriget's founding guitarist, in a group consisting also of Dagge's younger brother on the bass guitar and a fourth guy on drums. First they were called Vinterminne (Winter Memory), then Delirium. They even supported Kriget on a gig, and they shared Grunden with them as a rehearsal studio. At first Mats just helped Kriget out, but after some time he became a regular member, putting his pedagogical studies on the shelf for awhile.

As everyone knows who has heard Kriget live, an important feature of the aforementioned "Andra sidan" is Mats' beautifully sad solo on the synth. But it did not appear until the tune was recorded for the third album the following summer. That is, from the very beginning they had tried a synth solo, but Mats' old synth was so hard to keep in tune that they dropped it on stage for a guitar solo from Chrille for almost a year. Luckily enough, Mats tried again when he had got a new synth.

Otherwise, it was mostly Chrille who had wanted key-

boards in the group to relieve him from some of his accompanying burdens. It coincided, too, with the songs becoming simpler in structure, but richer in sound. As a result, both Stefan and Chrille took a step backwards, Stefan perhaps two. Instead, he concentrated more on song-writing, and the typical interplay between the guitar and the bass tended to disappear.

Mats' debut on stage with Kriget was on the island of Gotland in early August 1977. Kriget played at the same place, an old abandoned mill, for four consecutive nights and did an extra gig one afternoon somewhere out in a forest glade. It was nice and easy, more or less a paid vacation, and they could try their new numbers and perhaps some other ideas too. "Dagspress" ended with Mats doing a solo on the sax, accompanied by Dagge on the drums, and sometimes he was in the audience, sometimes at the bar. No one was really sober, neither in the audience nor in the band.

Came November, we started thinking about a new album. We had no record contract, but the idea was a live album. That way we could record and produce it ourselves, and then go hunting for a company. We could also evade the fact that I still was in no shape to write any new lyrics. In short, we had "En kväll hos X", "Dagspress" and "Den stora kliniken", and then the instrumental "Andra sidan". The rest had to be old material in one form or the other. The candidates included Robert's yodel "Alpen Funk" followed by the nameless bass solo from Stefan accompanied by Dagge on the drums, and a long version of "Ur djupen".

With the help of Hasse, Kriget recorded two gigs in Stockholm, the first on November 26 at Mariahissen near Slussen, the second on December 17 at Medborgarhuset not far from there. Mariahissen was to be Krigets foremost

stronghold in Stockholm, and the gig at Medborgarhuset was arguably the first Rock against Racism-concert in Sweden. At Mariahissen, Robert's guitar went berserk and destroyed a couple of songs, and the overall sound was better at Medborgarhuset, so we chose the tracks from that gig when we put the album together. Listening today, it is evident that the atmosphere and the swing, admittedly a bit rough, is better at the low-ceilinged, crowded Mariahissen.

In the spring of 1978, I got tired of my assistant work at the hospital and instead I tried teaching, substituting for another teacher in our old school, Samskolan. I immediately liked it and it was to become my most official job to this day. After a few years I even got my degree as a senior high school teacher in Swedish and philosophy. However, in the spring of -78 I also started working a few hours a week in a second-hand bookshop. The owner could not afford to pay my salary in money so I had to take it out in books instead. It suited me perfectly.

Concerning the live album, Dagge offered it to some companies, among them CBS, and was turned down. Then he found two young guys who had just started a small company called Mistlur (the Foghorn). They had no money and worked part-time as taxi-drivers to eke out a living. But they had an idea and an old bus that had been in traffic in Stockholm. This bus they had turned into a literally mobile studio. The wheel and the driver's seat were left in the front but in the back there was an eight-channel tape-recorder, a mixing-desk, loudspeakers and so on. The idea was to drive it to a place where a band had its equipment, mostly their rehearsal rooms, put up some mikes there and get to work.

When Dagge talked to them they had only a couple of releases on their label. They accepted the live album but

asked us if we did not want to make a studio album instead. At the same time, a guy at the Swedish Broadcasting System did a program where he wanted a song from Kriget as a sound track. Stefan made a tune with an unusually catchy chorus, followed up by a just as catchy figure on guitar. I wrote some terrible lyrics to that, as I still was not well. Looking for words felt like being caught in some inner mud. But suppose I could rewrite them into something better? Then we would have five new songs. That would be half an album.

So we decided to make a new studio LP, after all. In June, Mistlur drove their bus to Grunden and parked it on the grass beside the road, cables were drawn down under the iron door, and in the rehearsal room microphones and sound-shields were arranged. As usual, the backing tracks were laid down first, which meant that only Dagge, Steffe and Chrille were there from the start.

Then came Mats and Robert. Mats played a lot of different keyboards, often colouring a sound: synthesizer, electric piano, clavinet, organ and Elka. He also added a little saxophone here and there. I was down and assisted Robert, standing beside him at the microphone, gesturing and pulling faces. This was particularly needed when the song and the lyrics were hot from the press. I had written new lyrics for the radio tune too and called it "Hej på er!" ("Hallo everybody!"). I felt sure it ought to be the title of the album.

The lyrics for "Hej på er!" show three different pictures of life, one for each verse, and the chorus asks: "Dear friends, are you waiting for anything more than yourselves?" The title was borrowed from a painting showing a lot of palms of the hand by a Swedish surrealist painter who had lived in Saltsjöbaden. To me it was mildly ironic. Then Johan made a

cover painting showing a white, somewhat out-of-proportion figure against a background of overwhelming blue, and to me it underlined the irony. I associated the figure with the inmates at the mental hospital.

*Hej på er!* was out in September. I was glad I had managed to write anything at all, although it was not as good as I had wished. The good lyrics were "En kväll hos X" and "Dagspress", but they stemmed from before my crack-up. My favourites beside them were "Andra sidan" and "Moln på marken" ("Clouds on the Ground"), both of them instrumental. Therefore, it was not just a joke when I called "Andra sidan" my best lyrics. Besides, I really thought it conveyed a feeling the same way a good poem does.

In the following autumn Kriget returned to the stage. They did thirty-five gigs in just a few months, which was more than most bands in Sweden at the time. The album met mostly with good reviews too, stressing the simplification of the songs as something positive. It even sold better than the previous albums, which meant perhaps a total of 4000 copies. To us, that was an awful lot!

On top of that, the title song was tried for the weekly Swedish top ten music poll. It failed, of course, but the mere fact that it was enlisted was as surrealistic in itself as the works of the old painter whose title I had borrowed. As if it was not enough, Kriget were requested to make the signature for another radio music-program called "Rockgift" – "Rock poison", in Swedish a pun on rat poison. Stefan did a short, fast number inspired by the then current punk-rock paradigm, and I wrote the lyrics, which had to mention the word "rockgift". Considering the circumstances, they were OK.

All these things surprised me. While we were making

the album I had felt that Kriget were a little sidestepped by the times and by punk and new wave music. It was not an unpleasant feeling, just a mild sadness, as if we could do what we wanted quietly for ourselves, while all the action and the media hype went on somewhere else. But the truth was that judged by our own modest standards we were more popular than we ever had been.

Unfortunately, this went to our heads. We believed we had a chance at a real breakthrough if we acted fast. Therefore, we decided to make a new LP album the next summer. So we went down to Grunden again, with the bus outside. Except a re-recording of "Rockgift" all the songs were newly written. Stefan had penned six altogether, the others one each. The title was *Mot alla odds (Against All Odds)* after the opening number, a fast rocker, the only one with a faint remembrance of a more ambitious structure.

