

Unease in UK's political elite after Prince Charles compares Putin to Hitler

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The row over Prince Charles's comparison of Russian President Vladimir Putin with Adolf Hitler continues to rumble.

The Prince of Wales and heir to the British throne made his remarks during an official engagement at the Museum of Immigration in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in Canada. Speaking to 78-year-old Marianne Ferguson, who lost relatives in the Nazi Holocaust, the prince said, "Now Putin is doing just about the same as Hitler."

The comment was first reported by the *Daily Mail*. A Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman said the comparison was "unacceptable" and part of a "propaganda campaign" against Moscow. The Russian deputy ambassador to Britain met with senior Foreign Office officials to establish whether "it is an official position."

"The response from Clarence House is it was a private talk," the spokesman said. "We hope there is nothing behind it. But it is unclear to us: what does it mean? He is the future King. Was it a stunt?"

At the weekend, Putin criticised the prince for his "unacceptable" comments.

"Pass this on both to the prime minister and Prince Charles. He has visited our country many times. I did not hear him say that.

"If that is so, then of course it is unacceptable. I think that he himself understands this. He is a well brought up man. I am acquainted both with him and members of the royal family. This is not royal behaviour."

Charles is not the first to make the comparison. The false and provocative analogy was also used by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, among others. In fact, the modern-day equivalent of "lebensraum" (living room in the east) is being pursued by

Washington and Berlin, not by Moscow. The aim is to encircle Russia and plunder the former territory of the Soviet Union. To this end, the US and the European Union, in collaboration with fascists, instigated a coup in Kiev and installed a government that includes the political heirs of the Ukrainian fascist and Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera.

Charles's remarks were particularly crass given that he was in Nova Scotia to pay tribute to veterans of the Second World War. An estimated 27 million Soviet people were killed during that conflict, approximately 15 percent of the country's population—the highest population loss of the war of any nation. The United Kingdom, in comparison, lost less than one percent of its population.

On June 6, Putin and Charles are due to meet to commemorate the D-Day landings in France. According to the *Daily Mail*, Clarence House, Charles's official residence, said today that there was no possibility of the two meeting, and that the Prince "would leave 'immediately afterwards' avoiding the possibility of an awkward confrontation."

Charles's comment backfired enormously, as several were quick to point out that he and his family were in no position to use comparisons with Hitler as a term of abuse, given that many royals had been on first-name terms with the dictator.

Russia Today (RT) broadcast a mocked-up royal family tree, showing its links to the Nazis, in a "Takes one to know one" video.

"If anyone knows real Nazis it's the royal family", it stated, showing a photograph of Prince Charles's great uncle, the Duke of Windsor, and wife Wallis Simpson visiting Hitler in 1937 shortly after the Duke abdicated as Edward VIII.

The Duke of Edinburgh's sister Sophie was married

to an SS officer, Christoph of Hesse-Cassel, who was shown marching in his uniform.

Prince Harry, Charles's son, was also shown dressed up as a Nazi at a party.

"Perhaps the royals are better seen, not heard", the video commented.

RT's video could have run much longer, given the great admiration for Hitler and his Nazi storm troopers among both British royalty and the upper echelons of the establishment.

That in part accounts for the efforts of the British political establishment, and much of the media, to play down Charles's "gaffe". While Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg vocally defended the Prince's "right [to] express himself," he said he would not "start comparing one period of European history to another." Labour leader Ed Miliband said only that "many in Britain" had "concerns" about Russia's annexation of Crimea, while Prime Minister David Cameron would not be drawn.

In its editorial, the *Guardian* indicated the real reason for such caution. Describing Charles's remark as a "breathtaking" lack of tact, it continued, "It is not a question of whether he is wrong. Some see Hitlerian parallels in the contempt that the Kremlin has shown for Ukraine's borders; others see Russia as chiefly driven by defensive fears. The point is not the merits of either perspective, simply that both are bitterly contested."

It fretted that, in the run-up to Sunday's elections in Ukraine, "The last thing anyone needed was an incautious remark wafting in from across the Atlantic that reminds everyone, inside and outside Ukraine, of the age-old divisions that threaten to rip the country apart."

As the *Guardian* well knows, it is not the "age-old divisions" that threaten Ukraine's territorial integrity, but the machinations of the western powers. What it really meant is that Charles's remarks threaten to throw the spotlight once again on these provocations.

For the last weeks, the main political parties and the media have sought to draw a veil of silence over events in Ukraine. Whatever the disquiet among a section of the establishment over its potential fallout, especially for the City of London, of more concern is the fact that responsibility for the catastrophe now unfolding in that country is, indeed, "bitterly contested" by the majority

of the British and European public.

Britain's ruling elite got its fingers badly burned over Syria in August last year when, in response to popular opposition, parliament was forced to veto plans for military intervention. Massive spending cuts, rising levels of social inequality and the bitter experience of the lies used to justify a pre-emptive war against Iraq have led to a deep disquiet, if not outright hostility, to the revival of militarism.

That hasn't ended British and US-led intervention in Syria, where they continue to fan the flames of civil war, financing and arming Al Qaeda elements to support their goal of regime change. It did, however, mean that they had to alter plans for establishing control over this geopolitically strategic region, moving directly on to provoke a confrontation with Moscow.

British armed forces are now stationed in Estonia as part of the NATO military build-up against Russia, while RAF Typhoon jets patrol the Baltics. In the last weeks, there have been three barely reported "engagements" between British and Russian military forces, all described as "friendly".

How much longer that can continue is another matter and one that Britain's ruling class does not want being openly discussed. That is why they are so keen to draw a veil of silence over Charles's latest stupidity.



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