

December 4, 1918.—This morning a telegram from Hoover at Paris, saying that owing to the continued conferences necessary to set up the food control, he would have to postpone coming to Brussels another week. The telegram was to Francqui, sent through me.¹ I was not surprised after he had set the date for the 7th

¹ Famine was epidemic throughout all Europe east of the Rhine; social organization had broken down in many areas; disease was taking a colossal toll. In Berlin two-thirds of the population were on rations just above the starvation level; in Serbia 35 per cent of the people were suffering from recognizable tuberculosis; people were dying of starvation in Vienna; in Poland the peasantry were living on roots, grass, acorns, and heather. Mr. Hoover had more important tasks on hand than accepting a great civic reception in Brussels. But Whitlock believed that his curt action at the last minute reflected his well-known dislike of certain leading Belgians, and that he might have shown much more tact and consideration.

the other day. He said to me that he would try to get out of it. I shivered at the time. And I shivered more this morning, when immediately after the telegram had come, Grégoire of the Foreign Office arrived to discuss the plans—the King is to give a dinner on Sunday, the City of Brussels is to give the benedictional ceremony of reception at the Hôtel de Ville, with all the school children assembled in the Grande Place, the Comité National will give a banquet in his honour on Saturday night, and there will be a luncheon for him at the Foreign Office on Monday. Grégoire was in consternation, and begged me not to deliver to Francqui the fatal telegram; he was dumb with amazement and disappointment, all the arrangements have been made, and so on. I said, call them off. But said he, the King's dinner and all the school children have been notified. I saw at once that Hoover was making a deplorable *gaffe*, an irreparable blunder, and I sent to him at Paris a telegram couched in strong, yet friendly, terms, telling him that he could not afford lightly to wave aside such honours as the nation had never shown man before, and urging him to reconsider his unfortunate decision.

Francqui came in later, and I gave him the telegram. He was very much annoyed!!

Francqui in to ask if Heineman should be invited to dinner of the Comité National. He much embarrassed, said that there was much feeling here against Heineman, who had gone to Berlin several times and had held on to his directorship since our entrance into the war. I did not solve his problem for him, feeling that the Comité National could invite whom they pleased.