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Andrea und Hansjürg Badrutt: the jet-set period



*Father and son:
Hans and Andrea
Badrutt, circa 1950.*

When Andrea and Hansjürg Badrutt assumed responsibility for the Palace Hotel in the 1950s, they took on a great legacy. Their father had established the company as an exclusive international luxury hotel which met the highest standards.

As a leader with charisma and style, Hans Badrutt also cast a long shadow.

The age of mass tourism

In the decades after the war, Andrea and Hansjürg Badrutt benefited from political stability and a highly successful economic situation in the western world. However, this was precisely the nucleus of a new danger: rising prosperity heralded the age of mass tourism. Wide sections of society could now afford to take holidays once or twice a year.

In the Canton of Graubünden, which was heavily dependent on tourism, this triggered an unprecedented building boom. New roads and tunnels made it easier for visitors to arrive at the holiday resorts by car, and mountain railways opened up new skiing and hiking regions. The recruitment of foreign workers increased the number of inhabitants and made it necessary to construct new houses and infrastructure.

The jet-set as a new target group

The intense building activity of the 1960s and 1970s once again brought about a fundamental change in the appearance of St. Moritz-Dorf and St. Moritz-Bad. Several hotels with a long-standing tradition disappeared, such as the Hotel Stahlbad and the Hotel Du Lac. Many wealthy regular

guests decided to invest their money in their own houses and thus to save taxes at the same time. With the introduction of freehold ownership throughout Switzerland in 1965, the number of holiday flats again increased enormously in St. Moritz. This accommodation industry became a serious competitor of the established hotels in St. Moritz.

In this situation, Andrea and Hansjürg faced the great challenge of repositioning Badrutt's Palace by making the hotel modern and attractive while retaining the exclusiveness and charm of the past. They found their own, specific clientele in a new social phenomenon, a hedonist class of society who travelled by air: the so-called jet-set.

Andrea Badrutt: lonely childhood

Andrea Badrutt was born in St. Moritz on 30th May 1910 as the son of Hans and Amalia Catharina Badrutt-Ganzoni. At the early age of two he lost his mother, and together with his sister Anna Ursula, a year his senior, was entrusted to the care of his aunt Martina.

When his father married Helen Kolb, his second wife, in 1922, Andrea was already twelve years old and attending St. Moritz village school. It is understandable that he did not bond as closely with his stepmother as a younger child would probably have done. The relationship between stepmother and son was thus distant from the very beginning, and nor did it improve in the course of time. A further problem was the fact that father and son communicated in Romansh, a language that Helen Badrutt understood only to a certain extent. A relatively short time after the wedding, Andrea was sent to a boarding school in Trogen, which his grandfather Caspar had also attended. This was an-

other reason why Helen and Andrea Badrutt had few opportunities to intensify their relationship. When his aunt Martina, who had looked after the boy since 1912, died unexpectedly of a stroke in 1925, it was certainly a shock for the young Andrea.

An affinity for the English lifestyle

Andrea Badrutt began his professional training at a London accounting firm, probably on the advice of his father, who wished to spare his son his own negative experiences with the banks. Andrea then went on internships at «Le Meurice» in Paris, the «Frankfurter Hof», and the «Waldorf Astoria» in New York, where he became the managing director's assistant. He also managed the restaurant of the Swiss Pavilion at the 1938 World Exhibition in Paris.

At the Palace, reception increasingly became Andrea's domain, and remained so until the end of his life. There he acquired in-depth knowledge of business processes. His various stints at international luxury hotels influenced Andrea's values and his lifestyle. He was particularly attracted by the English way of life, not only where dress and demeanour were concerned, but also regarding the subtle English sense of humour.

Andrea's elder sister, Anna Ursula Badrutt (1909–1996), married Jacob

Andrea Badrutt (middle) with colleagues: left to right, Anton R. Badrutt, Director of the Hotel Kulm; Walter Scheel, Director of the Hotel Carlton; Albert Candrian, Director of the Hotel Suvretta and Peter Kasper, Tourist Office Manager; circa 1955.



Hansjürg Badrutt with his parents, Helen and Hans Badrutt, 1933.



