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(Second World War - The Aftermath - Abdication of Leopold III) En Pleine Guerre! Voici le Domaine dont Leopold III Revendiquait les Titres: Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha. . . [In the middle of a war! Here is the region where Leopold III Claimed Title: Saxony, Coburg, Gotha. . .]

Stock#: 91010
Map Maker: Legrand
Date: 1950
Place: Brussels
Color: Color
Condition: VG
Size: 33.4 x 20.75 inches
Price: \$ 975.00



Description:

Ethnic Propaganda in Post-War Belgium

Brilliant propaganda poster aimed at French-speaking Walloons arguing for the removal of King Leopold III (of the Royal House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha) in a national referendum.

Leopold III had lost the faith of a significant portion of his country during the Second World War II when he surrendered the nation's army in a potentially unconstitutional act. Following the invasion of Belgium, Belgian forces succeeded in delaying German troops sufficiently for the evacuation efforts at Dunkirk to proceed. However, Leopold III unilaterally surrendered the army as soon as it was surrounded, against the wishes of his military advisors, straining relations with Belgium's English and French allies. Further, when the Belgian government fled to France and then London, Leopold III did not join this voluntary exile. He was placed under house arrest by the invading Nazi authorities. He attempted to project an image of self-sacrifice but this was marred by his secret marriage to a mistress in 1941.

Leopold III lived in exile between June 1944 and 1950, with his brother replacing him as regent after the war. He was invited to return to the country in 1950, which he did, pending a referendum. He narrowly won the referendum, as predicted, but the results were heavily split down ethnic lines, with Flemish regions supporting the king and Walloon regions opposing him. Upon his return, however, much of the country entered a general strike, and he had to announce his intentions to abdicate in favor of his son less than six months after the initial referendum.



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This poster targets the French-speaking populations of Belgium and urges them to oppose the ethnically-German Leopold III. The map on the poster shows the historical lands of the House of Saxony-Cobourg-Goth, of which Leopold III was the heir. The loose grammar of the poster can be interpreted in multiple ways. It may suggest that Leopold had some complicity in the atrocities that were committed in those territories, as his family had historically claimed title to them. An alternative explanation is that "En pleine guerre!" is a rallying cry referring to Leopold's surrender (or marriage, which is what this phrase appears in conjunction with Leopold the most during database searches) "In the middle of a war!" The historical association between Leopold's family and Germany would then be used to reinforce a sense of alienation experienced under his rule by French-speaking Belgians.

The intended meaning of the poster likely lies somewhere between these two interpretations. The Belgian ruling family had changed their familial name to "of Belgium" from "of Saxony-Cobourg-Gotha" in 1920 following the First World War, and there does not appear to be any indication that this change of name was undone during the Second World War. Further, the regent Duke of Saxony-Cobourg-Gotha, who would have had actual possession of the familial land in the area, was Duke Charles Edward. Thus, it is unlikely that Leopold III had any actual claim on the land itself, although suggesting that all these atrocities happened on land held by his family would not have painted him in a kind light.

The text on the poster translates as follows:

"In the middle of a war! Here is the region where Leopold III Claimed Title: Saxony, Coburg, Gotha.

On the 12th of March Belgians will say No! A Thousand Times No!"

Rarity

We are unable to trace any reference to this poster through OCLC or related searches.

Detailed Condition:

Marginal chips and tears to left side. Toning.