

**October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1914.** - Yesterday was another busy day. I did not know that the entire population of Belgium could make such a crowd as I have had in the waiting-room of the chancery. In some mysterious way the news of my coming to London has got about, and swarms of people are coming in with little errands they want done and messages to be delivered to their friends and families in Brussels. It makes work, but that sort of thing is a comfort to lots of people and is worth undertaking. I have made it clear to all of them that anything to be delivered will be turned over to the German authorities first, and hope they will govern themselves accordingly.



Herbert C.  
Hoover



French Howitzer near  
H ----



German camp kitchen

The British Government has stipulated that the feeding of the civil population shall be carried on by a neutral organisation, under the patronage of the American and Spanish Ambassadors in London and Berlin, and the American and Spanish Ministers in Brussels. The food is to be consigned to the American Minister in Brussels for distribution by the organisation which is to be known as the American Relief Committee, with Hoover as chairman and motive power. The various local Belgian committees are to be grouped together in a national organisation, to assist in the distribution of the foodstuffs once they are delivered inside the Belgian

frontier. The members of the Belgian organisation are, of course, prisoners of the Germans and unable to give any effective guarantees as to the disposal of the supplies. The British Government has, therefore, stipulated that all authority and responsibility are to be vested in the American Committee, and that the Belgians are to be regarded simply as a distributing agency. This is, of course, in no sense a reflection of the Belgians engaged on the work, but merely a recognition of the difficulties of their position.

The neutral composition of the Committee assures it a freedom of travel and action, and an independence of political and personal pressure, and a consequent freedom of administration which the Belgians could not hope to enjoy. It is only by the assumption of complete authority and responsibility by the Committee that the patrons will be able to give the various Governments concerned the necessary assurances as to the disposition of foodstuffs and the fulfillment of guarantees.

There is something splendid about the way Hoover and his associates have abandoned their own affairs and all thought of themselves in order to turn their entire attention to feeding the Belgians. They have absolutely cut loose from their business, and are to give their whole time to the work of the Committee. This is done without heroics. I should hardly have known it was done, but for the fact that Hoover remarked in a matter of fact way:

"Of course everybody will have to be prepared to let business go and give their whole time."

And it was so completely taken for granted that there is nothing but a murmur of assent.

Another strenuous day on the food question and other things.

My plans were to leave for Brussels on Monday morning, but in the evening the Ambassador sent for me and it was decided that I should go to Havre and from there to see the King and Queen. That will take me to within a couple of hours from Brussels, according to old calculations, but under present conditions I shall have to get there by way of France, England and Holland.

GIBSON, Hugh (Secretary of the American Legation in Brussels, 1914) ; *A journal from our Legation in Belgium* ; New York ; Doubleday, Page & Company Garden City; 1917 :

<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/memoir/Legation/GibsonTC.htm>

**Footnotes.**

It would be interesting compare with what **Roberto J. Payró** told about the same day in his *Diario de un testigo* (*La guerra vista desde Bruselas*) :

Original Spanish version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141024%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141022-1102%20PAYRO%20EN%20HOLANDA.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141024%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141022-1102%20PAYRO%20EN%20HOLANDA%20FR.pdf>

It would be also interesting compare with what **Paul MAX** (cousin of the *bourgmestre Adolphe MAX*) told about the same day in his *Journal de guerre* (*Notes d'un Bruxellois pendant l'Occupation 1914-1918*) :

[http://www.museedelavilledebruxelles.be/fileadmin/user\\_upload/publications/Fichier\\_PDF/Fonte/Journal\\_de%20guerre\\_de\\_Paul\\_Max\\_bdef.pdf](http://www.museedelavilledebruxelles.be/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/Fichier_PDF/Fonte/Journal_de%20guerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf)