

Chapter 1 : Club Albert " BelgiansRTW

Albert I (8 April - 17 February) reigned as the King of the Belgians from to This was an eventful period in the history of Belgium, which included the period of World War I (), when 90 percent of Belgium was overrun, occupied, and ruled by the German Empire.

Prince Philippe was the third second surviving son of Leopold I r. Retiring and studious, Albert prepared himself strenuously for the task of kingship. In his youth, Albert was seriously concerned with the situation of the working classes in Belgium, and personally travelled around working class districts incognito, to observe the living conditions of the people. Upon his return to Belgium, he recommended reforms to protect the native population and to further technological progress in the colony. The letters express a deep mutual affection based on a rare affinity of spirit. The spouses shared an intense commitment to their country and family and a keen interest in human progress of all kinds. Together, they cultivated the friendship of prominent scientists, artists, mathematicians, musicians, and philosophers, turning their court at Laeken into a kind of cultural salon. He became King Umberto II r. Accession[edit] Newspaper compilation in December shows Albert at top left after inspection of a mine. His wife and children are at bottom right. Previous Belgian kings had taken the royal accession oath only in French; Albert innovated by taking it in Dutch as well. For instance, when his former tutor General De Grunne, in his old age, entered the Benedictine monastery of Maredsous in Belgium, King Albert wrote a letter to him in which he spoke of the joy of giving oneself to God. World War I[edit] Albert wearing the uniform of a British infantry officer inspecting the front line with British and Belgian officers. In fact, the French Government had told its army commander not to go into Belgium before a German invasion. King Albert, as prescribed by the Belgian constitution , took personal command of the Belgian Army , and held the Germans off long enough for Britain and France to prepare for the Battle of the Marne 6â€™9 September He led his army through the Siege of Antwerp 28 September â€™ 10 October and the Battle of the Yser 16â€™31 October , when the Belgian Army was driven back to a last, tiny strip of Belgian territory near the North Sea. Here the Belgians, in collaboration with the armies of the Triple Entente , took up a war of position, in the trenches behind the River Yser , remaining there for the next four years. During this period, King Albert fought alongside his troops and shared their dangers, while his wife, Queen Elisabeth, worked as a nurse at the front. The King also allowed his year-old son, Prince Leopold , to enlist in the Belgian Army as a private and fight in the ranks. The King, fearing the destructive results of the war for Belgium and Europe and appalled by the huge casualty rates, worked through secret diplomatic channels for a negotiated peace between Germany and the Entente based on the "no victors, no vanquished" concept. He considered that such a resolution to the conflict would best protect the interests of Belgium and the future peace and stability of Europe. At the end of the war, as commander of the Army Group Flanders , consisting of Belgian, British and French divisions, Albert led the final offensive of the war that liberated occupied Belgium. Post-war years[edit] Upon his return to Brussels, King Albert made a speech in which he outlined the reforms he desired to see implemented in Belgium, including universal suffrage and the establishment of a Flemish University in Ghent. That same year he was elected an honorary member of the New York Society of the Cincinnati. In New York the King received a Ticker tape parade in his honour. On 18 April , at the end of the Belgian general strike of , universal suffrage, approved by the Belgian Parliament , gave plural votes to individual men based on their wealth, education, and age, but this was clearly not a universal suffrage. He had four strategic goals: He strongly advised against a harsh, restrictive treaty against Germany to prevent future German aggression. During this period, he was also the first reigning European monarch to visit the United States. His death shocked the world and he was deeply mourned, both in Belgium and abroad. Because King Albert was an expert climber, some questioned the official version of his death and suggested that the King was murdered or even committed suicide somewhere else and that his body had never been at Marche-les-Dames, or that it was deposited there. There are two possible explanations for his death according to the official juridical investigations: Maarten Larmuseau and colleagues from the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven on bloodstained leaves collected from Marche-les-Dames concluded that King Albert died at that location. In , a close climbing

companion of the King, Walter Amstutz , founded the King Albert I Memorial Foundation , an association based in Switzerland and dedicated to honouring distinguished individuals in the mountaineering world. The obverse shows a portrait of the King. These were those of the king, differenced by a label gules, with one crescent argent on the central point. When his father died in , the crescent was removed. When he acceded as King, he gained the royal arms Belgium with inescutcheon of the shield of Saxony , undifferenced. Finally, after the abolition of the monarchy in Germany and the subsequent loss of his Saxon titles, Albert had the inescutcheon removed in