The problem was that in principle *all* the ten songs on the album were fast rockers. At least they were performed at the same stressed speed. Also, they were underarranged or underproduced. Some of the ideas were not bad but they were left naked – while some other ideas were bad. It was apparent that we finally had been too influenced by the new wave paradigm. Robert described the album as "straight energy rock" and that was true, but not in a positive sense. The overall sound was terrible, dry and small and lifeless. In my opinion, it was our worst album.

This was ironic in two ways. First, I had been among the pushers for a "basic" rock album with up-tempo numbers, the others being Robert, mixer Hasse and to a degree Dagge, while Stefan and Chrille were unhappy with the situation. Second, I was content with my lyrics. I had got my writing ability back and this was the first time the words were more

direct and personal. In April I had split ways with my longtime girl-friend and moved to two small rooms in an old wooden house near the Grand Hotel, with a lovely view overlooking the water. I think that shook me emotionally in a positive sense, and I felt free and available for new adventures.

Back in 1977, Johan had broken up with his girl-friend Helén in an upsetting way. When it was time for the cover for *Hej på er!* he did it but was in no high spirits. Now he definitely did not feel like doing yet another one. Perhaps it added to his gloom that I had started seeing Helén now and then. In fact, I first met her on the same occasion as Johan did. As it turned out now, we became friends instead. I think it was a lucky thing, because that friendship lasted. Concerning the cover, Stefan did an emergency job with some photos.

In autumn 1979 I started teaching easy mathematics at Samskolan. At the same time I felt I could finally complete my philosophical paper on precognition. I also completed some courses I had enrolled for in literature. As I still did not suspect I was going to become a professional teacher I did not know why I took these courses. I just was very interested. It was my way of living.

I had slowly started writing a little poetry again, and it would still be some time before I gave it up. In the end, I would never publish any poems, but I was aware that the lyrics I wrote were becoming that dreamt of book, a kind of emotional diary, inseparable from the music and the cover work, scattered on different albums. Through my work at the antiquarian shop I also got to know a couple of real poets my age. They were good lads, but totally self-absorbed. They did not ask me one single question about Trettioåriga kriget.

Since then, I have been used to living in different worlds: the world of rock, of literature and of philosophy. They do not interfere much with each other. Neither do the world of artistic creativity, the world of teaching and the world of academia. But from my point of view it is all – well, my point of view. I and I and "I".

*Mot alla odds* was out sometime in the autumn of 1979. Typically, some reviewers hailed it as our best album to date, even my lyrics were OK, while others deplored our being swept away by the New wave. The following-up gigs were to be booked by a professional guy but he failed miserably, and Dagge had to do it instead, managing to fix twenty-seven gigs. However, at the end of November Stefan and Robert had a big row, and afterwards Stefan told Hasse he was going to quit. As he had come to be the indisputably foremost song-writer in Kriget by then, it would have been the same as dissolving the group. Instead, Robert got fired.

In reality it was *not* like that, but that was how it looked and also how Robert took it. They had discussed plans for the future, and while the others wanted to gig for periods now and then, Robert wanted to go full tilt or else let it be altogether. He could be very cathegoric, and this was such an occasion. Yes or no! So they broke up after all. But a few days later the others reconsidered. They did not want to do that! Instead they voted for playing in periods like they had wanted – but keeping Robert out, as he had totally declined to follow their line. This meant Stefan had to take over the vocals beside the bass playing, and I think Robert was sure it was Stefan's idea to leave him out. Actually, it was not. For my part, I was not that involved, but I was clearly against sacking Robert.

However, that was the way it turned out. Kriget re-

heard at Grunden without Robert, doing a couple of new songs and re-doing some older ones with Stefan singing. This of course meant that his bass playing had to be simplified even more than when Mats entered, and by now it had lost the leading role it had in the beginning. He became more and more of a song-writer instead.

The first gig with him on lead vocals was on the 4th of April 1980 at Rock Palais in Stockholm. Then they toured and played Gothenburg and some small towns. It was OK, they worked hard, even Dagge sang one tune, but it was not the ambitious, tough and proud attitude from the early years. In fact, it was more like the leading party in Swedish politics, the social-democrats: a good day's work but a bit grey and dull.

On the 28th of June they entered the stage at the Roskilde festival in Denmark. It was in a blue tent and they followed after a band with a couple of elderly jazz musicians, Mel Lewis and Thad Jones. It was a demanding task, but they parted from it with honour. At the end, when they had started sweating a bit, everyone in the crowded tent had risen and stood applauding and shouting.

Nevertheless, Dagge had decided he wanted to quit the band and told us so. In the face of that, we decided to do one last LP album, the third at Grunden with the mobile bus. It was mostly recorded in October, the pouring rain seeping into my lyrics on the opening track, "Regn (regn, regn)" ("Rain, rain, rain"). The last song was called "Tack och adjö" ("Thank you and good-bye"), but no one except ourselves understood it was a farewell album. Dagge contributed with one song, the funny "På jakt efter rock" ("Hunting for Rock"). The other ten were by Stefan, and on a couple of them, the longer "Europa" ("Europe") and "Som förut" ("As before"),

they did not exactly return to form, but they hinted at it.

One of my favourites was the short "Blues", a simple song in a minor key, with a good beat, a heavy chorus and a wonderful solo from Chrille. Otherwise, it was tough being a guitar hero in those days. Punk rock was about strumming three chords and the emerging synth-rock idiom did not have any use of a guitar at all. It was not the best of times for old Chrille.

For me, on the other hand, it must at least have been a good time. I kept pouring out lyrics, so that Stefan put music to them instead of the other way around. I also completed the courses in literature at the university and due to one of the poets I met at the book-shop I started translating the poems of Jim Morrison. He was the death-obsessed singer with The Doors that we had seen twelve years earlier, and he had died young. His poems in *The Lords* and *The New Creatures* were not great literature at all, but they were OK. Today I would not have translated them.

The 8th of December 1980 was a Tuesday. At that time I was teaching my first class in philosophy at Samskolan, corresponding to the last year in senior high school. When I came walking in the old, echoing corridor a guy from the class met me, clearly upset, and asked if I had heard the news: John Lennon had been killed by some lunatic in New York City!

Later that day, when talking about it with Stefan, we recognized it meant more to us than we imagined. It was one of the four Beatles, the once young group that to us and countless others set the whole thing going. I thought of the photograph on the cover for the EP record "Twist and Shout" in 1963: four guys jumping into the air. On the picture they would remain there forever, suspended between heaven and

earth, young and laughing, waving their arms, but now one of them was dead.

It was because of this that Kriget on a couple of gigs for an encore played the Beatles' "Tomorrow never knows" from the 1966:s *Revolver* album. Of course Stefan could not sing anything like John Lennon, but they played it well, heavy and with a lot of sounds from Chrille and Mats. It is the only cover Kriget ever did.

Our own LP album was mixed in January 1981 and out soon afterwards. Once again, Johan did not want to do a cover, but he assented to creating a new logo. We had got tired of our name, "Trettioåriga kriget" and thought we would just call ourselves "Kriget", as this was what everybody said. It was a stupid idea, but we persisted. For the front cover, we used a black and white photo of Kriget sitting in a sofa on a stairway landing. For the initiated, that was the stairs leading to the great hall in Samskolan, where we had begun the Kriget story eleven years earlier. The inner sleeve showed the instruments down at Grunden, with me sitting in front of them on one of the pictures.

The record sold miserably in spite of some attention from the media. In part, perhaps this was because the change of name made it hard to identify us as us, but in part, no one seemed to be interested anyway. This feeling was born out during the gigs that followed later in the spring. Not many people came. The times had moved on and left us behind. On the 11th of May we did our last gig, a live performance in a radio program sent later in the summer. Typically, it was a good gig, with an enthusiastic audience in the studio, some of them young pupils from one of my classes in Samskolan.

