

A Tale of Two Princes

by Michael Curtis



In one of his most famous sentences, written in his 1852 essay, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx wrote that “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historical facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.” Conscious of the lesser historical and intellectual levels of the two personages, Karl Marx might well have been talking of members of the British Royal Family, the Duke of Windsor, once King Edward VIII, and Prince Harry, the troubled 36 year old Duke of Sussex, the great grandson of his brother, who have been anxious to inform the world of their autobiography, and their feeling about their status as a Royal.

That status was made known by the Duke of Windsor in declaring that "the idea that my birth and title should somehow set me apart from and above other people struck me as wrong...I suppose that, without quite understanding why, I was in unconscious rebellion against my position. I recoiled from anything that tended to set me up as person requiring homage."

If that is tragedy, then comes the farce of Prince Harry, who declared of his royal life "I was trapped, but didn't know I was trapped. My father and my brother, both are trapped."

Both Windsor and Sussex were and are eager to inform the world of their life story. In 1951, *A King's Story: The Memoirs of HRH the Duke of Windsor* was published, an explosive royal statement, just six months before the death of his brother who had succeeded him as King after his abdication. Windsor tells of his fate, his sacrifice of "my cherished British heritage," and that love, marriage to the previously twice married Wallis Simpson, had triumphed over politics. That decision had long sanctified a true and faithful union, However, as was to be the case with Harry seventy years later, the "autobiography" was ghost written by the American author and distinguished journalist Charles J.V. Murphy who had worked for a variety of publications including *Fortune* and *Life* magazines, and had written a three part article on Winston Churchill.

According to one account by an observer, Windsor was feckless, idle, wayward to an intolerable degree. Nevertheless, after editing a three part story by the Duke on the Education of a Prince, Murphy worked for three years on the autobiography. It was a brilliantly written book. Murphy also wrote the "autobiography", *The Heart has its Reasons*, of Wallis Simpson in 1955, and co-wrote the *Windsor Story* in the late 1970s with Joe Bryan.

The Windsor life was not all tragedy. His story tells of being with celebrities, Tyrone Power, Elsa Maxwell, Clark Gable, Hollywood Moguls, politicians, meeting with Hitler at the

Berghof and his pro German sentiments, and his life in a villa in the Bois de Boulogne, a country home outside of Paris, a rented villa in the Chateau de la Croe, Cap d'Antibes.

Windsor admitted he had a sense of unconscious rebellion against his royal position. Indeed, he was happier with the contrast and commotion of the social world of the 1920s than with the order and perfection of the monarchy. He enjoyed flying his own plane, drinking gin, and dancing the black bottom. More sadly, he tells of the meetings with the Archbishop of Canterbury and Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin who told him the Empire would not agree to his marriage with the twice divorced Wallis Simpson. He abdicated on December 10, 1936, with a speech, part of which was suggested, perhaps written, by Winston Churchill.

Windsor's tragedy was self-induced as a result of insistence on marrying an American divorcee, and the current issue is whether the story of Harry will be one of farce as a result of his romance with and marriage to another American divorcee.

Harry, now 36, has now revealed he has been secretly working on a book for nearly a year, for which he reputedly obtained a \$20 million deal with Penguin, Random House, telling the story of his life from childhood growing up in Palaces to his decision to marry, to reduce or give up his royal duties, and to leave London in 2020 to live in California. A book of less gravitas than that of Windsor It is due to appear in 2022.

Random House advertises it in absurd extravagant fashion, as an intimate and heartfelt memoir, an inspiring human story from one who has established himself as a global leader recognized for his courage and openness, and one who is a world-renowned leader, icon, and change maker. The first draft is said to be almost completely written, and Harry did seek permission from Buckingham Palace. It is unlikely to be a bridge builder between Harry and the rest of the Royal Family, and even more it can be regarded as disrespectful, appearing in the year of the celebration of the Queen's life.

Harry says he will share his mistakes and the lessons he has learned from them. So far no mistakes have been recorded. He is writing the book "not as the prince I was born, but as the man I have become." He talks of the many hats he has worn over the years, both literally and figuratively, but he is careful to sign himself , not as common Harry, but as the Duke of Sussex. Yet hypocrisy aside, Harry would not have become that "man I have become" if he were not a prince and clung to the title. Harry non-prince would not have got a \$ 20 million deal with Random House. It is not clear if Buckingham Place will get to see the finished book before its release. In any case, Harry has got the trappings of being a royal prince without the hard work of earning the title. He can lecture internationally on the problem of climate, while using, as does his wife, private jets for convenience.

There are two fundamental issues. One is that like the book of Windsor, this autobiographical work of Harry is being ghostwritten. The main writer is a well known figure, J.R. Moehringer, an accomplished writer. Among other items he has written an anecdote that became a Hollywood movie, *The Tender Bar*, several other memoirs including one, *Resurrecting the Champ* which became a film of a complex father-son relationship, and *Open*, the sad tale of the human story of tennis champ Andre Agassi who told of his honest confession of his problems with his profession, his failed marriage to Brooke Shields, and his medication with crystal meth and his self-destructive rebellion. Moehringer has written film scenarios, one soon to become a Hollywood movie produced and directed by George Clooney. The circle is complete. Clooney and his wife had attended the Sussex wedding, and given Meghan a lift back to the U.S. in his private jet.

The other problem is that Harry has said that he can help show that no matter where we come from, we have more in common than we think. But he is different and realizes the differences, having been born a prince. Moreover, he differs

financially and socially. The Sussex duo have deals with Netflix, Spotify, Apple Tv and lucrative commercial arrangements with private companies so there's no immediate or urgent need for money.

The book is likely to lead to conflict with other members of the royal family, and to problems for the institution of monarchy. Can one expect details about mental health problems of the Sussex duo, or an objective account of alleged racism in the royal family, and his true relationship with his brother and father?

Harry, and his wife Meghan, have long complained of the critical coverage of them by the media. Yet, they complain about their lack of privacy, and then the couple, supposedly shy of publicity, told all first to Oprah and now to the readers of the book. Harry describes the work as a first hand account of "my life that's accurate and wholly truthful."

Meanwhile, he lives in a \$11 million mansion in California, and is a lecturer on living the good life while jetting around the world.

Paradoxically, news appeared on the same day as Harry's intellectual achievement as the memory of true courage and honesty. It was the auction of World War II medals, sold for 260,000 pounds, that had been awarded to Peter Townsend., best known as the companion of Princess Margaret, the Queen's sister. He was a brave man, a fighter pilot who flew 300 sorties, shot down 11 enemy aircraft, and was the first to bring down an enemy aircraft on English soil. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Distinguished Flying Cross. His relationship with Margaret was doomed because, at that time, the Queen's sister could not marry a divorced man, even a heroic one.