

Brussels, November 14, 1914. - On the morning of the 10th, I came down to the Legation and found things in an uproar. A telegram had been received saying that two trainloads of food, the first shipment for the Province of Liège, would cross the frontier in the course of the afternoon, under convoy of Captain Sunderland, our Military Attaché at The Hague. The Minister and I are the only people authorized to receive shipments; and, as no power of attorney had been sent to the Consul at Liège, things were in a nice mess; and, at the request of the German authorities and the Committee, it was decided that I should go down, receive the stuff and make arrangements for its protection and for the reception of future shipments. The German authorities were so excited about my being there to head off any trouble that they hustled me off on an hour's notice without any lunch. I contrived to get Jack's name put on the *laisser-passer*, so that he could go along and see a little something of the country. Joseph, the Legation butler, was wild to go along as far as his native village to see his aged ma, whom he had not seen since the beginning of the war, and he rode on the front seat with Max who was much delighted to get under way again.

Jack was thrilled with the trip, and nearly fell out of the car going through Louvain and the other ruined villages along the way. As we were in such a rush, I could not stop to show him very much; but in most of these places no guide is needed. Louvain has been cleared up to a remarkable extent,, and the streets between the ruined houses are neat and clean. On my other trips I had had to go around by way of Namur, but this time we went direct; and I, got my first glimpse of Tirlemont and St. Trond, etc.

When we reached Liège we went straight to the Consulate without pausing to set ourselves up at a hotel, but found that nothing was known of Captain Sunderland or his food trains. Thence to the German headquarters where we inquired at all the

offices in turn and found that the gentleman had not been heard from. By the time we got through our inquiries it was dark; and, as we had no *laisser-passer* to be out after dark, we had to scuttle back to the hotel and stay.

In the morning the Consul and I started off again to see what had become of our man. We went through all the offices again, and as we were about to give up, I found Renner, who used to be Military Attaché of the German Legation here, and is now Chief of Staff to the Military Governor. He cleared up the mystery. Sunderland had arrived about the same time I did, but had been taken in hand by some staff officers, dined at their mess, and kept busy until time for him to be off for Maestricht. He was, however, expected back in time to lunch at the officers' mess. He was also expected to dine with them in the evening. I left word that I wanted to see him and made off to get in touch with the members of the local committee and make arrangements as to what was to be done with the food. We sat and waited until nearly dark, when I decided to go out for a little spin. I gathered Jack and the Consular family into the car and went for a short spin.

After losing our way a couple of times we brought up at the Fort of Chaudefontaine, which was demolished by the Germans. It is on top of a veritable mountain and it took us some time to work our way up on the winding road. When we got there the soldiers on guard made no trouble and told us that we could mouse around for fifteen minutes. We walked out to the earthworks, which had been made by the Belgians and strengthened by the Germans, and then took a look at the fort itself, which was destroyed, and has since been reconstructed by the Germans. They must have had the turrets and cupolas already built and ready to ship to Liège, for the forts are stronger than they ever were before and will probably offer a solid resistance when the tide swings back, unless, of course, the allies have by that time some of the big guns that will drop shells vertically and destroy these works the

way the German 42's destroyed their predecessors. It was very interesting to see and hard to realise that up to three months ago this sort of thing was considered practically impregnable.

When we got back we found that our man had come and had left word that he could be found at the Café du Phare at six o'clock. We made straight for that place, and found him. I made an appointment with him for the first thing next morning, and went my way.

I was bid to dine with the German Military Governor and his staff, but told Renner that since we were accredited here to the Belgian Government, accepting German hospitality would certainly be considered as an affront. He saw the point, and did not take offence, but asked me to come over after dinner for a talk and bring Jack along, the which I promised to do. While we were dining, a soldier with a rifle on his shoulder strode into the dining-room and handed me a paper; great excitement, as everybody thought we had been arrested. The paper was a pass for us to circulate on the streets after dark, so that we could go over to the headquarters. It was written on the back of a menu in pencil. Although dinner was over the entire mess was still gathered about the table discussing beer and Weltpolitik. At the head of the table was Excellenz Lieutenant-General von Somethingorother, who was commanding a German army on the eastern front when they got within fifteen miles of Warsaw. After being driven back he had an official "nervous breakdown," and was sent here as Governor of the Province of Liège---quite a descent, and enough to cause a nervous breakdown. There was another old chap who had fought in the Franco-Prussian war and had not yet quite caught up with this one. I foregathered with Renner and got my shop talk done in a very short time. Then everybody set to to explain to us about the war and what they fought each other for. It was very

interesting to get the point of view, and we stayed on until, nearly midnight, tramping home through a tremendous downpour, which soaked us.

The next morning at eleven I met Sunderland. We saw the Governor and the Mayor and Echevins, and talked things out at length. I had to collect a part of the cost of the food before I could turn it over, and they explained that the chairman of the local committee had gone to Brussels to negotiate a loan; he would be back in four or five days and if I would just wait, they would settle everything beautifully. That did not please me, so I suggested in my usual simple and direct way that the Governor rob the safe and pay me with provincial funds, trusting to be paid later by the committee. It took some little argument to convince him, but he had good nerve, and by half-past twelve he brought forth 275,000 francs in bank-notes and handed them over to me for a receipt. Sticking this into my pocket, I made ready to get under way, but there was nothing for it but that I must lunch with them all. Finally I accepted, on the understanding that it would be short and that I could get away immediately afterward. That was not definite enough, however, for we sat at table until four o'clock and then listened to some speeches.

When we got down the home stretch, the Governor arose and made a very neat little speech, thanking us for what we had done to get food to the people of Liège, and expressing gratitude to the American Government and people, etc. I responded in remarks of almost record shortness, and as soon as possible afterward, we got away through the rain to Brussels.

After getting through that elaborate luncheon, getting our things ready at the hotel, paying our bill, saying good-bye all around once more, etc., it was nearly five o'clock when we got off and nearly eight when we reached Brussels and put our treasure in the safe.

The Germans have begun arresting British civilians and we have had our hands full dealing with poor people who don't want to be arrested and kept in prison until the end of the war and can't quite understand why *they* have to put up with it. It is pretty tough, but just another of the hardships of the war, and while we are doing our best to have the treatment of these people made as lenient as possible, we can't save them.

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/19141110%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141111%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO.pdf>

French version :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141110%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%20FR.pdf>

<http://www.idesetautres.be/upload/19141111%20PAYRO%20DIARIO%20DE%20UN%20TESTIGO%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%20Oguerre_de_Paul_Max_bdef.pdf