*Albert and the Belgians: Portrait of a King [Charles D'Ydewalle] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. This scarce antiquarian book is a facsimile reprint of the original.*

His family followed his example as well, serving to the best of their ability wherever they could. King Albert took the throne in 1909, only a few years before the start of WWI. During his early years, King Albert and his wife Elisabeth were widely popular for being seen as a good, moral, and happy family. Albert was an avid mountain climber and known as a benevolent ruler. His wife, Elisabeth, grew up watching and assisting her parents. Her father was an ophthalmologist, and her mother assisted as a nurse. Before the war hit Belgium, Albert refused to allow the Germans to march through his territory. When the Germans eventually did invade Belgium, just a day later, the Belgians were hit hard and overwhelmed. Despite the overwhelming force, the Belgians offered outstanding resistance, leaving the Germans to struggle in sniper-infested towns and a defiant population. The refusal to let the Germans pass in addition to the disproportionate resistance caused the Germans to commit several atrocities of war in Belgium out of sheer frustration, killing prisoners and civilians, with Belgians reportedly killing German prisoners as well. During all this, King Albert took personal command of his troops, heading to the front lines and inspecting defenses. The King led the defense at the siege of Antwerp, the most fortified city in Belgium. While some of the largest artillery pieces the world has ever seen, the Germans bombarded the city and surrounding forts. Despite this, the Belgians led several sorties to the south against the Germans. A political cartoon showing the small Belgians boldly standing up to the Germans. These attacks severely disrupted German plans to attack France and focused more of the reinforcements on Belgium. The allies ultimately had to retreat, but they had held long enough to make a second front at the Yser River, the last remaining westernmost sliver of Belgium left. At the Battle of Yser, the Belgians made a heroic defensive struggle for their remaining territory, led by their King. Over weeks of sustained attacks, the Belgians and French decided to flood parts of the river to create a more impassable barrier. King Albert sent the Belgian government to work in exile under Charles de Broqueville, in a French city while he remained at the front for the remaining years of the war. In addition, Albert was a relative of the German Kaiser Wilhelm, so many Germans thought they might be punished if they shot King Albert. Queen Elisabeth did not sit idly by during the war. She organized a nursing unit and served as a nurse herself. She was of German descent, but the troops and people loved her because she often visited troops near the front and was seen as being fiercely patriotic for Belgium. Prince Leopold was only 14 at the start of the war, but received permission from his father and served as a private during the war. Albert inspecting the trenches. Because of the harsh German rule in occupied Belgium, Albert worked hard to secure a separate, but fair, peace. His efforts failed, but he would again lead his troops to reclaim occupied Belgium at the end of the war. After the war, Albert was instrumental in implementing universal male suffrage. He was vocal in not giving Germany harsh terms in the peace, a wise and impressively objective stance considering what his country suffered at German hands. Still, an avid mountain climber as he was approaching his sixties, Albert was killed in a tragic climbing accident. He was an outstandingly beloved leader and well respected around the world as one of the greatest monarchs of the modern world.

Chapter 3 : Albert I of Belgium - Wikipedia

Albert II (born 6 June) reigned as the King of the Belgians from until his abdication in King Albert II is the son of King Leopold III and Queen Astrid, born princess of Sweden. He is the younger brother of Grand Duchess Joséphine-Charlotte of Luxembourg and King Baudouin, whom he succeeded upon Baudouin's death in