## 10 THE 80'S

So Kriget had done their last gig. At that time, Mats already played with Pocke again. They were a duo consisting of Mats on the synthesizer, Pocke on guitar and vocals, and a rhythm box, which was a new fad then. They named themselves Tredje Mannen, The Third Man, after the famous 40's movie, set in post-war Vienna. Their first LP was out on Sonet that year, called *Cul-de-Sac*, and I found it very good: aesthetically minimalistic and melancholic. In time, they would add a real third man, Christian, on real drums, and as a trio they made two more LP albums before splitting.

Mistlur had built a studio in an old house in the south part of Stockholm. We had mixed the *Kriget* album there and from 1982 Dagge worked there as a sound engineer and sometimes a producer until 1989, when the building was torn down. Chrille had been gigging with a part-time band even before Kriget broke up, but their repertoire was standardized pub rock, and to be honest, it was amazing how standardized Chrille too would sound with them. But they had a good time, and their drummer Per was a cheerful guy later to be connected with the reborn Trettioåriga kriget in a way no one could have foreseen. Otherwise, in the 80's, Chrille drove a truck at Gevalia Coffee.

Since the late 70's, Stefan lived in Stockholm on the west side, the Kungsholmen, with his girl-friend and first wife Ankie. He worked as a dentist, and halfway through the 80's he would buy a private practise at Odenplan in central Stockholm. He still works there. When he and Anki met, she

already had a little boy, Johan, and in 1985 they had a son together, my godson Basse. A couple of years later, he returned to Saltsjöbaden with them.

In 1981, I too moved to Kungsholmen. It was a small room on the ground floor in a backyard, very dark and a bit run-down, like a left-over hippie-pad. Outside my window there was a huge antique fan, belonging to the pub facing the street and often left rumbling through the night. The black girl next door to me was on dope and later on heavy drugs. I promised myself I would soon be moving on. I stayed there for thirteen years.

However, despite the break-up of Kriget Stefan and I had no intention to stop writing songs. On the contrary, we wrote some new ones and soon wanted to try them with a band. So we asked Dagge to play the drums and Chrille the guitar. Then we made a demo with four songs. After some discussion with Mistlur, we went to Planet Records, a very small company run by the man who had been the boss for the Swedish department of CBS when we got our record contract in the winter of 1973-74. Now, nine years later, in the winter of 1982-83, he once again offered us a contract.

At that time there were two more guys in the band. Freddie played the guitar, but in a style totally different from Chrille, rhythmic little fills rather than elaborate arrangements or wailing solos. Stoffe, who was considerably younger than us, played the keyboards, which at that time meant the synthesizer. Together with them Steffe, Dagge and Chrille played once in 1982 at Mariahissen as Trettioåriga kriget, but they were not really meant to be a live band. They were not meant to be Kriget either, not at all, so for the first single we had to come up with a new name. We fastened on Fredin Comp, "Fredin" being Stefan's surname and "Comp"

being a kind of pun. Stefan is a dentist and in medical circles "comp" means "composite", that is: a mix of substances, like in the Swedish aspirin Treo Comp. But in Swedish the band *accompanying* an artist, the backing group, is called the "kompband" too, and your pal is called your "kompis", from "*companions*". So Fredin Comp be it.

As can be gleaned from this, Fredin Comp was very much Stefan's solo project – or Stefan's and mine. Anyway, the important thing was our songs. These were "normal" tunes in quite another way than those of Kriget. That was more or less the point. We were still not writing anything else than what we wanted, but concentrating on melody and harmony, making it more intimate and low-profiled. This was natural also because Stefan sang. He is quite a good singer, but not in a technical way like Robert, and his tonal range is limited. Instead, he interprets the lyrics, gives them personal meaning. I suppose that is why Fredin Comp seemed to be more popular with the girls than Kriget had been.

To Chrille I think this was OK. He did not care that much and he has never been against something sounding a bit sentimental or "soft". To Dagge, on the other hand, I think the whole project was problematic. He never was particularly fond of Fredin Comp, and was reluctant to give it too much of his precious time. Perhaps he did not like the overall, "fluffy" sound, at least not on record, which in principle was the only form in which the songs existed. Perhaps he just found them uninteresting tunes to play the drums to. Still, the things he did, he did very well as usual.

To me, the Fredin Comp concept was an important step. I wrote most of the lyrics first and sometimes Stefan came up with the melody first, yet we worked *together* more than had been the case in Kriget. The lyrics shrunk into fewer

words, and I explored different kinds of repetition. Thereby, the lyrics became part of the music in a new way, at the same time making the music more part of the lyrics. This was much to my satisfaction. Like the 19th-century French symbolist Paul Verlaine said about poetry: "De la musique avant toute chose" – "Music above all"! And he added, with an allusion to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "the rest is literature".

Early in 1983, the first single was out, then during April and in the summer we did some sessions, completing an LP album. The studio was in the south part of Stockholm and the engineer once again was Peter, who had done *Krigssång*. He also mixed the new album, and he, Stefan and Chrille produced it. It was called *Tystlåtna äventyr (Silent Adventures)*, and this time Johan did the cover, as he had done with the single and was to do on two more singles. He used a stylized variation on the figure from the *Hej på er!* album, which in his words symbolized "the lost 'I'". On the LP this was a blue figure against a clear-blue background. The figure was falling forwards, probably inspired by the first single, called "Fallande stjärna" ("Shooting Star"), and it cast a geometric shadow, that vaguely called to mind a spotlight.

For the last track on the LP the synth was played by Mats instead of Stoffe. It was a single melody line that kept repeating and the whole instrumentation was the synth and a rhythm box, also programmed by Mats, with Stefan's voice on that. It was a slow, silent, atmospheric tune called "Gryning" ("Dawn"), and the lines were not rhymed, just rhytmized. In unrhythmic prose:

*The street's emptied of people  
The cars drive fast away  
Stockholm lies silent*

## THE 80'S

*The dawn is blue and cool*

*She who was here a moment ago  
didn't promise you anything  
The words the two of you spoke  
you've already lost*

*Life is so long  
The dawn is blue and cool  
Stockholm lies silent  
Everything is as it was again*

The LP got a couple of very good reviews and was "This week's album" in a popular radio program and so on, but sales were very low. Perhaps one of the reasons was that Planet Records was such a small label.

Anyway, I had other things on my mind. The same year the album was out, in 1983, the guy who had persuaded me to translate Jim Morrison persuaded me to write an essay about one of the foremost young poets in Sweden. By then, I had written a few academic papers, but never an essay. All the same, I wrote it – partly when I visited a girl in the south of Sweden – and it was printed, and it was pretty clear that this was something that suited me. This was even more apparent when I continued writing five essays loosely connected with rock music and rock lyrics. I knew instinctively what I wanted and how I was to go about it to get it. I had finally found my voice. It was not a poet's voice, alas, romantic as that would have been – it was a teacher's voice. But it was a teacher's voice on summer vacation.

You might think that this should have been evident as I worked as a teacher and liked it. But it was not until now that I became a professional teacher and realized that my

easy communication with my pupils was not something everyone could take for granted. It was a gift, humble as it was. Anyway, my aim in essay-writing became the same as in the class-room: to make difficult things easy instead of the other way around. In the spring of 1985, the five essays connected with rock was out in a small volume titled *Det nödvändiga livet* (*The Necessary Life*).

