

The Royal Family

A personal view

Simon Black

February 2021

The Royal Succession in 1926

King George V (61)

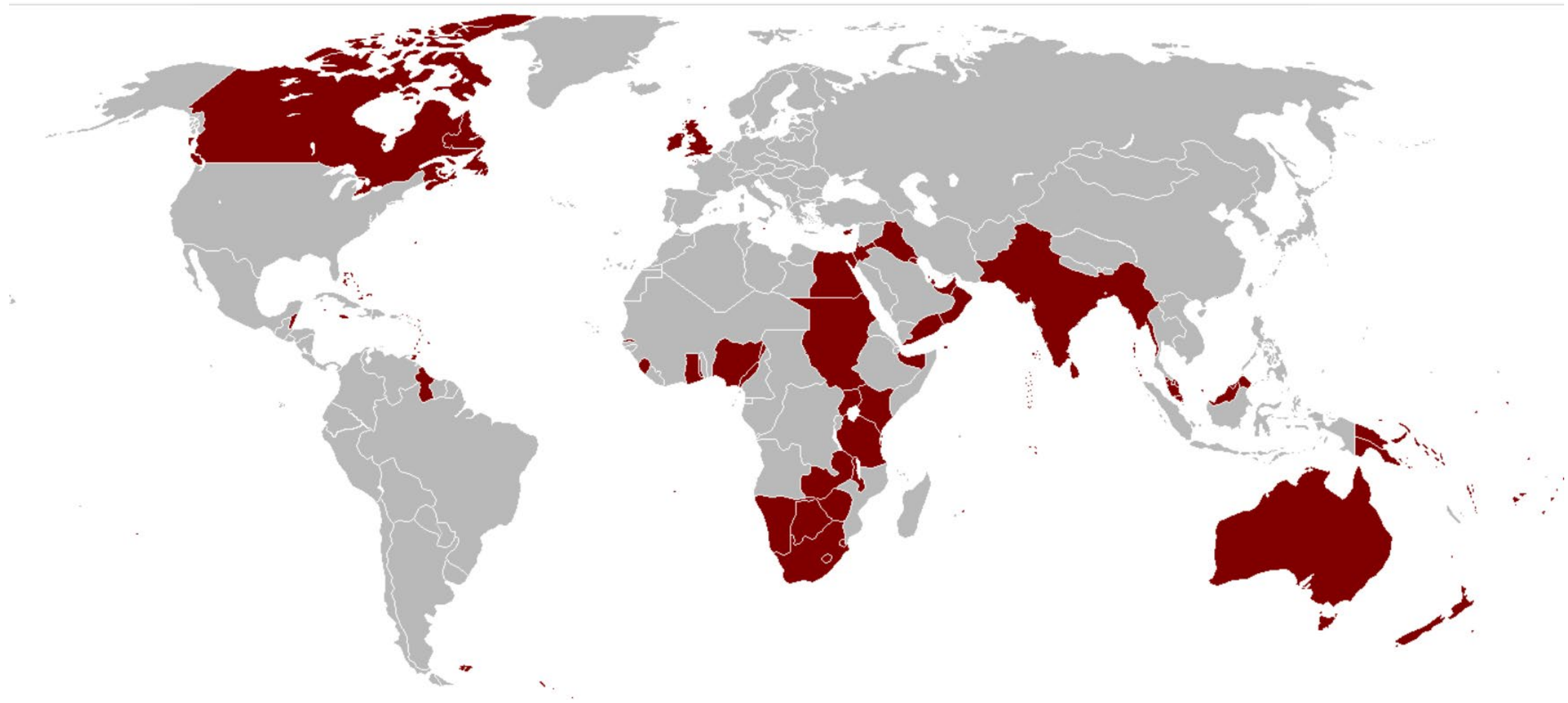
- Edward (eldest son of King George V, 32)

.....

- Albert (second son of King George V, 31)

.....

- Elizabeth (daughter of Albert)



The British Empire in 1921



The 1926 Balfour Declaration

“autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations”



....so Elizabeth (age 10) becomes “heir presumptive”

1952

King George VI dies, aged 56

- His wife becomes “Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother” (until 2002)

Elizabeth becomes Queen, aged 25

- Her husband (m. 1947) becomes Prince Phillip

Being Queen =

- . Head of State of the United Kingdom
- . Head of State of 15 other countries
- . Head of the Commonwealth
- . Head of the Church of England
- . Head of the Royal Family



The Queen is the UK's Head of State

Politically neutral

After each General Election, the Queen asks the leader of the most popular party to form her next government

Weekly audiences with the Prime Minister; confidential; “advise and warn”

There have been 14 Prime Ministers since the Queen came the throne in 1952



The Queen is the “Supreme Governor” of the Church of England

The Queen appoints new bishops, from proposals by the Prime Minister. 26 Bishops sit in the House of Lords

There is a Diocese of Gibraltar, covering continental Europe, with the Pro-cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Brussels

The Queen is a member of The Church of Scotland

“Deo Gratia Regina”

“Fidei Defensatrix” – since 1521/1544



The Queen as a Mother and Mother-in-law



1981: Charles & Diana
William (1982)
Harry (1984)



1973: Anne & Mark
Peter (1977)
Zara (1981)



1986: Andrew & Sarah
Beatrice (1988)
Eugenie (1990)

Reflection: 1990

Celebrated Queen's Silver Jubilee (1977)

Celebrated marriage of Charles & Diana (1981)

Usually watched Queen's Christmas Broadcast (3 p.m.)

