

The Burrell Affair: British Royals' Debacle

by Mark Burdman

"The biggest crisis facing the House of Windsor since the 1936 abdication of King Edward VIII"—thus do observers in Britain characterize the catastrophes befalling Queen Elizabeth II and the Royal Family this November.

The unfolding drama confirms the forecasts of Lyndon LaRouche and *EIR* since the mid-1980s, of "the coming fall of the House of Windsor." Now it's coming on fast.

The crisis involves charges of "obstruction of justice" by Her Majesty and her son, Prince Charles. It also centers on accusations that Charles has covered up at least one instance—probably more—of homosexual rape in his St. James Palace; and on claims that Charles's chief aide has been illicitly selling off precious royal items. Although frenetic efforts are being made to avert it, there is also the potential that this process will force a new investigation into the circumstances of the wrongful death of Princess Diana on Aug. 31, 1997, in Paris.

Such an end-game dynamic for the Windsors could have repercussions far beyond Great Britain. Royal Consort Prince Philip likes to refer to the Royal Family as "The Firm"—and the family sits atop a vast "informal empire" of financial, raw materials, and property holdings, centered in the Commonwealth. It is integral to the global system now disintegrating; its woes are emblematic of that disintegration, and will exacerbate it.

Implications for War and Peace

Linked to this is the strategic factor. Britain is on the point of joining the Bush Administration in war against Iraq. Reservations about that war are felt at the highest levels of the British Establishment, probably including elements of the monarchical structure, typified by opposition to the war on the part of the Rev. Rowan Williams, new head of the Church of England (the country's established church, whose Supreme Governor is the Queen). According to Harold Brooks-Baker, publisher of *Burke's Peerage*, the almanac on the British aristocracy, there are "people in sensitive places" in the U.K. who are very irritated by the willingness of Prime Minister Tony Blair and his coterie, to tail after the Bush Administration on the question of Iraq and related war moves.

One must ask whether the present scandal is in fact a way of "jamming up the works" to neutralize British participation in such a war, given that Her Majesty is also Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces. Conversely, insiders warn

that, in the political fragility created by this crisis, if Britain were to become entangled in an unpopular war, that would intensify the process they call "institutional disintegration" in the U.K., bringing about enormous political realignments, as well as a radical decline in central power in the country.

'Remember, Remember'

The crisis began Nov. 1, when it was announced that the trial of royal butler Paul Burrell had been stopped, on the basis of an extraordinary intervention by Her Majesty. Burrell had been accused of having stolen 300-plus items belonging to Princess Diana, after her death. The trial had run for 18 months, costing British taxpayers £1.5 million (over \$2 million).

Burrell was to testify on his own behalf the week of Nov. 4. But days before that, the story goes, the Queen was in a coach with Prince Philip and Prince Charles, attending a "Remembrance" event for war dead. It was then, it is said, that she suddenly had a recovery of remembrance, recalling that soon after Diana's death, Burrell had told her he was putting many of Diana's valuables into safekeeping. Her claimed five-year memory lapse is all the more remarkable inasmuch as, according to Burrell, their 1997 meeting lasted three hours; Palace spokesmen insist this is exaggerated, and that it lasted 90 minutes.

In any case, Buckingham Palace intervened to stop the trial. The case against Burrell collapsed.

But this story is outrageous, with all the subtlety of a second-rate mafia movie—especially given the way the justice system operates in the U.K. The prosecution of Burrell had been initiated by the Crown Prosecution Service, legal arm of the Crown itself. So the monarchical structure that had initiated the case, now precipitously shut it down. Britain is awash in calls for reform of the legal system, and for independent inquiry into this monarchical intervention to end an on-going legal action.

Some have even accused the Queen of "obstruction of justice," an extremely serious charge. In a Nov. 13 commentary, "Ghosts of 1936 Return," *Guardian* writer Jonathan Freedland said the probability that the Queen had engaged in obstruction had brought about "the greatest threat to the House of Windsor since then," referring to the abdication of her uncle, Edward VIII.

Wronging Diana Again

The Palace's crude behavior created outrage on a second count. It was clear to all that Her Majesty and the family did not want Burrell to testify, out of fear of what he might reveal. No doubt, the greatest fear was that he might shed new light on Diana's death. Numerous *EIR* exposés since that night in 1997 have documented the circumstances and most probable leads suggesting that the death was no accident.

It is intriguing that one of the items Burrell reportedly had in his attic—its existence and location is now uncertain—was

a letter from Prince Philip, heaping bile on the Princess. Was this some kind of death threat?

