

Prince Philip is 'hoist with his own petar'

Britain's Royal Consort Prince Philip's racism is nothing new, of course, but it seems that some among the British elites have decided to make an issue of it, as the accompanying cartoon by Steve Bell, published in the *Guardian* newspaper on Aug. 13, vividly demonstrates. (From left to right, the caricatures are of Conservative Party chairman William Hague, former Prime Minister John Major, former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and His Royal Highness Prince Philip.)

On Aug. 10, Buckingham Palace was forced to apologize for a racist remark made by Prince Philip. According to the *London Times*, "The Duke of Edinburgh made his fastest public apology yet yesterday, after he made an insulting joke during a factory tour. The Duke pointed at an old-fashioned fuse-box at the Racal-MESL factory near Edinburgh and said it looked as if it had been 'put in by an Indian.'" "

Within 2 hours and 14 minutes of Prince Philip's statement, Buckingham Palace issued the following announce-



ment: "The Duke of Edinburgh regrets any offence which may have been caused by remarks he is reported making earlier today. With hindsight he accepts that what were intended as lighthearted comments were inappropriate."

the special police unit jargon, that "everyone stays put." Continuing in a not so civil tone, he said, "Sergei Vladimirovich [Stepashin] and I are military servicemen, and we obey orders." Asked by journalists whether he would run for President next year, Putin replied, "I will."

Escalation in the Caucasus

The firing of Stepashin was closely linked with the interaction of the Caucasus crisis and the Russian internal political situation. The first ten days of August have witnessed a grave escalation of the war in the Caucasus republic of Dagestan. This was precipitated when bands of armed, British-controlled Wahhabite Islamic fanatics, of various ethnic origins, including Chechen, Dagestani, Arab, and Afghan, entered Dagestan from Chechen territory and took up positions in the mountains.

The question now is, how will the Dagestan crisis be exploited for unconstitutional moves in Russia as a whole. On the same day as the Yeltsin-Putin coup, the Wahhabite insurgents made the following proclamation: "We, the Muslims of Dagestan, officially declare the restoration of independence to the Islamic state of Dagestan." The declaration called on

"all Muslims" to help Dagestan get rid of Russian "occupants." The insurgents, adding yet another provocation, called on Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev to head up their "state."

The first signs that the Putin government could use Dagestan as the pretext for police measures in Russia proper, were visible on Aug. 10, when the Moscow police said that they were beefing up security in the capital because of outbreaks of violence in the North Caucasus. Police were also reported to be taking control over key transportation and communications centers, such as train stations. Putin, in his first statement on the Dagestan crisis, announced that he would restore "order and discipline" to Dagestan. "We are facing the emergence of mass terror on Russia's southern border. . . . The situation in Dagestan will return to normal within a week and a half to two weeks," he said.

No serious observer agrees with his assessment, because there there are up to 2,000 Wahhabites lodged in the remote mountainous areas of Dagestan. They have come under heavy bombardment from Russian artillery and helicopter gunships, but even if, by some miracle, they were to be driven from Dagestan within two weeks, they would simply fall back to Chechen territory, regroup, and re-enter Dagestan.