Edwin Wolfensberger from Zurich. The family owned a printing house in Zurich and ran an art gallery. The Palace's posters were also printed there.

**Hansjürg Badrutt:
«I grew up with princes»**

When Hansjürg Badrutt was born on 14th October 1930, his elder brother Andrea was already 20 years old and gaining his first professional experience abroad. Hansjürg was the only child of Hans Badrutt and Helen Badrutt-Kolb. He spent his childhood and youth at the Palace and also

went to school in St. Moritz. At a very early age, Hansjürg was already well versed in the hotel business – as a child he knew what a concierge is, what a head waiter does, or what is meant by the job title «Argentinier». As a small boy, neatly dressed and his hair carefully combed, he had to pay his respects to the prominent guests: «I grew up with princes and princesses,» as he put it in an interview. Hansjürg played with the hotel guests' children, but a certain distance remained. Although the village children liked coming to Hansjürg's birthday parties at the hotel, they also never invited him back to their houses – they felt too much respect for the renowned family of hoteliers. After Hansjürg broke his thigh in a skiing accident, his father hired the well-known Romansh poet and author Andri Peer as a private tutor for him, as Marcella Maier reports. Like his brother, Hansjürg also trained in the hotel industry; after hotel management school he gained

Hans and Hansjürg Badrutt in a jeep in a photographic studio, 1945.





sons, each holding a third. After Helen's death, her share passed to Hansjürg, making him the majority shareholder.

Wedding of Hansjürg and Anikò Badrutt, 6th May 1960.

With the death of Helen Badrutt, the long era of Hans Badrutt finally came to an end. At the same time, the younger generation established themselves: His sons jointly took on management of the hotel, and both Andrea and Hansjürg Badrutt celebrated their weddings that same year.

Hansjürg Badrutt: marriage to Anikò Tamas

Before her death, Helen Badrutt was able to witness Hansjürg falling in love with the Hungarian Anikò Tamas, who was the same age. Anikò managed the «Seventeen Club» at Zurich's Grieder fashion house, organised events there and selected young fashions. Helen Badrutt soon bonded with the attractive and intelligent young woman – also because both of them came from the same profession and shared a passion for fashion and style. Helen Badrutt also introduced her daughter-in-law to the Badrutt philosophy of hotel management.

Given the empathy between the two women, Helen Badrutt was eager to organise the couple's wedding. Having looked for a romantic church all over the lowlands, she chose the church of Schloss Greifensee in the Canton of Zurich. The wedding took place with a small number of guests on 6th May 1960, followed by a reception at the Grand Hotel Dolder in Zurich. For their honeymoon the couple travelled to Barcelona and then on to Majorca. Hansjürg Badrutt had found the love of his life at the age of 30 – the couple celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 2010.

experience in various first-class establishments in Paris and London as well as at several hotels in Germany.

Death of Helen Badrutt

While Hansjürg was still in training, he lost his father at the age of 23. His relationship with his mother became even closer than before. It was all the more tragic for him when she died seven years later in 1960 after a brief, serious illness at the age of 70. Her death was not only a shock for him personally, but was also decisive for the history of the Palace; for Helen Badrutt-Kolb's strong personality had exercised a considerable influence on the hotel.

«The soul of the place,» as her son describes her, had continued to manage the Palace together with her stepson Andrea «with great sensitivity and competence» after Hans Badrutt's death.

1960: a turning point

Hans Badrutt had decreed in his will that the Palace shares should be distributed among his wife and two

Master of suspense and femme fatale

In the late 1920s, the British film director and producer Alfred Hitchcock came to the Palace for the first time during his honeymoon, and returned with his wife and daughter at the same time of year for decades.

