

January 1, 1917.—New Year's Day—and a thick rain. To the Legation, where Solvay, Lambert, Jadot, and de Wouters of the Comité National called to pay their respects; then came Lemonnier and the aldermen, Lemonnier making a little speech in which he spoke of the reëlection of President Wilson as one of the happy events of the old year. Then I went over to the Political Department. Herter¹ had, by a fortunate mistake, asked if von Bissing would receive me, saying that I wished to pay my respects. I had not intended to do so, but it turned out happily enough, for von Bissing, though too ill to receive, was deeply touched by my expressing such a wish. Had a long, pleasant chat with von der Lancken. He spoke about the unemployed, and I told him of the unfavorable opinion in America and pointed out that it was injuring the chance of peace. He said he knew it, and said that they were going to give up the policy, though slowly, lest their adversaries say that they abandoned it because of external criticism and pressure. He said that the men at Malines were to be taken the

4th and said that Herter might go with him to see it, if he wished. We talked of peace; he thinks that now the talk has begun, it will continue until something is accomplished. Is furious at Van Vollenhoven.... He told me that they had proof positive that Van Vollenhoven carried letters; one given to him here (presumably by a German spy) had been delivered to the address in Holland.

Telegram from Washington asking for a report on the deportations, saying that the interest in America is "inconceivable." I prepared a long reply for Herter to code. It is difficult to write with restraint of the awful deeds that daily occur in Belgium. I hear every hour sickening stories, and have detailed reports from many villages of the brutality, above all of the suffering of those who refuse to work in Germany, the starving, the threats, the shootings even. It is too sickening to allow oneself to realize it. Some happier day I shall have to digest, and make a report on the whole thing—an inferno of horror, inconceivable in our day.

¹ Christian Herter, attaché of the American Embassy at Berlin, detailed for a time to assist in the Brussels Legation.