In August I went alone to Bollnäs, a town in the north part of Sweden according to a Stockholmanian point of view. The reason was that having become a certified teacher it was suddenly more difficult to find a job. In the north it was easier as not many who had not grown up there wanted to live and work there. I stayed the autumn, but arranged it so that I could go home by train a couple of days every week. Everyone was kind and friendly, but I found it depressing all the same. I had a small room with no TV, no telephone and no cooking – not even a shower. There was nothing to do, the shops closed at six and the streets were empty. The days became shorter and darker. When I left the last time before Christmas, the snow was on the ground, but joy was in my heart.

The same year a new single was out with Fredin Comp, and in the spring of 1987 Dagge recorded four more tunes in the Mistlur studio where he worked. They made it on singles too, but all in all, nothing happened, and we decided to call it a day. By that time I already worked at a senior high school in Solna west of Kungsholmen. I would stay there for many years. I remember walking from the tube station to the school in the grey mornings. I thought about the life I had led, and that it was OK now, but still a pity I would end up being the same average Swede I had satirized in the early songs with Kriget, that forgotten group.

Even in middle age, I have sometimes dreamt that I pick up a guitar and try to play, conscious of my injured arm. Then, to my great astonishment, I discover that I *can* play, after all! The fingers run freely over the neck of the guitar, and I am back where everything was broken off, and I play and I play, almost crying for joy. It is such a relief! It is all the years in between that is a bad dream! When I awake, the feeling lingers.

When Trettioåriga kriget started anew, it was perhaps not as astonishing as if the nerves in my left arm suddenly had mended, but almost. However, it took some time to get started again. In fact, it took the 90's and the first years of the 00's, before we even realized that we *had* started on a new round.

It began early in the 90's with a young guy who came to Stefan as a dental patient at the private practise at Odenplan. His name too was Stefan, Stefan Dimle. He played in a band called Landberk, and he was into progressive rock in the international sense. He had a second-hand record-shop called Mellotronen (The Mellotron), and he liked the first albums with Trettioåriga kriget. Indeed, that was why he had called Stefan among all possible dentists: to see if it really was the same guy as the bass guitarist in Kriget. Well, it was, and they started talking. Dimle asked Stefan if they could make a reissue of the album *Krigssång* as a CD on his own small label, named Mellotronen, same as the shop.

*Krigssång* was out early in 1992 with three bonus songs taken from a gig in Stockholm after the England tour. Later

that year there was another CD called *War Memories*. We did the compilation – that is, Stefan, Dagge and I did – but the idea was Dimle's. He wanted an album with material not earlier on record, and we collected a few items here and there, among them a couple of numbers from the live album anno 1977 that in the end had been discarded for another studio album.

This was not Dimle's only idea. He suggested that Kriget ought to have some kind of release party for *Krigssång*, and that they should perform a song or two, even if they did it acoustically. This meant talking to Robert again. He had – and still has – a small studio and a rehearsal room just behind the street where I lived at the time. They did not ask Mats, but Stefan, Dagge, Robert and Chrille were to meet at Robert's place. When Chrille came he brought a battered guitar with only five strings. It did not matter, he said. That was the mood he was in.

Dimle had chosen a pub on the south side of Stockholm called Black Horse Inn. They played "Jag och jag och 'jag'" and "Krigssång" with Dagge beating a tambourine and Stefan on the acoustic guitar. Chrille did not play at all, he just stood beside the stage, while a young friend of Dimle's named Reine Fiske, who also was in Landberk, played Chrille's arrangements on acoustic guitar, not by note from the old record. Robert sang, and I remember talking to Dagge's wife Marie about it. We both felt sentimental and we were surprised that his voice was in such good shape.

The next step was what I hinted at in the beginning of this little book. In 1994 I moved back to Saltsjöbaden and this flat, and in the autumn Stefan, Dagge, Chrille and I met a few times and jammed a bit. In the beginning, Chrille was unsure of himself, almost only playing chords and no solos.

## STARTING OVER

But slowly he gathered speed. I think it helped that he got a new job. His old company was bought by Kraft Food and suddenly he got the chance to work with computers. He still does, and is very good at it. It must have been a new start to him.

Once again, Dimle helped us. His own band rehearsed in an old magazine in a dock area kalled Värtahamnen. It was a large, high-ceilinged building, partly stone partly wood, and it reminded me of the old villas in Saltsjöbaden. It had a light, spacy atmosphere and we could use it, as long as we paid a modest rent. We could also use the backline standing there. This was decisive, as Kriget had retained their old instruments, but no amps.

The year was 1995. One evening Stefan found a bass riff while jamming and they kept harping on that. It was the beginning of the song "Lång historia" or "Long /hi/story". The problematic part was the vocals. First we tried a ballad-like sequence, but although I wrote some lyrics it did not work. Then on one occasion Stefan kept jamming there too, and humming some vocals, and suddenly it came alive. I wrote some new lyrics, just a few lines about the situation. They start more or less like this :

*So we meet again  
in a place for old crimes sake  
and the music sounds  
as something we could perpetrate  
Tell me how you've been!  
Is it true that years went by  
while the fall rains cry  
and we stick through thick and thin?*

## STARTING OVER

In 1995, too, MNW or Musical NetWork, one of the old Swedish prog record companies, wanted to issue a compilation with songs by Trettioåriga kriget. Stefan and I put it together, Dagge mastered it with another guy, and we called it *Om Kriget kommer (If the War Comes)* after a tune that had been recorded for the fifth album but left out. The layout and cover work was made on a computer by David, yet another friend of Stefan's. David is a design artist and in the coming years he and Johan would strike up a working relationship, with Johan doing the original artwork, David the layout and the technical realisation of Johan's and his ideas.

The compilation was out in 1996. Because of that Kriget actually did a couple of gigs in Stockholm and on those occasions Mats and Robert were on stage too. But first they drove to Borlänge in Dalarna in the north of Sweden. That is where Dimle came from and now they tested their capacity by playing a short set there. They had rehearsed with Robert on vocals, but he was not with them in Borlänge, so they had to stick to songs that Stefan could sing. I remember it very well. There were not many people in the audience, but a couple of them had driven about 160 kilometers just to see us. It warmed our hearts. I remember it also because it was the first gig performed as Trettioåriga kriget since 1981, bar the one-off gig in 1982. At least Stefan was nervous, and so was I. Afterwards, we hugged each other, which we seldom do.

The following gigs in Stockholm, at a place called Studion and then at the old establishment Berns respectively, were OK. Accordingly, you might think that all we had to do now was to roll on. Then you forget that this was not an ordinary group, but Trettioåriga kriget. Instead of rolling on, we lost momentum, and when we could not stay in Värtahamnen

because we had forgot to pay the rent (imagine!), everything petered out. Besides, we had other things to do. Stefan was divorced and would date a lot of girls in the following few years until he finally met Jessica, his second wife. Dagge and Marie had three children to take care of, while Chrille and Lollo, Stefans cousin – the girl who fixed us our very first "gig" in 1966 – had two. Mats and Annette had three children and Robert three collectively with his new wife Lena. He sang in a cover band too.

The only solo artist was me. I did not consciously stay single so that I could write and do the things I wanted, but as it turned out, I undoubtedly was free to do as I pleased. In 1995 I submitted my doctoral dissertation in literature. It was about Gustaf Rune Eriks, an old working-class short-story writer from the once poor south-side of Stockholm. He had been born in 1918 and was still living when I wrote, so I got to know him very well. My friendship with him has meant more to me in literary matters than anything else. Perhaps he became a kind of father figure too.

