

King Albert I of the Belgians' Speech to the Belgian Parliament

August 4, 1914

In the name of the nation, I give it a brotherly greeting. Everywhere in Flanders and Wallonia, in the towns and in the countryside, one single feeling binds all hearts together: the sense of patriotism. One single vision fills all minds: that of our independence endangered. One single duty imposes itself upon our wills: the duty of stubborn resistance.

In these solemn circumstances two virtues are indispensable: a calm but unshaken courage, and the close union of all Belgians.

Both virtues have already asserted themselves, in a brilliant fashion, before the eyes of a nation full of enthusiasm.

The irreproachable mobilization of our army, the multitude of voluntary enlistments, the devotion of the civil population, the abnegation of our soldiers' families, have revealed in an unquestionable manner the reassuring courage which inspires the Belgian people.

It is the moment for action.

I have called you together, gentlemen, in order to enable the Legislative Chambers to associate themselves with the impulse of the people in one and the same sentiment of sacrifice.

You will understand, gentlemen, how to take all those immediate measures which the situation requires, in respect both of the war and of public order.

No one in this country will fail in his duty.

If the foreigner, in defiance of that neutrality whose demands we have always scrupulously observed, violates our territory, he will find all the Belgians gathered about their sovereign, who will never betray his constitutional oath, and their Government, invested with the absolute confidence of the entire nation.

I have faith in our destinies; a country which is defending itself conquers the respect of all; such a country does not perish!

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