Also intriguing: In their meeting after Diana's death, according to Burrell, Queen Elizabeth said menacingly: "Be careful, Paul, nobody has ever been closer to a member of the family than you were to Diana. There are powers at work in this country, about which we have no knowledge."

But before anything coherent might be gleaned from such revelations, a counter-dynamic set in. Burrell, who had portrayed himself as "Diana's rock," her truest aide, poured forth his memoirs—for £300,000—to the *Daily Mirror* tabloid. The venal Burrell, whose real loyalties are not entirely clear, spewed all sorts of poison against Diana, including stories about how he supposedly secretly brought lovers to her, smuggling them into Kensington Palace in the trunk of his car. He also provided what he claimed to be details of her rage fits and other outbursts, in fights with husband Prince Charles. He focussed his main attacks on Diana's family, accusing her brother Earl Spencer of trying to capitalize on her death for monetary gain, and portraying her mother as obsessed that Diana was attracted by "Muslim men" and wanted to marry Pakistani Dr. Hasnat Khan.

So Diana is wronged again, in this posthumous abuse. However, she may be having her revenge, in other ways.

'Public Relations Disaster'

With each passing day, the miseries of the Windsors increase.

Burrell's defense has claimed that in his collection of Diana's possessions, is a tape she made of a top servant at Prince Charles's St. James Palace, claiming he had been homosexually raped some years back. The identity of the man, George Smith, was revealed by the Italian daily *La Repubblica* on Nov. 11. Smith told the paper he had witnessed one such rape "involving a member of the Royal Family and a servant." At least one British tabloid has claimed that the "member" was Charles!

Such stories of homosexual romps and rapes in royal abodes have a lurid credibility; a "gay mafia" has long played a role among the Palace servants and lackeys. At least as early as the "Jack the Ripper" case in the 19th Century, investigations were leading to a "homosexual underworld" in and around the Royal Family. The story could undoubtedly be taken further back, to the Satanic escapades of the "Hell-Fire Club" of the 18th Century.

But as stories seep out that the Palace, and perhaps Charles himself, intervened to spike police probes into homosexual rape charges, the Prince has also been accused of "obstruction of justice." That his favored aide, Michael Fawcett, known as "Fawcett the Fence," had been illicitly selling off royal items didn't help.

Buckingham Palace grew increasingly angry and impatient at St. James Palace. The Queen, and/or senior advisers, also evidently felt it could be to her advantage to focus the

blame on her hapless son, away from herself. Many in the monarchical structure also believe it would be an advantage if Charles renounced the succession, passing it on to his (and Diana's) eldest son, Prince William.

Buckingham Palace demanded St. James Palace clean up its act. So, on Nov. 11, the senior staff of St. James Palace held a "crisis meeting" with a key aim being—according to the *Daily Telegraph* of Nov. 12—to ensure the crisis does not "suck in" the Queen.

Out of that came an announcement Nov. 12, of an "internal inquiry" into the complex of events, to be carried out by Charles's personal secretary, Sir Michael Peat. Simultaneously, Buckingham Palace released a statement asserting that the Queen had done nothing wrong.

These initiatives massively backfired. Cries arose that the Palace was engaging in cover-up. What was the purpose of an "internal inquiry" by Charles's own lackey, if the monarchy was already announcing that the Queen was innocent? The lead article of the *Times* Nov. 13 was headlined "Burrell Inquiry Backfires on Besieged Royals"; the piece noted that the inquiry was becoming a "public relations disaster" for the Crown.

Such actions drew contempt from *Burke's Peerage's* Brooks-Baker. He told *EIR* Nov. 13: "It's completely crazy, to see the monarchy shooting itself in the foot this way. The mind boggles at the thought of it. Anyone could have predicted, that a tactic of having the monarchy conduct an inquiry about itself would backfire. My surprise is only that there is no general inquiry that has been started, on this whole mess. What is happening now, will harm the monarchy terrifically. . . . Their behavior is pathetic. That Burrell case should never have started in the first place; it should have been stopped right away." He insisted there had to be a purge of top royal advisers, most of whom "are courtiers, whose families go back generations in monarchical service, and who have an 18th-Century mentality."

Brooks-Baker agreed with those who see this as the greatest Windsor crisis since the abdication of Edward VIII: "In some respects, this is becoming a greater crisis than what happened in 1936, even if an abdication need not be involved, this time around. What makes the current situation so precarious, is that the possibility of a popular referendum exists today, whereas it didn't exist in 1936. The institution of the referendum has existed since 1975 in Britain, when it was introduced, then, on the subject of Europe. What happens if there is a popular referendum on the monarchy, soon? Then, we have a greater crisis than 1936."

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