When I submitted my thesis, I had written two more small collections of essays, mostly concerning unknown or forgotten authors, or else some philosophical question, now and then a more autobiographical piece. I was aware that just as I throd some No man's land between literature, philosophy and rock in my life, my essays too were something apart from the prevailing cultural paradigms of postmodernism or whatever. It was no big deal, I just wrote what I felt like, earning my living through teaching, but to me personally it was interesting. Metaphorically speaking, it still happened that I wondered at the face in the mirror.

As the Swedish saying goes: Shame on him that gives up! About the year 2000 Stefan, Dagge, Chrille and I once again started playing to see what would become of it. A friend of ours called Kim had a garage in the north-west part of Stockholm, where he fixed up old motorcycles, oily parts lying everywhere. It was an underground place and one floor further down he had a couple of cells where you could rehearse. He let us borrow one of them for free. Some drums were standing there together with some amps and speakers, and as he himself plays the guitar the place was littered with guitars in different stages of repair.

As I remember it, we were out for something new. We did not rehearse old tunes, not even "Lång historia". On the other hand, we did not talk about what to do with what we might come up with, although a new album hovered very vaguely and far away in my mind. Maybe Stefan was scheming something in that direction too, but perhaps he was not as convinced as I that it was feasible. After all, the making of new songs would fall upon him, and apart from the collective "Lång historia" he had not been writing anything since Fredin Comp.

Anyway, we were in no hurry. No one was expecting anything from us. Therefore, we took it very easy. There was a pizzeria in a nearby street, where we often met and had something to eat. A couple of times we did not get any further than another beer there. It just was very nice seeing each other.

One afternoon we had worked a bit on an idea that resisted our efforts and took a break. We went to a stand where we got a cup of coffee. Getting back, Dagge sat down, a bit frustrated with the situation, and started banging away a rhythm on the drums. Stefan smiled and began to follow him on the bass guitar, and after awhile Chrille too crept in on some chords. That was the beginning of what would become the song "Ljuset" ("The Light" or "The Candle"). Whether it was then or on a later occasion, I remember Stefan shouting "Go on, go on!", while he started taking chords on the bass. Suddenly the chorus or vocal theme too had materialized in the cramped, stuffy room.

This was before summer in 2001. A year later, we still rehearsed that song. By then, it was almost completed. It even had a vocal middle part, what The Beatles used to call a middle-eight, regardless of the actual number of bars. Stefan had come up with that too, but I was the one who always kept nagging about some bridge or middle or whatever would break up the standard pattern of verse and chorus. It was partly a selfish thing, because it made it more interesting to write the lyrics, but I also thought it was a means to making both music and lyrics more flexible. Here is one point where Stefan and I differ. He has a penchant for blocks piled upon blocks with nothing in between, whereas my ideal is the lithe body.

Ironically enough, what was lacking now were the lyrics. Of course I had written a couple of alternatives, but they were no good. It was a golden September and I wanted to get that into the words somehow, but the result was bland, even trite. It is a thin line between simple and simplistic. (That line is also what gets blurred in translation from Swedish into English.)

In an indirect way, Dimle once again came to our rescue. He said the *War Memories* album was sold out, and now he wanted to put out a new edition, preferably with some new old material. This opened up two possibilities. One was to actually find some forgotten gems among the piles of old tapes that had gathered. The other was to record "Lång historia" and perhaps the new number as a kind of bonus tracks. Would not that be a nice thing to old fans, the fans we at that time hardly knew about but that Dimle kept telling us we had? Both these possibilities were made the more possible because of Dagge. After leaving the Mistlur studio he had worked at Studio Decibel near Slussen. Recently he had bought it with his young partner Lasse and re-named it Decibel Studios.

Thus it came about that one fine evening in September 2002 Stefan parked the car opposite Dagge's studio. Then we carried an old reel-to-reel tape-recorder and a bag with tapes across the street. While doing that I threw a quick glance to my right looking out for cars. In the distance I saw The Old Town and the hazy blue sky over the roof-tops, tinged with a slightly golden red. At that moment I knew I had the lyrics for "Ljuset" within me.

As always, that put me in good spirits. It was a nice start, too, on an evening where Stefan, Dagge and I – what Stefan has called I and I and "I", literary me being the "I" in quotation marks – were to listen through a lot of tapes, hunting for hidden treasures. We were not in the big studio, but in a neighbouring small one. We talked, joked and listened to something. Suddenly Dagge hit upon some tapes from Grunden, spring 1977. We had completely forgotten them, but when we heard them we were enthusiastic. To me, however, it was more than that. It was like walking into that rehearsal room twenty-five years ago.

## THE FIRE OF YEARS

I may have gotten a bit excited, but in a positive way. It was clear to me that four of the songs fitted together in a suite, and that I could write the lyrics now: that they existed, in the music. Thinking about it afterwards, I suppose my strong emotional reaction had to do with my being away at the mental hospital at the time. It was like I had been prevented from coming, and then I got a bit delayed, twenty-five years in fact, but now I had finally arrived and pushed open the heavy door. And they were there, playing!

Afterwards in the car, when Stefan drove us back to Saltsjöbaden, I told him the name ought to be *Elden av år* (*The Fire of Years*), which he agreed to. The next few days I wrote "Ljuset", listened to the tapes and wrote the words for the suite, all the while with the golden air around me. The title song, with music by Stefan, alludes to the situation for Kriget and me then: Grunden, the annulled contract, the asylum and life in general. In prose:

*We've been here before, in a room made of concrete  
Echoes behind a door, the fire of years, its song is here  
Snow falling white outside, the evening passed by ear  
and we started again, to see where we came*

*through the fire of years, through the years of fire*

*The door was closed, somebody drew the curtain  
Perhaps the key was thrown away, life went on,  
dinner and wine*

*But from the house of fools the spring light pulled  
me away*

*and we found a track through the fire of years*

*through the fire of years, through the years of fire*

## THE FIRE OF YEARS

*Since the day we broke out  
'til we beat a retreat  
the War never stopped  
'though we easily forgot  
through the fire of years, through the years of fire*

Of the remaining three tunes, two are about specific young girls twenty-five years ago. "Möte" ("The Meeting"), by Dagge, has a theme in a minor key sounding like a folk song. The other one was the original song by Stefan that I failed finding any lyrics for back in '77, so that they stripped it down and made it into the instrumental "Moln på marken" instead, that is, "Clouds on the Ground" on the *Hej på er!* album. The title had been Chrille's reaction when they drove back in the Midsummer night 1975 after a gig and he suddenly saw the morning mists outside the car. Now I alluded to that in the lyrics and that was one reason why I chose the title "Molnbudet": "The Cloud-Messenger". The other was that the lyrics are about a girl who has gone away to another country. The ancient Indian author Kalidasa has written an epic poem about two lovers apart, where the young man sends his love to the young woman on a cloud. In sanskrit the title is *Megadhutta*, and that means "The Cloud-Messenger". In the end we once again stripped the song so that only the vocal harmonies were left for Robert to sing to. The original recording from 1977 can be found on the digipack reissue of *Hej på er!* where it is called just "Moln" or "Clouds".

The fourth tune had a chord sequence by Dagge. It slowly built up, with Robert on the Elka and Chrille making sounds on the guitar with a flanger – the same device as he used for

the subtle solo starting off "Metamorfoser" on the *Krigssång* album. I wrote a few words to it meant to be recited, and showed them to Stefan. He must have misunderstood me, because he wrote some music to it which he showed me the next time, together with another idea. It was obvious to me that the two ideas belonged to the same song and a good one at that. So I added some more words in my turn and then we had the new ballad "Night Flight", sung by Stefan on the album and in my opinion one of Kriget's best songs ever.

The fourth number in the suite, Dagge's chords, remained instrumental. In fact, we used the recording from Grunden and due to the background story I christened it "Night Flight -77". Later, when I told Dagge about this, he smiled. The actual background was even more complicated, he said. When he originally made the chord sequence he had had in mind a small poem of mine, that he had seen the first time we were at the summer house of Stefan's parents outside Katrineholm, way back in 1974. It was funny, as I did not know about that, but still had had an idea about reciting the lines that turned out to be the chorus for "Night Flight". The old – or rather, very young – poem was like this:

*In the narrow passage of night  
the sleeping are jostling  
to reach the pale shore of morning*

*In the narrow passage of night  
those who have awoken  
silently row away  
with darkness dripping from the oars*

It is not until now, when I write this down, that I realise the poem describes a kind of night flight too!

Anyway, we started recording in January 2003. We were in the small studio at Decibel. It was cosy, but when Dagge had put up his old Ludwig drums before the computerized recording and mixing desk there hardly was any place left for Steffe, Chrille and me. But the very first hours we put down the backing track for "Ljuset", before taking a lunch break. The same day or the next we did "Lång historia" too, and before stopping I asked the other three guys also to put down some kind of backing track for "Night Flight", the reason being that I did not trust them to remember it otherwise. They did it, luckily enough, since in the end it became the track we used.

At this point we still thought only about making a kind of enlarged and revised version of *War Memories*. Indeed, the idea was to use the old rehearsal tracks from Grunden for the suite, and then just add Stefan singing my newly written lyrics. But it did not work, the sound or the feel was too different between now and then, so we slowly started to rehearse and record the old tracks anew. Then we had a break, I think because Dagge, perhaps Chrille too, had other work on their hands. When we got back to recording again, sometime in the spring, we began being conscious that we actually were at work on a *new* album with Trettioåriga kriget.

This, however, meant talking to Mats and Robert. Stefan called Mats and I called Robert. During the summer, Robert and I worked with some of the lyrics at his small studio on Kungsholmen, and then we recorded them in the big Decibel studio, just him and I and Dagge. After the summer, Mats added keyboards here and there. By then, Dagge and Lasse had dropped the small studio where we had been working.

Instead, they had bought another one, a larger small studio, so to speak, neighbouring the big studio to the right, and there we continued. Stefan and I had written the tune we knew were missing too, called "Gnistor" ("Sparks"). Now Dagge put up his drums in the new studio, in front of the recording and mixing desk, and he, Steffe, Chrille and I rehearsed it and recorded it. Then Mats added keyboards on that too, but Stefan sang it. The last song was the ballad "Molnbudet", done in one go by Chrille on the acoustic guitar and Robert on vocals.

Stefan and I spoke to Johan about the cover. He got my lyrics as a pointer to what was going on and then he set to work. He came up with a beautiful idea consisting of circles or orbits or possibly rings or auras of light. When we saw the small paintings we were convinced immediately that he had hit the head of the nail. The interpretations lay like air around the motive: the fire of years, fulfilling a circle etcetera. But the important thing was that the paintings were so exciting in themselves, apart from intellectualising concepts about what they "were about".

At the same time, Dimle wanted to issue the old tapes from the recording we had done in the winter of 1970-71 with the original six-piece line-up. We decided on the title *Glorious War* and collected the old photos Jåpe had taken in autumn 1970. Then Stefan, Johan and I talked to David. He did a very good work with photos and paintings and lyrics and liner-notes and credits and everything for the two albums, out at the same time, but recorded with an interval of more than thirty-two years.

On one of the first recording-days for *Elden av år*, Stefan and I dropped in for a hamburger at a McDonald's in Nacka. He talked about what ought to be done in case they were to gig again as Trettioåriga kriget. I interrupted him and said he did not need to bother: There would be no gigs!

– Perhaps not. But *if*...

Of course he was right. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2003 Kriget was among the artists playing on a big passenger-ship destined for Åbo in Finland, hired especially for the occasion. That was the come back. Then on the first of May 2004 they entered the small stage at Alcazar, the smallest concert room in the old dance hall Nalen. It was a release gig for the two albums and in spite of almost no advertising some hundred or hundred and fifty people had found their way there. I came alone, walking the street and thinking about the very first gig Kriget had done in Stockholm at Groupie in January 1974. It had been just the next block from Alcazar.

It was a nice gig with a friendly atmosphere. The boys on stage made some mistakes but it was OK and when they came to "Krigssång" and after that "Gnistor", the final track on the new album, the performance really took off. There even was a rumour spread that Mats had smiled once, but you can't believe everything they say.

I do not know what we expected beside that, but what we got exceeded our wildest dreams. We had not counted on any reviews at all, but now we had a lot of them, good ones, and Dimle told us the album sold well. But most im-

portant of all was the response from individual listeners.

Here, too, Stefan was the one who together with Chrille led Kriget into the modern era. The year before, he had launched Kriget's website with the help of Jessica's brother Chris. It was a stroke of genius. Suddenly the fans Dimle had been talking about became a reality to us. They were from Sweden and the USA and Latin America and Europe in one mix, and it was wonderful. Even I, who do not use the net myself, felt like a door had opened and a lot of fresh air let in. You must remember, this is a country where a music critic in the biggest daily paper seriously can write: "Why does everybody have to be so good?" Now we could just forget about that and concentrate on friendly people who liked our music. What a sea change!

In early August, I visited a friend in southern Dalarna. She lived in a town called Falun and when we sat on her balcony and talked after darkness had fallen you could see the light from the old mine. It is one of the oldest mines in Sweden, dating from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, and quite big. One day when my friend was at her job I went up there. Then I saw the big hole, more than 360 meter in length, 220 in breadth and 65 meters deep, that had been created when the ground above the mine had collapsed. This was in 1687, not that long after the Thirty Years War, and they suspected it had been done on purpose by angry workers, as it had crashed down on a day when no one was there. I felt weird standing and looking at it. I had not known anything about it before, but now I could not help thinking that this was what "Krigssång" was about.

Later in August I went along with Kriget to Gothenburg, where they played on an outdoors stage in a park called Slottsskogen. They also played one evening in Saltsjöbaden,

on a stage set up in a shipyard. Not many people came, but it was alright. Krok joined them for "Ur djupen" and anyhow they needed the practise, because after that they flew to the United States and on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September they played at the Progday Festival in North Carolina. I envied them that, but I could not afford it and I had a course in philosophy running in a small private senior high school, a so called free-school, situated in the south side of Stockholm. Stefan called me after the gig, which meant about three o' clock in the night. He was very satisfied.

This is the point where Per had entered the picture, the drummer in the pub-rock band Chrille played in around 1980-81. He had been a travel guide in his younger days, and now he had bought Saltour, the travel agency in Saltsjöbaden. So he was the one who fixed the tickets to the USA for Kriget, and he also went along with them, working hard as a combined press agent, mixer and roadie. This arrangement has continued since then, and it has been invaluable.

During 2004, Stefan Dimle at Mellotronen also released our two first albums, the eponymous *Trettioåriga kriget* and *Krigssång*, in digipack editions, corresponding to *Glorious War* and *Elden av år*. Naturally, I wrote the liner-notes, while Johan digged in the drawers for art work from the period in question and David did the lay-out. Later that autumn, Musical NetWork, which had bought the Mistlur catalogue, wanted to release *Hej på er!*. We got the permission to do it our way, which meant another digipack edition with bonus tracks, additional art work and liner-notes from yours truly. This time Johan even made some new figures using the old cover as the starting-point. The remastering was supervised by Dagge on all the albums. The result was very convincing.

