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Why ex-Kings are dangerous

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John Kennedy. Too beautiful to be discarded, too dangerous to live, Marilyn compromised the White House. Diana has compromised Buckingham Palace. The mystery of the star's drugs overdose and the visit by CIA agents before and after her death has never been cleared up. Does anyone blame Diana for throwing up her food? Wouldn't anyone in the circumstances, now food tasters are hard to get? Royalty may still be horrified at stories of anarchists or republicans who killed heads of State and those at court but they're a dab hand at it themselves. Edward was lucky in having a stern but protective mother (Queen Mary) who had never forgiven her husband for allowing their Russian cousins to meet the final punishment for the crimes of their dynasty, because George V feared giving them sanctuary might lead to revolution here.

Why is it unthinkable that Trotsky (with more tragic family reasons for bitterness) did not do an 'Edward VIII' like most others in his position? In power, his policy was that the Soviet revolution could be spread abroad by armed intervention. So far as the Soviet Union was concerned he never until his dying day (and his disciples thereafter) advocated internal revolution against Stalin, nor did the Old Bolsheviks who came up for trial. The 'soviet revolution' had made Russia a 'workers state', he argued, all it needed was the overthrow of Stalin's dictatorship and bureaucracy. How do you overthrow or alter a dictatorship except by revolution or by foreign armed intervention? If the first was out, there was a Leninist precedent of accepting help from Imperial Germany. On the German side there was no more reason why they should refrain from helping Trotsky (before Hitler) than they had with Lenin, while after Hitler, once he started planning war, Trotsky was no more unacceptable a partner than Litvinov or Molotov later with whom they undoubtedly did collaborate.

There is plenty of evidence, including confessions, that Trotsky and all of his associates or former colleagues in Russia did collaborate with the Nazis. The only problem with the evidence is that it was given in a Soviet court, under Stalin, and nobody believes it for that reason. At any rate, Stalin certainly believed what he is supposed to have invented himself, and had Trotsky murdered, at a time when the exile was calling for defence of the USSR, lest he was placed as the nominal head of an invading army, whether from the West or the centre of Europe.

Diana and Marilyn

In that now notorious interview, the Princess of Wales revealed her marital disputes and claimed to want to be the Queen of Hearts. The last person who functioned in that role was Marilyn Monroe. Her downfall was in becoming involved with the Head of State,

Half a century after the events concerned, the Guardian and the BBC unearthed the facts about Edward VIII (later Duke of Windsor). Only their interpretations are dubious. They say the Establishment suspected Edward for his fascist views, and used the Mrs Simpson affaire as an excuse to get rid of him. Certainly Edward collaborated with the Nazis before and during the war and by law should have been hanged for high treason (even now a capital offence). He deserted his post in front of the enemy in France during the war and went to Spain. Another death sentence was due. Prime Minister Churchill then sent him off on a handsome salary to govern the Bahamas, where he gave information and advice to Berlin (a third death sentence!) and engaged in wartime currency trading (meriting only a lengthy prison sentence this time) and post-war black marketing (just a fineable offence). But it is nonsense to say, as they do, that this was because of his 'natural fascism'.

The Royal Family are exposed as having covered his unpunished criminal record up but some nagging questions remain. The entire British Establishment, royal and otherwise, was fascistic and pro-Nazi before the war, except for a tiny number. Earl Mountbatten, though his close German relatives were active Nazis, some even in the SS, was the only anti-Nazi in the Royal Family (his wife's grandfather was a German Jew married into British aristocracy, he himself was pro-Communist). But how did Edward differ from a logical mould with which Prime Minister Baldwin had certainly no difficulty? When the pre-Abdication crisis came, Sir Oswald Mosley backed the King but they did not become friends until after the War when both were in comfortable retreat in France for much the same reason. The support Edward in crisis solicited at home, against the Establishment was not from the street fascists but from those who saw the military menace of Nazi Germany, especially Winston Churchill (then a back-bencher out of line with his party). Mountbatten enlisted the aid of those who wanted Churchill as PM. His go-between, double-agent/journalist Claud Cockburn, later described it as an unofficial Conservative-

Communist front. It aimed to appeal to a much wider segment of the public than Mosley. Allied to the natural monarchists and those swayed by his own charms, they were thought by the king to be irresistible.

He was brought up in the monarchical tradition and hedged about with the divinity that surrounded it. He was worshipped at home and overseas throughout his youth on a scale now unbelievable. He could do as he wished, and was built up as a demi-god even among the deprived as someone who was concerned about them (he never actually did anything) who asked only for their devotion. Hitler had to work hard to get comparable status. It is understandable Edward liked what he saw in Germany but had no desire to be a stooge like the King of Italy under Mussolini. It irked him to be one under Baldwin. The Government only asked him to respect the 'Constitutional obligation not to marry a dubious American divorcee lest it destroy the monarchical mystique. The Establishment, Government and Labour Opposition defeated him. The 'irresistible coalition' vanished. His upper-class friends dropped him immediately, with sudden engagements in far off corners of the world. They had wanted to be his closest courtiers and but did not want to fall out with the vindictive new consort who had a still-unexplained grudge against him (she is now the revamped cosy dear old 'Queen Mum' of newspaper hype). Edward retired bitter. Even his staunchest champion, Churchill, ditched him after 'National Rat Week' (Osbert Sitwell) when the moronic new king and his formidable wife put the boot in.

The subsequent repeated treasons and criminality were inevitable. He was brought up to do as he wished. What need to obey laws which were passed for his subjects? The Government recognised he was an attractive prize for the Nazis who could use him to 'legitimise' an Occupation government. A king is always a king. If the Russians had not wiped out their royals, the Nazis would certainly have imposed the 'rightful Emperor'. The Japanese invaders did exactly that in China. A century and a half before,

the French wiped out their royal family, but not sufficiently. There was still an heir who led the enemy forces against the French, and later executed as traitors those like Marshal Ney who had fought for their own country under Napoleon. The latter died under suspicious circumstance in the hands of the British, who knew from their own repeated experience that ex-kings, even frustrated kings, like tigers wounded by hunters, are dangerous. Nobody should ever again question the danger', to conservatives no less than revolutionaries, of allowing deposed monarchs and even their heirs the luxury of being 'kings over the water', even on a coral reef, even to live at all.

Two corollaries follow, the first being to reconsider the case of Trotsky, still worshipped by legitimist Bolsheviks.

Was Trotsky a Traitor?

Equally Trotsky must be reckoned an ex-king or of comparable status when he left Russia with all his retinue and private fortune, and with his 'revolutionary' if not royal mystique intact thanks to American admirers. Was he not equally a dangerous threat to Stalin as Edward to the monarchy? Stalin for all his astuteness woke up to that too late to keep him in the minor ranks of the bureaucracy to which he had been relegated and let him go. Afterwards in a series of trials universally stated to be false in spite of open confessions, Trotsky and all his Russian followers were unmasked as traitors and conspirators with the Nazis against Russia — or were they?

It seems every anti-Stalinist including anarchists thought the trials a frame-up, but I personally always suspected what they were judging was not Trotsky but Stalin, on the basis that someone so ruthless must always be truthless. I always felt that though Stalin was a vicious dictator, it does not follow that everyone with whom he came into conflict was by that token any good (Hitler for one), and hardly those on whose legacy he attained power.