

THE HERITAGE OF CAUX



“How long have you known the royal family?” was a recurring question from people who noticed a great camaraderie and a certain familiarity between me and the princesses. I had known the Romanian royal family since 1965. We met in the Caux Conference Centre above Montreux on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. At that time, the world had very little interest in former royal families who came from countries that formed the Soviet Union and its satellites. But Frank Buchman²⁸ - even before he founded *Moral Rearmament* in the 1930s (it was renamed *Initiatives of Change* in 2001) was in touch with the Greek and Romanian royal families.

He had been invited by Queen Marie of Romania, an English princess of great vivacity and spirit, granddaughter of both Queen Victoria and Tsar Alexander II to join her and meet her husband King Ferdinand I at the Peles Castle in Sinaia, the historic home of the Romanian dynasty from the beginning of the 1920s. Buchman thus knew their grandson, the future King Michael, when he was very young.

Buchman kept in close touch with the King when he was in exile and with his mother Queen Helen of Romania. The English writer Garth Lean recounted in his biography of Buchman: “King Michael came to have tea with Buchman. He was accompanied by his mother Queen Helen and his wife Queen Anne. Of this meeting King Michael recalled, ‘I well remember how solicitous Frank Buchman was about, and how he took to heart - my experience and the sadness of having lost my country and my feeling of not belonging. After our

²⁸ Frank Buchman (June 14, 1878 - August 7, 1961) was an American Lutheran minister who founded the ecumenical movement *Moral Rearmament*, open to all religions. The contribution of *Moral Rearmament* to the Franco-German reconciliation was recognized by both France and Germany.

meeting, I felt my spirit and soul were relieved of a heavy burden.”²⁹



Caux Conference Centre, 1983. At a conference of *Initiatives of Change*, the Dalai Lama met King Michael and Queen Anne of Romania. Behind the Dalai Lama is Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, who in 1971, hosted a group of young people in India, including Princess Elena and myself. (Photo Danielle Maillefer)

In a biography³⁰ that her son-in-law Prince Radu dedicated to her, Queen Anne told how much she and her husband, since the 1950s, were confronted with the difficulty of adapting to the society around them. The King in exile could not forget the way he had been treated, not only in Romania but also in the free world. He had the feeling of being misunderstood. The Queen said that the King became more

²⁹ Garth Lean, *Frank Buchman: A Life*, p. 402. Constable & Co Ltd.

³⁰ Radu, Prince of Hohenzollern-Veringen, *Anne of Romania: A War, an Exile, a Life*. Humanitas.

and more silent, closed up, and taciturn. She realized he was bitter and sad. Little by little, they refused all invitations, which clearly were motivated by their name and not by friendship.

Anne of Romania remembered another meeting with Frank Buchman in Florence at the Villa Sparta, home of King Michael's mother Queen Helen. There in Italy Buchman introduced them to an English couple who would become close friends, Bunny Austin³¹ and Phyllis Konstam³² and their daughter Jenny. Bunny was a great tennis champion and Phyllis was a remarkable actress who had made her career notably in the films of Alfred Hitchcock. It was through Phyllis that I later became close to the Romanian royal family.

The Queen recalled, "Together Bunny and Phyllis saved us from terrible solitude. With delicacy they helped us, and gave us back the confidence that we could express ourselves freely, that we had something to say, and that people could listen to us without our feeling ridiculed. The fear of being ridiculed 'killed' us. Gradually we became friends. Above all, their sincerity touched us. They became a bridge between us and the world in which we lived."

From then on, the King and Queen went often to the Caux Conference Centre. I remember these were very active years. I was still a very young photographer, just out of the Photography School in Vevey. Phyllis and Bunny took me under their wing and let me stay at their ravishing home in Victoria Square, behind Buckingham Palace, when I was in London. In their home, I discovered the world. The tennis champions Stan Smith and Arthur Ashe came through, and they attracted actors, artists, and politicians. Their daughter Jenny, became a friend of mine, whom I visited with pleasure in Canada after she married a farmer.

³¹ Henry (Bunny) Austin (August 20, 1906 - August 20, 2000) was an English tennis player. In 1938 he was the last Englishman to reach the finals at Wimbledon, before Andy Murray repeated his performance in 2012, 74 years later.

³² Phyllis Konstam (April 14, 1907 - August 20, 1976) was an English actress.



The King and Queen at Caux meeting dockers from the port of New York.
(Photo Lars Rengfelt)

It was Phyllis, who at the end of the 1970s, suggested to the royal couple that they ask me for help, if necessary. The rhythm of my meetings with them in Versoix was very random. King Michael and Queen Anne, along with their daughters Princesses Margareta, Elena, Sophie, Irina, and Marie, lived very simply. The end of the month was not always easy! That was the time, Anne told me during our chats, that they must look for any possible banknote or forgotten change in their respective pockets, in order to pay the bills.

The King was naturally very quiet. I was always impressed when I saw him ironing his shirts himself and shining his shoes impeccably. Like a true military man! I don't remember exactly what he did at this time. I did not ask any questions. I knew that he was a test pilot for airplanes and that he often travelled.



The Vaud countryside, autumn 1972. Elena and Marie on the tractor of Samuel Maillefer in Villars-sous-Yens, Switzerland. (Photo Danielle Maillefer)



The King and Queen travelled to a number of countries to take part in *Moral Re-Armament* programmes. Here they are seen with the Anglican bishop of Lagos, Seth Irunsewe Kale and his wife in Nigeria, 1975. (Photo Rob Lancaster)