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HOLLAND HERALD



Juliana

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HOLLAND HERALD 4

Magazine of the Netherlands
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The portrait on our cover of Juliana as a princess was taken in 1934 when she was 25. It has the qualities of simplicity and human warmth that she has kept throughout her life as Queen of the Netherlands. Indeed it is Juliana's unpretentiousness that endears her to the Dutch people who regard her as a vital unifying factor in a country traditionally polarised in both the political and religious fields. So the Dutch people were saddened when Juliana announced, in typical down-to-earth manner, that she would abdicate on April 30, her 71st birthday. To mark the occasion and the inauguration in Amsterdam the same day of her successor, Crown Princess Beatrix, we devote the heart of the magazine this month to the House of Orange. John Sparrow's profile of Juliana begins on page 24.

CONTENTS

<i>You write</i>	4
<i>Cartoon: Father and son</i>	4
<i>Close-up: Holland's star-gazer goes to work</i>	8
<i>News in brief: Coal's come-back, capital value, canals for The Hague</i>	10
<i>What's new: Super thread, pic-up trucks, new wave radio</i>	14
<i>Media: World Press Photo awards</i>	18
<i>Cover section:</i>	
<i>Juliana, the modest monarch</i>	24
<i>Figuring the fortune</i>	33
<i>The new queen</i>	37
<i>Limits of power</i>	41
<i>Popular prince consort</i>	44
<i>Fresh heir</i>	48
<i>Newly restored Nieuwe Kerk</i>	51
<i>Books: Johan de Witt, the great republican</i>	54
<i>Eating out: Hugh Jans eats French and Spanish</i>	56
<i>Music: Piano accord</i>	59
<i>Business Herald: Holland for investors</i>	62
<i>Short story: Simon Carmiggelt</i>	65
<i>Crossword</i>	66
<i>Children's Herald: Clowning</i>	67
<i>Fashion:</i>	
<i>Latest from Fong Leng</i>	74
<i>New hair lines</i>	76
<i>Highlights: Our selection of what's on in April</i>	80
<i>Crossword answers</i>	82



Gijsbert Perlee rejuvenating one of his beloved barrel organs that still tinkle their merry music in the streets.

Barrel organs? Absolutely. But in KLM's Holland, you can also hear the organ that Mozart and Handel played.

Holland is alive with music.

On the streets of Amsterdam, carillons from the church towers ring out every quarter hour. At times they play Debussy, Bach, or, surprisingly, early American ragtime.

Bicycle bells and canalboat horns add their voices to the street symphony. Stop at a bar and listen to accordion music while you sip the good Dutch beer.

And be sure to look for one of Amsterdam's famous barrel organs. The one in our photograph is 100 years old and multi-talented. It plays the melody, beats drums, tinkles chimes and clashes cymbals like a well-rehearsed band.

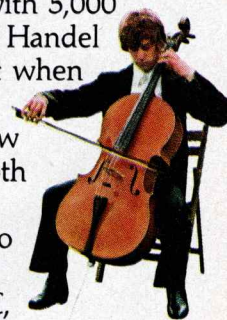


Somewhere in Holland, you can always find an organ recital. In the 13th-century St. Bavo's Church in Haarlem, you'll see the famous Christiaan Mullerorgan—a majestic instrument with 5,000 pipes and three keyboards. Bach and Handel played it in their time. So did Mozart when he was just ten years old.

Try to take in the Concertgebouw Orchestra and the National Ballet. Both are among the best the world offers.

Send for our free 240-page guide to Holland's sounds and sights. Write: KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, AMS/MC, P.O. Box 7700, Schipol Oost, Holland.

Read it. Then call your travel agent or a KLM office for reservations.



The reliable airline of Holland

Juliana

the motherly monarch

On April 30, her 71st birthday, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands abdicates the Dutch throne. John Sparrow profiles the woman who brought modesty to the monarchy.

"Everyone who grows old must sooner or later face the sober fact that the strength fades and tasks can no longer be fulfilled as before. Then comes a moment when it is irresponsible to continue. I feel that the time is approaching for me to lay down my task as your Queen."

With these words Queen Juliana announced her forthcoming abdication to a surprised Dutch nation. In the down-to-earth manner that has been the hallmark of her reign, she said she would step down on April 30, her 71st birthday, in favour of her eldest daughter, Crown Princess Beatrix. Although the Press had speculated about an abdication on and off for years, the television and radio broadcast from Soestdijk Palace took Juliana's 14 million subjects unawares. On her 70th birthday last spring she scotched the rumours by saying retirement could not be further from her mind, and there had been no hint of an imminent abdication. Indeed, a few hours before the January 31 broadcast, the royal household's chief spokesman was vehemently denying anything was afoot. The decision saddened the Dutch, for while a monarchy in a progressive modern state like the Netherlands might seem an anachronism to some, Juliana ruled by popular assent. The royal house has long been regarded as a vital unifying factor in a country traditionally polarised in both the political and religious fields. Juliana gave it a modern face and is widely loved as an informal, grandmotherly figure with a distaste for pomp. Wim Kan, one of the Netherlands' top comedians, summed up many people's feelings when he said several years ago: "I am all in favour of a republic, but only if Juliana is its president." Her popularity has survived several royal scandals, the most dramatic being the

alleged influence a faith-healer had upon court matters in the Fifties, and Prince Bernhard's involvement in the Lockheed affair. Perhaps they even increased it, for each time public feeling was with the Queen.

She is seen as the monarch who broke with tradition and precedent and even as a girl mixed with the people, travelled by public transport and pedalled a bicycle through the crowded streets of The Hague. A modest, sympathetic woman, she abolished



The Queen announcing abdication on TV

the curtsy at court, simplified protocol, limited usage of the term "Your Majesty", and was devoted to many humanitarian causes, including movements to combat racialism and narrow the gap between the world's rich and poor.

As head of state she was the first Dutch monarch to be content with a small political role but nevertheless made her contribution to the peaceful post-war transition of the Netherlands from an agricultural and colonial state to a modern industrial one. The left-wing daily *De Volkskrant* reflected the popular mood most ably the morning after her broadcast: "She was not only a good head of state, but also a nice Queen.

People who are capable and pleasant at the same time are always going to be missed in public life."

The newspaper went on to say it would not be easy for Beatrix to succeed her mother, invoking a sentiment many people had expressed when Juliana herself had come to the throne in September 1948.

She was 39, less popular than her war hero husband, and she did not particularly want the crown. She would have preferred to devote herself to her children, and when her ailing but strong-willed mother, Wilhelmina, first talked of abdication a year before, her reaction had been dismay. Juliana was prepared and able but she dreaded the responsibility of being Queen. Nevertheless, on September 6, wearing a long dress of sapphire blue silk, an ermine-lined cloak of scarlet velvet, and a jewelled Juliet cap, she stood in Amsterdam's New Church for her inauguration.

As usual she had written her own speech, and it was emotive and personal. "Since the day before yesterday," she began, "I have been called to a task which is so heavy that nobody who considered it deeply would want it, but at the same time so splendid that I can only say 'Who am I to be allowed to attempt it?'"

"The opportunities of working for the common good which I am being granted are so great that, after considerable heart-searching, I have made up my mind to follow the vocation for which my parents took such great care to prepare me." Juliana was born on April 30, 1909, daughter of Wilhelmina and the German Prince Hendrik von Mecklenburg-Schwerin. The name Juliana came from Juliana van Stolberg, the mother of William the Silent, a woman who did much for the national cause in the 16th century struggle for independence from Spain. The

PHOTO: NATIONAAL FOTO PERSBUREAU



PHOTO: AMP FOTO

Dutch greeted the birth enthusiastically, for after three miscarriages it had looked as if the royal couple would have a childless marriage. And in a turbulent European route to the First World War, the uncertainty of who or what would succeed the last of the Orange family had been perturbing.

Of her daughter's early days Wilhelmina recorded in her autobiography *Lonely But Not Alone*: "She was a strong and healthy child, always a little in advance of her age in intelligence and knowledge." Those were carefree days for the Princess. The palace grounds in The Hague resounded to little-girl games, but strangely dolls and toy tea-sets were out. More to Juliana's liking was frog-catching in the ponds.

The one thing missing was the company of children her own age. To help remedy this the Queen decided a small class should be formed at the palace of Huis ten Bosch with herself giving religious instruction. But when Juliana was 10 her primary education came to an end and from then on it was private, solitary tuition. Wrote Wilhelmina: "We decided that she would have to finish her secondary education in less than the usual time, for the constitution laid down that, on completion of her 18th year, she would act as Regent if I should be unable to perform my duties, and, if I should die, would be my successor. This meant that at that age she should have completed her studies, including those on the academic level, and have acquired all the knowledge necessary for a ruling position."

No wonder Juliana detested her upbringing and vowed her own children would have a normal state education.

On May 2, 1927, a few days after her 18th birthday, Juliana was installed as a member of the Council of State, although for her the most important event of the year was her enrollment at Leiden University. The move, coming from Queen Wilhelmina, was seen as a tremendously democratic step. Although Leiden was a bastion of conservatism, a princess studying at a normal university was unheard of.

Juliana moved into 't Waerle, a house nearby Katwijk, with three friends. They called themselves the Merry Sea Stars and while the Princess obviously lacked the freedom of other students, protocol and sensibility were by no means the rule. Wilhelmina told in her book how the palace of Het Loo was "eminently suitable for all the activities that young people enjoy. The Sea Stars and the Zestigpoot [her student club] visited her often, and the *Io Vivat* and other student songs were heard until late at night, accompanied on my piano."

The serious side of life at Leiden was taken up with national and international law, Dutch and French literature and the history of religion. In her second year the Princess attended lectures on mythology, Slavic literature, sinology and various aspects of water economy.

But although she followed scheduled

courses Juliana was not allowed to take the official examinations to gain her degree. She had not attended a normal school and passed the necessary examinations there, it was said in explanation. So she took a special test and received an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters and Philosophy. Of this she would one day tell Prince Bernhard: "I never felt I earned it. It was a sham."

