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On 11 December 2017, six days after the death of King Michael I, a solemn session of Romania's parliament was held. Through its parliament, the Romanian nation morally and politically recognised the first Royal succession since 1940.

Convened in order to pay a tribute to the late King, the session of parliament was presided over by the Speakers of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, and was held in the presence of the President of Romania and the Patriarch of the National Orthodox Church. In attendance were the prime minister, ministers, and senators and deputies from both the ruling party and the opposition.

The diplomatic corps, headed by their dean, the Apostolic Nuncio, were also in attendance, as were Romania's former presidents and prime ministers. The Vice-president of the Romanian Academy, the local head of the Roman Catholic Church, and representatives of the Constitutional Court and other

central institutions of state took part in the event.

The session, broadcast live on national television, was a powerful symbol of national unity. The Custodian of the Crown addressed Parliament in the following words:





*Mr President of Romania,  
Speakers of the Senate and the Chamber,  
Prime Minister,  
Your Beatitude, Your Eminence,  
Senators and Deputies,  
Your Excellencies,*

*The solemnity in which we here take part is held in order to pay tribute to our King, so loved by the Romanian people and admired by the whole world. But the meaning of today's distinguished assembly has deep roots in one hundred and fifty years of modern history, a history full of tragic but also uplifting moments.*

*I have lost a parent, and so too has the entire nation. In these difficult moments, we are united in our suffering.*

*The goodness and forgiveness of my father vanquished all the evils of the last century. His wisdom ensured our country's continuity in times of tragedy and unbearable suffering last century. Even when our King was far away from his country, Romanians saw him as a beacon. For almost a century, King Michael was part of the fabric of Romanian nationhood.*

*A new time is beginning for the Royal House. With the same values and principles as my father, I will continue to serve Romania's fundamental interests. Like King Michael, I will devote my work to Romanians all over the world.*





*Alongside the fundamental institutions of the State, the Crown will continue to do everything in its power to further the country's progress in the European Union and NATO. The King always believed it was our duty to be an integral part of such endeavours.*

*Besides our actions to strengthen Romanian communities and our charitable projects, my Family and I will continue, alongside the institutions of state, to promote the authentic image and interests of Romania globally.*

*The countries of the world need gain a better knowledge of what Romania has achieved in the last one hundred and fifty years as a modern state, what we have managed to build in the century that has passed since the Great Union, and what we have accomplished since the fall of communism. Looking back, we can be proud of the progress of our nation.*

*In my parents' heart there was always a "tomorrow". Thinking of that "tomorrow", I am grateful to you for today.*

*So help us God!*

At the end of the solemn session,  
the Royal Anthem was intoned.









*F*ive days later, the burial of King Michael took place, at the end of four days of national mourning. Those who witnessed the event will never forget it. Many of our co-nationals declared that this was their Romania. It was an uplifting moment, a unique page in our

contemporary history. A general feeling of pride, love, respect and admiration united all Romanians and greatly struck foreigners. There was much sadness and sorrow, but the extraordinary emotion and outpouring of love were far stronger than anything else.













In order to understand how all this was possible, let us briefly look back over the last one hundred and fifty years of our modern history.

The Romanian Royal Family is young by comparison with other European Royal Families. It encompasses one hundred and fifty-two years of history and five generations. This was undoubtedly a source of fragility during the first decades of the dynasty. But today, when Romania is – constitutionally speaking – a Republic, the youth of the Royal House is a strength. For, the defining moments of the Royal Family in recent times are related to progress and democracy.

King Carol I gave the country its first modern, European constitution in 1866, and then national independence in 1877. The Kingdom of Romania was established in 1881, and this was also when most of the nation's institutions were founded, gaining strength during the king's forty-eight-year reign, which ended in 1914.

His wife, Queen Elisabeth, a German-born princess, was an extraordinary example of the values of European culture. She spoke seven languages fluently and wrote more than fifty books in these languages, uniting Eastern and Western Europe in spirit. She wrote poetry and operas, and founded art galleries and art schools. Her book of aphorisms, *The Thoughts of a Queen*, was awarded a medal of honour by the French Academy. She was an outstanding pioneer in the field of social work, helping children in need, the disabled and the disadvantaged. She championed the cause of women's rights, fostering the higher education of women and creating women's schools for the teaching of various crafts. She fought for abundance by sanitation laws, and founded institutions for the poor, hospitals, soup-kitchens, convalescent homes and crèches, demonstrating to mid-nineteenth-century society, through the power of personal example,





the virtues of compassion, love, trust, a sense of duty, and unswerving loyalty.

King Ferdinand and Queen Marie, the second generation of the Romanian Royal Family, achieved the Great Union of 1918: the unification of all the historical Romanian provinces. Romanians today view them as the parents of the country. And Romanians from the Republic of Moldova feel the same way. Romania and the Republic of Moldova may quarrel over presidents, prime ministers, parliaments, and language, but nobody in the Republic of Moldova questions the parents of the nation: Stephen the Great, Ferdinand the Loyal, and Marie the Mother of the Wounded. During and immediately after the First World War, the King courageously undertook the complicated task of introducing a sweeping Agricultural Reform, on which a modern rural economy could develop. He was also the first Romanian sovereign to engage in a complex foreign agenda.



