

# Prince Charles Discusses His Life and Work

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black, American-style penny loafers, a touch he may have picked up in the years he spent in California working for Bing Crosby.

The prince, he said amiably, was working in the study but would duck out to visit his son while I fussed nervously with tape recorders and cameras, waiting for the interview to start, a few minutes past the appointed hour of 10:30 a.m.

This was Prince Charles' first interview with an American reporter, and it was emphatically not a casual matter. The main stipulation was that the prince would be able to review the transcript before publication and revise his remarks wherever he thought necessary, though in the end the only changes made were insignificant and altered no point of substance.

In addition, the subjects to be covered in the session were submitted in advance. The prince declined to be questioned about his wife or infant son and how they have changed his life. He also refused to speculate on why the British royal family's stature was so high. One hour was set aside for the August 5 interview.

The study at Kensington Palace, where the interview was held, is a good-sized room, but hardly massive. It overlooks a quiet courtyard at the center of the palace complex. On the walls are portraits of the queen, the queen mother and the late Lord Mountbatten, who was Charles' favorite relative.

On the tables and in cabinets are books ("Adventures in High Endeavor" was one), magazines like *Punch*, pictures taken at Charles' and Diana's wedding and presents, including a wooden case inscribed to Prince William from his godfather, Laurens van der Post, a South African-born writer who is another of Charles' heroes.

Among the papers on Charles' desk was a small photograph of a obviously delighted new father holding his baby son. Charles is plainly not a clean-desk man. Papers covered the top. Two comfortable arm chairs in front of the fireplace were pointed out as the place for the interview.

Charles arrived. A visitor is expected to nod, mumble greetings to "Your Royal Highness" and then shake hands. Such opening moments are unavoidably awkward, and the prince seemed relieved finally to be in his chair with the interview under way.

After all the thousands of pictures and descriptions of Charles, there is nothing unexpected about his appearance.

He is about 5 feet 10 inches tall and well built, with brown hair and a ruddy complexion. He was wearing a gray, medium-weight suit with highly polished brown loafers, a fashionably narrow gray tie, a french-cuffed shirt and a maroon wedding ring, a crested signet ring and a gold watch with a dark brown leather band.

Each of his public expressions has to be weighed for its impact, and so much care went into this public figure, he also attempts to preserve a measure of privacy. Before the tape was turned on in our

session, he recalled with some pain (as he has to other interviewers) the trouble he made for himself when he once observed to a woman's magazine that he should marry about the time he was 30.

As he approached that age, speculation about princely romances in the British press reached frenzied heights. That, he said, is why he chooses not to talk about his personal life or predict the course of his future.

Following an excerpt of an interview with Prince Charles by Peter Onos of the Washington Post:

**Question:** You serve as chairman of a number of organizations and charities designed to encourage work opportunities for young people. What can you, as the Prince of Wales, do to cope with the serious economic problems, particularly the unemployment in Britain today?

**Answer:** My philosophy has been that it's better to begin something in a tiny, small way which has the possibility of growing into something larger, than not to attempt it at all. Or, on the other hand, to attempt something large which fizzles out rather ignominiously. Which is the other severe danger: that if you try and do something in too large and loud a way, you raise everybody's expectations, and then can't fulfill them, which actually (is) more dangerous, I think, because it increases possible bitterness and frustration. But I hope to now, through these various organizations — one I started about eight or nine years ago, (is) called the Prince's Trust.

**Q:** Does the nature of smaller pilot projects (like the trust) enable them to have the effect of a catalyst on a problem? Or is it conceivable that they might distract from the core question for Britain today, which is how to adapt to the latter part of the 20th century, how to adjust Britain to the realities of the world in which it now exists?

**A:** Again, you see my problem is perhaps where it's worth trying to explain, I don't actually have a role to play. I have to create it. And there is no set book of rules, so to speak, as to what my job is in the scheme of things. I am the heir to the throne, full stop. That's all.