By the time Juliana was 26, the big question was: Whom will she marry? A German prince had always been a good wager because there were so many of them, and while staying at Igls in Austria in 1935 Wilhelmina and her daughter met one Bernhard zur Lippe-Biesterfeld. Bernhard lived in Paris at the time and the Dutch Ambassador to France had suggested he visit the royal family during his winter vacation.

The first meeting was a formal lunch where Wilhelmina did most of the talking, but later Bernhard and Juliana went skiing — alone. The bespectacled and studious-looking young German found the blonde

'An immensely lovable,
extremely shy and
exceptionally intelligent
girl, very much under
her mother's influence'
— Bernhard

Princess shy. As he would describe her in the years to come: "An immensely lovable, extremely shy and exceptionally intelligent girl, very much under her mother's influence. She had the touching innocence possessed only by a girl who had always lived inside the ivory tower which is the home of royalty, exposed to the gaze of the whole world but deprived of a clear view of the world outside. Her knowledge of the way and customs of the modern world was less than that of many much younger girls." Within days the couple were together again watching the Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Bavaria. Bernhard suggested they meet again and the seeds of a romance were planted. Secret invitations to Holland were soon arranged, as well as a meeting in the Swiss Alps which ended in an engagement. Wilhelmina had wanted to keep it a secret for a few months until she thought the time ripe to tell the people. But Press inquiries began, rumours flew and rather than have a reporter beating her to an announcement the Queen introduced her future son-in-law

in a broadcast. The wedding took place in St. Jacobskerk, The Hague, in January 1937. The date chosen was the seventh, the day Juliana's grandparents, William III and Queen Emma, had married.

A little over a year later, on January 31, 1938, Princess Beatrix was born, followed on August 5, 1939, by Princess Irene. But the happiness that had been introduced to their home at Soestdijk Palace, 25 miles east of Amsterdam, was not to last long. The Second World War broke out, Germany invaded the Netherlands and the royal family fled to England. Even the redoubtable Wilhelmina crossed the North Sea, furious that she had not been allowed to fall in battle as the last man in the last ditch, like her ancestors.

The flight was from Noordeinde Palace in The Hague, where for several days the royal family had spent most of their time in an air-raid shelter, and where Bernhard had begun his war by machine-gunning any Luftwaffe planes that came within range of the palace roof.

An armoured truck took the royals to a waiting destroyer at IJmuiden. Normally the journey would have been completed comfortably in an hour but — escorted by two cars of guards and Bernhard with a machine-gun on his lap — the truck took four, avoiding the main highways for safety.

On reaching IJmuiden, the tension eased until a German bomber appeared as the truck was being ferried to the destroyer. Fortunately the pilot's mind was concentrated on dropping mines in the harbour and the royal party made it to the ship without trouble.

With the family in England, Bernhard left to rejoin the still-fighting Dutch. But on his return, just before the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk, he considered his family would only be safe away from Europe. He stayed in London with Queen Wilhelmina, but the Crown Princess and her children set sail for Canada. If the Dutch people knew the future of the Queen was safe, it would keep their hopes alive, he said.

Juliana lived in Canada as a private citizen until 1945. Instead of a palace, her first home was a rented five-bedroomed house in a fashionable Ottawa suburb, and 11 people crowded into it: the Princess, her baby daughters, their nurse, an aide-de-camp and his wife, three security men, a friend of Juliana's and her small daughter. Servants were hard to come by and the Princess did her full share of the housework, making beds, dusting, vacuum-cleaning and washing up.

By all accounts she adapted well and one story tells how Juliana consoled a companion who complained of overcrowding, by saying: "When you forget something upstairs at Soestdijk you have to walk a mile to get it."

Certainly she enjoyed the freedom of her new lifestyle, and she once confided to a journalist that even in post-war years she

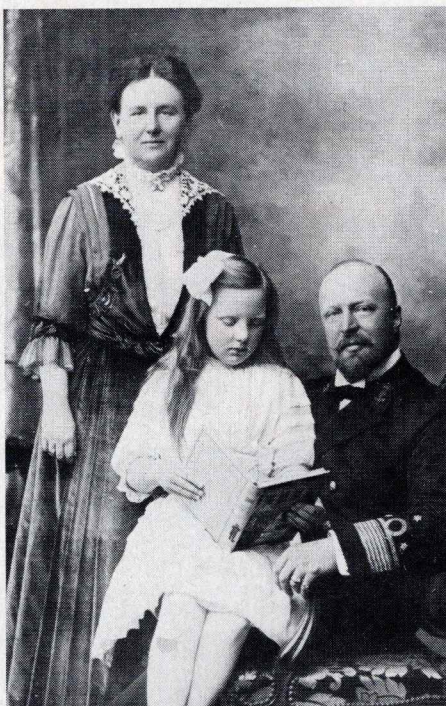


PHOTO: SPAARNESTAD

Aged 9, with Wilhelmina and Hendrik



PHOTO: ZIEGLER

With grandmother Emma (left) and mother in 1933



PHOTO: SPAARNESTAD

In folk costume of Zeeland province (1924)



PHOTO: RIJKSVOORLICHTINGSDIENST

Wedding portrait of Juliana and Prince Bernhard zur Lippe-Biesterfeld



PHOTO: POLYGOON

1939 — walking with baby Beatrix to air-raid shelter before escape to England

never felt more relaxed than in Canada. Her neighbours remember a friendly woman without the airs they had expected of someone with a royal upbringing. She would look after their children, queue quietly in Ottawa stores, catch a movie from the stalls of local cinemas and drink coffee at a Woolworth's counter. Those closer to her knew another Juliana; the woman who overcame a natural shyness to become ambassador for her country in North America. Often she was away from home, travelling across Canada, and visiting the United States where she was a frequent guest of president Roosevelt. On top of this she visited the former Dutch colony of Surinam, on the shoulder of South America, and the Dutch Antilles islands in the Caribbean. She did not return to the Netherlands until May 2, 1945. The country was in ruin and she was soon involved in relief work for those who had suffered so terribly in the hunger winter of 1944-45. For months she was fully occupied as head of the Council for the Rehabilitation of the People of the Netherlands.

Her family, too, demanded time. A third daughter, Margriet, had been born in Ottawa, and in 1947 came Princess Marijke, or Christina as she would become known. Soon after ascending the throne in 1948, Juliana is reported to have said: "For a queen, the task of being a mother is just as important as for every other woman in the Netherlands." And it was parental concern for her youngest child which led to a constitutional crisis over the alleged influence of someone the popular press called a female Rasputin. While she was carrying Christina, the Princess caught German measles, probably on a hospital visit. As a result the baby was born almost blind and although her sight improved in later life, at the time doctors could do no more than restore blurred vision in one eye.

The baby was about eight months old when Bernhard was told of a faith-healer called Greet Hofmans. She had, he was assured, already cured tuberculosis and blindness with her prayers and members of the court encouraged her invitation to the palace. The faith-healer seemingly did little for the child, but she won the confidence of the Queen, a deeply-religious woman, and remained close to her until the mid-Fifties. According to foreign Press reports the mystic wielded sinister influence over Juliana and had caused a rift between the royal couple. Some said Hofmans' pacifist preachings had led the Queen to disagree with the Dutch Government's line on rearmament in the Cold War, and the position of Nato. Rumours of abdication came to nothing, however, and in 1956 a government committee investigated the allegations and announced the Queen had broken all relations with the healer. Greet Hofmans died a forgotten woman in Amsterdam in 1968.

As for Christina, by the age of 10 her sight

had so improved she was able to read and to cycle two miles to school every day, and in her teens it became obvious her handicap was not going to affect her independence. In 1966 she left home to enrol at an academy for social studies, spent two years at Groningen University, and studied music and singing at the Vincent d'Indy college in Montreal. Today she lives in New York with her Cuban-born husband, Jorge Guillermo, their two-year-old son, Bernardo, and nine-month-old Nicolás.

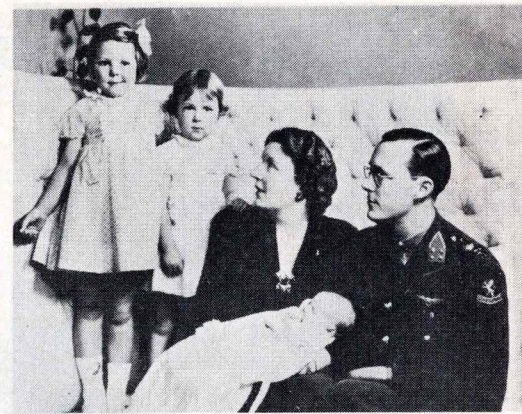
Troubles within the royal family have provided Juliana with the greatest challenges of her reign. In 1964 a second crisis hit the court when Princess Irene was secretly converted to Roman Catholicism and later wed a Carlist pretender to the Spanish throne, Prince Carlos Hugo of Bourbon Parma.

Not only has the House of Orange been staunchly Protestant for 400 years, according to the Dutch constitution Irene was obliged to ask permission of parliament to marry. She didn't, having

'For a queen, the task of being a mother is just as important as for every other woman in the Netherlands' — Juliana

been warned approval could not be expected because of Carlos' political position, and forfeited all rights of succession to the Dutch throne. Juliana threw constitutional caution to the wind in an attempt to stop the marriage. At one point she boarded a government aircraft and set off for Spain with the reported intention of bringing her daughter home. Prince Bernhard went with her, and at a stopover in Paris seems to have persuaded her not to continue her mission. After he telephoned The Hague, the plane returned to the Netherlands. On April 26, after five months of international attention, Irene married Carlos in the Borghese Chapel of the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome. Juliana, like Bernhard, officially supported the Dutch Government and neither attended the ceremony. They watched it on TV at Kasteel Diepenheim in Holland. At least, they watched half of it before a power cut blacked out the screen.

