

Handout # 4: The Royals in Exile

The Royal Exile

On 10 May 1940, when Holland was attacked by the Germans, Queen Wilhelmina proclaimed the invasion was a violation of international law, and asked for all of The Netherlands to do their duty to defend the motherland.

However, the Dutch army was no match for the German army, and the situation quickly deteriorated. A key objective of the invaders was the capture of the Dutch Royal Family, so the Queen was advised to have her family sent away for safety.

The Queen, along with her daughter, Crown Princess Juliana, son-in-law Bernard, and little granddaughters, fled to England on a British Destroyer. She was followed by the senior ministers of the Dutch government.



The Queen sought refuge in England to avoid capture, and, from there, headed her country's government-in-exile. However, England was under the constant threat of German air attacks, so there was an urgent need to find a safe place where, in case the Queen of the Netherlands were killed or captured, her heir (Princess Julia) would be able to take up the reins of government in exile. As a result, Princess Juliana and her two small children boarded a vessel bound for Canada.

Although Queen Wilhelmina lived in England, and Princess Juliana in Canada, throughout the war, the Royal family remained as symbols of hope and resistance to the Dutch people.

Queen Wilhelmina - Symbol of Resistance & Allegiance

Wilhelmina emerged as a feisty leader who inspired loyalty, even in her absence. While in London, she found a great purpose for her life in giving hope and comfort to the oppressed Dutch people through radio broadcasts. She spoke weekly to the people of the Netherlands, inspiring them to take heart and to fight against those who would enslave their country. The Dutch responded by planting orange flowers in their gardens and window boxes to symbolize their allegiance to the exiled family of “Willem of Orange”.

In January 1945, with a severe winter tightening its grip on northwestern Europe, and Winter Hunger in the Netherlands, Queen Wilhelmina pleaded for help by writing to U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and King George VI, predicting “if a major catastrophe, the like of which has not been seen in Western Europe since the Middle Ages, is to be avoided in Holland, something drastic has to be done now.”

When the Queen returned to the Netherlands in 1945, she was met by her people with cheers, singing, and weeping. In the people's eyes, she was a strong symbol of hope and resistance.

Symbols of Hope

Crown Princess Juliana and her two small children (baby Irene and two year old Beatrix), sailed for Canada in June, 1940, and made Ottawa their home.

While in Canada, Princess Juliana showed her support of the Canadian war effort by joining the everyday activities of the women around her. She knitted scarves and sweaters for Canadian Soldiers, volunteered for fund-raising efforts and gave blood to the Red Cross. Her children, made the most of their new home by attending school, building snow forts in the winter, and riding bikes in the summer! Prince Bernhard stayed in London, England with the Queen, but fortunately, he was able to visit his family in Canada occassionally.

In the spring of 1942, Princess Juliana had happy news - she was going to have a baby! On January 19, 1943, royal history was made when in a room in Ottawa's Civic Hospital, specially decreed to be Dutch territory, her third daughter Princess Margriet was born.

The tiny princess captured the hearts of Canadians and also brought new hope to the people of the Netherlands. Her birth became a symbol of hope and inspiration for the Dutch people who were fighting for their lives in Europe. They needed reason to hope, because back home in the Netherlands, each day had become a fight for survival.

Daisy: Blooms of Hope & Resistance

The name chosen for the new princess meant "daisy," a flower that was blooming in the Netherlands when it was invaded by Germany, and a flower that Queen Wilhelmina had declared the symbol of resistance and hope in the Netherlands. Queen Wilhelmina, broadcasting over the free Dutch radio told her people: "It is the intention of the parents through their choice of a name to establish a lifelong bond between our grievously tried people in the occupied part of the kingdom and the newly born.... the name is a tribute to the memory of our heroes on land and sea...."