

October 26, 1917.—Captain Priestley here, full of most interesting information privately conveyed to me after luncheon. He notes the difference, apparent to me, in the Belgians in and out of Belgium. Those inside have been ennobled and hardened by suffering; those outside are what they were before the war; like the Bourbons they have learned nothing and have forgotten nothing; the civilians in England, Belgian refugee civilians, have done the name of their nation incalculable harm. Priestley eager to know about Flemish movement, and I could tell him that it had literally made no progress in Belgium, quite the reverse indeed; he agreed; that was his information. But here it is not quite that good. Helleputte and others in the Government still terribly Flamigant. De Broqueville, Carton de Wiart, Renkin,¹ not so, but politicians with Flemish constituents. There has been a strong Flemish movement in the army, and a serious incident in the case of the priest who had carried on Flemish propaganda among the troops; two serious orders published against his propaganda and he broken and sent away. When he went two soldiers escorted him. Since, the orders have been withdrawn and are kept secret. Other incidents of soldiers declaring they would fire in the air if orders were not given in Flemish. Much of the trouble due to the fact that Belgian soldiers have no distraction; their only relief is in political discussion. No Y.M.C.A. for instance, and the morale of British troops much better, much higher now than it was in 1914, due wholly to the work of the Y.M.C.A. . . .

Thus Belgium.

And France? Seething in corruption of the worst sort—reaching up to the Palace of the Elysée. Poincaré said to have had Mme. Bolo as mistress; who is one of two women the Government would like to silence; the other was Mata Hari, whom they shot. Malvy, says Priestley, undoubtedly guilty—dares not take up Daudet's challenge or pursue him. The whole Government dare not seek an

¹ M. Helleputte, a Minister without portfolio, was one of the two heads of the Official Belgian Commission for Refugees. Jules Renkin was Minister for the Colonies.

investigation of the Almereyda-Bolo affair.¹ Humbert, he says, as bad as any. New arrests yesterday, Lenoir and Desouches—Lenoir's mistresses figuring prominently in the newspapers—one of them Mme. Alexandre, quite important. Briand has for mistress Princess ——— of ———. Caillaux has a mistress, too, who threatened trouble with Mme. Caillaux, and a scandal worse than the first expected to break out any day. Meanwhile the whole thing is affecting the morale of the troops—though they fight desperately and are even now winning great victories.

¹ M. Almereyda was editor of the *Bonnet Rouge* in Paris, a newspaper which took on a defeatist and traitorous tinge. It was thought to be subsidized by German funds conveyed through men like Bolo. After his arrest, Almereyda was found dead in prison, either murdered or a suicide. As for Lenoir and Desouches, mentioned in this paragraph, they had bought Bolo's share in *Le Journal*. The whole mess, involving many figures high in French politics and journalism, had a deplorable effect on French morale.