At his birth, no one expected that he would ever reign. He was married to Elisabeth of Bavaria, Queen of the Belgians , and had three children: As a constitutional monarch in a parliamentary democracy, Albert played the role of a mediator in the political problems of his day, among others the introduction of universal "one man one vote" suffrage, the language question, the economic crisis and the strengthening of national defence. Albert would, however, go down in history primarily for his leading role in during the First World War. For four years he held his ground in a small, unoccupied area behind the Yser River in the westernmost part of the country. Historical research shows that during the war, Albert adopted a position in keeping with the status of Belgium , created in as a neutral state , and intended to help maintain the balance of power in Europe. Albert and his government refused to accede to the German demand, made on 2 August , to march through Belgium in order to attack France. The king decided to take personal command of the army, surrounded by his general staff and military advisers but without ministerial responsibility for the conduct of the war. Albert was no strategist. Like the heads of states of other nations at war, he could have delegated the command to the chief of general staff. He knew that he was taking a heavy responsibility upon his shoulders. He feared that his government would align Belgium too closely with the French and British camp. Albert was convinced that the army of a neutral state such as Belgium could not simply rally behind the military objectives of France and Great Britain " to defeat Germany , recapture Alsace-Lorraine and safeguard the British Empire. The king also mistrusted the military commanders. He knew that many generals adhered to the French doctrine that victory in war depended on the moral strength of the army, the will to defeat the enemy by engaging in attack after attack. Albert and his military advisor Emile Galet , by contrast, took the principle of the true balance of power as their starting point, according to which a small army could not engage in offensives that had no real prospect of success. He refused to sacrifice his troops and thereby endanger the future of his country. Preventing unnecessary bloodshed was a matter of conscience. For four years, the Belgian army played a largely defensive role, repelling the often bloody attacks by the German army from the flooded Yser estuary " from Nieuwpoort through Diksmuide to the canal to Ypres " and striving to prevent them from reaching the ports. Throughout the war, the king stood by his soldiers and remained in De Panne, a small coastal town on the French border. But when it came to military decision-making, Albert would not countenance any ministerial responsibility. This greatly displeased Prime Minister Charles de Broqueville , who unsuccessfully engaged in conflict over this as late as and was forced, partly for this reason, to resign. Albert also refused in several instances to grant the requests with which the French and British assailed him in De Panne, namely, that he place the Belgian army under Allied command. Each time, Albert invoked constitutional reasons: In reality, his stance was based on the political and moral grounds cited above. Despite the thousands of soldiers who had already been sent into the line of fire, the front still held. The king feared that even if the Allies succeeded in pushing the Germans out of Belgium by force of arms, the whole country would be laid waste. He soon became convinced that it would be better to end the war through negotiations and a compromise that did not result in victors and vanquished. Yet when it came to peace initiatives, the king was dependent on his government. However, the latter had rallied completely around the Franco-British standpoint and even nurtured annexationist ambitions for the period following a military victory. The aim was not to sign a separate peace but, should the conditions prove acceptable, to persuade the French and the British that Belgium need not be liberated by military might. Proposals and counterproposals were put on the table, but satisfactory promises were not forthcoming. When Waxweiler died in a traffic accident in London in June , Albert wanted the talks to go on. Lagrange refused, however, as he was convinced that secret talks with the Germans, behind the backs of the Belgian ministers, was a dangerous course of action. Albert continued to hope that the seemingly endless war would bring the fighting parties to rethink their positions. He believed

that Belgium had to take advantage of the peace initiatives on offer, and sought to win over his minister of foreign affairs. The holder of that portfolio was in an unenviable position: The longer the war dragged on, the more sceptical and pessimistic the king became. Albert tried to persuade not only his ministers but also the Allies that continuing the war would only lead to more bloodshed and to more dead and injured, and possibly even "as in Russia" to revolutions and the fall of the West. His attempts foundered, however, and only brought him accusations of defeatism. Only in September, when it seemed that the joint Allied offensive had a chance of success, did the king lift his constitutional objections and allow the Belgian army to join the Group of Armies of Flanders GAF and participate in the liberation of Belgium. On 11 November, the armistice was signed. Albert now emerged from the war as the knight-king with an enhanced prestige that would radiate throughout the rest of his reign. As early as, it was in part thanks to his influence that a three-party government was established in Loppem that was prepared to introduce universal "one man, one vote" suffrage without the need for a constitutional amendment, thereby avoiding serious political tension. Throughout the interwar period, the political agenda was dominated largely by the financial and economic crisis and the linguistic dispute between the Flemish and francophone Belgians. In order to overcome the crisis, Albert did not hesitate to urge his ministers to take a firm line, among other things by asking parliament for special powers. When Albert tragically died on 17 February in a mountain climbing accident in Marche-les-Dames Belgium, the population deplored the death of this highly respected king as a great loss. Jan Velaers, University of Antwerp.