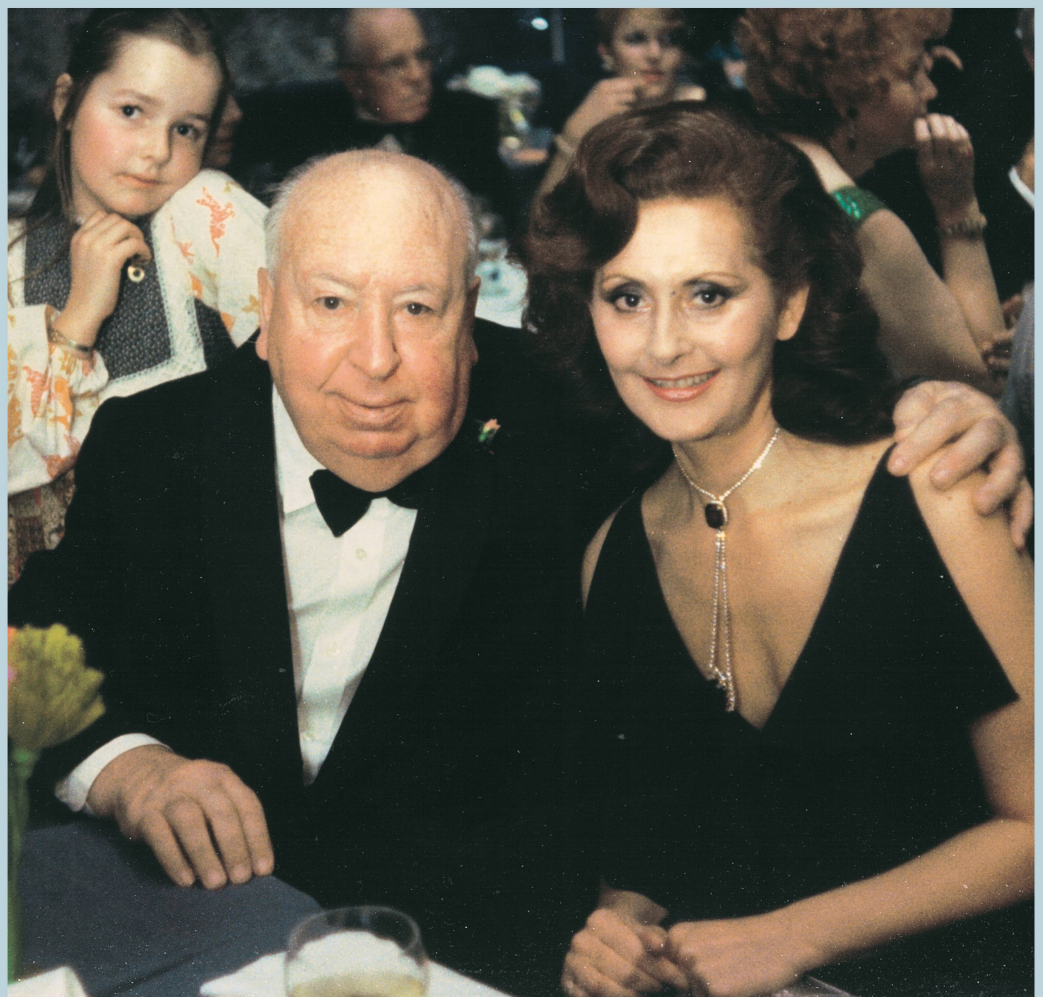
«He was a gourmet and had a great sense of humour; you could tell jokes for ever,» remembers Hansjürg Badrutt. One of Hitchcock's sayings was «I feel like a really thin person who happens to have been born in a fat body.» He would stay in a suite with his wife on the fourth floor.

Sometimes the director went walking and shopping, but above all he wanted peace and quiet and to enjoy the atmosphere of the hotel.

Hansjürg and Anikò Badrutt dined with him regularly, and he would tell them scary stories, report on his latest ideas for films or ask them for ideas.

The Badrutts were particularly impressed by the film diva Marlene Dietrich, who despite her image as a vamp was very amusing and down to earth.

In the mid-1960s she gave an unforgettable concert at the Palace in front of all kinds of famous people and stayed on for a week: «I remember her as a very captivating person who demanded one's full attention,» Anikò Badrutt reminisces. They would go on outings or shop together in St. Moritz. «I was utterly exhausted afterwards.»



