

Int Her 22. 24/11/2000 p.4

Ex-King of Greece Wins Property Suit

By Elizabeth Olson
New York Times Service



Stefan Rousseau/The Associated Press

Constantine, with his wife Anne-Marie in London on Thursday, was deposed in a 1967 military coup.

GENEVA — Former King Constantine of Greece won a ruling in Europe's human rights court Thursday that entitles the royal family to compensation for palaces and estates seized when he was deposed three decades ago.

A panel of 17 judges at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg ruled, 15 to 2, that the confiscation of the royal family's property violated the part of Europe's human rights convention guaranteeing property rights.

The court said it would examine the question of compensation for the ex-king, his sister, Irene, and their aunt, Catherine, at a later date. King Constantine, 60, has lived in exile since he was deposed in

1967. The monarchy was abolished in 1973, and Greece passed a law in 1994 confiscating the royal properties.

Lawyers for the Greek government told the court that the properties had never belonged to the royal family, and they should remain in government hands because they contained historical and archaeological sites.

The three properties at issue are the Mon Repos summer retreat on the island of Corfu, an estate in Tatoi near Athens, where the royal cemetery is located, and real estate in Polydendri estate in the foothills of Mount Olympus.

At a hearing in June, the deposed king's lawyers argued that he and his relatives owned the disputed property as a private persons rather than in their capacity as royal family members. They

asked for \$1.4 billion in compensation if the property was not returned. However, Greece maintains that it wants to collect taxes on the properties if the royal family wins a compensation award.

The Greek deputy foreign minister, Elisabet Papazoi, told Greek radio that the former royal family owes \$49.6 million in back taxes. She said that the properties were worth about \$464 million.

King Constantine, who lives in London, lodged his complaint with the court, set up to deal with cases involving the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, in 1994 following the passage of the law confiscating his properties and belongings. A Greek special court upheld that law in 1997, leaving the former king with no avenue of appeal in the Greek legal system.