Chapter 4 : The Mad Monarchist: Monarch Profile: King Albert I of the Belgians

Albert I () was king of the Belgians from to He was especially concerned with the social welfare of his subjects and the development of commerce and industry in Belgium. Albert was born in Brussels on April 8, , the son of Philip, Count of Flanders, and Princess Marie of Hohenzollern.

Frederic Bonzon and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Belgian refugees, Gooie namiddag, damens en herren! I must also thank him for his help in finding out more about Professor Bonzon when all I had was a scrap of music and an address. But to start at the beginning – As you will know only too well, during and after the terrible events of August , something like a quarter of the population of Belgium fled, on foot, in carts, taking what they could carry, in many case with only the clothes they stood up in. Perhaps members of your own families were among them. They fled to neutral Holland, to France and to the United Kingdom – , people – men women and children – made their way across the English Channel by whatever means possible, and in such numbers that in one week after the fall of Antwerp on 10th October , 26, fugitives landed at Folkestone. And among their number were 64 year old Professor Frederic Bonzon, his wife Marie Therese Faviesse and their grown-up daughter Marthe who arrived in Folkestone on 9th October Many of those arriving were destitute, others were able to support themselves. In early September the British Government had offered hospitality to any refugees from Belgium for as long as it was needed and soon a Central Refugees Committee was established in London followed by voluntary committees around the country. A scheme was put in place for receiving and registering the refugees. On arrival in Folkestone, most people were sent to dispersal centres in London set up in public buildings like Alexandra Palace and Earls Court. The local committees around the country identified possible lodgings in their towns and villages and the refugees were then sent on to them. Others went directly from Folkestone to the care of a local committee, and this was the case for the Bonzon family for in December , just in time for Christmas, they are at a house in Tunbridge Wells – 11 Linden Park – a large roomed house round the corner from the famous Pantiles. Unfortunately the house no longer exists. The house was one of those provided by the local refugees committee and had been lent rent-free by a local builder. The fact that the Bonzon family was given lodgings in one of the houses provided by the Committee suggests that they had left Antwerp with very little and were not able to support themselves. This number was augmented by those who were able to support themselves or stay with friends. We learnt recently that one of the self-supporting families – the Meeus-Havenith family from Antwerp, chose to come to Tunbridge Wells simply because the novelist Thackeray had once lived there! So what was the town the Bonzon family and others found themselves in, like? In the 19th century the town began to attract more permanent residents. The surrounding countryside was ideal for walks and rides and early guide books of the town described the country houses that could be visited in the area. But by the autumn of it had also become a military centre Photo: A notable feature of the town, was its religious-ness – it was predominantly Church of England and non-conformist, and well-known for its more Puritan tendencies. And the following year the family moved to apartments in a house nearer the centre of the town – just along from the Opera House. And while the children needed to continue their education, the adults wanted and were encouraged to work – though it was made clear not at the expense of local workers. Going home was never far from the minds of the refugees, and finally after the Armistice in November , this was possible – thought not until early The Belgians had been in Tunbridge Wells for four and a half years and in that time were gradually absorbed into the life of the town. Their presence now is hardly known about, but they did leave at least two memorials of their stay. The first is an almost life-size bust of the then Mayor, Mr Whitbourn Emson, who was chair of the refugees committee during the whole period. It was commissioned and paid for by the Belgian Community from sculptor Paul Van Den Kerckhove, himself a refugee who stayed in the town with his wife and two daughters, and it stands today in the lobby to the Council Chamber in Tunbridge Wells Town Hall. But the souvenir album was a very special thank you from the people she helped, and it was there that I came across this: Thank you again for inviting me to speak today. I also discussed with Mr Cosaert the possibility of a Carillon piece by W.

