
A Chronology

Princess Diana's war with the Windsors

by Scott Thompson

For more than two years, as her marriage to Prince Charles unraveled, and relations between Princess Diana and the Windsors went from bad to worse, the Princess emerged as a central figure in the struggle around the future of the House of Windsor. And, with the controversy, came a flurry of subtle and not-so-subtle threats, which we summarize below.

The first barrage of threats against Diana came immediately after her interview with the British Broadcasting Corp. "Panorama" program on Nov. 19, 1995, in which she more or less declared war on the British royal family. Among her more startling revelations in that broadcast, was that Prince Charles neither had the inclination nor the ability to be king of the British Empire. She intimated that Prince Charles should be skipped over in line of succession, in favor of their son, Prince William.

Specifically, Princess Diana said about her then-separated husband: "Because I know the character, I would think that . . . [being king] would bring enormous limitations to him, and I don't know whether he could adapt to that." According to ABC journalist Ted Koppel, Princess Diana had been coached for this interview by the former press officer of Lady Margaret Thatcher, the former prime minister of the United Kingdom, known for her hatred of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. "I shall not go quietly," Princess Diana warned in another part of the broadcast, adding: "That's the problem. I shall fight, and I believe I have a role to fulfill with two children to bring up."

A series of threats and countermoves followed:

Nov. 20, 1995: Lord William Rees-Mogg, the former editor of the London *Times*, wrote in that newspaper, referring to Princess Diana's Stuart heritage: "Like other historic co-inheritors of Stuart PR gene, the Princess is brilliant at the kingcraft of public image building. . . . The unfortunate Prince of Wales seems only to have the Windsor gene to guide him. . . . If one takes the long view, and tries to see the Princess of Wales as her role may appear in a hundred years' time, she will then be seen as the great royal star of the late 20th century, the most famous member of the royal family since Queen Victoria." However, Rees-Mogg is not of the "Diana party." He stated that Stuart brilliance "almost always ends in per-

sonal tragedy," like that of Mary Queen of Scots, who was executed, and that the Hanoverians (now Windsors) have a long future ahead of them.

Nov. 21, 1995: The Princess of Wales set off "fireworks in Buckingham Palace" with her broadcast, said unofficial Palace reporter Mrs. Morton on German television. Morton added that Prince Charles was furious. Meanwhile, German TV showed a clip of Prince Charles's press secretary calling Diana "mentally ill."

Nov. 22, 1995: The authorized biographer of Princess Diana, Andrew Morton, spoke on SKY-TV, saying that Princess Diana "sees herself as grooming William for his future destiny."

Nov. 24, 1995: Germaine Greer wrote a commentary entitled, "God Help the Princess of Wales," written amid a number of warnings to Princess Diana "not to go too far." Greer outlined the misfortunes of various Princesses of Wales, especially those who suffered at the hands of the Hanoverian dynasty. She noted the career of Princess Caroline, wife of George IV, who was thrown out of England by her hateful husband. Caroline, however, refused to give up her right to be crowned Queen when George III died, and returned to London to the overwhelming welcome of the general population. The House of Lords passed an act depriving her of her rights and divorcing her from the king; when she tried, with public support, to enter Westminster Abbey for the coronation, she was physically prevented. "Ten days later, Caroline was dead," Greer wrote. Soldiers fired on London crowds who gathered for her funeral. "If Lady Diana Spencer had known the record of this family, if she had had a history [diploma], she might have learnt that the Princess of Wales is a title written in tears."

Nov. 24, 1995: The *Daily Telegraph* reported that Nicholas Soames, a Tory member of Parliament, second ranking defense minister, grandson of Winston Churchill, and former equerry and confidant of Prince Charles, had been demanding that Prime Minister John Major use his influence on the Queen to secure a divorce for Charles and Diana. On the Monday night immediately after Diana's interview, Soames went on the radio to say:

"I do know great sadness and unhappiness when I see it. But when people claim that they have enemies at every turn and are spied on at every corner, I know of no other word than paranoia. I'm not questioning the Princess of Wales's state of mind at the moment. I'm merely saying to you in some of the things she said last night it did exhibit a degree of paranoia."

John Keegan, former defense correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* and military historian, went one step further. In a commentary on the editorial page of the *Telegraph*, under a cartoon of Charles looking up, suddenly inspired, at a portrait of Henry VIII (who executed two of his six wives), Keegan wrote: "The important thing is that [Princess Diana] should set limits to her ambitions. She has said she will not 'go qui-

etly.' She must, however, not go too far. . . . The people know how much change in the system they desire. If the Princess exceeds their wishes, it is she who will become the casualty, not the monarchy."

