



STATEMENT FROM THE HEAD OF THE ROYAL HOUSE OF SAVOY

In undertaking the responsibility which behoves me as representative, by way of dynastic laws, of the Royal House of Savoy I am bound to make it perfectly clear that the requests for indemnity from the Italian State are fruit of a specific initiative on the part of two persons, Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy and his son who, in accordance with the laws of the House, no longer belong to the royal House ever since the ex-Heir to the Throne was destituted, and more than once. Firstly, for his attempt to overthrow his father, King Umberto II, of venerable memory, by a barely conceivable act: while displaying a notable absence of the sense of the ridiculous he proclaimed himself “Vittorio Emanuele IV”, virtual King of Italy since 1946, the year when the king signed the decree which called for a referendum on the institutional form of the State; the *referendum* was widely known to have been won by the Republic in a way which was neither clear nor straightforward. Secondly he violated, of his own free will, the prerogative of his father, the King, to grant or withhold his consent to his son’s marriage. The marriage of a prince of the Royal House is not a private affair. It is an act that concerns the entire Dynasty and, when the consent of the King and Head of the House has been withheld, sanctioned by expulsion from the Royal Family. This is an ancient regulation which has always been observed by the House of Savoy as in all other royal Houses, just as King Umberto II mentioned in some of his letters, and its violation led to the substitution of Vittorio Emanuele by my person, without any necessity for further procedure.

Representing a Dynasty which has over a thousand years of history behind it, and which has so largely contributed to the unification of the Italian State, is a grave responsibility. Since it has also played a formative role in Italian history a bad image of the Dynasty reflects upon the entire nation.

In my position as representative and guardian of the Family’s image it is my duty to make it perfectly clear that none of these initiatives was conceived in a spirit of benefiting the good name of the family but entirely inspired as opportunities for material gain in favour of identifiable persons with no possible connections with the House of Savoy, or with the moral heritage left by the last king of Italy, Umberto II of Savoy.

Finally, as Head of the House, I must distance myself from the requests for damages brought against the State of Italy on the grounds of the unjust Exile. I shall not enter into the rights and wrongs of that objectively anti-historical penalty, but I wish to associate myself with the example and message left by King Umberto II who never once thought or spoke of asking for compensation from his beloved Country. For Umberto II, the Exile was not simply an opportunity to enjoy a luxurious holiday abroad, but (*this concerns his offspring* – translator’s note) an endless period which he suffered as particularly harsh and sad. Far from his own Country, followed by only a few members of his family. And yet he was the only one who held any right to claim moral and material compensation. And to the very end he maintained that raising a problem of the kind was out of the question. This is the point of honour of the House of Savoy whose members have been prepared, time and again, to give all they have for their Country. Even the most bitterly antagonistic historians and politicians could never accuse them of placing their own personal interests above the common good of their Country. Italy comes first. A proud statement but a true one which few persons could or can permit themselves to make.

In the interests of truth, after having disavowed the initiatives of the two Savoys who indeed carry the Family surname but not its moral role, I must unhappily add that when the organs of the Presidency of the Council were faced by the political content of this inappropriate request for damages, they responded, on the rebound, with a theoretical counter claim for damages. I have the impression that the uncritical digging up of hoary and long archived problems does not go very far in enhancing the image of Italy. Italy must confront other nations in the language of history, not in the language of political wrangling. In 1946 the King called the referendum to ask the Italians what form of institutions they would prefer; but not to impose historical sanctions on the Monarchy. What is the fault of the Monarchy on our institutions? What was the fault of King Umberto II who was deservedly known as the first gentleman of Italy?

In the transitional stage closely following a terrible war it was only logical that space could be found for extremist theories. But in the euphoric period of peace and the urge to join in with the prevailing influence of the victors, the list of people suffering from amnesia lengthened day by day. Today, however, decades after the institutional consolidation of the Republic, hauling back the old polemics of a political and juridical sort seems to me, if you will allow the statement, wrong.

It seems to me that this is one of the moments when the time has come to urge a co-ordination of efforts, for all of us to pitch in and raise high the material and moral standard of Italy.

San Rocco, 24 November 2007

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'A' followed by the name 'Amedeo' written in a cursive script.

Amedeo, Duca di Savoia