After this, Albert focused on rebuilding Belgium and the lone Belgian colony of the Congo, where he created the Virunga National Park. Still, an avid mountain climber as he was approaching his sixties, Albert was killed in a tragic climbing accident.

He was formally sworn in August 9, Belgium found itself unexpectedly with a new king when King Baudoin died on July 31, Baudoin had no children, and nine days later his younger brother, Albert, took the oath as king of the Belgians the constitutional title of the Belgian monarch. He did not step aside in favor of his son, Philippe, as had been anticipated; at 33 years of age Philippe was rumored to be still unready for the responsibilities of the monarch. At the time of his death Belgium had begun a far-reaching federalization that made the maintenance of Belgian unity as a country questionable. The extent to which Albert would be able to play the part of mediator and peacemaker remained uncertain, however. As a constitutional monarch, the king of the Belgians may take no independent political action. When Baudoin, as a devout Catholic, found himself unwilling to sign a law permitting abortion, he withdrew from his office for a day to permit it to go into effect. The monarch is compelled to be extremely careful in using his influence as a symbol, especially since the reigns of two previous kings, Leopold II and Leopold III, had been marked by bitter and never fully resolved controversy over their policies. Subtlety, persuasiveness, patience, and imperturbability, as well as deep knowledge and understanding of issues, are required for a king. This is where there was anxiety about whether the new king could effectively carry through the healing and reconciliation for which he pleaded in his speech to the Parliament on taking the throne. His experience, apart from the largely honorary offices bestowed upon him as heir to the throne, was chiefly as an enthusiastic supporter of Belgian business interests abroad. While leaving the hard work of negotiating to businessmen and economists, he provided the flattering presence of what the British call a "royal. His obvious desire to preserve Belgian national unity was aided by the fact that he had not taken sides in the Flemish-Walloon conflict. The murders of several children led to the discovery of a pedophile ring. The king, who has no powers of government, spoke out freely and expressed his outrage on more than one occasion. He called for "profound change" in the wake of nationwide demonstrations over the incidents. On the personal side, King Albert II is an ardent fan of fast motorcycle driving sometimes halted but not charged by highway police. He is known to enjoy good living, although he was not a member of the international "jet set. After a storybook romance, he married an Italian princess, Paola Ruffo di Calabria, in King Albert II and the members of the royal family take a deep interest in social and humanitarian issues including health care, wildlife, and the environment. These modern royals sponsor a site on the Internet with news and tourist information concerning the Kingdom of Belgium. Information can be found online at [http:](http://)

Chapter 6 : First World calendrierdelascience.com - Who's Who - King Albert I

Albert I, () was the third king of the Belgians, reigning from to In the history of Belgium, this was one of the most eventful periods and included World War I, when 90 percent of Belgium was overrun, occupied, and ruled by the German Empire.

