

“ROYALTY AND THE STATE”

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by JOHN JENKINS

Perhaps it would be as well to clear the air by clarifying my own position regarding my particular perception of royalty. I do not, and have never, believed in the institution; I regard royalty as a feudal anachronism which, no doubt, was essential during the feudal period, but is now a very expensive diversion encouraged by the State for that very reason.

Although I am well aware that the Welsh version was very different from the Anglo-Norman, was more democratic in concept and application, and received status according to its responsibilities rather than because of its privileges, I am against the idea of an aristocracy born to rule, as a matter of principle.

I attend the annual ceremonies at Cilmeri and Abaty Cwm Hir to commemorate and mourn the loss of an independent Welsh State, seven centuries ago, not the Welsh sovereign who personified that State; I think it true to say that in feudal days and later, the State was the mechanism by which the sovereign held and maintained power; today of course, the exact opposite is true, with the State using its powerful machinery to propagandise the royal family and its cronies, thereby gaining popularity from the spinoffs of which there are many. As has been proven time and again, one needs to actually *do* nothing to become a popular public figure - except be constantly in the public eye. One notes every week some third-rate actor or actress opening yet another supermarket purely on the strength of their constant appearance on television. What is particularly sickening is that these people cannot even be graced with the honorific of 'Has-beens' because they never were or did anything in the first place. This lesson is well known to the State, with the result that one can scarcely look at the daily papers, listen to the radio, or view the television without some sycophantic flatulence to do with a birthday or some such trivia appertaining to the royal family.

This, of course, was the problem faced by MAC during the latter part of the sixties when the mass media smoothly slid into top gear over the coming investiture of Carlo as "Prince of Wales" in 1969. Somehow, with our few resources, we had to provide a focus for the considerable but incoherent opposition to this circus, not necessarily to stop it, but to open the eyes of the public to the issues involved. I say 'WE' because, as we had learned to expect of any issues which could arouse controversy, there was no help from the official nationalist party. Plaid Cymru had announced, as they had over Trywern and Clywedog, that the matter should be left to the individual conscience of nationalists. At this



time, of course, Plaid Cymru had decided to expel any member who supported or took part in direct action. One leading Plaid member even offered a rich reward to anyone who would "inform" on us.

Our strategy was to counteract the official machine by using it to spread our message, through the karate process whereby one uses the strength of the enemy instead of meeting it. During the period leading up to the investiture we heightened the tension and political consciousness of the public by a series of successful bombing attacks on symbolic artifacts, ranging from water pipelines to offices of State, always arranging them to coincide with visits from the royals. This meant that by the very nature of things, the headlines dealt not with the royal visits but with MAC visitations, and this in turn mobilised opinion and polarised attitudes; even the State could not prevent this, although they did ban, after one showing, the single programme which actually admitted that the idea of the investiture did not fill everyone in Wales with hwyf. Vital factors in the campaign were that no-one was killed (to the horror of the mass media who would have liked nothing better) and neither was anyone arrested. So MAC was able to stand up to the power of the State and beat them at their own game - and without English officers.

By virtue of certain threats which were made, more and more troops and police were drafted into Wales. This was specifically one of MAC's aims, so that the Welsh public could see for itself and suffer from the benefits of being British. The "Crach" still haven't got over the fact that the State regarded even them as a threat, and for the first time they

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were able to appreciate the joys of being Welsh *outside* the Maes!

Eventually the circus had its performance, with skin-divers in the Menai straits looking for mines, helicopters looking for spies, troops and police searching for everybody, Carlo wearing a bullet-proof jacket, and George Thomas undermentioned in the honours list because the Queen wasn't too keen on the way he had cured her constipation by letting her in for a fête worse than death.

The investiture was held at Caernarvon in 1969 for the same reason as that of 1911, namely to bolster a government falling in popularity. It should not be forgotten that the timing of the investiture was planned in the aftermath of the Aberfan tragedy; at a time when scores of Welsh coal-mines were being shut down; when unemployment in Wales rose from 27,000 in 1966 to over 40,000 within 12 months - and kept going up; and when Plaid Cymru was making huge inroads into the Labour vote in valley by-elections.

It was held in order to mobilise opinion and to polarise attitudes, and MAC used it to achieve the same objectives, using the same weapons and beating them at their own game.

The success was evidenced in the opinion polls of the time, and helped to create the conditions which changed voting patterns; it also lay the foundations in the hearts and minds of others of our people as to the dimensions of nationalism and the limitations of the constitutional approach.

It seemed a pity that the power of the energy and passions roused by the exercise was ignored and indeed suppressed by those who should have welcomed the return of the ingredient essential to the building of a new Wales. The investiture and what went with it is now part of history, but it opened the eyes of many who have now realised the relationship between royalty and State. We will ensure that Wales will never be humiliated by another investiture.

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