

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

## **A PERSONAL NARRATIVE 2**

**Brand WHITLOCK**

Chapter **XXXIII**. The press-gangs : **Belgian Bar**.

(...) I often thought, yield to the constant and importunate temptation to cry out against it, in some hot flash of rage and indignation, to have done with the too polite expressions of diplomacy, to call things, for once in the world, by their right name, and, when one meant **slavery** to say **slavery** instead of deportation. (...) (page 269)

There were other protests, too, to which the Governor-General did not reply, that of **November 11**, presented by the judicial leaders and members of the Belgian Bar (...)

**Brand WITHLOCK**

### **Translation :**

To His Excellency Baron von Bissing,  
Governor-General in Belgium, Brussels.

Brussels, November 11, 1916.

Excellency :

The undersigned, united in the same spirit of solidarity for the defense of right, believe it to be their duty to acquaint Your Excellency with the painful impression produced upon the entire

judicial world by the recent measure enacted against a portion of the Belgian population.

Peaceful citizens belonging to all classes of society and to all parts of the country are, in disregard of natural law, positive law and international law, torn from their homes, from their families, and employed in Germany or elsewhere at labour which helps, indirectly at least, military operation against their country.

It is the disavowal of the great principle of individual liberty, recognized by all civilized peoples.

It is also the disavowal of the most fundamental principles of military law, which assure to the civil populations the free exercise of their rights.

Lastly, it is the disavowal of the assurances that Your Excellency gave to the Belgian population when promising to the citizens remaining in the country security and protection.

This measure carries us back to the time when the conqueror carried back into servitude the vanquished populations, and reduced them to slavery.

Man is master of his person, of his strength and of his will. Forced labour is a punishment reserved for great crimes.

The undersigned venture to recall that fact to Your Excellency and to hope that Your Excellency will be, before the imperial Government, the

defender of Belgium, confided to His vigilance and keeping.

They present to Your Excellency the assurance of their high consideration.

(Followed by about five hundred signatures — including those of judges and lawyers of the Supreme Court, of the Court of Appeal and of the Bar Association of Brussels ; Court of First Instance, Commercial Court of Brussels, Justices of the Peace Trade Councillors of Brussels.)

### 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). This letter and the English translation : pages 326-327. (**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 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)

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>