Wednesday, June 15, Monarch Profile: On the surface he would have seemed unlikely to ever become a monarch. He was the second son out of five siblings in his own family and his own father was the third son of the first Belgian king. However, after the death of the only son of King Leopold II and the death of his father and older brother Prince Baudouin, Prince Albert became heir to the Belgian throne. He was only 16 when his father became heir to the throne but even by that time he had the makings of a great monarch. His parents ensured that he was well grounded and sincerely religious. He was serious and studied hard and from the first moment he knew he would become king someday he set to work preparing himself for that task. The reputation of the Belgian monarchy had suffered during the reign of Leopold II and Albert was determined, even as a young man, to set a new tone. Part of this new tone was to be the domestic life of the Royal Family. In he married Duchess Elisabeth of Bavaria in Munich, beginning what would be a very long, happy and fruitful marriage marked by mutual respect and devotion. Albert was a very devoted husband and father who set a fine example in his private life. Together, Albert and Elisabeth would project a united front of domestic fidelity. Prince Albert also made himself familiar with every section of Belgian society. He studied the problems of the working class and came up with recommendations to improve their working and living conditions. He had, perhaps, learned from the experience of his uncle, King Leopold II, that it was not safe to simply take the word of officials as to what life was like in the central African colony. He took seriously his duties to all of his future subjects, Belgians and Africans alike, and when he returned home presented a detailed report and recommendations on improving the lives of the natives and for further modernization in the Congo. His role in the rapid improvement in conditions in the Congo is not often stated but it was significant. Whereas Leopold II wanted his reign to be known for grandeur and greatness, King Albert I, at least in his own life, was best known for his simplicity and moderation. He was a hard working monarch not at all enthralled by pomp and ceremony. He was also a very humble man, reluctant to accept any praise or adulation no matter how well deserved. He wanted peace, prosperity and contentment in Belgium but he was not blind to the growing threat across the border in Germany. He tried to strengthen the Belgian army and give them more up-to-date weapons but was hampered by an uncooperative government and the fact that Germany itself was the source of most of their rifles and artillery. In his generals estimated that it would not be until that the military was fully prepared to successfully defend the national territory. As we know, Belgium was not to have that long. In August of the ultimatum arrived from Germany stating that Belgian neutrality would be violated and that if resistance was met Germany would consider Belgium an enemy. No effective resistance was expected. A very upright and moral man, he had no other option. Belgium was bound to neutrality by treaty and if the Belgians had simply stood aside and allowed the Germans to pass through in order to attack France this would be a violation of that neutrality, not only by Germany but by Belgium as well as they would be passively cooperating in the invasion of France. Despite the impossible odds arrayed against them, King Albert I took command of the Belgian army and led a heroic defense of his country. The German timetable was upset and French and British forces had just enough time to rally in front of Paris to defeat the invasion force at the First Battle of the Marne. King Albert, after being forced to withdraw from Antwerp, pulled back behind the Yser River and established a defensive line on the last corner of his native soil from which the Germans could never dislodge them. It was important to him to remain at the front, with his soldiers, on Belgian soil. He oversaw the rebuilding of the army which had been shattered in the initial invasion and in time they were better armed and equipped than they were at the outset. This was an extraordinary feat considering that almost the entire country was under German occupation and the sector the Belgians had to defend, the Flanders coast, was easily the most miserable on the western front, low, open and constantly waterlogged. As commander-in-chief he also had to oversee the operations of the Belgian colonial forces in

Africa, where they met much success. It was a very trying time for the King, but his deep and sincere faith helped sustain him. A devout Catholic, King Albert impressed the importance of religion on his children and when Pope Benedict XV called for a peaceful end to the war he was the only Allied head-of-state to take the issue seriously. Unfortunately, his efforts to arrange peace with the Emperor Charles of Austria-Hungary were thwarted by the other Allied powers. There were wild celebrations in Brussels as the King rode in at the head of his army to liberate the country. However, there was no rest for the King as he immediately set to work rebuilding the devastated Belgian economy. He implemented government reforms such as universal suffrage and at the peace conference in Paris obtained reparations payments for Belgium but also showed his magnanimity by opposing overly-harsh treatment of the Germans. He could see, if none of his fellow Allied heads of state could, that the downfall of the German princes and the dissolution of the Hapsburg empire would dangerously destabilize all of central Europe. Alas, his warnings in this area went unheeded. The interwar years were a period of recovery and King Albert I was kept very busy. He became the first reigning European monarch to visit the United States, paying tribute to the men of the AEF who helped clinch the Allied victory in the war, he opened the first national park in Africa in the Belgian Congo and he showed solidarity with the Dutch-speaking community of Flanders whose region had suffered the most in the war. When he did have some time for himself he loved mountain climbing. He was climbing in the Ardennes, near Namur, when, on February 17, he died in a tragic accident. His sudden death was a cause of great mourning and it is probably accurate to say that he was the most beloved King the Belgians ever had up to that time. He was upright, hard working, devoted to his God, his family and his country, courageous in the face of disaster and humble in the face of praise and adulation. He was a great man and a great king.

