

Choreographed media fawning over Prince Harry and Meghan Markle

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It has been just days since the official engagement of Prince Harry to US actress Meghan Markle was announced. Yet already Britain and much of the world's population is being force fed saturation media coverage to the point of nausea.

Google trends reported Tuesday that 12,221 news stories were published in the first 24 hours, as the powers-that-be sought to convey an image of joy and celebration throughout the land.

Most of Britain's newspapers covered the engagement with "souvenir" editions. Entire front pages and multiple inside pages were given over to announcement, and hours of TV broadcasting, virtually obliterating all other news. Coverage in the media internationally was equally sycophantic, with the *Sun* boasting in its editorial, "The global fanaticism for our Royals just went off the dial."

After Downing Street said there were no plans for a public bank holiday to mark the wedding next May, the media went into overdrive to demand one.

As part of this modern-day version of imperial Rome's bread and circuses, the engagement was the subject of a special 20-minute BBC interview with the couple Monday evening.

As always with the Royal Family, every line, every smile, was carefully choreographed, calling on every ounce of Ms. Markle's acting experience. This is the family, after all, that has been preparing for the death of Queen Elizabeth II—under the codename Operation London Bridge—for four decades, planning which is updated several times every year.

The aim was to present the couple as ordinary, just like the average couple in the street. Except one is an heir to the throne, worth an estimated £40 million and lives in a palace. And while Ms. Markle's estimated £4 million fortune pales in comparison, her future income

potential will now go through the roof.

Small wonder the couple looked so happy as Harry explained to a fawning BBC interviewer that he had proposed to his girlfriend on a "standard, typical night" in their "cottage" (one located in the grounds of Kensington Palace and fully taxpayer funded), while the two, in Markle's word's, "tried to roast a chicken."

The pair spoke of their humanitarian work and their particular love for Africa, especially Botswana, which Harry said he considers his second home and where he oversees various charity projects. In an interview last year, just prior to the 20th anniversary of the death of his mother, Princess Diana, Harry said of the African continent, "This is where I feel more like myself than anywhere else in the world. I have this intense sense of complete relaxation and normality here."

His love for Africa is intriguing. After all, just ten years ago he was photographed at a "colonials and natives" costume party dressed as a Nazi, replete with a swastika armband and a desert uniform similar to Erwin Rommel's German Afrika Korps. A few years later, video footage emerged of Harry, in army uniform, describing one of the soldiers in his regiment as "our little Paki friend" and describing another as a "raghead."

Following an outcry that his antics were discrediting the Royals, Harry was subjected to an image makeover that included being made the head of various charities and conservation organisations.

The choreography in his latest BBC interview wasn't quite spot-on, as Harry let slip that he had sourced the "main stone" in the engagement ring from Botswana to underscore his affection for the place.

It pays to have connections in high places. Botswana was an impoverished British colony—with just seven miles of useable roads—until 1966, when it gained

independence. When its chiefs made their request to the British colonial masters for self-rule, the response was, “You must be very brave or very foolish.”

A few years later, significant diamond deposits were discovered. The country is now one of the world’s leading producers of diamonds. In September, the world’s second-largest diamond, sourced from Botswana’s Karowe mine, was sold for \$53 million.

Would it be uncharitable to suggest that this might have something to do with the British ruling elite’s “love” of Botswana, and Africa more generally?

At any rate, Harry and Meghan’s engagement is presented as proof of just how “thoroughly modern” the Royal Family now is, in the words of the *Express*.

What an oxymoron! Do the journalists who write this nonsense even read what they have written? The only way the Royal Family, the living embodiment of dynastic, hereditary privilege, could be made modern would be if they were abolished.

At any rate, this is part of a broader PR operation using the younger members—especially William and Katherine—to try to rebrand the Royal Family as altruistic and in touch with the “common folk.”

Only in June, Harry gave an interview in which he reiterated his commitment to “ensuring the Monarchy lasts” and how he wanted to “pull it into the 21st Century. “Things are moving so fast”, the prince said, “especially because of social media, so we are involved in modernising the Monarchy.”

A major factor motivating these efforts is the advancing age of the 91-year-old reigning monarch, Elizabeth. Earlier this year, her 96-year-old husband Prince Philip retired from all royal duties. There is well-placed concern that Elizabeth’s death could give impulse to republican sympathies and “the Firm” as they call themselves are leaving nothing to chance.

But then they can always rely on the nominally republican, liberal media. The *Guardian* published a gushing article by columnist Afua Hirsch on news of the engagement, headlined, “When Meghan weds Harry, Britain’s relationship with race will change for ever.”

Based around the fact that Markle’s mother is African-American and her father white, Hirsch said, “It will be impossible to argue that being black is somehow incompatible with being British.”

The implication that Britain’s population has

hitherto—that is, prior to their enlightenment by Harry’s choice of partner—been a seething mass of racism is slanderous. Today, around one in 10 people living in Britain is married to or living with someone from outside their ethnic group.

Hirsch continued that she had struggled “growing up with the feeling that the monarchy were fundamental to Britishness, but that the Britishness they represented was one that excluded me.”

For Hirsch this terrible psychic struggle is now over. The fact that Meghan is “a mixed-race woman” has confirmed the monarchy’s role as being “fundamental to Britishness.” Sure, she writes that the royal family is the “human manifestation of the class system” and that “few will find their lives transformed in real terms by the arrival of a beautiful American actress in Kensington Palace.” But, she continues, “We live in times defined also by identity.”

Hurrah for class privilege if it has some black lineage in it!

Massive sums of public money will be lavished on the royal wedding, which is expected to total at least the £20 million spent in 2011 on the marriage of William and Kate. But whatever efforts the ruling elite put in place, the upcoming wedding can never be a genuinely popular occasion.

Commenting on the 2011 wedding, the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote, “One thing can be established—a royal wedding is a sure indicator of hard times, at least for the broad mass of the population not invited to the ceremony but expected to foot the bill.”

We noted that despite every attempt by the ruling elite to cultivate a spirit of “national unity”, there was a “palpable sense of resentment amongst a significant section of the population” who were repulsed by its fawning celebration of wealth and privilege. How much more so today, after another six years of relentless austerity and a projected two further decades in which there will be no growth in incomes whatsoever?



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