An even bigger furor surrounded the



Family portrait — thousands were dropped over Holland



Juliana at her inauguration in 1948



February 1953 — Juliana visits flood victims in Zeeland

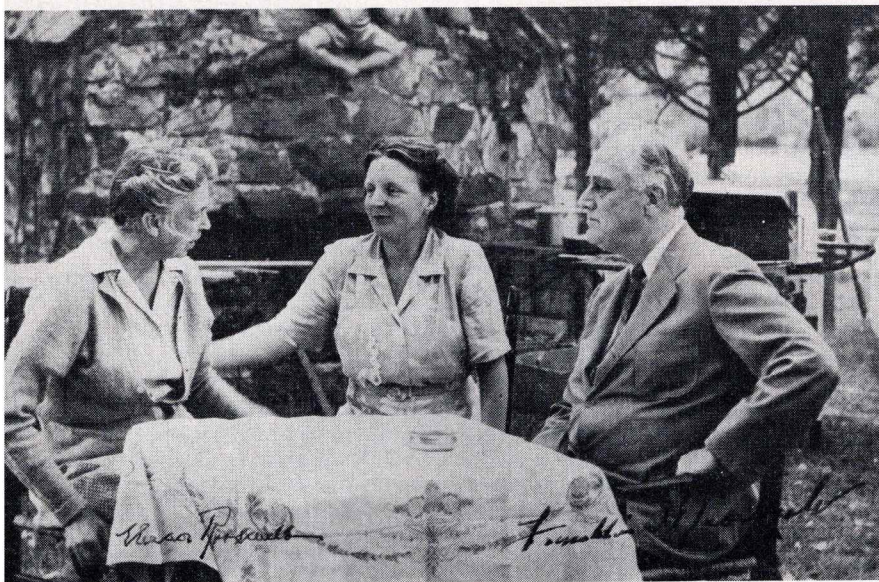


PHOTO: SPAARNESTAD

Juliana with Eleanor and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Hyde Park, 1943



PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

Faith healer Greet Hofmans: great influence on the Queen



PHOTO: ANEFO

Return from exile, Holland, 1945



PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

Early official portrait of Juliana as queen



PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

Churchills visit Holland, Soestdijk Palace, 1947

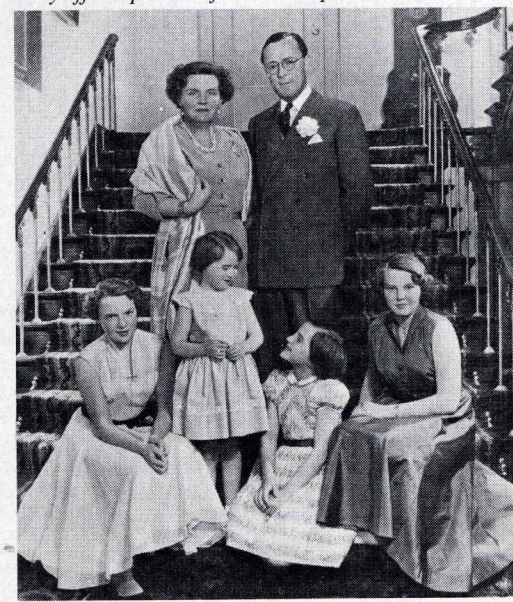


PHOTO: RIJKSVOORLICHTINGSDIENST

Princesses Irene, Christina, Margriet, Beatrix (1955)

marriage of Crown Princess Beatrix to German diplomat Claus von Amsberg two years later (see page 37).

But perhaps the hardest blow to the monarch came in 1976 when Prince Bernhard was named in connection with the Lockheed affair. After a government inquiry he resigned all his military and business posts.

The Queen, though, won general admiration by accepting the government's criticism of her husband and remaining on the throne rather than abdicating and provoking a constitutional crisis. Through all the controversies Juliana's popularity simply continued to grow. As the quality daily *NRC Handelsblad* put it, her behaviour was seen to be compassionate and motherly. She was above Lockheed, and when the *Algemeen Dagblad* newspaper ran an opinion poll in the wake of the abdication announcement, it found 89 percent of the people questioned were in favour of the monarchy.

While her personal life has not been easy, neither has the period of her reign. Since 1948 the Netherlands has gone through a turbulent era of change, and Juliana's first years as Queen were particularly difficult.

After a bloody struggle the Dutch East Indies became the independent Republic of Indonesia and, to a country still recovering from war, it was a heavy economic blow. Around 10 percent of the national income came from the East Indies before the Second World War and Dutch investments there amounted to over \$1,200,000,000. The Dutch sought new trade to compensate and, in the meanwhile, Marshall Aid played an important role in the country's economic survival.

Juliana felt a deep debt to Americans for wartime and post-war help. When invited to pay a State visit to the US in 1952 she made her feelings known in a speech to Congress which received an ovation.

The theme was international cooperation, and she commented: "Our world has need of cooperation as close as that existing between the cells of one body. The only feasible basis for international cooperation is trust. Cooperation will have no basis if there is no trust; it will be doomed to failure."

She called for more spending on social needs and less on defence, and during her stay made a number of speeches which were deemed to be attempts to break the Cold War mentality. Some interpreted this as the unsavoury influence of Greet Hofmans. "Doubtless these speeches are well-intentioned," admonished the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool*. "Nevertheless we realize with painful embarrassment . . . that all this might leave the impression that Holland is a queer country." In 1980 the newspaper would no doubt take a very different line.

The Dutch used their Marshall Aid well and by January 1953 were the first people to tell the US they needed no more. As one

crisis ended a new disaster loomed, though. Holland's age-old enemy the North Sea breached the dikes in the south-west of the country and 1,700 died in the subsequent flooding. For days on end the Queen criss-crossed the disaster area, visited evacuation centres with food and clothing and helped comfort the homeless and bereaved. Said the *NRC*: "In those bleak February days solidarity and sympathy were heart-warming reality."

Juliana showed then that she was tireless, an asset made obvious on many subsequent occasions. In October 1955, for instance, she became the first reigning Dutch monarch to visit Surinam and the Antillean islands. Ten months earlier these former Dutch colonies had become autonomous members of a tri-partite Netherlands kingdom. She had visited them before, as Crown Princess, but as Queen she was setting the seal on a new relationship. For three weeks, plane, river boat, native canoe and horse-drawn carriage took her through all six Antillean islands and through Surinam from capital to jungle

~~~~~  
'If my destiny had not  
lain elsewhere, I should  
have liked to become a  
social worker' —  
Juliana  
~~~~~

village.

Until recently, a normal working day for the Queen was close to 12 hours, says a palace source, and while abroad, her programmes were always ridiculously heavy. Indeed her massive reserves of strength often left her companions exhausted. Once, climbing the pyramids near Mexico City, she noticed Foreign Minister (now Nato Secretary-General) Joseph Luns was not by her side. He had not made a move and the Queen invited him to climb with her. "I think," replied Luns, "it is better that Your Majesty has a live Foreign Secretary than a dead one." Another well-noted incident occurred during a vacation by the Caspian Sea. Returning from a boat trip the harbour had just come into view when she announced: "I shall swim the last stretch." Before anyone could stop her she jumped over the side. Her security chief had no choice — he followed suit. For two hours he swam towards shore, a respectable distance behind the unconcerned Queen. Much of her energy has gone into social

work. She once confided to a university friend: "If my destiny had not lain elsewhere, I should have liked to become a social worker." She has been involved with social affairs since the early Thirties when the consequences of the economic depression were felt. Her work helped to establish the National Crisis Committee, and when the economic recession in the second half of the Fifties caused widespread unemployment in agriculture, Juliana visited distressed areas to see for herself what was happening.

Child welfare throughout the world has been her concern. Launching the Netherlands Child Welfare Scheme in the mid-Sixties, she said: "The people of tomorrow have no say in the disastrous happenings, the discords in the adult world, and they stand bewildered. They have a right to food and drink, to be healthy and to build up their own world in their play. Most important of all, a child must be surrounded with love. No one can live without receiving love. In fact, no human being lives without giving love. To live is to live for someone else."

Her favourite statesman shared her social awareness: ex-premier Dr. Willem Drees Sr., the man who ended poverty for thousands of Dutch people by introducing state pensions for all. She once told him: "You, of course, carry the political responsibility. But I carry the moral responsibility."

The monarch has no power to wield in the Netherlands but she does have influence, even in the formation of the coalition cabinets the Netherlands' proportional representation inevitably brings. She chooses an *informateur* to find a political leader to form an alliance reflecting the popular vote. Her influence comes too in the close contact she has with ministers. A sovereign's refusal to grant royal assent to acts of government in the Netherlands would probably see the end of the monarchy, but nevertheless Juliana has been no rubber stamp. She has been known to discuss new measures with ministers for hours, offering advice and sometimes pushing for modifications. *De Volkskrant* commented recently that no president could have shown greater adroitness. Perhaps the final word on Juliana should come from former premier Joop den Uyl, leader of an opposition Labour Party whose left wing vents republican rumblings from time to time. On hearing her January 31 broadcast, he said: "Her abdication fills us with sorrow. One can hardly imagine the Netherlands without her. Queen Juliana has given substance to the monarchy in a democratic way. Keen-witted and independent in her judgement, she performed her task as a constitutional monarch with great wisdom.

"She did so in a way which gave numerous people close affinity with her. They recognised in her humane ways their own aspirations and problems, right across party lines. She became one of us."



PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

Juliana opens Parliament last year



PHOTO: ANP FOTO

Out for a spin with Bernhard, 1967



PHOTO: ANEFO

Entertaining in the palace garden



PHOTO: ANP FOTO

Royals at wintersport. Back row (l. to r.): Irene, Margriet, Carlos, Beatrix, Claus, Bernhard, Juliana



PHOTO: ANP FOTO

The Queen with her successor Princess Beatrix



PHOTO: ANEFO

'She became one of us' — Joop den Uyl



PHOTO: JAN STERK

'She was not only a good head of state, but also a nice Queen' — De Volkskrant

Is Juliana really the wealthiest woman in the world?