I could do absolutely nothing if I wanted to. I could go and play polo all over the world, I suppose, I could do anything in that sense, because there are no laid-down responsibilities or anything. Anything that I do I have to create myself. So all the interests that I have got myself involved in I do because I am interested or concerned, or anxious. I happen to mind about this country, and I mind about all the countries of the Commonwealth.

I think a lot of people outside this country, and perhaps some of them inside this country, think that somehow or other this particular family "rules." In inverted commas it doesn't, because the whole system has grown up in such a loose and extraordinarily informal way over the centuries. The British constitution is not written, and as a laid down what happens, to all intents and purposes, what people can and can't do to a certain extent. It's not the case in this country. It's all done in this very informal way.



PRINCE CHARLES, HEIR TO THE BRITISH THRONE  
The interview with an American reporter was unique based on a certain amount of precedent.

But in my case I can't affect things on a large scale. The only way I can see myself achieving anything is by example. That's the way I look at it. I can make speeches until I am blue in the face, but I believe that that's not really going to have much effect. It's the way you behave, the way you act, them, and how you are seen to be doing them which is what ultimately is going to have an effect, I believe.

**Q:** The question of example becomes extremely important in the issue of race relations. What is the proper, appropriate role of the Prince of Wales in a matter such as that?

**A:** As far as race relations is concerned, I feel that there is a great deal to be done, from my point of view, because of what I want for people who come from different countries. Those who are born in this country from black parents are now British subjects, with a British accent and everything else, and brought up in British schools and the British way of life, to a certain extent. I want them to feel that they are part of this country's existence. And they are as much welcome at, for instance, Buckingham Palace, or here, as anyone else. And if they can be welcome anywhere else, and this is important, to show that somebody is concerned about them in a totally non-political way. I have no ax to

grind. I am just interested in making as happy a society as possible.

**Q:** So you perceive this involvement for yourself as that of a motivator, as distinct from someone with responsibility or time, for that or a specific function in government?

**A:** I suppose I could do, easily single out something. But it's terribly difficult, I find, just to remain single, and that was one very important aspect of our island existence. And as an island, we rely on — time ability, and if we forget that, we forget it at our peril.

I believe we have learned a lot of lessons recently in the South Atlantic about our ability to be flexible, to respond in a flexible way, and all these sorts of problems would arise, but they so often do just to annoy you.

I could have stayed in the navy, I suppose. I could have concentrated purely on being a professional naval officer. But there were difficulties with that, because I would only have stayed if I could have gone on flying, which is my main love in the navy. And it was because people get into a terrible

state about flying. You know — if I am going to fly myself into a hill, the sea or whatever. People get very upset, and it was all becoming more and more difficult. The restrictions that I had to operate under, and the annoyance factor I was to everybody else who was responsible for me, made it more and more complicated. That was one of the problems, and it is always the difficulty.

If, for instance, I got myself involved in an industrial enterprise, I don't know — one particular company — again it would seem that I would be involved with just one company. Would it then not be unfair on a lot of others, who felt, Why should it be that one? You know what people are like — endless argument and disagreement, controversy and bickering about it.

**Q:** To justify the existence and the comfort, et cetera?

**A:** My existence.

**Q:** Do you think that the way in which you were prepared for this role, which was different from that of most of your ancestors, was again part of an evolving 20th-century way of coping with problems? Do you think it was the best, in retrospect? It was a very public kind of preparation. You went to schools, you were in the navy, you did things, you traveled.

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Did it give you the access that you need?

**A:** I think it certainly gave me much more access than I would have had if I had been brought up in a more traditional way and hadn't been sent away to school, for instance. Then I would have been brought up in a much more secluded and cloistered way. Clearly from the 20th-century, 21st-century point of view, it would have been, I think, probably a bad thing. Yes, it would have been.

