

# Broqueville, Charles Marie Pierre Albert, Baron de

By [Laurence van Ypersele](#)



## Charles de Broqueville (1860-1940) with Henri Clouten (1849-1925)

Charles de Broqueville (on the right), chief of the Belgian government during the First World War, photographed with General Henri Clouten (on the left).

Agence Rol: Le baron de Broqueville ministre de la guerre belge en conversation avec le général Clouten, n.p., 1914; source: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rol 43182, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6932598r>.

This image has been identified as public domain.

Broqueville, *Charles* Marie Pierre Albert, Baron de  
Politician, member of the Catholic Party

Born 04 December 1860 in Mol (province of Antwerp), Belgium

Died 05 September 1940 in Brussels, Belgium

## Summary

Charles de Broqueville, chief of the Belgian government during the First World War, acted as liaison between the king and the Belgian government. He supported the king in his attempts to obtain peace and his efforts to break free from the Allies.

## Table of contents

[1 Political Office](#)

[2 World War I](#)

[3 After the War](#)

[Notes](#)

## Selected Bibliography Citation

## Political Office

A member of the Catholic Party, Charles de Broqueville (1860-1940) started his political career as a provincial council member from 1886 to 1892. Subsequently, he was elected as a member of the House of Representatives from 1892 to 1919 and of the Senate from 1919 to 1936. Most notably, he occupied a number of ministerial responsibilities: minister of railways, post and telegraphs (1910-1911), head of [government](#) (1911-1918), and simultaneously minister of railways, post and telegraphs (1911-1912), of war (1912-1917), of foreign affairs (1917) and of national reconstruction (1917-1918), as well as minister of home affairs (1918-1919).

## World War I

On the eve of the First World War, the Catholic Party, dominated by its conservative and antimilitary wing, had been in power for thirty years. Still, de Broqueville, who was aware of the international situation and of the risks run by Belgium in case of a crisis, did not hesitate to repudiate his electoral promises of 1912 and actively support the king in his efforts to reinforce the army: in 1913 he obtained the vote for the generalized military service, reorganized the high command and increased the arms supply.

But it was too late. On 4 August 1914, he enlarged his Catholic government, giving two liberals, [Paul Hymans \(1865-1941\)](#) and [Eugène Goblet d'Alviella \(1846-1925\)](#), and one socialist, [Emile Vandervelde \(1866-1938\)](#), positions as ministers of state, in order to have a non-official government of national union (it would be official by January 1916). Confronted with the rapid progression of German troops, the government followed the king and the army to Antwerp. In October 1914 the government found shelter in Le Havre, whereas [Albert I, King of the Belgians \(1875-1934\)](#) settled in La Panne, close to his army.

Throughout the conflict, de Broqueville acted as liaison between the two. He supported the king in his attempts to obtain peace and his efforts to break free from the Allies. Furthermore, de Brocqueville protected Albert I with the ministerial countersignature. However, the two men had divergent opinions: the king considered that as commander-in-chief he did not need the signature, whereas de Broqueville held the opposite view. Therefore, in May 1918 the king replaced him as head of government with [Gérard Cooreman \(1852-1926\)](#). Yet, in the very same month, de Broqueville was appointed a minister of state. He was given the title of baron in 1919 and count in 1920.

## After the War

After the Great War, de Broqueville served as Minister of National Defense from 1926 to 1932, of agriculture in 1932 and Prime Minister from 1932 to 1934. He died in [Brussels](#) on 5 September 1940 at the beginning of the second German occupation. [Louis de Lichtervelde \(1889-1959\)](#), his secretary, drew an excellent portrait of the man:

de Broqueville had a quick intelligence, an infallible memory, an innate tact both in political and social life; he had to a rare extent an acute sense of political manoeuvre; he handled men with a consummate skill and was able to address everyone in his own language so as to convince or seduce them. He had a taste for authority and the sense of State. He advised his king with great independence and with absolute devotion.<sup>1</sup>

Laurence van Ypersele, Catholic University of Louvain

## Notes

1. de Lichtervelde, Louis: Charles de Broqueville, in: Biographie Nationale de Belgique, t. XXIX, Bruxelles, H. Thiry-Van Buggenhoudt, 1956-1957, pp. 376-377. [↑](#)

## Selected Bibliography

- [Haag, Henri: \*\*Le comte Charles de Broqueville, ministre d'Etat, et les luttes pour le pouvoir, 1910-1940, 2 volumes\*\*, Louvain-la-Neuve; Brussels, 1990: Collège Erasme; Editions Nauwelaerts.](#)
- [Lichtervelde, Louis de, Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres, et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique \(ed.\): \*\*Charles de Broqueville\*\*, in: Biographie Nationale de Belgique 29, 1956, pp. 369-377.](#)
- [Molle, Paul van: \*\*Le parlement Belge, 1894-1972\*\*, Antwerpen, 1972: Standaard.](#)
- [Waele, M. De: \*\*Charles de Broqueville\*\*, in: Schryver, R. De \(ed.\): Nieuwe encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging \(New encyclopedia of the Flemish movement\), Tielt 1998 Lannoo.](#)

## Citation

Laurence van Ypersele: Broqueville, Charles Marie Pierre Albert, Baron de, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.10068](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10068)

## External Links

- [Billets dans la catégorie Charles de Broqueville \(Broqueville'blog\) \(Institutional Website\)](#)

## Metadata

### Regional Section(s)

[Western Europe](#) > [Belgium](#)

### Thematic Section(s)

[Power](#)

### Subjects

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Governments](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Monarchy](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Parties, confessional](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [International relations](#) > [Exile, politics](#)

### Author Keywords

Exile Government; Le Havre; Ministerial countersignature

### GND Subject Headings

[De Broqueville, Charles](#)

### LC Subject Headings

[Broqueville, Charles, baron de, 1860-1940](#)

### Rameau Subject Headings

[Broqueville, Charles \(1860-1940\)](#)

### **Key Person(s)**

[Vandervelde, Emile](#); [Hymans, Paul](#); [Cooreman, Gérard](#); [d'Alviella, Eugène Goblet](#);  
[Lichterfelde, Louis de](#); [Albert I, King of the Belgians](#)

### **Key Location(s)**

[Brussels](#); [Le Havre](#); [Mol](#)

### **Title**

Broqueville, Charles Marie Pierre Albert, Baron de

### **Author(s)**

[Laurence van Ypersele](#)

### **Article Type**

Encyclopedic Entry

### **Classification Group**

Persons