Less convincing at that time was my mental health. I fin-

ished the work with the reissues and also the book *Lång historia* about Kriget that I had started thinking about two years earlier, when we looked for bonus material. I had a breakdown in December, but finished the course I was teaching. It was the same old story, with a dream that I became terrified was a sign that I was going to die. I hoped I was going to get better in the spring, but instead I broke down completely and had to stay at a psychiatric clinic again for three weeks. It was like a toothache in the soul.

However, this time I had a very good psychologist and a dito psychiatrist, two middle-aged women, who moreover worked together with pills and cognitive therapy. I also had my good friends – and most of all Stefan. I talked to him at least once a day, we went for walks, I had coffee at his and Jessica's home, he was the one who drove me to the hospital and so on. And then, when I was back on very shaky legs, everybody continued helping me. That way I could join Kriget when they played the Sweden Rock Festival in early June 2005, in the so called Classic tent. I was in no condition to hear the other groups, because I suffered from tinnitus, but it was very good to be among friends.

In the summer, I visited my friend and book publisher Jonas Ellerström and his wife Elisabeth in Skåne (Scania) in the south of Sweden and other friends on the island of Gotland. To my surprise, I recovered so that I could write a couple of essays and even start teaching again when autumn came. And when Kriget went to Mexico the following year, 2006, I went along with them.

These tours or gigs outside Sweden also came about because of Stefan. He is a social guy and on the internet he held a conversation with the world. This definitely included some nice people back home too, but one of the guys in the

bigger world was Juan from Santiago in Chile. He is a sports journalist who loves progressive rock and he has a wide net of contacts in the European and non-European latin countries, and books gigs for bands. It was he who got Kriget to Mexico, and later he has made it possible for us to play in several other places.

In Mexico we played at a big four-day festival in Mexicali called Baha Prog. We flew to Los Angeles, where we had a hotel just between Hollywood Boulevard and the Sunset Strip. I know it was the 4<sup>th</sup> of March because the next day there was the Oscar gala on the next block. We were not picked up at lunch as planned, so we stayed the day in central L.A. Robert, who had been there before, took us for a walk in the neighbouring green hills. In the afternoon we walked along the Sunset and had a look in a couple of shops for instruments. Stefan learnt that his old Fender Precision back home – he brought a new one on the trip – cost quite a few bucks.

In the night the bus came and so we went down to Mexico in pitch dark. Mexicali is situated just across the border from California and it was a kind of ramshackle town spread out in the desert heat. But a couple of central streets lined with lights and palms looked nice, and at one of them the big luxurious hotel Araiza was situated. During the next few days I got to like it, and I know Stefan did too as we shared one of the double-rooms. People staying at the hotel were mostly there because of the festival, either as musicians or listeners or record-buyers. You felt you were among like-minded.

Kriget played on the first evening, 8 March, as the second of three bands. They sound-checked before noon at the big amfi-theatre and I remember sitting in the high-ceilinged,

empty, dark theatre with Kriget on stage and behind them a big opening in the wall, where the white sun was blazing. Then I took a walk back-stage through the empty dressing rooms. I thought about Kriget's first gig at Tippen in Salt-sjöbaden, then about Stefan and little Pär and me in our bedrooms at number 72. It was strange.

The gig was good, though not the best one I have seen with Kriget. They played well but still were a little stiff from not really having performed for so many years. Or was it on-coming age? Anyway, they went down well and afterwards they went out to Per who handled the merchandizing together with Chrille's partner Lollo. They shook hands, signed CD:s and talked to people. Altogether on that trip we sold CD:s and some t-shirts for almost thirty thousand crowns, that is about five thousand dollars. In the 70's you did not sell anything at all on gigs.

In Mexicali, I had found a small café where I could have a cup of coffee and a toasted sandwich. It was Robert who brought me there, but I made it a daily habit. I like to sit and dream and just feel ordinary life going on around me. It is the same everywhere, including back home. Perhaps it is because I live so much on my own? Here I quietly made my notes and looked out on the busy street. Later, when Stefan and I wrote the material for the album *I början och slutet* (*In the Beginning and the End*), I made this café the centre for the song "Öknen" ("The Desert").

In late May, I went to Berlin with friends. One day on my own I found a ruin close to the big train station at Alexanderplatz, an old church from the Middle Ages. I was fascinated by the dilapidated walls and an arch against the blue sky, and at the same time a blooming white robinia tree close by the wall, sending out a characteristic fragrance. Later, that became the lyrics for "S-bahn". The S-bahn is the train above the ground in Berlin, whereas the underground is the U-bahn. Robert immediately liked this song, as there was an S-bahn in Vienna that he always rode as a child.

In the summer, Stefan and Jessica went to Brazov in Romania to see her parents. She and Stefan had married in Saltsjöbaden, but now the party was going to be in Romania, which meant in the mountains, where her parents came from and where her paternal grandmother still lived. I went with them and was struck by the beauty of the scenery.

Brazov was surrounded by steep mountain-sides, situated in a bowl, and the small village where her grandmother lived in a big house was further up in the northern mountains. One day we took a walk along the crystal-clear river flowing from somewhere where the clouds dragged along the mountain-crests, and in the night I could stand in my room in the house and still hear it passing by, murmuring to itself. Thus the lyrics for "Floden" ("The River").

Stefan, Dagge, Chrille and I had started rehearsing a couple of times before going to Mexico. We returned to it in the spring, before we took a break for the summer. Stefan and I were sure we wanted to make a kind of concept album. It was an old idea of mine, but now Stefan was the one who really pushed for it. He told me that was what we were good at. During the summer we kept writing new songs, and after the summer we rehearsed them with Dagge and Chrille. We had to rent a small rehearsal studio on the first floor of a large garage in Nacka, just where the train went by to Slussen. It was not a very poetic place, but we were very efficient, almost rehearsing a new tune on each occasion.

Sometime in late autumn Stefan and I went to see Johan in his studio, situated in an old stone building, the Redoubt, a kind of naval fortress at Vaxholm, the seaside resort where he lives with his wife Eva and where I happened to be born long ago. Once again he got my lyrics, and we talked about the concept idea. By now, it was clear to me that the theme was our childhood and youth and the story of Kriget, that is, a journey in time, and that it was contrasted to geographical journeys in the present. Together, they are what is contained between the beginning and the end. That is why the rider on his stone collects the themes. He is on his way to the dwelling of the dead, but the warriors in the ship on the

ocean beneath him are among the living, sailing towards some coast.

When we talked to Johan, he already had a painting. It was non-figurative but you could imagine some kind of horizon in the speckled surface of red-brown-green colours. It stayed with me, and that was how the lyrics for "Lovsång" ("Song of Praise") were born. Stefan's tune was already there, then, and in general I wrote most of the lyrics on this album to the music instead of the other way around. A couple of times I had some lyrics that Stefan expanded on musically and so I rewrote them or added what was lacking.

Concerning Johan's painting, it became the cover on the digipack. Then he worked with a tree on the inner sleeve, hiding things within its patterns of limbs. This tree is of course connected to the song "Childhood", which begins with mentioning an oak outside the window. But it is also connected with the big ashen tree, Yggdrasil, that is the world-tree in the myths of the vikings. The rider on the outer sleeve of the booklet as well as the small figures within it are evidently inspired by the old Swedish picture-stones.

