

King Leopold Pledges Fight On an Invader

Belgian Monarch Asserts Nation Will Resist if It Is Attacked, as in 1914

Calls Present Army 10 Times Stronger

Hopes U. S. Will Support Him 'for Good of Peace in Civilization's Service'

The address at the 11th session on "Belgium" by Leopold III, King of the Belgians, in a broadcast from Brussels, follows:

I am honored by speaking from the same platform as your great President. When the Forum kindly asked me to give a short message to the American nation, I accepted this invitation with pleasure.

My compatriots, my family and I have many dear and faithful memories of the United States. No Belgian can forget the solace and efficient aid that the American people extended to the Belgian population by leading the relief of its needs during years of stress.

The topic that was suggested to me was "A Call in the Defense of Civilization." I regard this suggestion as a compliment to my country. It implies a recognition of the distinguished place that Belgium has held throughout the history of the Western World. Belgium has always been looked upon as a fountain head of Christian civilization. Convinced that my country is acting in the defense of this civilization by the attitude it has taken amidst the conflict that has broken out in Europe, I feel I may confine my remarks to clarifying to my American audience Belgium's position in this war—a position entirely consistent with the will, the courage and the integrity of my people.

Frontiers Guaranteed

In my capacity of head of the Belgium state, I welcome this opportunity of setting out clearly the following facts:

In 1937 we made known our policy of independence, and each of our three great neighbors acknowledged this notification. They went farther, spontaneously giving us a definite assurance that they would respect Belgium's frontiers and insure her independence.

This led up logically to the declaration of neutrality which my government made at the beginning of the present war. An attitude of neutrality is, moreover, in keeping both with the traditions and aspirations of the Belgian people, whose feelings have evolved from a long struggle.

The Belgian nation, which is the very incarnation of the sense of individual liberty, gave its blood to win its institutions in an unflinching determination to remain itself.

Neutrality also is vital to my country, Belgium, whose territory is small but one of the most thickly populated in the world, essentially depends for her very subsistence on the activities of her inhabitants. These activities in turn require a continuous flow of her export trade and unhindered importation of food and industrial supplies. Peace is thus for the Belgian people a matter of life and death.

No Territorial Ambition

We have no ambitions for territorial expansion. Neither had we any part whatever in the happenings that brought about the conflict today dividing Europe. If we became involved in the fray, it is on our soil that the issue would be fought out, and in view of the small size of our territory, that would spell utter destruction for Belgium, whatever the issue of the war.

Side by side with Holland, Belgium stands for an island of peace in the interests of all. At the crossroads of the borders of the great west European powers, Belgium, neutral, loyal, and strong as she is today, fulfills an essentially peaceful mission. She sets a limit to the fighting front and to the loss of human life. She stands amongst other neutral states for a stronghold of peace, and an agent of that appeasement which alone can save our civilization from the abyss into which a world war would throw it.

We fully know our rights and our duties. We await the future with steadfast serenity and a clear conscience which nothing can perturb. We are prepared to exert our entire strength in order to uphold our independence.

Exactly twenty-five years ago, day for day, the Belgian Army under the command of my father, King Albert, arrested after a hard battle the progress of a cruel invasion. If we were attacked, and pray God this may not happen, in violation of the solemn and definite undertakings that were given us in 1937, and were renewed at the outset of the present war, we would not hesitate to fight with the same conviction, but with forces ten times

stronger. Once again, a single-minded nation would support its army.

But we cannot believe that the belligerents would fail to respect our neutrality. We trust in the word they have given us and have proclaimed before the world, just as they may rely on our loyalty from which, following the example set by my beloved father, I am resolved never to swerve as the sovereign of a free and gallant people.

In conclusion let me express the hope that the American nation, to whom we feel so closely drawn by ties of common aspirations and by the similarity of our institutions, will encourage and support us in the attitude we have adopted for the good of peace in the service of civilization.