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Oldest Member of Russia's Romanov Dynasty Dies at 91

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Dmitry Romanov, brother of Nikolai Romanov, and his spouse visit Kremlin Palace in 2006.

Nikolai Romanov, the most senior member of the Russian Empire's Romanov dynasty, passed away in Tuscany, Italy at the age of 91, TASS state news agency reported Monday.

The Romanovs, Russia's last royal family, was overthrown during the October Revolution of 1917. Tsar Nikolai II and his family were placed under house arrest before being moved to Yekaterinburg and executed by Bolshevik forces in June 1918.

Following the revolution, members of the tsar's extended family fled Russia to avoid the fate of their relatives, the Romanov Family Association claims in material published on its website. Eventually losing hope that their family's rule over Russia would be restored, the Romanov relatives settled across Europe and the U.S.

According to the website, Nikolai had formally presided over the family since 1990.

Nikolai's brother Dmitry Romanov reported the death to TASS, referring to it as "an

enormous loss." Funeral arrangements have not yet been made, according to the report.

Nikolai Romanov, known among his family as Prince Nikolai Romanovich, was born in Cap d'Antibes, France, in 1922, to Roman Romanov and Praskovia Sheremetyeva.

His family moved to Rome before World War II. In 1942, the Mussolini government asked the 19-year-old Romanov to become king of occupied Montenegro, but he declined, he told the BBC's Russian service in a 2006 interview.

Romanov and his wife, Italian Countess Sveva della Gherardesca, had three daughters together. The family managed an estate in Tuscany before moving to Switzerland.

Nikolai Romanovich first visited Russia in 1992. Shortly thereafter, he founded the Romanov Fund for Russia which provides financial assistance to Russian hospitals and kindergartens.

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