The problem is that I was at a sort of transitional stage, when it hadn't been tried quite so much before. And I am what I am, I think, educated and the way in which I had to struggle — it may sound silly, but I think I did have to struggle — to show throughout the military services, and the universities and the institutions, that I was as good, if not better, than other people that I had to compete with, despite my position. And the fact that I did things with other people of my own age, from all walks of life — they were from all walks of life, even though I went to a so-called privileged school — the fact that I had to struggle like that has given me a different sort of outlook, perhaps, than some of my predecessors might have had. Purely because I feel all the time that I must justify my existence, I must show some of these people that I can do some of these things as well, if not better.

This is one of the things that keeps me going all the time, I suppose, is that I can never, I believe, afford to sit back, and I never could, in all the period that I was educated.

**Q:** I've seen attributed to you the belief that the proper role for the British royal family is as now families that have attempted to reduce the regal surroundings and make themselves more common. Do you still feel that way? Do you think that the function you have described here is performed best in the way it's being performed now?

**A:** I don't know. I'm afraid I'm not really the one to tell. I just do it the way I feel I ought to. As I say, I'm feeling my way. Maybe you or other people are in a better position to tell me whether this is the right way or not.

People are going to tell me one thing, some people are going to criticize and say it's ridiculous —



# How Prince Charles Feels About His Life

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you are going too far — one way or the other. Others are going to say marvelous, well done and splendid. What do you do? You just have to go on, don't you, doing what you think is right ultimately. Because there is endless gratuitous advice, I can assure you. From every single quarter. And every single thing you do is either criticized or praised.

It is very difficult to know what the best way of approaching the latter part of the 20th century is. It's one of the reasons that I'm very hesitant to answer questions that people long to ask about how I see the monarchy in 25 years' time, because I don't know.

*Q: This is one of the few (times), if not the only time, that you have addressed an American interviewer. Is there anything, given that opportunity, you have to say to Americans — some message that you would wish particularly to convey?*

*A:* I don't know whether I have any specific message or not. I would hardly be so bold. . . . I have a somewhat low opinion of myself, I'm afraid, in that sense. I wouldn't dream of suggesting anything. But one of the things I would like to say is how fascinating it was to see the reaction over the South Atlantic crisis recently from America. It's terribly hard to know what most people think, but we were led to believe, in this country, that an enormous number of Americans felt that they somehow associated with this country and supported us

over something which was not easy to do, particularly in this day and age, when it's so difficult to know what you are standing up for, really. Whether right or wrong, this country felt it was standing up for a basic series of principles. And it was so interesting and so encouraging.

I thought it was really a warming feeling that other people — and particularly in America, because I personally mind what Americans feel and think; I think the connections are so strong, inevitably through history and shared difficulties, et cetera — it was wonderful to feel that we were supported and there was a great feeling — gratitude, I think — in this country, that we did have friends and people who understood the things that we felt mattered. This is the great thing as far as the future is concerned, that here obviously (there is) a great body of opinion in America which minds a great deal about things which still matter.

And no matter what sometimes the media may say, what administrations may do, there are still a whole lot of marvelous human beings at the bottom of it all who have similar feelings and mind about what happens.

## Japanese Ship Protest

Tokyo

As 1300 police officers watched, thousands of labor unionists paraded through the streets of the southern port city of Sasebo yesterday.

Associated Press



# First U.S. Interview With Prince Charles

By Peter Osnos  
*Washington Post*

London

It was a damp August morning, the day after Prince William's christening, when I went to interview Prince Charles.

Beyond the scrutinizing London bobbies at the gate, the front door to Kensington Palace was open. Diana, princess of Wales, had just left with a lady-in-waiting for what seemed to be a shopping expe-

dition. In the hallway was a wooden contraption for speedy removal of the Prince of Wales' grimy polo boots.

Given all the splendor and history of Britain's royal family, the scene somehow managed a domestic feel.

The official greeter was Fisher, the butler, decked out in traditional striped pants, but also wearing

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