*Anikò Badrutt and
Alfred Hitchcock,
31st December 1975.*



**Andrea Badrutt:
marriage to Caprice Jordan**

Andrea Badrutt was well-known as a confirmed bachelor whose charming manner pleased the hotel's female guests. But at the end of the 1950s a woman visited the Palace who bewitched him with her charismatic personality and beauty: the Mexican actress Caprice Jordan (1926–1982). Andrea Badrutt was obviously immediately fascinated by the sophisticated and well-travelled woman. In 1960, after Helen Badrutt's death,

the couple married. From that moment on, Caprice Badrutt-Jordan was often the life of the wild parties in the Grill Room or at the Chesa Veglia. During the low season she would travel the world with famous girlfriends such as Eliette von Karajan or Imelda Marcos.

Caprice Jordan, 1960s.

In 1964 the couple's son Johannes was born. Andrea Badrutt was proud and happy to have gained a son and heir at the age of 54. However, over time it became clear that the spouses led very different lives – while the hotel was Andrea Badrutt's first consideration, Caprice Jordan saw no reason, even with a small child, to give up travelling.

The marriage ended in divorce, and Johannes stayed with his father. Nevertheless, Caprice Jordan continued to come to the Palace regularly to visit her son.

Andrea's son, Johannes Badrutt, later went his own way. He sold his stake of one-third of the Palace shares to an Italian property developer, and now lives in Miami (USA), where he named a restaurant «Badrutt's Place» and owns the «JB Kitchen & Bar».



Palace Hotel menu from 1st August 1963.



Signed photograph of Rita Hayworth for Hansjürg Badrutt, circa 1950.

New generation of employees

The early 1960s not only saw a new generation at management level, but also among the employees, for many long-standing staff members had reached retirement age. The demands on staff were and remained high, but at the same time all employees were able to share in the hotel's success thanks to a results-oriented salary system and tips. Employees trained at the hotel and thus often stayed their entire lives at the Palace, sometimes for several generations.

The clientele also changed in the post-war period. While some guests of long standing remained loyal to the Palace, such as Marlene Dietrich and Alfred Hitchcock, others had built their own houses in St. Moritz and now came only to dine or party at the Palace. These included the Greek billionaire Stavros Niarchos

and his sons, the Shah of Persia, the wealthy brewer Alfred Heineken and the conductor Herbert von Karajan. The Palace's main clientele now consisted of entrepreneurs of the economic boom as well as wealthy heirs. The Badrutt brothers therefore wished to attract not only rich, but also glamorous guests to the hotel again.

King's Club: legendary discothèque

With this in mind, the Palace was continuously modernised and adjusted to meet its guests' requirements: from the 1960s until 1980, every single room in the Palace was renovated, and 100 new bathrooms were installed. A particular highlight for the jet-set was the opening of the King's Club in 1963. It was one of the first discothèques in Switzerland. The King's Club was built on the site of the indoor tennis courts. So the Palace could offer its guests an amusement that they were familiar with from Paris, New York, and London. At this time, the disco's employees were also flown in from the British capital.

The King's Club rapidly established itself as a meeting place, primarily for a younger clientele, where the rich and famous would come to celebrate. The King's Club is still considered an exclusive party venue for celebrities in St. Moritz, even though it faced competition in 1974 with the opening of Gunter Sachs' Dracula Club.

The great spectacle

It was primarily Andrea Badrutt's achievement to attract new famous personalities to the Palace in the 1960s. He attached great importance to a creating a successful mixture of crowned heads, aristocrats and the economic elite of the period with fa-

mous names from the worlds of film and art. However, he not only paid attention to those with great fortunes, but also enabled young, attractive and original personalities to stay at the Palace – the former staff rooms were converted into more modest rooms especially for these less well-to-do guests.

In an article published on the death of Andrea Badrutt, Max Keller described this approach as «the great spectacle». Every day from the late afternoon, an opulent pageant would take place, with the guests in leading and supporting roles and the Palace as the stage. After returning from the slopes or a stroll, costumes would first be changed for afternoon tea, followed by the great costume change into elegant evening dress with jewels. After cocktails at the bar, the performers would position themselves on the various smaller stages – the dining room, the Grill Room, the Chesa Veglia, private parties or restaurants outside the Palace. After midnight, the entire cast would meet again at the Palace bar or in the King's Club.

Active media relations also contributed towards the successful staging of the legendary Palace: the international glossy magazines reported regularly on the hotel's guests and events, thus giving an international audience a taste of glamour.

