# The Queen hid from dictator guests during tense 1978 state visit



During her 70-year reign as Head of State, the late Queen Elizabeth II hosted an extensive array of world leaders, completing a record 113 state visits. This included figures ranging from the controversial, such as former US President Donald Trump, to more notorious guests like Ugandan President Idi Amin. Among these visitors, one set of guests stands out for their particularly difficult presence, according to the Queen’s official biographer Robert Hardman.

In a recent two-part edition of the Daily Mail's podcast series "Queens, Kings, and Dastardly Things," historian Kate Williams and Robert Hardman explore some of the worst royal houseguests. They highlighted the state visit of Romanian leaders Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu in June 1978 as arguably the most challenging.

Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu ruled Romania as communist dictators for over 25 years, presiding over widespread human rights abuses and repression until their violent overthrow in 1989. Their visit to Britain came during the Cold War, a period marked by tensions between Western powers and the Soviet bloc. Despite warnings from French diplomats about the Ceaușescus’ reputation, then-Prime Minister Harold Wilson requested the Queen to host them in an effort to forge commercial ties, as Britain was facing severe economic difficulties including high inflation and fiscal instability.

Hardman explained the motivation behind the visit: “This happened at the height of the Cold War – it’s West versus East. Two superpowers up against each other. However, what the West sees in Ceausescu is an independent spirit… someone who is prepared to tow a slightly different line. He talks a lot about setting up commercial partnerships. Britain thinks it might be able to do a deal with him – and he was very keen to meet the Queen.”

The Ceaușescus insisted on a full state visit, including a stay at Buckingham Palace, as a precondition for any commercial agreements. It was revealed that the Queen herself reportedly expressed displeasure with the visit. She allegedly called Elena Ceaușescu a "viper" in correspondence with the British embassy in Bucharest. French reports also indicated the couple had damaged diplomatic quarters in Paris before arriving in the UK.

Robert Hardman recounted, “The Elysee Palace guest quarters were a wreck. The Queen got on the phone to the master of the Royal Household and said: If it moves, I want it taken out of the Belgian Suite. Do not leave anything of note or value in there. Everyone was just dreading this couple.”

The Ceaușescus, meanwhile, were deeply suspicious of the British staff, convinced they were being spied on and their laundry poisoned. They took to walking privately in the Buckingham Palace gardens to have conversations away from perceived eavesdropping.

Hardman shared a personal anecdote from the Queen herself: “The Queen told Sir Anthony J, the writer, that she’d been out walking her corgis in the garden, as she often liked to do. The Queen said she decided to hide behind a bush to avoid talking to her houseguests. They were that bad. They were so objectionable, so charmless, that she had absolutely nothing to say to them. For the first time in her entire life, she hid to avoid them.”

This candid glimpse into the difficulties surrounding one of the Queen's state visits offers insight into the complexities of royal diplomacy during a tense geopolitical era. For more accounts of challenging royal guests, the "Queens, Kings, and Dastardly Things" podcast series is available on major podcast platforms.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ukpol.co.uk/hm-queen-elizabeth-ii-list-of-state-visits-inward/> - This source provides a comprehensive list of state visits received by Queen Elizabeth II, confirming the total of 113 state visits during her 70-year reign.
2. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ceausescus-state-visit-to-great-britain-june-1978/> - This article discusses the state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu to Great Britain in June 1978, highlighting the challenges faced during their stay.
3. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ceausescus-state-visit-to-great-britain-june-1978/> - This source provides detailed information about the Ceaușescus' state visit to Great Britain in June 1978, including the difficulties encountered during their stay.
4. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ceausescus-state-visit-to-great-britain-june-1978/> - This article offers insights into the state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu to Great Britain in June 1978, emphasizing the challenges faced during their stay.
5. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ceausescus-state-visit-to-great-britain-june-1978/> - This source provides detailed information about the Ceaușescus' state visit to Great Britain in June 1978, including the difficulties encountered during their stay.
6. <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/ceausescus-state-visit-to-great-britain-june-1978/> - This article offers insights into the state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu to Great Britain in June 1978, emphasizing the challenges faced during their stay.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14664723/Queen-elizabeth-II-worst-state-visitor-nicolae-ceausescu-romania-royal-family-podcast.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data