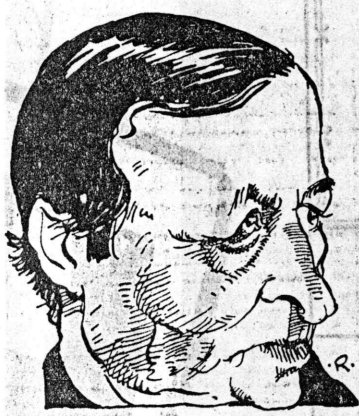


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# Tragic Prince

## living in the shadow of his Queen



Prince Claus ... weary and ponderous.

By JOHN O'NEILL

Act One. Scene One. A tall man of practised deportment walks slowly into the lobby of the Royal Family's working palace.

He is a Prince and his movements are weary and ponderous. He appears to have a tear welling in his eye, hinting, one fears, at the onset of yet another bout of severe depression.

He calls for his aides to bring a round of drinks.

"My first responsibility," he says, "is as the husband of the reigning monarch. I assist my wife in the performance of her duties. Everything I do is somehow connected with the functions of my wife."

The play, the tragedy of Claus, Prince of the Netherlands, has begun.

The Prince, 62, and his wife, Queen Beatrix, 51, arrive in Australia today for a 12-day tour.

As heir-apparent and more recently as Queen, she has enjoyed the adoration of her public. As Prince Consort and a German whose people occupied the Netherlands and killed Dutch Jews, he has endured hate and forsaken the right to speak his mind.

The diplomat-cum-lawyer married the future Queen in 1966. As they were exchanging vows, youths were rioting in Amsterdam's streets, throwing smoke bombs in protest at the union of

their Princess and Claus, a former member of the Hitler Youth.

Earlier, Klaus (he later changed his name to the Dutch spelling of Claus) had told the press that yes, he had been a private in the German Army and yes, he had been a member of the Hitler Youth. But, he protested, it had been compulsory at his school.

"I did not like the Hitler Youth at all ... [and later] I can assure you that I and my fellow soldiers knew nothing about those atrocities. I know this is difficult to believe, but it is true."

The Princess took the throne in 1980 after her mother, Queen Juliana, abdicated. The Prince took to a psychiatric hospital 18 months later.

Het bewuste artikel in de Krant

Three weeks ago, the Prince met members of the Australian press at his wife's palace in The Hague. There, he confided: "I think there is a problem when you are on a State visit [it's so] organised ... You asked me if I would like to do something else, some sightseeing. I would like to see something of the central parts of Australia."

Alas, the Prince, as a Dutch protester pointed out to him in a letter, will not even be meeting any of the original inhabitants, the Aborigines. But, says the Prince, he can't complain: "I've been told to steer clear of that subject as I know very little about it."

During the next 12 days, highlights of the couple's official

appointments will include: a wreath-laying ceremony, a State dinner with the Governor-General, a visit to Parliament House, a lunch with the Prime Minister, a visit to a school of art, a meeting with the Dutch ambassador, a visit to a monument, a trip to a farm to watch sheep being shorn, lunch aboard a military ship, etc etc.

In Melbourne, the Prince's wife, the Queen, will present The Cup.

Nonetheless, the Prince is looking forward to his travels. "One of the great advantages of a country like Australia is that they don't recognise you," he says. "Our faces are not known and so we can walk around the streets."