

Intimate biography of a fascinating man

Leopold I

GITA DENECKERE

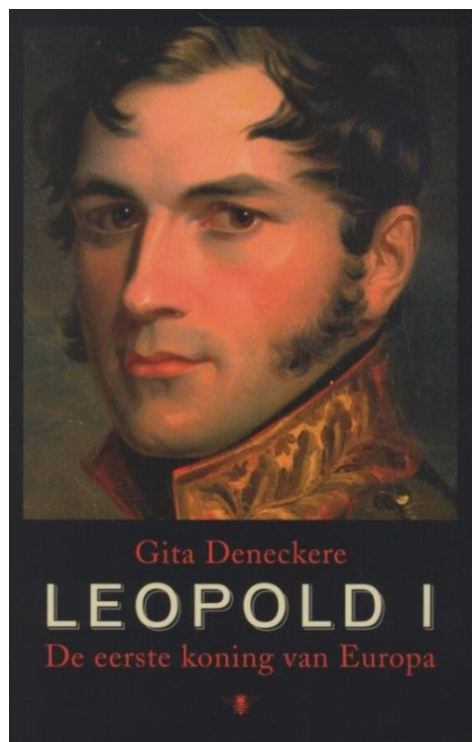
Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld was a child of his time. He was the youngest son of the ruined duke and ambitious duchess of little Coburg, whose dukedom was trodden underfoot by Napoleon's armies. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Leopold saw his brilliant future as consort to the English crown princess slip from his hands through a tragic twist of fate.

In 1831, having declined the throne of Greece, he was 'democratically' elected King of the Belgians. Leopold I played his role with verve. To contemporaries at home and abroad he was the exemplary modern monarch. He knew exactly how to play upon the sensitivities of his people, but he had great difficulty in dealing with the constitution and the representative institutions of a liberal nation state that had emerged from a revolution.

She succeeds in making the first king of the Belgians a man of flesh and blood.

ERWIN MORTIER

Based on Leopold's private letters, Gita Deneckere paints a portrait of a melancholy ruler who managed like no other to weave together the personal and the political. Through his eyes she examines the history of Europe in a period of change.



AUTHOR



Gita Deneckere (b. 1964) lectures on social history since 1750 at the University of Ghent's Department of Early Modern History. She is the author of a number of books about the history of Belgium.

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