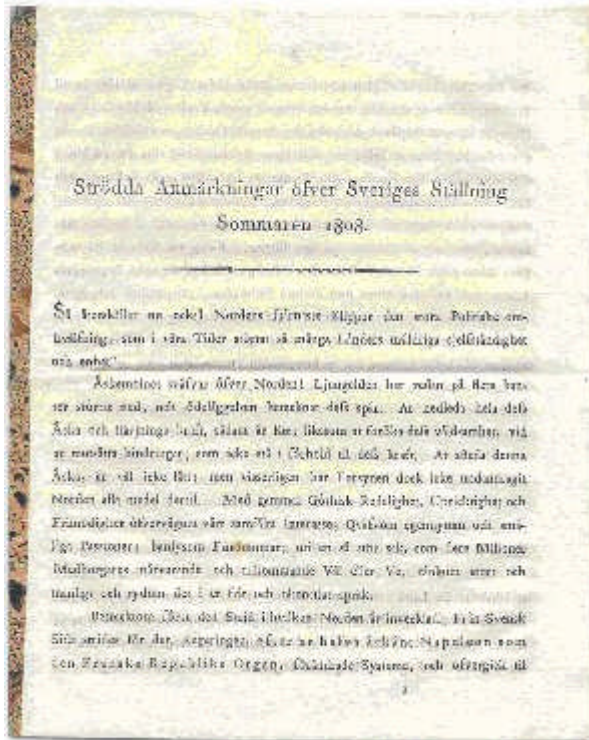


**October 2004**  
submitted by Fredrik Ydell  
delegate from Sweden

**World's oldest item sent by airmail between two countries**  
**Balloon mail from Denmark to Sweden 1809**



On the 16th of March 1792 the Swedish King Gustav III was shot at a masked ball in the Royal Opera in Stockholm, Sweden. The king's injuries were so serious that he died on the 29th of March. The regicide was committed by Captain Jacob Johan Anckarström, who was arrested on the 17th of March and executed on the 27th of April 1792.

Anckarström was surrounded by several hundred conspirators, of whom several were banished from Sweden forever. One of these, Carl Fredrik Ehrenswärd, escaped to Denmark and changed his last name to Ehrenswärd-Gyllembourg.

He still didn't care for the Swedish royal house and wrote a 16-page pamphlet in which he encouraged the Swedes to rebel and overthrow the Swedish royal house. He suggested that the Swedes instead elect the Danish King Fredrik VI as the new Swedish king. The propaganda pamphlet "Scattered Remarks on Sweden's Position Summer of 1808" was printed in Denmark in 300 copies.

It describes the state of Sweden in a very expressive but negative manner. The propaganda pamphlet was sent from Kronborg Castle at Elsinore, in Denmark, to Southern Sweden in small pilotless balloons in February and March 1809. Every balloon was capable of transporting some 30 pamphlets, so 10 balloons were needed.

The idea was for the balloons to land at various places in Southern Sweden and that the Swedes there should read the pamphlets and then help the Danes who, during the first months of 1809, were close

to a landing in Southern Sweden.

The idea of transporting mail by balloons was not new to the Danes. In 1808, mail had been carried in unmanned balloons across the sound between Jutland and Fyn. Four of these pieces of mail are preserved in Danish archives.

The reason why Carl Fredrik Ehrenswärd-Gyllembourg used balloons was that there was no connection by ship between Denmark and Sweden at this time because Denmark had declared war on Sweden on the 14th of March 1808. The war lasted till the 10th of December 1809 when the peace agreement was signed. During the war all traffic by ship between the two countries was suspended. Another reason was that Carl Fredrik Ehrenswärd-Gyllembourg wished to remain anonymous because of the content of the pamphlet as he could be sentenced to death in Sweden for inciting revolution.

The balloons, and the contents, were intercepted by the Swedes. The Swedish king, Gustav IV Adolf, instructed the Governor General of Southern Sweden (Skåne), Johan Christopher Toll, to collect all pamphlets and destroy them, with the exception of four copies that were sent to the king in Stockholm. All of the four copies have been identified. Today, one is in the Royal library, another at the War Archives, and two are in private hands. One of the copies in private hands is shown in the book *The history of air mail in the Nordic countries* by Örjan Lünning. The other copy in private hands is shown here and the owner is Fredrik Ydell, Sweden.

It may be added that these pamphlets are the oldest known airmail between two countries. Among airmail collectors, the pamphlet is known as the “balloon pamphlet.”