Appeal to the Women in the Prussian State (1813)

Abstract

The royal princesses appealed in 1813 to the "women in the Prussian state" to become involved in the war against France. They upheld the gender-role dichotomy and called on women to intervene in the ways assigned to them. While the appeal narrowly outlined the framework of normatively permissible activities, it also resolutely inscribed women into the imagined nation.

Source

Appeal of the Royal Princesses to the Women in the Prussian State

"The fatherland is in danger!" Thus spoke the king to his trusted subjects, who love him, and everyone is rushing to his side to wrest the fatherland from this danger. Men are grabbing their swords and tearing themselves away from the circle of their families, youths are extracting themselves from the tender embrace of loving mothers, and the latter, full of noble feelings, are suppressing their sacred maternal tears. Everyone is flocking to the flags and arming themselves for the bloody battle for freedom and independence. The flame that burns in the breast of every person ensures a positive outcome. But we women, too, must contribute, help to bring about victory; we, too, must unite with the men and youths to save the fatherland. We, who belong to the fatherland, gladly place ourselves at the head of this association. We firmly believe that the noble-minded women and daughters of every class want to join us in providing assistance to the men and youths who are fighting for the fatherland, so that it again stands in the ranks of respected states, and peace can radiate its blessings. Our association will not only accept cash offered as a sacrifice but any expendable trifle of value—the symbol of fidelity, the wedding ring, the sparkling adornment for the ears, the costly necklace. Monthly contributions, materials, canvas, spun wool, and yarn are gladly accepted, and even the uncompensated processing of these raw materials will be viewed as an offering. Such donations, gifts, and services entitle contributors to call themselves from this point on "part-members of the Women's Association for the Welfare of the Fatherland."

Everything that is collected in this way belongs to the fatherland. These sacrifices serve the purpose of arming, clothing, and equipping the defenders who need it, and if the great beneficence of the women puts us in a position to do still more, then the wounded will be cared for, healed, and given back to the thankful fatherland so that from our side, too, the greatness and the beauty will be fulfilled, so that the fatherland, which is in danger, will be saved by our help as well, will redefine itself, and with God's help, will flourish.

Marianne, Princess of Prussia
Wilhelmina, Princess of Orange
Augusta, Crown Princess of Hesse[-Kassel]
Wilhelmina [of Prussia], widowed Princess of Orange
Princess [Louise, wife of] Ferdinand of Prussia
Louise, Princess of Prussia-Radziwill
Caroline, Princess of Hesse[-Kassel]
Marie, Princess of Hesse[-Kassel]

Berlin, March 23, 1813

Source: Aufruf der Königlichen Prinzessinnen an die Frauen im Preußischen Staate (1813), in Otto Karstädt, *Heldenmädchen und Frauen aus großer Zeit* (1813), vol. 15, *Als Deutschland erwachte*. Hamburg: Schloeßmann, 1913, p. 28f; republished in Bärbel Kuhn and Astrid Windus, eds., *Geschlechter-Konstruktionen. Gender im Geschichtsunterricht*. St. Ingbert, 2017, p. 62.

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Recommended Citation: Appeal to the Women in the Prussian State (1813), published in: German History Intersections, <https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/germanness/ghis:document-317> [September 16, 2026].