The wealth of the House of Orange has long fascinated Dutch and foreign observers alike. In defiance of the laws of optics the Dutch royal family's fortune increases with the distance of the viewer. In his recent book, "Queen Juliana, the story of the richest woman in the world," American author William Hoffman estimates her wealth at more than 600 million dollars. The Guinness Book of World Records makes no mention of Juliana but lists her mother, the late Queen Wilhelmina, as the wealthiest woman in the world, with a fortune of more than 550 million dollars.

The Dutch have taken a more sober view of their royal family's riches. The most detailed independent estimate made recently was by two journalists writing for the weekly *Haagse Post*. In an article entitled "The poverty of the House of Orange," it concluded that the Queen was worth a "mere" 25 million dollars — less than a twentieth of the foreign estimates. While even this figure would make Queen Juliana an extremely wealthy woman the *Haagse Post's* investigations revealed "archaic conditions" in the royal palaces where for many years under Wilhelmina the honour of working for the House of Orange was considered reward enough, without the need for a decent salary.

When earnings were set at reasonable levels and the Dutch trade unions were first allowed to negotiate annual wage agreements in 1963 this placed such a strain on the royal finances, that the Queen's personal fortune began to be eaten into at an alarming rate. This prompted Dutch parliamentarians, after several years' debate, to agree rises in the state's stipend to the royal family and led to the state taking on many of the royal expenses. The problems of accurately assessing an individual's fortune are enormous. The discretion with which the Dutch have always treated their royal family increases

the difficulties. Royalty's shareholdings for example are impossible to unravel since companies issue only "bearer" and not "registered" shares in Holland. The share belongs to whoever physically holds the certificate and the company has no list of its shareholders. Even without this obstacle nominees are almost certainly used while no bank would reveal who it was working for.

Jewels, antique china tea services and works of art can be valued, though their worth will depend on a changing market. But they earn no income unless sold and the idea of selling off the crown jewels would be unthinkable. The daily newspaper *De Telegraaf* revealed earlier this year that Queen Juliana had set up four trusts to look after, respectively, the royal jewels, historical books and documents, paintings, and her more personal possessions. Princess Beatrix will therefore only "borrow" these treasures when she becomes queen.

Most sources for the estimates that have been produced of the Queen's wealth remain vague. The Guinness Book of Records does not say where its information comes from though it does speak of the "intractable difficulties" of assessing personal wealth. William Hoffman's controversial book speaks of Juliana as "the wealthiest Dutch citizen". Mr Hoffman produces no direct evidence of her wealth however and he is content to rely on American magazine estimates and her reported shareholdings in a couple of major Dutch companies.

The *Haagse Post's* investigation is the most convincing, though even this resorts in the final instance to saying only that its reporters' estimate of 25 million dollars, produced after months of research, was "not denied by people in a position to know". This figure is based on the eight

million dollars which Queen Wilhelmina was estimated to be worth in 1940 by the German occupiers of Holland who were intent on confiscating the royal family's fortune.

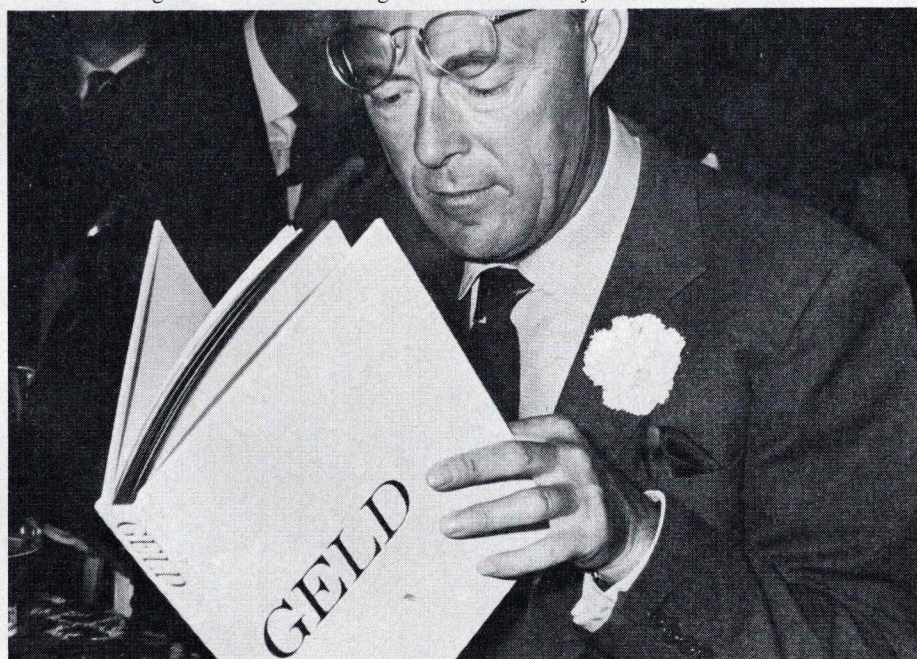
This figure of eight million dollars, the first realistic estimate to be made in recent times, was revealed in 1974 by Professor Lou de Jong in his official history of the Netherlands during the Second World War. In this study, "On the power of the king", the Dutch journalist,

H.A. van Wijnen, notes that only one man, apart from the Queen's own financial advisers, can know her real private wealth, and that is the inspector of taxes.

Van Wijnen cites an instance in 1970 when a small circle of ministers was told that the Queen was about twentieth in the list of rich Dutch citizens, a placing which Prince Bernhard has repeated in public.

One thing is certain from published records. Queen Juliana is not the best paid monarch in Europe. Despite parliament's efforts to boost her income in the early 1970s she still lags behind Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. The British monarch received 4.8 million dollars from the state in 1979, nearly double the 2.7 million dollars Juliana can expect this year. The royal families as a whole are more evenly balanced. The six million dollars paid to the top 11 members of the British royal family is not markedly higher than the 4.5 million dollars paid to the four senior members of the Dutch royal household. Queen Juliana has the advantage however of not paying tax on her income.

A comparison of the wilder claims made for Juliana's wealth and the simple life style chosen by the Queen indicate her fortune is less fabulous than many have suggested. But this simplicity, say the cynics, is merely an appeal to the strong Calvinist traditions of her subjects. The riddle remains.



Prince Bernhard — "The Queen is not even the wealthiest person in Holland"

PHOTO: ANEFO



PHOTO: ANP FOTO

Queen to be

An arrogant woman with a starchy hairstyle and a sharp tongue has featured often lately in the news — as has a dignified woman with a dimpled smile and a strong will: both descriptions have been applied to Crown Princess Beatrix who is soon to take over as Queen of the Netherlands from her mother. Since Queen Juliana announced her intention to abdicate, thousands of words have been printed in an attempt to introduce the country's new monarch; while her critics and admirers agree Beatrix is a very intelligent person, they are less unanimous about how likable she is. And it has become clear that there is considerable uncertainty about her true character.

One reason for this is that the Princess avoids publicity if she possibly can and rarely grants interviews.

It is known that she keeps in touch with current events, has travelled widely and is particularly concerned about matters which affect children. Further, she is an accomplished horsewoman, an experienced sailor and a talented sculptress.

She has been described, to give just a few examples, as aloof, a good friend, decisive, stubborn and impulsive. She has also been called conceited, but Beatrix denied this when she did give an interview a few months ago to the women's weekly magazine *Margriet*. "If I had to put a finger myself on my weakest point, it would be that I'm impatient. I try to fight it because I have noticed it sometimes causes problems."

Her father, Prince Bernhard, has said: "Beatrix has a very strong, sometimes domineering, character." And a journalist, Ans Herenius, who accompanied the Princess on a tour of China, said afterwards: "Beatrix is not reserved, as some people say, but she is careful. She has to be."

In fact, Beatrix has become increasingly careful about what she says as she has grown older. Even so, it seems she will not be allowed to forget some of her less popular earlier comments. Still quoted, for example, is a statement she made when she was 17 — "When I'm Queen, I must know the important people. Not the ordinary citizens — you only have to wave to them." This remark — more tactless than untrue — and others like it, were presumably not ignored by her parents either. Years later Beatrix said her mother had taught her always to remember her position. "You can never forget about it, not for a moment," said the Princess.

She was seven years old when Holland was liberated after the Second World War and she returned home with her mother and sisters from exile in England and Canada.

'I wouldn't orientate myself so broadly if I didn't know what lay ahead'

From then she had to get used to living in the limelight. As a school girl she showed her displeasure at this factor of her life when she approached a crowd that had gathered behind her in the street and said: "This is what I look like from the front and" — turning round — "this is what I look like from behind. Now are you satisfied?"

Queen Juliana, sympathising with her daughter, once appealed to the Dutch nation not to treat her children as extraordinary beings. Her husband, however, did not support this. "It belongs to the job," he said.

Years later Beatrix — who went to an ordinary school and studied at Leiden University like her mother — commented that "the moment the monarchy has to be sold, is the moment that marks the end of the monarchy."

This is, in fact, a possibility she has considered. "I can understand that some people are against the monarchy," Beatrix once said, "but as long as people ask it of us, we will do what we can to serve."

Now 42, Beatrix has to follow the reign of a warm Queen who has become widely loved as a grandmother-figure. Naturally, comparisons have been made of the two women. Juliana is seen as religious and mystical, Beatrix as realistic and down-to-earth; the mother is a good listener, the daughter tends to be short with people.

Both are considered energetic and practical with a resistance to superfluous ceremony. They share a strong sense of duty and wide interests.

Beatrix, who is said to get on better with her father, with whom she has more in common, has said of her mother and herself: "I recognise myself in her and she probably recognises herself in me, but nevertheless we are very different in many respects."

The name Beatrix means bearer of happiness, and in her home life, at least, that seems to be the case. She and her husband are said to be "clearly in love" and "very fond" of their three sons.

