



MARIE ALEXANDRA VICTORIA

MARIE ALEXANDRA VICTORIA (b. Eastwell Park, United Kingdom, 29 October 1875; d. Sinaia, Romania, 18 July 1938), queen consort of Ferdinand I, king of Romania (r. 1914-27).

Marie was a descendent of two powerful royal houses of Europe. Her father, Alfred, was the second son of Queen Victoria of England, and her mother, Marie Alexandrovna, was the daughter of Tsar Alexander II of Russia. In 1893, her mother arranged for Marie to marry Ferdinand, the crown prince of Romania, the country where they settled. They had six children: Carol (who eventually became King Carol II of Romania), Elisabetha, Marie Mignon, Nicholas, Ileana, and Mircea, who died at age three in 1916, two years after Ferdinand had been crowned king of Romania. Ferdinand died in 1927, and he was succeeded by his five-year-old grandson, Michael, in whose favor his father Carol had renounced the throne to be with a woman while still married to Michael's mother, Princess Helen.

Queen Marie's efforts to alleviate the suffering of the wounded during World War I were deeply appreciated by the Romanian people. At the conclusion of World War I, the Romanian government appealed to Queen Marie to attend the Paris Peace Talks in 1919 in order to lobby unofficially the participating countries for an enlarged Romania by regaining lands lost to its neighbors. As expected, Queen Marie was successful in her efforts, and Romania more than doubled in size with its population increasing by over 100 per cent.

In January 1926, Queen Marie received Martha L. Root, an American Bahai



journalist who was visiting Bucharest and had sent her a book on the Bahai Faith. Later, in an open letter published in *Toronto Daily Star* (4 May 1926), Marie said: “If ever the name of Baha’u’llah or ‘Abdu’l-Baha comes to your attention, do not put their writings from you. Search out their Books, and let their glorious, peace-bringing, love-creating words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have into mine” (Momen, 1981, 59-60). Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahai Faith, shared the open letter with the Bahais in Iran, informing the queen: “To my fellow-workers in Persia, particularly—the downtrodden victims of relentless religious fanaticism—your Majesty’s eloquent testimony to the potency of the message they bear has been of immense significance and will certainly prove a great relief” (Marcus, 2000, 65). Queen Marie responded: “That my open letter was a balm to those suffering for the cause, is indeed a great happiness to me, and I take it as a sign that God accepted my humble tribute.” In another open letter published some months later, Queen Marie wrote: “Therefore the Prophets; therefore Christ, Muhammad, Baha’u’llah, for man needs from time to time a voice upon earth to bring God to him, to sharpen the realization of the existence of the true God. Those voices sent to us had to become flesh, so that with our earthly ears we should be able to hear and understand” (Momen, 1981, 60-61). Because of the numerous statements and testimonies left for posterity by Queen Marie, Bahais around the world consider her to be the first Crowned Head to accept and promote the teachings of Bahā’-Allāh.

Queen Marie continued until the end of her life to promote harmony and understanding between people of different faiths. One of her last public statements is as relevant today as it was during her lifetime: “More than ever today when the world is facing such a crisis of bewilderment and unrest, must we stand firm in Faith seeking that which binds together instead of tearing asunder” (Momen, 1981, 61).

Queen Marie died at age 63 in the Romanian mountain resort of Sinaia after a prolonged illness, and she was buried alongside her husband in Curtea de Argeş. She, who was once well known and greatly admired around the world, including Iran, has left a great legacy for her adopted country and people.



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