Individual pricing policy

At the same time, Andrea Badrutt set the prices on a very individual basis. The price of a room did not depend solely on its size and location, but also on how Andrea assessed the guests in question.

For example, a young couple with a great deal of style and charisma but little money could perhaps benefit from a lower price, while a mil-

lionaire with a dubious background would have to pay proportionally more. It is to the credit of the hotel's legendary reputation that this policy was only rarely called into question by the guests. It was also considered inappropriate to ask the price of a room in advance – anyone who needed to do so presumably could not afford the Palace.

On the other hand, the Palace offered young golfers and tennis players free board and lodging during the tournaments in St. Moritz. The participants in the annual skiing competitions between the «British University Ski Club» and the «Swiss Academic Skiing Association» were also invited to be guests of the hotel.

Andrea Badrutt thus aimed to awaken the enthusiasm of interesting young people for the Palace as potential, future paying customers. He was also convinced that the atmosphere at the Palace could only benefit from the élan, sportiness and naturalness of these young people.

Excellent memory for guests

Andrea Badrutt's great strength was his memory for guests. He not only remembered faces and names, but also characteristics, peculiarities and special requests. This was part of his special charm, but also meant that he monopolised serving the guests himself.

His brother Hansjürg remembers: «Andrea was very old-fashioned. That means he wanted to know nothing of modern machines and certainly nothing of computers. All invoices also had to be written by hand.» However, this also meant that all information was only in Andrea's head, thus enabling him to make himself irreplaceable and later hindering an effective succession.

Dissimilar brothers: an ideal complement

Even if the relationship between the brothers Andrea and Hansjürg was not always easy, they complemented one another very well. While Andrea had inherited manners, charm and passion for the hotelier's profession from his father, Hansjürg embodied the latter's foresight and sense of responsibility and tradition.

While Andrea presented himself on the great stage, Hansjürg and Anikò Badrutt were more the producers who worked quietly as a team, organised the staff, devised strategies or took care of hiring artists. Anikò Badrutt comments on this as follows: «We're definitely not party-goers. We prefer to spend a cosy evening with a small circle of friends and acquaintances.» From the very beginning, one important task was to plan and

*The fire in the tower
at the Palace Hotel,
24th June 1967.*



implement building work. Hansjürg Badrutt: «Our very personal signature is the fact that we decide on everything that is converted or extended. We even design the interior decoration. My wife and I choose every detail together.»

1967: the tower's on fire!

In the night of 23rd to 24th June 1967, the tower of the Palace was completely destroyed by fire, caused by welding work during renovations. Within no time at all, the entire tower went up in flames. Until deep into the night, firemen were occupied with bringing the blaze under control to prevent it from spreading to the main building. Hansjürg Badrutt is still touched to this day by the fact that the whole of St. Moritz felt sympathy in this dramatic situation and stayed up to help.

The fire had not only destroyed the tower; the rooms beneath had become uninhabitable due to water damage. This made it necessary to renovate everything within a short time as the summer season was to start at the beginning of July. The tower itself had to be completely rebuilt. This happened the following spring. The spire has been the shape of a pyramid ever since. On the top floor, the seventh, there was a luxurious suite. This was rented to the famous jet-setter Gunter Sachs for 25 years. He designed it as a pop art apartment, decorated with works by the likes of Andy Warhol, which was legendary in artistic circles. The tower suite is now inhabited by a publisher.

Locally active

Both Andrea and Hansjürg Badrutt were active on various committees in St. Moritz for decades. Andrea, for example, played an active role on the



Boards of the Hoteliers' Association, the Spa and Tourist Associations, as well as being Chairman of the Engadine Golf Club for many years. Hansjürg's duties included being the Treasurer of the Citizen's Council as well as of the Hoteliers' and Spa Associations. «In the past we had been considered as plutocrats by the so-called 'poor' of St. Moritz,» Hansjürg explains. But over time the relationship improved continuously, and the brothers had an especially good relationship with the last great Tourist Office director of St. Moritz, Hanspeter Danuser.