Her engagement to the German-born diplomat, Claus von Amsberg, was unpopular — memories of the Second World War, when German forces occupied the country, were still vivid and the people

resented his nationality. Despite widespread protests, Beatrix stood firm — Claus was the man she wanted to marry, and that was that. Nevertheless, the couple emphasised that they understood the hostility and respected the very real reasons for it.

The Princess further insisted on being married in Amsterdam although this was considered unwise. Bitterness was particularly strong in the capital, which had lost the majority of its large Jewish population to the Nazis during the war.

On March 10, 1966, the couple were married in the Westerkerk, their arrival at the church marred by smokebombs and accompanied by jeers as well as cheers.

Riot police and demonstrators struggled among the spectators; leaders of the Jewish community boycotted the event.

Subsequently, Claus, who was given Dutch nationality, was made a prince of the Netherlands. He impressed the people by learning to speak their language well — unlike his father-in-law, Bernhard, he managed to lose his German accent. Before long, his personality gained him the popularity he initially lacked.

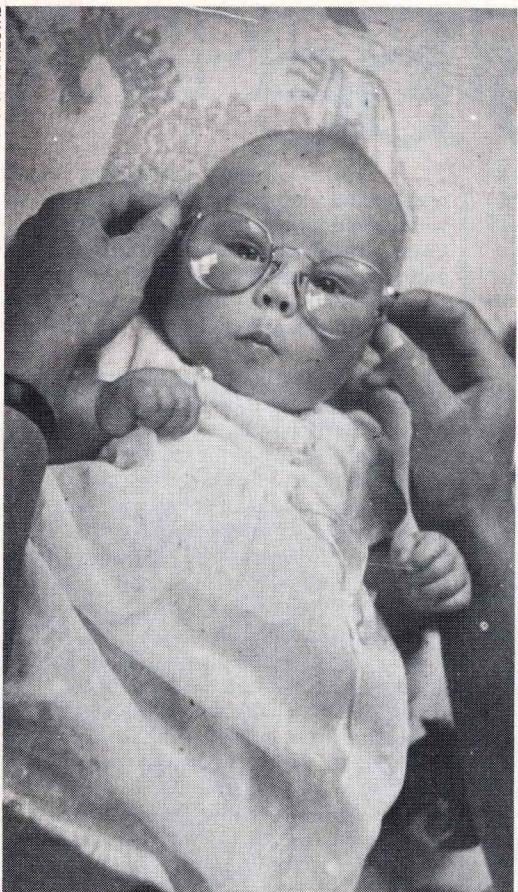
On April 27, 1967, the couple's first child, Willem-Alexander, was born. The following year Beatrix gave birth to Johan Friso and in 1969 to Constantijn. While the children were very young, she concentrated on her family — once lamenting the difficulties of being a mother and a working woman.

Having studied sociology, law, economics and parliamentary history, Beatrix later commented that she saw her duty as Crown Princess as learning as much as possible.

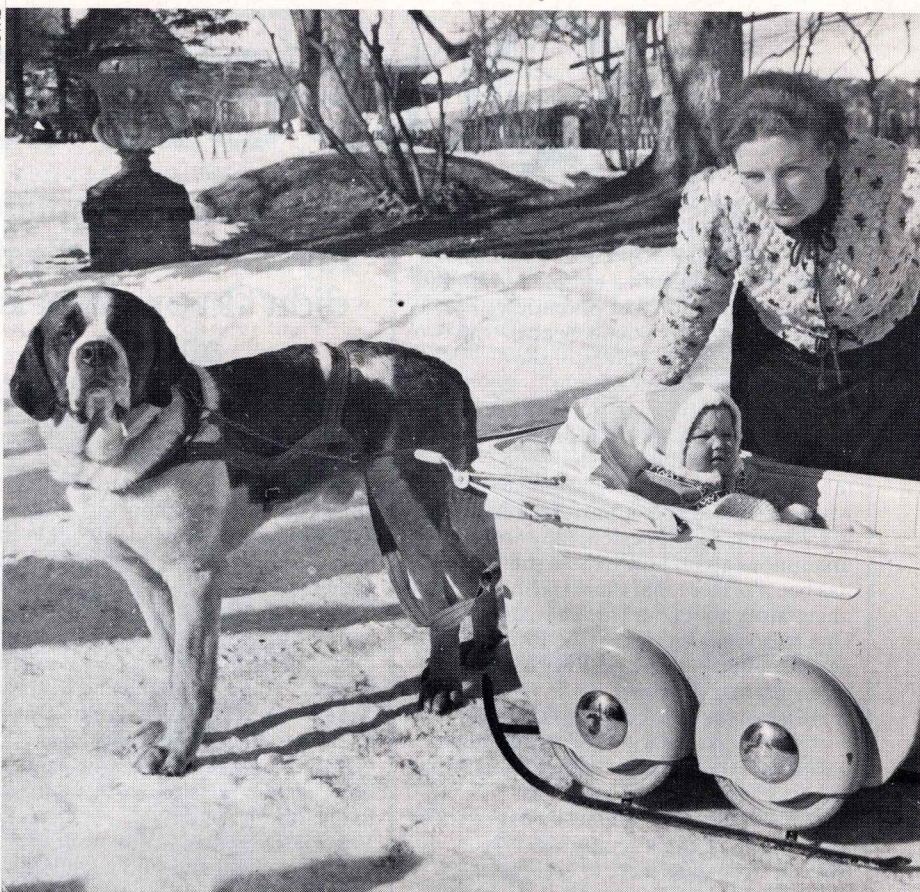
"I wouldn't orientate myself so broadly if I didn't know what lay ahead. It is unavoidable that you take account of that in everything you do."

During the past few years, in particular, Beatrix has prepared intensively for the task which now awaits her. And the interview with her that was published in *Margriet* suggests she feels ready to perform it. She regards her duty as serving as best she can, given her personal limitations and those placed on her. "If you succeed in that and can, at the same time, find your own identity, then it is a marvellous function. Very heavy, with many difficult sides, but a tremendous task."

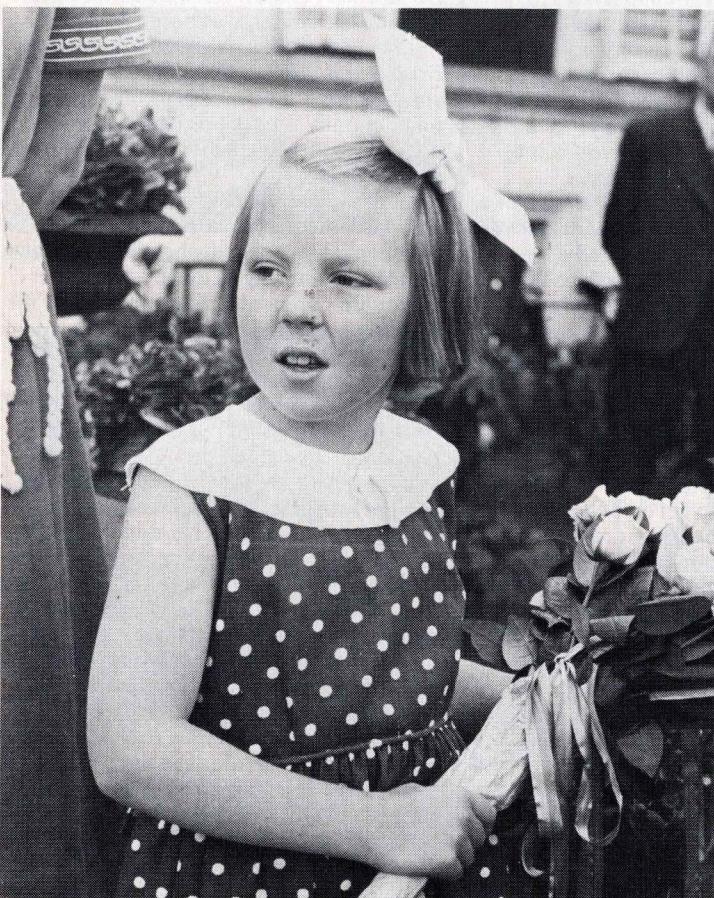
The Crown Princess added that her function was something she had consciously accepted, not simply felt obliged to fulfil. "I see my function as a calling rather than destiny," she said. "I have definitely had a moment in my life when I thought: yes, now I accept it, now I really accept it."