Just before Christmas Stefan, Dagge, Chrille and I went into Dagge's studio near Slussen and recorded the backing-tracks for the new album. As usual, Dagge did the actual recording at the same time as he played the drums. We re-did one song, I think, otherwise all of them were done in three days. I was quite impressed by the guys' playing and their ability to focus. It was exhaustive work even to me, although I did not do anything except being there. When I came home I was completely empty and fell asleep immediately.

About that time I also started working out the vocals with Robert in his small studio on Kungsholmen. That is, sometimes he had a melody from Stefan, sometimes he had

to invent one, and then *he* worked them out, singing in parts with himself on some tunes. I just said okay and was happy. Naturally, I told him how I interpreted the feeling of the song and once or twice I commented on the intonation of a phrase, but the rest was done by him. Sometimes, when he got excited, he explained to me how he had changed the seventh for a sixth in the third part, and I just nodded. I did not know what he was talking about, but it sounded good.

Came spring, we started the overdubbing business. Mats had listened to the backing tracks and now he came to the studio with ideas for some of them, whereas on some tracks he simply told us he had no clue at all. However, he was easy to work with, he just sat at his keyboards, mostly a synth programmed into something else, and Stefan, Dagge and I sat around him, Dagge at the recording desk. Then we tried different sounds and tonal phrases. His most impressive effort was on "Lovsång", where he had recorded his ideas back home for us to listen to, before he did them in the studio.

Chrille, too, spent considerable time in the studio. But he had a new guitar box he tried out, a Pod, and he had got it in his head that there were to be no dubs at all. Instead, he kept on polishing what he already had laid down and he seemed to want a thin, clear sound that I personally did not find wholly convincing. In the end, though, he agreed to some overdubbing. But the overall result was that the album contains less than usual of his guitar. At least it *sounds* that way, which is a bit of a pity, as the things he does are as good as ever. His solo in "Benke" for example, is heart-breaking.

Speaking of "Benke", it is sung by Stefan. He had some idea that Robert could do that, perhaps because it is an up-tempo number, but I told him I was not even prepared to try

it. I mean, Stefan had known Benke almost as well as I. So he sang, and did a really good job, giving it the personal touch that is essential to it. He also sang "Öknen" and "Floden", and they worked very well. On "Öknen", Robert was present at the recording of Stefan's vocals, and out in the control room he started to sing a second, wordless part, which we all felt belonged to the tune. So he recorded it, and in the recurring thematic chords afterwards, you can even hear Dagge for a short spell, singing in parts with himself.

In early June, Johan and David had done the cover work, and the album was mastered by a friend of Robert's called Limpan. Some of us were there when he started, and he turned out to be a likable guy, totally professional, with a keen ear for what was to be done. We surely would be working with him again.

By that time Stefan Dimle had decided he would not keep his shop Mellotronen in the Old Town. He told us he wanted to switch to internet business only and that he actually did not have the money to release our album. Instead, Stefan and Dagge put the money needed on the table, but as Dimle would keep his label we continued with that, striking a business deal with him.

When the album was out after summer 2007, reactions were rather slow. We knew we had made a good album, to the best of our efforts, but it would be very nice if someone else told us so too. By and by they did, and after awhile everything worked out well, but we did have some time to speculate in between. Those speculations did not mean anything in the end, but one thing emerged very clearly. Whether the listeners would take the new album to their hearts or not, Stefan and I saw *Elden av år* and *I början och slutet* as two albums in a trilogy. When talking to Dagge and the other

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guys about it they did not protest. Indeed, I already had the title for the third album. It will be interesting to see if it will stick or not. Nothing is really guaranteed with Kriget.

I have just had an evening walk, and inhaled all the sweet scents after the June rain. The waters in the coves and expanses were gleaming, green and black, blue and silver. In the setting sun the asphalt on the road was steaming of damp mist, like the smoke rising from the stage floor in a show.

Now I am back in my room, writing these words. I and I and "I". My old mirror in its wooden frame is on the wall behind me, but I will not look into it. Instead, I am thinking about what remains to be said about Trettioåriga kriget.

Little or much, depending on how you see it. At the same time as the album was out we went to Bordeaux on the West Coast of France and played. It was a three-day festival called Crescendo on a wonderful seaside resort named Saint Palais, reminding me of Saltsjöbaden, although bigger and with lots of tourists. The stage was up on a cliff, facing the Atlantic. Kriget head-lined on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, and I think the commander-in-chief, Sébastien, was satisfied. Anyway, we were, the sound was tip-top, the stage crew, the mixer and the lights were total pros.

Then in October we went to Brazil. Juan had booked us for two gigs, Per arranged the flights and joined us. Then followed a week different from anything else I have experienced. Rio de Janeiro is a beautiful city, but it is also a very tough city, with lots of poor people and a very high rate of criminality. Luckily enough, we had a good guide in Gustavo, a young carioco, as the inhabitants of Rio are called. He liked

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Kriget and so Stefan and he had established a contact on the net several years before our visit.

The gig, on the 7<sup>th</sup>, was upstairs at a big restaurant, with an enthusiastic crowd, dancing and singing along to the Swedish lyrics. After that we travelled to a place called Macaé further to the north on the Atlantic coast. That gig was at the town theatre and everything was well arranged. But the audience did not seem to like our music. I stood at the back as usual, so I saw everyone that left, and there were too many of them. Kriget felt that on stage too, and considering the circumstances they did a heroic effort.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December we played in Sickla, the train stop not far from Slussen where old factorys have been turned into a mall. Beside the shops and restaurants there is a hall with a stage. It was a sort of homecoming, not that far from Tippen where it had all began. The hall was filled, and I have reached that age when it is good to recognise a lot of the faces. To accentuate the feeling of a full circle, Pocke supported us, by playing four songs alone on stage, just him and his guitar. The introducing was done by Krok, Stefan's parents were in the audience. It was a good gig.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2008, Kriget once again played on a ship destined for Finland, this time Helsinki and hired by Dimle. Later that month they went to Oslo in Norway. They did a gig in Madrid in Spain on 26 April and then outside Marseilles in France on 2 May. And now as I sit in my quiet room, it is as if I had imagined everything. I see the waning light in the sky, a night fly is dancing around my lamp, and through the open window I suddenly hear the loon from the small lake in the distance. Do you know about the loon? It is a beautiful sea-fowl, who can stay under water for long stretches of time, and its cry is lonely and mystic. They re-

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turn to their chosen waters year after year and can become quite old. If it is not the same loon as I heard on my first summer here it is one of its young ones. That summer was thirty-five years ago. I had moved into the flat next door, I was going to be twenty-one at the end of July and I had just started writing my first serious lyrics for Trettioåriga kriget.

## MEMBERS OF TRETTIOÅRIGA KRIGET

*The original six-piece line-up (1970):*

Stefan Fredin: bass guitar and vocals

Johan Gullberg: drums

Dag Kronlund, "Krok": keyboards (piano)

Dagge Lundqvist: drums

Olle Thörnvall: harmonica

Pocke Öhrström: lead guitar and vocals

*The classic line-up (1972–77):*

Stefan Fredin, bass guitar

Dagge Lundqvist: drums

Robert Zima: vocals

Christer Åkerberg, "Chrille": guitars

Olle Thörnvall: lyrics

Johan Gullberg: art work

*In 1977 Mats Lindberg joined on keyboards and saxophone*

*In late 1979 Robert left, leaving vocals to Stefan*

*In 1981 Kriget disbanded*

*The come back, 2003–:*

Stefan Fredin: bass guitar, vocals

Mats Lindberg: keyboards

Dagge Lundqvist: drums

Robert Zima: vocals

Christer Åkerberg, "Chrille": guitars

Olle Thörnvall: lyrics

Johan Gullberg: art work

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