

# **BELGIUM UNDER THE GERMAN OCCUPATION. (1916)**

## **A PERSONAL NARRATIVE 2**

**Brand WHITLOCK**

Chapter **XXXIII**. The press-gangs : **Brussels**.

**Translation :**

Brussels, November 6, 1916.

Mr. Alderman Lemonnier,  
Acting Burgomaster of Brussels.

Your College of Aldermen rightfully maintains that if the fourth convention of The Hague of 1907 does not contain the precise text relative to the deportation of the civil non-combatant population, it is nevertheless to be concluded from the spirit of that convention that such a measure is not legitimate.

Such a measure is in complete contradiction to the idea of military occupation. This idea has replaced the former theory of conquest which made the conqueror the sovereign of the conquered country. In modern warfare the peaceful population has certain rights. The conqueror is the provisory administrator ; he must respect the rights of the peaceful inhabitants.

All this was clearly indicated in 1874 at the Conference of Brussels, notably by the delegate of the German Empire, General von Voigts-Rhetz. The project of a convention of that Conference was

not ratified but its text served for the preparatory work of the Conventions of 1897 and of 1907 ; and these two Conventions drew their inspiration from it, and, on the point that interests us, they made no change in it.

In 1899, at the first conference of The Hague, the President of the Committee on Rules and Customs of Land Warfare, Frédéric de Martens (Part 3, page 92, edition of 1907), speaking of the exigencies of war, said these words :

*"It is our unanimous desire that the armies of civilized nations be not only provided with arms of the greatest perfection but that they also be actively aware of the principles of law, of justice, and of humanity, obligatory even in occupied territory and as regards the enemy."*

These words are not at all Utopian ; they take sufficient cognizance of the facts ; but they admit also the demands of humanity and the aspirations of modern civilization.

Such will be the impartial statement of any jurist.

I beg you to accept, Mr. Burgomaster, the expression of my highest consideration.

E. Nys, Professor of the University.  
39, Rue Saint- Jean

## Footnotes.

***Belgium under the German Occupation : A Personal Narrative*** ; London ; William HEINEMANN ; 1919, 2 volumes. See chapter (« The Press-gangs», sometimes with title « *Documents in evidence* » in other editions), volume **2**, pages 268-344 (**76** pages). About this letter and the English translation : pages 325-326. (**Very partial**) French translation : «*Les enlèvements*» in WHITLOCK, Brand ; chapitre XXVI (1916) in ***La Belgique sous l'occupation allemande : mémoires du ministre d'Amérique à Bruxelles*** ; (Paris ; Berger-Levrault ; 1922) pages 383-391.

It would also be interesting compare with what [Louis GILLE](#), [Alphonse OOMS](#) et [Paul DELANDSHEERE](#) told about the same days in ***50 mois d'occupation allemande*** (Volume 2 : 1916) :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/?p=ides&mod=iea&smod=ieaFictions&part=belgique100>

It would also be interesting compare with what Charles TYTGAT told about the same days in ***Journal d'un journaliste. Bruxelles sous la botte allemande*** :

<http://www.idesetautres.be/?p=ides&mod=iea&smod=ieaFictions&part=belgique100>

It would be 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)