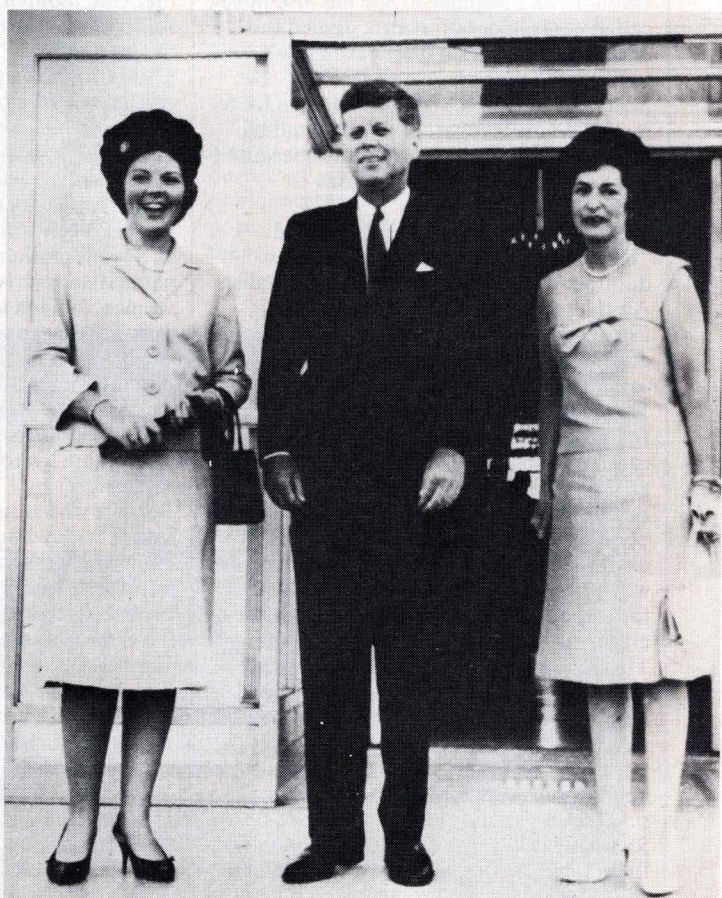
Baby Beatrix behind father's spectacles



Switzerland, 1939 — Juliana, Beatrix and Saint Bernard



'A strong character, sometimes domineering' — Bernhard on Beatrix



With Lady Bird Johnson and John Kennedy a few months before his assassination



Courting Claus at Soestdijk Palace, 1965



PHOTO: SPAARNESTAD

Stormy wedding procession in Amsterdam, 1966



PHOTO: SPAARNESTAD

On balcony, Dam Palace — cheers and jeers

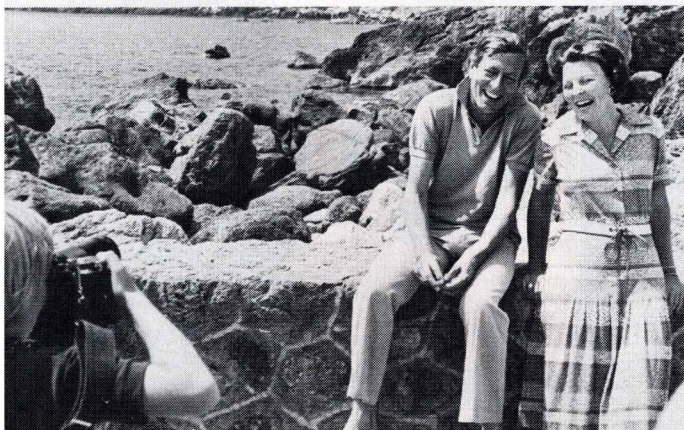


PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

Royal double-take in Italy



PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

On Great Wall — 'When I'm Queen I must know the important people'



You can still taste the good old days.

Sovereign power

Crown Princess Beatrix has made it clear she does not regard cutting ribbons and laying foundation stones as reigning. Instead, it is expected that when she becomes Queen of the Netherlands she will play as active a role in society as her position allows.

In a recent interview she said that while it was essential she and her husband remained above party politics, they should not keep themselves apart from anything happening in politics. "We must have contact with as many sectors of society as possible," she added.

The approach Beatrix is expected to take to her task as sovereign, has led the Dutch press to try and establish exactly what power will be available to her.

Perhaps the most significant function the Dutch Queen has, is her part in the formation of a cabinet after elections. No party in the Netherlands is strong enough to win over half the seats in parliament on its own, so the country has to be ruled by a coalition government. When the election results are known, the Queen must assess the situation by hearing the advice of various political figures, including the floor leaders of all the parties. She can also call on others of her own choice to give her additional guidance.

On the basis of these discussions, she appoints the man she believes is most likely to be able to form a representative government — if he does succeed, he may become Prime Minister. If not, the Queen can either instruct him to try again or give the job to someone else.

Another general election is due to be held in the Netherlands before May next year, so the formation of a cabinet will be one of Beatrix's first major tasks as Queen.

In this capacity she will also receive regular visits from the Prime Minister, as her mother has done until now. There is no record of what is said at these meetings — and there has been speculation that a strong Queen could exert considerable influence over a weaker Prime Minister. Summing up the political strength of the Dutch monarch, a senator and former minister of internal affairs, Professor W.F. de Gaay Fortman, has said: "She has no power, but does have influence."

A position automatically held by a Dutch sovereign, is that of chairman of the Council of State, the highest advisory body to the Crown.

As heir to the throne, Princess Beatrix has been entitled to membership of the council, and during the past few years she has attended its weekly meetings regularly. Now she has let it be known that she

intends to continue attending after she becomes Queen, unlike her mother who did not make much use of her right to chairmanship.

The council examines every piece of legislation before it is tabled in parliament, advising on the judicial aspects of law making, and so an extensive range of subjects arises. According to a council member who does not wish to be named, Beatrix has always shown a broad interest in matters brought before the council. "Her manner of questioning gives the impression she has studied the documents," he said. The council can also initiate bills and Beatrix is said to be involved with the introduction of one aimed at protecting the privacy of people; it has apparently been nicknamed "The bill of Beatrix".

Further, the Council of State is the highest appeal body in the country, a factor which is believed to attract Beatrix who is particularly concerned with matters relating to welfare.

Specifically interested in the welfare of children, Beatrix is, for instance, president of a foundation for handicapped children. It has been reported that all members of the current royal household — many of whom are elderly — will hand in their resignations when Queen Juliana abdicates at the end of this month. Beatrix has apparently planned a tighter, more efficient household — she wants to operate on a more business-like and less traditional basis.

Not long after she becomes Queen, Beatrix will visit the last remaining Dutch colony — the six Antilles islands in the Caribbean. Prime Minister Andries van Agt has announced she will go on this trip before the end of the year.

Beatrix has travelled widely during the past ten years, visiting several African states, the Soviet Union, China, Japan, Israel and Egypt, among others.

She has been praised for "the amazingly intensive and serious way" she prepares for trips abroad.



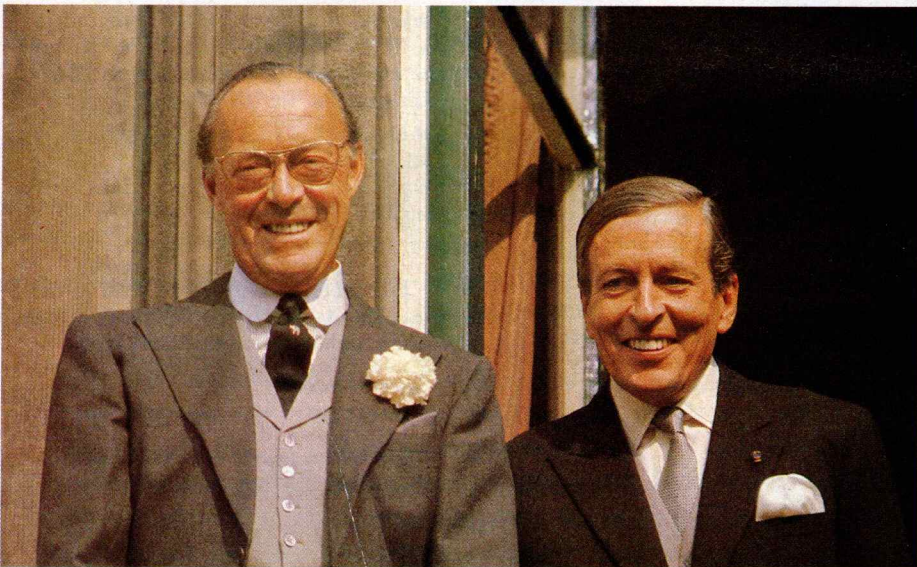
Beatrix: 'We must have contact with as many sectors of society as possible'

A POPULAR PRINCE



Claus in China — he advises on development aid projects

PHOTO: ANP FOTO



More reserved than his flamboyant father-in-law (left)

PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS



At an institute for the deaf in Jordan

PHOTO: ANP FOTO



Windsurfing at Porto Ercole, Italy

PHOTO: BENELUX PRESS

Not only is a queen to reign in the Netherlands for the third time in succession since a monarchy was established, but the inauguration of Crown Princess Beatrix will also give the country its third German-born prince consort.

Like Queen Wilhelmina's husband Prince Hendrik and Queen Juliana's husband Prince Bernhard, the man Beatrix became engaged to in 1965 was German; a few months before the wedding Claus von Amsberg, who changed his name to the Dutch form, **van Amsberg**, was granted nationality of the Netherlands by an act of parliament.

Although Beatrix's father and grandfather were German, the nationality of the man she chose to marry caused considerable hostility — the activities of the Nazis during the Second World War were still remembered in Holland with great bitterness.

Nevertheless, Prince Claus has become well liked and respected. Now 53, he is more reserved than his flamboyant father-in-law, Bernhard, and he is said to have a calming influence over the sometimes hot-headed Beatrix.

During the war, Claus served with the German army for three months in Denmark and with the 90th panzer division in Italy in 1945. In May of that year he was captured by the US forces and sent to a prisoner of war camp.

A diplomat, Claus entered the West German Foreign Service in May, 1958, serving in Santa Domingo and later in Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. He stayed in Africa until 1963, when he returned to the Foreign Ministry in Bonn where he worked until August 1965.

In a recent interview, Prince Claus criticised the fabricated articles printed in gossip magazines about, among others, his family. He added that contrary to the impression sometimes created, the life-style of his family fell within normal boundaries.

Particularly interested in Third World affairs, he is special advisor to the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation, travelling widely to inspect and give advice on Dutch development aid projects abroad. The minister, Jan de Koning, has expressed the hope that Claus will be able to continue in this function after his wife becomes Queen of the Netherlands. Recently, a majority of the Second Chamber of Parliament announced it had no objections to this as long as Claus did not become involved in political matters.

The Prince is, however, to relinquish his position as chairman of the *Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers* (SNV), an organisation concerned with sending volunteers to developing countries. SNV projects are paid for by the Minister of Development Cooperation. It is thought that as chairman, a position Claus has held for six years, he could face political considerations which would present difficulties in his position as husband of the monarch.

A SPIRITED HEIR

For the first time in nearly a century, the Netherlands is again to have a male heir to the throne. Willem-Alexander is the eldest child of Crown Princess Beatrix who will become Queen of the Netherlands after her mother's abdication at the end of this month.