The Royal Family as a model family

The Commonwealth as Britain's place in the world

The Queen as a religious leader

Generally, mildly positive about the Royal Family

1992 = “Annus Horribilis”



Later.....

Charles: “Irretrievably broken down” by 1986

Diana: “There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded.....”

The Queen's Hidden Cousins

Nerissa Bowes-Lyon b 1919

Katherine Bowes-Lyon b. 1926

Daughters of John Bowes-Lyon, brother of the Queen's mother

Listed in "Burke's Peerage " in 1963 as having died in 1940 and 1961 respectively

Nerissa died in 1986 and was buried in an unmarked grave

In 1987 it was revealed that the two sisters had lived in Earlswood Hospital for the Mentally Disabled since 1941. Katherine remained there until it closed in 1996. She died in 2014

The Queen Mother was the patron of "MENCAP" from 1986 until her death in 2002

Anthony Blunt

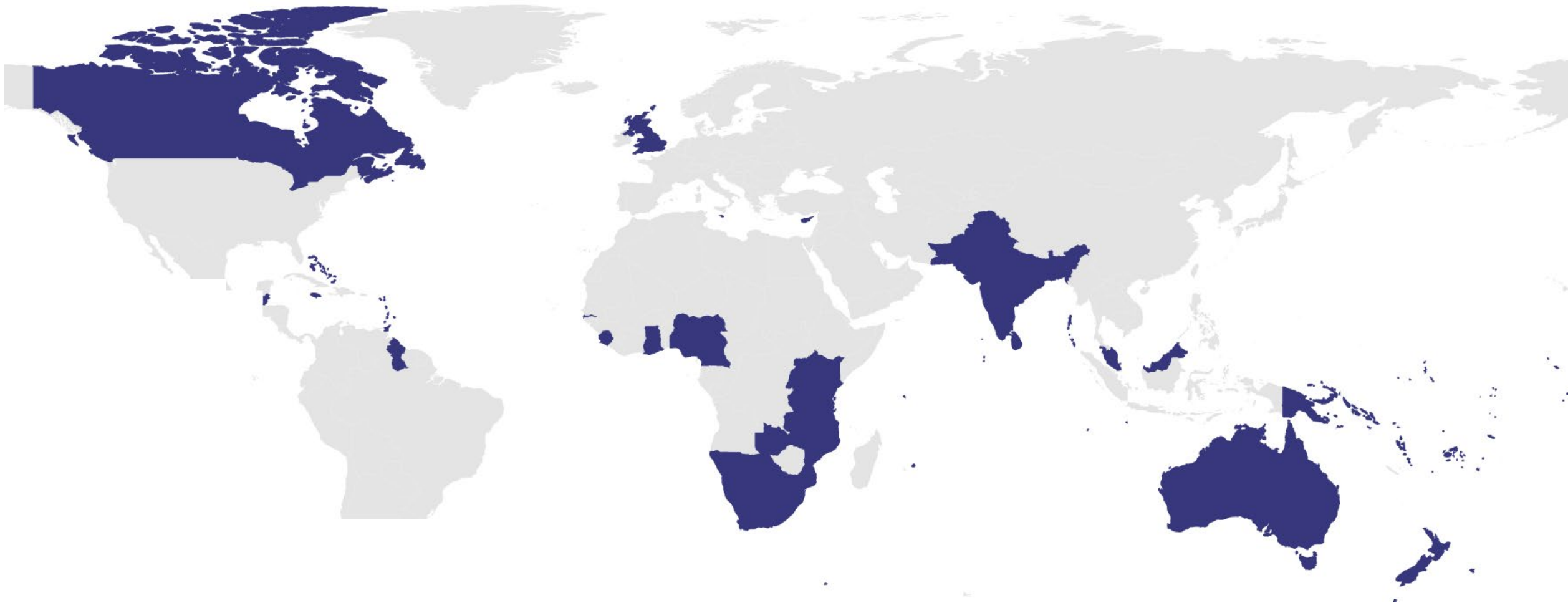
- Third cousin to the Queen Mother
- A respected art historian
- Appointed “Surveyor of the King’s Pictures” in 1945
- Knighted in 1956 (Sir.....)
- Confessed to MI5 in 1964 that he had been spying for Russia for over 25 years. The Queen was informed
- Stepped down as “Surveyor of the Queen’s Pictures” in 1972
- Exposed publicly as a spy in 1979. Stripped of his knighthood



Some Commonwealth Difficulties

- Malaya and Singapore were occupied by Japan 1942-5
- Pakistan and India declared war on each other in 1947 (and again in 1965, 1971)
- South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961 following a whites-only vote. It rejoined after Nelson Mandela was elected president in 1994.
- Zimbabwe (as Southern Rhodesia) declared UDI in 1965, leading to sanctions. Formal independence in 1980. Suspended in 2002. Withdrew in 2003.
- Grenada was invaded by the US in 1983. It is still a member of the Commonwealth, and the Queen is still the Head of State

Commonwealth countries



The Commonwealth today

- 2.4 billion people
- 54 countries, including UK, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, 32 “Small States”
- 10 countries are also members of “la Francophonie”

- Since 1949, “British” has been dropped, and Republics can join.
- Governed by consensus
- The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) meet ~ every two years.
- The Queen is the currently the Head of the Commonwealth, by agreement.
- At the 2018 meeting it was agreed that she will be succeeded by Prince Charles

Reflection: 2021

The Royal Family plays a long game.....

The Queen is respected for her dignity and sense of duty

The Royal Family as a model family?

The Commonwealth as Britain's place in the world?

The Queen as a religious leader?

Duty.....to what?