Nov. 24, 1995: A poll taken by the London *Times* showed that only 2% of the British public blamed Princess Diana for the breakup of her marriage, while 43% blamed Prince Charles. And, more than half the British public believed that Prince Charles should not become king in succession to his mother.

Nov. 24, 1995: According to the *Berliner Morgenpost*, more than two hours of the interview with Princess Diana, which included even more damaging comments about the British royal family, were cut. However, when these portions of the interview were privately aired for a BBC inner circle, there was "panic" at BBC, and frenetic last-minute efforts were made to water the interview down.

Nov. 25, 1995: British author A.N. Wilson, in a commentary for the *New York Times* entitled "What the Princess Is Up To," presented new evidence that Princess Diana's BBC Panorama show was scripted by some of the leading Thatcherites. Wilson, who is also the author of a book titled *The Rise and Fall of the House of Windsor*, emphasized that the fight between the royal couple was much bigger than an oligarchical soap opera:

"No one can doubt that this was a skillfully organized attack on the institution of the monarchy itself. Not just on Prince Charles. Not just on the Queen, whom Diana obviously hates. But on the monarchy. . . . But then, nor had anyone supposed that she would be so self-confident and so well-groomed in her answers. She has been taking lessons from experts. Only a week before the broadcast, she attended a private dinner party in London with . . . Home Secretary Michael Howard and the new editor of the radical right-wing *Sunday Telegraph*, Dominic Lawson, whose wife, Rose, is a close friend of the Princess. No one can doubt that all those present have scant regard for the old institution of the monarchy. . . . For the real threat to the monarchy comes not from the soft-centered old left, but from the radical right. When she was the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher made no secret of openly despising the Queen and of disagreeing with the essentially liberal consensus politics that the House of Windsor has always espoused. . . . Prince Charles is a committed liberal, openly hostile to the 'little Englanders' of the right."

Wilson concluded with a pointed warning to the Princess: "The war is not about individuals. It is about the oldest and most durable constitutional monarchy in the world. The example of Wallis Simpson and Edward VIII should be enough to tell Diana that when it comes to fighting a war, the Establishment can get very nasty indeed, and that for all her undoubted popularity, if she continues to rock the boat in this way, the Establishment will simply get rid of her, as they got rid of Edward and Mrs. Simpson. She might think she will

pull down Charles with her. Well, we shall see."

Dec. 4, 1995: Biographer Andrew Morton wrote an article for *Newsweek* magazine, entitled "Diana—Her Life Alone," in which he stated that the Princess of Wales believes the House of Windsor is falling:

"So the hidden agenda in her TV interview was to spread her view that William is more suited to the role of Sovereign than her husband. Diana believes that the monarchy today is outmoded and out of touch. Over the years she has emphasized her determination to bring up her children in a very different manner from that of previous royal generations. She believes that their constricted upbringing has left members of the royal family emotionally stunted and unable or unwilling to understand a modern society. As one of her friends told me: 'She finds the monarchy claustrophobic and completely outdated, with no relevance to today's life and problems. She feels that it is a crumbling institution and believes that the family won't know what has hit it in a few years' time.' "

Dec. 6, 1995: The *Times* of London reported: "Baroness Chalker of Wallesey, Overseas Development Minister, has emerged as the main figure in Foreign Office opposition to a formal role for the Princess. After they conducted a joint trip to Nepal in March 1993 Lady Chalker became convinced that the Princess should be kept away from the diplomatic sphere." Lady Chalker, who is a Thatcherite Life Peer, is the person behind Ugandan mass murderer Yoweri Museveni. This might have been ugly egotistical pique, because Princess Diana reportedly "upstaged" Baroness Chalker in Nepal.

The second round

Mid-August 1997: The French press issued a curious "pre-warning" that the British royal family was prepared to move ruthlessly against Princess Diana and Dodi al-Fayed. *Le Monde* published a full-page feature entitled, "When the Court of St. James 'flirts' with the al-Fayed Family." After reviewing the "Dodi-Diana friendship," London-based journalist Marc Roche concluded:

"Mohammed al-Fayed is not at the end of his troubles. If Diana were to marry 'Dodi,' and become Lady Diana Al-Fayed, this union risks undermining the worldly capital amassed by the owner of Harrods. Prince Charles would be aghast at this, and, in a ricochet effect, so would the entire royal family. As a 'Buckinghamologue' in the know indicates, 'The problem for the Windsors is not to pardon this type of thing; the problem is, that they never forget.' Clearly, the British royal family has a long and merciless memory."

Aug. 27, 1997: Princess Diana gave an interview to *Le Monde* in which she said that her behavior was "upsetting certain circles." Interviewer Annick Cojean noted that Diana's behavior "did not fail to provoke furrowed brows in the royal family. The Diana 'style' was unsettling, especially when it became obvious that, beyond having a more modern image, it reflected a different relationship to people."