Queen Juliana's high-spirited grandson will celebrate his 13th birthday just a few days before she ends her reign. When Beatrix is inaugurated, her son will take the title Prince of Orange. When he was born, on April 27, 1967, there was great excitement at the news that he



Claus and Beatrix with sons — Willem-Alexander (right) — and nephew Carlos

was a boy — there had been no male births in the Dutch royal family for 116 years. However, *oranje bitter*, the traditional drink to celebrate a royal birth, was later poured as a toast for many more males: all of Juliana's daughters have had sons and Willem-Alexander has two brothers. In 1884 the last surviving son of King Willem III died. Also named Willem-Alexander, he was the half-brother of Princess Wilhelmina, daughter of the King and his second wife Queen Emma. Wilhelmina later became the country's first female monarch, following the reign of three kings after the Netherlands became a monarchy, under Willem I, in 1815. Juliana was Wilhelmina's only child and she in turn had four daughters, now giving the Netherlands its third queen. Beatrix's son will then be the seventh monarch. As heir to the throne, his official title will be Willem-Alexander Claus George Ferdinand, Prince of the Netherlands, Prince of Oranje Nassau, Jonkheer van Amsberg. A bill is at present being considered which will raise the age at which an heir can become sovereign from 18 to 21. It is also expected that the preference which has until now been given to male descendants over female will be removed. Neither change, however, is likely to be significant for the present royal family. Crown Princess Beatrix and her husband Prince Claus have favoured as informal an upbringing for their sons as possible. The forwardness with which the princes approach publicity has been called cheeky as well as charming. Their activities — and antics — are a popular subject for press photographers. On one occasion Willem-Alexander borrowed a camera from a news-photographer and then asked his mother to pose. He had captured a smile, although the result was a little blurry.

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Willem-Alexander — first male birth in Dutch royal family for 116 years

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The uncrowned Queen

There will be no coronation when Crown Princess Beatrix becomes Queen of the Netherlands after her mother's abdication on April 30; all Dutch monarchs have been inaugurated without a ceremonial crowning.

When Willem I sought a union with Belgium — creating the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815 — it was for practical reasons: he wanted to strengthen the defence against Napoleon. A coronation is a spiritual dedication and must be performed by a high church dignitary. At the time Willem I was to be made King, no one could be found to suit both Protestant Holland and Roman Catholic Belgium. So the only satisfactory answer was an inauguration.

The Dutch royal family does have a crown, but not only is its functional value limited,

it is also not worth very much money.

The stones of real value owned by the royal family can be found in Queen Juliana's personal jewels.

It is a tradition that when a new monarch is sworn in, the crown, a sceptre and orb lie on a table during the ceremony, but their purpose is strictly symbolic.

During the inauguration, the monarch swears to protect and preserve the country and its independence, to protect the freedom and rights of all her subjects and to strive for their welfare.

After Queen Juliana announced she would abdicate on her 71st birthday, Beatrix chose to be inaugurated on the same day, partly as a mark of respect for her mother and also to maintain the date, April 30, as a public holiday. The Queen's Day can be celebrated either on her birthday or on the day she was inaugurated. Beatrix's birthday is in January and therefore not well suited to the outdoor festivities which are held nationwide on this annual public holiday. Like her mother and grandmother before her, Beatrix will be inaugurated in the Gothic Nieuwe Kerk, off Dam Square in Amsterdam. This ancient church will be officially re-opened on April 17, after restoration work which has taken almost 21 years to complete and has cost about \$25 million. Building on the church began in the 15th century. Now the foundations

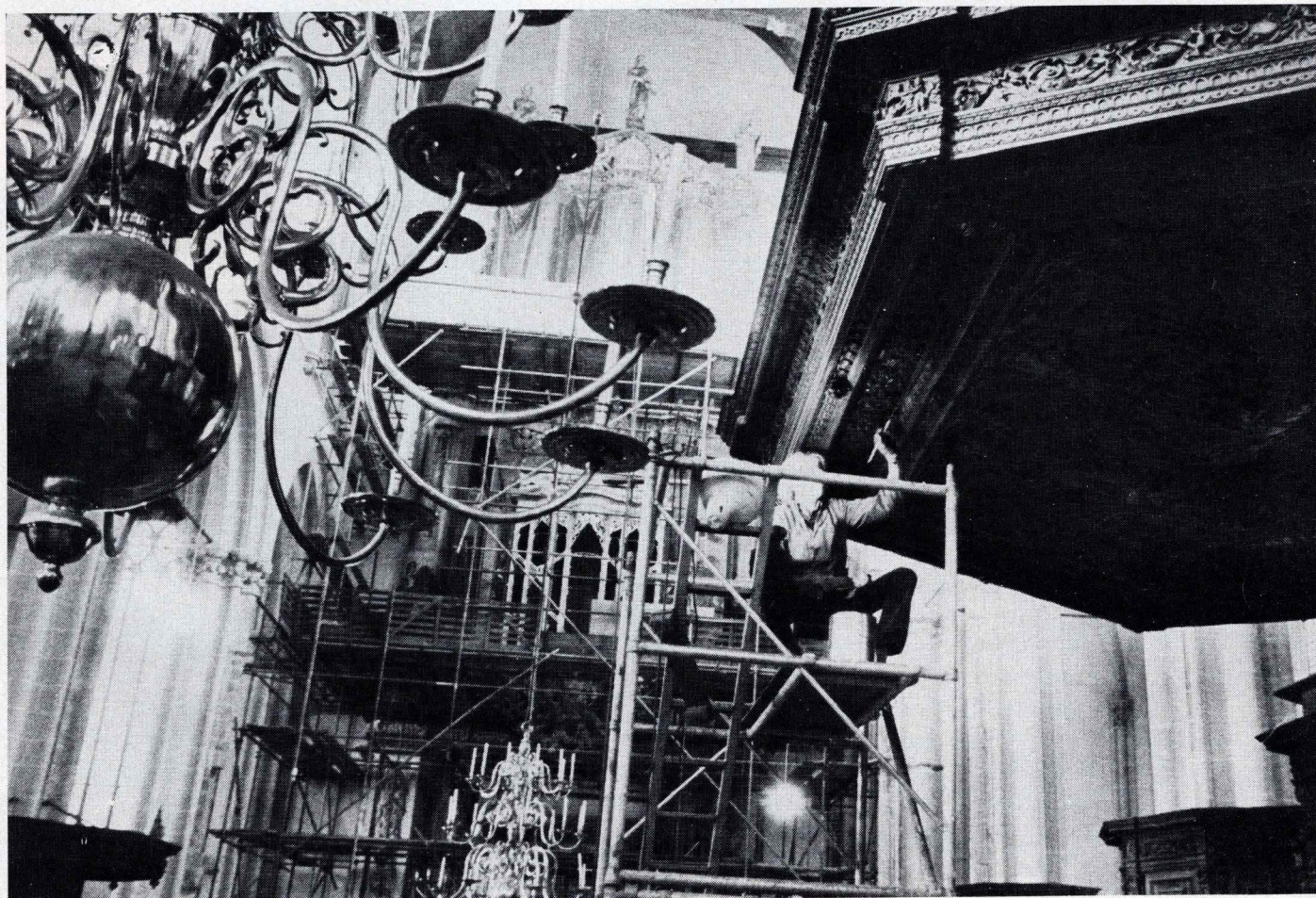
and pillars have been reinforced and the stained glass windows carefully repaired and cleaned.

Some 3,000 invitations are to be sent for the inauguration.

Beatrix will arrive at the church in the elaborate Golden Coach which was given to Queen Wilhelmina by the City of Amsterdam, on the day after she was inaugurated in September 1898.

The design and construction of this coach was the work of expert craftsmen: just two of the requirements were that the coach had to afford the Queen a clear view of her people and they, in turn, of her, while the roof had to be high enough for her to stand up and yet low enough to fit under mediaeval arches. The paintings which decorate the coach include small dog and owl emblems, representing loyalty and vigilance, and the wheel hubs are suns with the spokes as rays.

As Queen, Beatrix will live with her family in the palace Huis ten Bosch, near The Hague. It is not yet ready, however, and the family will stay in their present home, Drakensteyn, for a few months longer. The palace being prepared for Beatrix was built in the middle of the 17th century. In all, the royal family has six palaces. Juliana has made Soestdijk her home and will continue to live in this palace after she abdicates.



Putting finishing touches to the 21-year restoration of the Nieuwe Kerk where Beatrix will be inaugurated on April 30

PHOTO: ANP/FOTO

A GREAT STATESMAN

The Netherlands has the rare distinction of having been a republic before becoming a monarchy. And for a large part of the 17th century the Dutch Republic was a thriving concern under the leadership of Johan de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland.

Although he did collaborate with William, Prince of Orange, this wily statesman and politician felt it was better to keep the Oranges outside the government, to educate William in the spirit of the republic, and at all costs to prevent political and military power falling under a member of the royal however.

Followers of the House of Orange, however, saw de Witt as the sly devil who kept the Prince away from his inheritance. De Witt's life — and death — were full of tragic irony.

Because this Dutchman was one of the greatest statesmen of the 1600s, many historians have written about him, but there can hardly be a treatment of the intricacies and historical significance of his career, in any language, that matches Herbert Rowen's detailed biography of de Witt. Describing his youth and the society he grew up in, Rowen shows how de Witt developed as an eloquent champion of republican principles. Recognised by contemporaries for his sharpness of mind, strength of purpose and good humour, de Witt emerged as a brilliant leader whose career ended in a death of horror rarely paralleled in history. Rowen's biography embraces all aspects of de Witt's political, intellectual, and personal life, including his role as a mathematician admired by Newton. And the biographer wastes no time in separating fact from legend, for instance bringing into perspective, for the first time, de Witt's relationship with the philosopher Baruch Spinoza.

The author also places de Witt's relationship with the House of Orange in a more subtle light and suggests that the country never seems to have been truly a republic.

But from 1651 to 1672 de Witt certainly played the key part in the domestic and

foreign policies of the Dutch Republic and Rowen examines in detail the politician's system of government as Grand Pensionary of Holland which made him, in effect, prime minister of the United Provinces of the Netherlands.