Chapter 7 : Albert II | king of Belgium | calendrierdelascience.com

Albert II, in full Albert Félix Humbert Théodore Christian Eugène Marie of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, (born June 6, , Brussels, Belgium), king of the Belgians from to The second son of King Leopold III, Albert was educated at home and in Geneva and Brussels and entered the Belgian navy in

The Belgian Monarchy Disclaimer The fact that a link is provided on this blog does not necessarily imply endorsement of everything at the other end of the link. A Note on Reviews Unless otherwise noted, any books I review on this blog I have either purchased or borrowed from the library, and I do not receive any compensation monetary or in-kind for the reviews. At birth, Albert was fourth in the line of succession to the Belgian throne. Retiring and studious, Albert prepared himself conscientiously for the task of kingship. Albert was seriously concerned about the situation of the working classes in Belgium and traveled incognito around working class districts, to observe the living conditions of the people. Shortly before his accession to the Belgian throne in , Albert undertook an extensive tour of the Belgian Congo, which had been annexed by Belgium in He found the area in poor condition. Upon his return to Belgium, he recommend reforms to protect the native population and to further technological progress in the colony. In , Albert was married in Munich to Duchess Elisabeth in Bavaria , a Wittelsbach princess whom he had met at a family funeral. It was a happy and devoted marriage. Albert and Elisabeth shared an intense commitment to the good of Belgium and a keen interest in human progress of all kinds. They were also both great intellectuals who cultivated the friendship of prominent scientists, artists, musicians, and philosophers, turning their court at Laeken Castle into a sort of cultural salon. Albert and Elisabeth had three children: Albert and Elisabeth raised their children in a tender and intellectually stimulating environment, while seeking to inculcate in them a rigorous morality and a high sense of duty to their country. He innovated by taking the accession oath in both Flemish and French; previous kings had done so only in French. At the beginning of World War I, Albert resisted the illegal German demand to move troops through neutral Belgium in order to attack France. Albert led his army through the Siege of Antwerp and the Battle of the Yser. On the River Yser, the Belgians, driven back to a small strip of their territory near the North Sea, succeeded in halting the German advance. Here, in coordination with the Allied armies, they took up a war of position which was to last four years. The war inflicted terrible suffering on Belgium, since the country was subjected to a harsh German occupation. During this period, Albert remained with his army, in the small portion of Belgium free of German occupation, and shared the dangers of his troops. His wife, Queen Elisabeth, worked tirelessly as a nurse at the front. The King also allowed his teenaged son, Prince Leopold, to enlist in the army and fight in the trenches. Albert tried to play a moderating role in the war and worked through secret diplomatic channels for a negotiated peace between Germany and the Entente based on the "no victors, no vanquished" concept. He considered that such a resolution to the conflict would best protect the stability and future peace of Europe. His efforts, however, were unsuccessful. At the end of the war, as commander of the Army Group Flanders, Albert led the final Allied offensive that liberated occupied Belgium. King Albert attended the Paris Peace Conference, where he defended the interests of Belgium, but opposed a policy of excessive humiliation of defeated Germany. Albert feared that such a policy would only provoke German revenge and lead to future wars in Europe. He also considered that the dethronement of the Central European monarchs would threaten the future stability of the Continent. His views, however, did not prevail in the decisions of the Peace Conference. Albert spent much of the remainder of his reign assisting in the post-war reconstruction of Belgium. He was admired throughout the world for his noble character and affable personality. A passionate alpinist, King Albert died tragically in a mountaineering accident in Marche-les-Dames, near Namur, Belgium. His death was mourned universally. Dujardin, Vincent et al. Albert and the Belgians: Portrait of a King. Albert, King of the Belgians. Albert et Elisabeth de Belgique, mes parents. Carnets et correspondances de guerre.

Chapter 8 : The Cross of Laeken: Albert I of Belgium

Albert I, the third king of the Belgians, played a leading role as supreme commander of the Belgian army during the First World War. For four years he defended the last piece of unoccupied Belgium behind the Yser River, refusing to sacrifice his troops in bloody attacks and hoping that the war could be ended through negotiations.

Chapter 9 : Famous Belgians - King Albert II

Albert I, King of the Belgians (), is remembered especially for his strong leadership during World War I. He married Elizabeth, daughter of the Duke of Bavaria, in and succeeded Leopold II, his uncle, to the Belgian throne in