His wife Marie, a British-born princess, who became Queen of Romania, steps boldly from the pages of history. She was a multi-faceted and courageous woman. Her humanitarian and diplomatic efforts for our country during the First World War and afterward, during





the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, won her worldwide acclaim and affection. She is remembered as a “lioness” for her role in convincing the Allies to recognise Greater Romania, as a result of the self-determination of Romanians in the former Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, while also being for quite some time the absolute image of the distinguished and modern woman in the pages of European and American magazines.

She dazzled and impressed Europe, but also the United States, where her state visit is still fondly remembered.

King Carol II was an erudite and intelligent sovereign who had the ill fortune to hold power at precisely the same time as Hitler and Stalin, in the tragic 1930s, but who still managed, against overwhelming odds, to build a robust industrial sector, to preside over an unparalleled upsurge in the cultural,





scientific and diplomatic spheres, and to oversee a number of notable architectural achievements. It was during his dramatic reign that Romania produced writers and philosophers of world renown, such as Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Eugène Ionesco, scholars such as George Emil Palade, and artists such as Ionel Perlea, Sergiu Celibidache and Constantin Brancusi.

In addition to all the other major architectural projects realised during his reign, King Carol II's pet project was the Village Museum. The Village Museum, close to the Elisabeta Palace, was a major achievement in the preservation and promotion of rural heritage and skills, bringing together peasant houses as well as traditional civic, religious and commercial structures from all over Greater







Romania. Set in the middle of the Herăstrău Park (laid out at the behest of Carol II), it provides hours of relaxing walks for citizens and visitors even today. For his sister, Princess Elisabeta, Carol had the Elisabeta Palace built, siting it so that, when opening the window, she could feel as if she was in the middle of a Romanian village.

Another uncommon woman was Queen Helen of Romania, who played a luminous, if discreet, role in the dark history of Romania in the twentieth century. She was twice to endure exile, first in 1930s, at the hands of Carol II; and then after 1947, at the hands of the communists. A beautiful, quietly courageous woman, she was thrown into the midst of history's brutal machinations, when as Queen Mother in the 1940s she single-handedly educated her son, King Michael, in the skills of leadership, despite the pressure from dictator Antonescu, who wanted to isolate the king from state affairs. She stood by him during one of the most atrocious decades

in the continent's history. Her role in the Second World War will not be forgotten by the thousands whose lives she saved and who she cared for. She was a steadfast supporter of Romania's democratic forces from 1940 to 1947. In the face of Nazi tyranny, she displayed resolute strength of character and determination, standing up for what she knew to be right and good. Although she did not hold any constitutional power, she managed to save the lives of over one hundred thousand Romanians of Jewish origin during the dictatorship of Marshal Antonescu. This was formally recognised when the Yad Vashem institute posthumously declared her one of the "Righteous Among the Nations".

A young man of twenty-one, King Michael I turned the country against the Nazis and brought Romania onto the Allied side, thereby shortening the Second World War by six months and saving the life of probably tens of thousands of people. After his brutal expulsion from the country by the Communists in





December 1947, he also served as a beacon for freedom, the nation's only source of pride and hope during forty years of oppression. Romanians all over the diaspora called him "the constitutional factor", that is, the last legitimate constitutional institution still standing after the Communist takeover.

King Michael's life and work were extraordinary. He was crowned King of Romania for the first time at the age of six, in 1927. Three years later, he was deposed by his father, who abandoned the country once more in 1940, leaving his son to take up the title of king during the dictatorship of Marshall Ion Antonescu. Aged just twenty-three, and in dire circumstances, the King took a stand against fascism and communism in his country, trying to salvage as much as he could when all seemed lost. After being forced into exile in December 1947, and during the four decades of the Cold War, he was for Romanians a symbol of democracy; he was the only hope for freedom we had. Romanians still

remember the Christmas messages he broadcast to his fellow countrymen over Radio Free Europe and the BBC. After 1997 – and let us not forget he was first crowned in 1927 – every Romanian government, whether Socialist, Christian Democrat or Liberal, called on him to serve in the front line of his country's efforts to achieve NATO and EU membership. What an astonishing thing! Here was a man older than both NATO and the European Union, the only acting head of state during the Second World War, but he was there to greet the new European millennium with undiminished strength.

In 1945, the King led his soldiers when they braved death to liberate large swathes of Europe. Sixty years later, in 2005, he drove his own car across Europe, from Timișoara to Prague, stopping at every cemetery where his soldiers were buried, so that he could lay flowers and light candles in their memory.

Returning to his country in 1997, the King and his family managed, over





the course of twenty years, to be constantly at the forefront of public life, undertaking over ten thousand public engagements in villages and towns all over the country, promoting the economy, education, and social causes, inspiring organisations and institutions, connecting people, communities

and countries. Abroad, the King and his family undertook more than 315 public visits, with the support of ten different Romanian Governments, taking part in 104 meetings with heads of State, and receiving in Bucharest heads of state and parliament on forty-seven different occasions.