Only a thorough grasp of Dutch history could enable Professor Rowen to present such a clear portrayal of the shifting sands and tides of volatile domestic Dutch politics involving Orangists and Republicans, and their interaction with the complexities of international politics in 17th century Europe.

Authoritative, but never didactic, Rowen recreates a compelling picture of the stormy life and times of de Witt. While obviously sympathetic to the subject, Rowen is careful to point out the numerous areas of disagreement surrounding the man, as, for example, in his balanced treatment of the variant explanations of the motives of the mob responsible for de Witt's death (his

murderers cut his flesh into pieces and ate it).

In the end, Prince William, who was later to become King of England, was able to realise what de Witt, for all his diligence and zeal, could not achieve in his lifetime.

De Witt had been unable to prevent the coalition of the two most powerful monarchs in Europe — Louis XIV of France and Charles II of England — against the United Provinces; not for want of ingenuity on de Witt's part but because neither Louis nor Charles was willing to pay the price.

De Witt's own base proved too small, the devotion of the people to the House of Orange too great, for the republican to be able to retain his grasp on power. But there was no sign, says Rowen, that William tried to thrust de Witt out of office, as some earlier writers have suggested. Rather there was every indication that de Witt's own camp took advantage of opportunities to get rid of him.

A popular image of de Witt has survived in Holland, and the nature of his barbaric death is discreetly omitted from Dutch school history books. Early this century a statue was erected in The Hague to this "perfect Hollander". Ironically it stands in the square where the Grand Pensionary was eaten by his fellow citizens.

The inscription on the statue reads:
Leader and servant of the Republic,
Builder of her Mightiest fleets,
Defender of the free sea,
Guardian of the country's money,
Mathematician.

But perhaps the most telling tribute comes from the Dutch people themselves. There is an often-used expression in Dutch: *een jongen van Jan de Witt* (one of Jan de Witt's lads). It implies a man of courage, resolution, and thoroughness — someone, in the words of the dictionary, "you can count upon".

KW

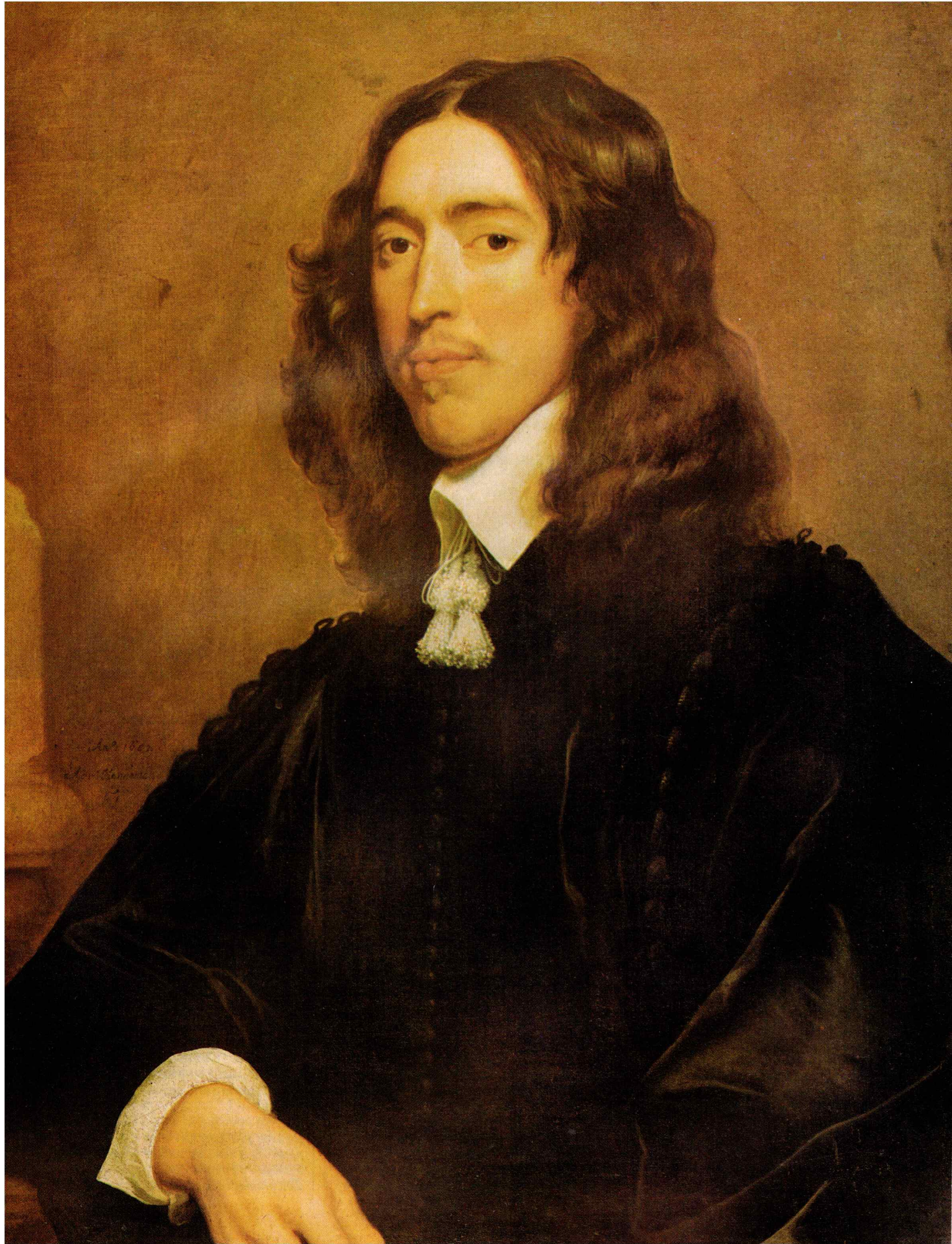
John de Witt, Grand Pensionary of Holland 1625 - 1672, by Herbert H. Rowen, published by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.



William III — de Witt worked with him

PHOTO: COLLECTION OF THE HOUSE OF ORANGE

Portrait of Johan de Witt by Adriaen Hanneman (Collection Museum Boymans-van Beuningen)



Jan 1662
John Gougeon
17



Born in 1913 in The Hague, Simon Carmiggelt came to Amsterdam during the Second World War and joined the Resistance group putting out the clandestine news-sheet *Het Parool* (The Watch Word), now a large Amsterdam daily carrying Carmiggelt's column *Kronkel*. The master of

compactness and nuance, Carmiggelt writes about people — their joys, sorrows, hopes, fears, their quirks and foibles. Not so much stories, they are perceptive observations of everyday life which have earned him the Constantijn Huygens Prize for literature and the P. C. Hooft Prize.

Being nice

The little tea salon still kept its old Hague air of refinement. The serene young waitress, in black with a miniscule white apron, had all the time in the world to let her guests select a teacake as if making a choice for life. The furniture was not antique, merely passé. There was a lingering, indefinable scent of sweet and bitter. The framed portrait of a duchess someone looked haughtily down upon us. Not that there was much to see, for it was a quiet hour.

Two women sat at a table drinking tea. As I was finding a place in a corner, one of them said, "Oh well, there was so little I could do . . ."

She was in her late fifties and well-dressed, but she lacked the chill of the sophisticate who has become inaccessible behind her façade.

"He didn't love me any more," she continued. "Oh, I don't mean . . . I'm past all that . . . But the little things. Saying something nice. Bringing home flowers. 'You've already got some flowers,' he'd say. But I'd bought those myself."

The other woman poured a cup of tea and said, "I know what you mean. They all get like that." Her tone was more aggressive.

"Yes, but my case was different from yours," replied the first woman in a friendly way. "He didn't have anyone else. I'd have sensed that. No, it was all because he was so unhappy. With his work. That merger, you know. He couldn't get along with the man who was supposed to be his junior but was actually taking over the place. And then, he simply didn't understand all these modern things — co-determination, or whatever you call it. He'd yell at me about it every night. After he'd had a drink or two, of course. If I didn't watch every word I said, I became his enemy, too. I could do so little. He was unhappy — and really so very alone."

Her smile, gently self-mocking, became her.

"In my powerlessness I did the craziest

things," she said. "It was a sort of superstition. For example, in the morning, after he'd had his shower and breakfast, I'd run my bathtub full of water. To the brim. You know why?"

The other woman shook her perfectly coiffed head.

"Well, it was this idea of mine. Right after breakfast he'd leave for the office, to face another terrible day. So then I'd take a bath. And when I was finished, I'd pull out the plug and begin to get dressed very fast. As fast as I could. Because what I thought was this: if I get everything on before the bath drains completely away, things will go better for him — and for us."

"Your make-up, too?"

"No, the make-up didn't count," she answered, again with that smile. "Just my clothes. That's all. Idiotic, isn't it?"

"Not so idiotic," said her friend. "When my husband started fooling around with that wench, I did something like that, too. In the mornings, in the kitchen. I'd wash the breakfast dishes. And when I was through, I'd grab up the tea cloth any which way and I'd think, 'If I can hold it so that I can loop it on the hook with just one move, everything will be all right again.' That's

crazy, too, isn't it? I haven't done it for ages now."

"I quit that stuff with the bath and getting dressed so fast, too, when he took his early retirement," said the first woman. "Now he isn't so unhappy any more. He's resigned himself to things." And after a short silence: "But while I was still doing it . . . You've lived with each other so long, and yet . . . I remember one morning. He was all ready to go to the office. The bathroom door was slightly ajar. I looked in. The taps were turned off, and the tub was only half full. 'Did you do that?' I asked. I was furious, because with that little bit of water I'd never make it getting dressed, and it was against the rules to run more water in — don't ask me why. 'Yes,' he said, looking surprised. 'You mustn't do that.' I screamed at him. And then he said, so helplessly, 'I don't understand you. I just did it to help. To be a little bit nice to you. Don't you keep saying I'm never nice to you any more?'"

Originally published as "Aardig zijn" in Simon Carmiggelt's "Slenteren" (Sauntering), Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1975. Translation by Elizabeth Willems-Treeman, copyright 1980.



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