A new director

In 1980, when Max Keller was the first person not related to the family to be appointed as director of the Palace, 70-year-old Andrea Badrutt officially retired from managing the hotel. However, because he saw the Palace as his life's work and had in-

vested his entire strength and enthusiasm in the hotel, Andrea found it difficult to relinquish control. He remained present on the premises, continued to take care of both guests and employees, and also kept his private apartment in the hotel. This made it extremely difficult for the new hotel director to do his job, and was probably also one of the reasons why Max Keller decided to take on a new challenge in 1990, despite his great dedication and attachment to the Palace.

1998: the captain takes his leave

Andrea Badrutt was the charismatic captain of the Palace who stood on the bridge to an advanced age and did not want to abandon «his» ship, as Marcella Meier put it in his obituary. Perhaps it was no coincidence that Andrea Badrutt died during the low season, on 24th May 1998. Having enjoyed a pleasant evening with his son,

Palace Hotel with Piz Rosatsch in summer, circa 1970.

daughter-in-law and newly born grandchild, he died suddenly the following morning.

With his individual contribution, Andrea Badrutt lent the legend of St. Moritz a really special, glamorous aura. With Andrea at the helm, the Palace was one of the most exciting places on earth. Like no-one else, he embodied the hedonism of the period between 1960 and 1980, and provided the perfect setting for it with the Palace.

Wisdom and a farsighted vision

It is remarkable that Hansjürg Badrutt – who was after all the owner of the majority share in the Palace from 1960 and practically the sole decision-maker – left the stage to Andrea for decades. Apart from his respect for his brother, 20 years his senior, this behaviour also proves that he was wise and farsighted, as he realised that this allocation of responsibilities was to the greatest benefit of the hotel.

Hansjürg Badrutt's greatest achievement is to have given the Palace sus-

tainable future prospects. The system of the «Sun King» Andrea had in fact allowed no alternatives; in the last years of Andrea's life and the first years after his death, the question of who should run the hotel was unresolved.

Intermezzo with a hotel chain from Dallas

After attempts with various directors during the 1990s, the «Rosewood Hotels & Resorts» luxury hotel chain, headquartered in Dallas (Texas, USA), took on the management of Badrutt's Palace Hotel one year after Andrea Badrutt's death. This group operates about 20 exclusive five-star hotels all over the world.

Under the management of director Roland Fasel, extensive renovations were carried out in the four years after the takeover, including the modernisation of 130 rooms, the redesign of the reception, the opening of the «La Serletta» shopping arcade opposite the Palace, and the construction of the spectacularly luxurious «Hans Badrutt Suite» (which cost 19,000 Swiss francs per night in 2009) and of the «Helen Badrutt Suite». In this respect, the urgently needed renovation works were finally tackled and the hotel was given a modern, up-to-date infrastructure.

Magical atmosphere at risk

For Hansjürg Badrutt, it soon became clear that having the Palace operated by an international chain was not the right path to take – despite professional management and outstanding quality. The individualism, the magic spell, the very «soul» of the hotel, which cannot be bought for all the money in the world, was at risk.

The Badrutts have always seen themselves as independent hoteliers. The Palace should therefore remain a

Distribution of prizes, St. Moritz Gold Cup on the golf course at Samedan. From left to right: John Plant, Constantin von Liechtenstein, Andrea Badrutt and the 1971 winner.





*Hansjürg and
Anikò Badrutt.*

family-run and family-owned hotel. The director's personality, the personal welcome and service, and the respect for tradition – these were things that made the Palace something special. Or, as Hansjürg Badrutt puts it, «The mixture of high class and cosiness are what constitute the allure of our hotel.» A hotel like the Palace, he is convinced, must be managed individually and be shaped by the personality of the director.

Hansjürg Badrutt at the crossroads

Hansjürg Badrutt was now at a crossroads and had to find the best solution for his Palace. He was presented with many lucrative offers – to the tune of

several hundred million Swiss francs, it is said. But for Hansjürg Badrutt, selling the Palace was out of the question. For him, that would have meant betraying his family's heritage and selling out on an important piece of St. Moritz's identity. Not least, the Palace was one of the major employers in the canton and thus indispensable for the region.

For this reason, Hansjürg Badrutt looked for a person who would be able to breathe new life into the Palace – and found him in the cosmopolitan Swiss hotelier, Hans Wiedemann. With this decision he offered St. Moritz's traditional luxury hotel sustainable prospects for the future.