

CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS FACES BELGIUM

The future of Leopold the Third, exiled King of the Belgians, hangs in the balance. These recent pictures of him with the Duke of Windsor were taken on the Riviera. A referendum, calling upon Belgians to vote yes or no to his return, has resulted in a narrow majority in favour of the King. After one of the most bitter election campaigns in her history, Belgium now finds herself split into two widely-opposed camps - both almost equal in numbers. With voting compulsory and defaulters liable to a fine, five-and-a-half million Belgians turned out at the polls. Instead of clarifying the position (as party leader, like Socialist Paul Spaak had asked them to do) the issue became still more confused. Princess Charlotte, the King's 22-year-old daughter, had flown to Brussels from her father's home in Geneva especially to record her vote. Strongly resembling her beautiful mother, the late Queen Astrid, the Princess would, it was thought, swing the floating vote in the King's favour. Final returns showed an almost complete deadlock. While in Flanders, the King had won Wallonia, the other half of the country was against him. With his second wife, Princess de Rethy, Leopold waits on in exile.