

Letter from Herbert Hoover about Commission for Relief in Belgium, June 15, 1915

Copie: -

Brussels, June 15th 1915

My dear Francqui,

This seems an apropos time for a short review of the amount of benevolent support and the results accomplished in the benevolent department of the Commission for Relief in Belgium during the past seven months. The work of the shipping, purchasing departments of the Commission with the Constitutional in alimentation and finance are not therein referred to.

At the outset, the Commission established relations with the several bodies throughout the world, interested in Belgian Relief - but of mere purposes - appeals were disputed to Governors, Premiere and other prominent men throughout the world, asking them to interest themselves in the establishment of regional committees to organize up an effort in favour of the destitute in Belgium. Ultimately over 1000 communities were organized by the Commission in various parts of the world.

Not only have these committees collected money, clothing and food on behalf of the destitutes, but the Commission has taken advantage of the kindly disposition and influence in innumerable local concessions in the purchase of the provisions for the department d'alimentation.

This money or the value of the food collected during the seven months up to June 1st has been as follows distributed as to regions:

Total Benevolent Receipts to June 1st.

United States	27,000,000 francs
Australasia	14,800,000
Great Britain	10,000,000
Canada	6,600,00
Spain	150,000
Italy	150,000
China	100,000
Profits earned by the Commission on the sale of food...	15,000,000

Total . . . 71,000,000 francs

Also several thousand tons of clothing valued at about 6,000,000 francs. Their contributions have been, in the main, the aggregation of minute subscriptions representing some self-denial by millions of people. There has only been one large contribution the Bookfellar-Foundation, of about 5,000,000 francs.

Aside however from the direct contributions of the generously disposed people and institutions, there has been invoked an extraordinary amount of free service, which in result can be interpreted in two directions: 1) In the profits earned by the Commission for Relief in Belgium, being the difference between the actual cost obtaining foodstuffs for the ravitaillement and the price at which they are disposed of in Belgium, and 2) The fact that, besides making a profit, the joint committees have been able to maintain the price of bread in Belgium until the end of June 1st at an average of 10c under the price of London. This latter is of the most vital importance to all classes on the Belgium people and has not only been done, but the profit of 13,000 francs over and above all expenses, has been earned for the support of the destitute besides.

It may be mentioned that the total foodstuffs imported into Belgium by the Commission have up to the first of June amounted to almost exactly 200,000,000 francs. The total expenses for administration of the Commission amount to less than $\frac{3}{4}$ if the percent.

It is interesting to note the importance of the saving made to all classes in Belgium by virtue of the very low prices which have been maintained. If the bread - not to mention the other commodities - had been sold at London prices, the profits would have been greater by 15,000,000 francs.

These special services are of the following character: The commercial management of the purchase and shipment of the foodstuff have been in the hands of those of my colleagues of wide commercial experience, who have devoted themselves unremittingly with great acumen, without even so much as their personal expenses. They have, by their own devotion, been able to demand concessions of the most extraordinary order. These concessions consist of the voluntary service without commissions, of the great shipping, railway and purchasing firms and societies throughout the world, with the almost total elimination of middle men's profits. Even office rent and furniture have been donated. Either free or reduced railway rates have been given throughout the United States and Canada and the shipping and insurance done without commission. The Dutch Government has given concessions in railway, telegraph and other services of the most noble order.

Aside from these services, I must mention that the large body of volunteers, who have worked as devotedly in Belgium in the distribution and secure, with the hope only of that greatest of all recompense - the satisfaction of a human service well given.

I am sending you this as an absolutely private communication to yourself to simply furnish you with data which may be of use in establishing the purely philanthropic character of all of our

institutions. We do not want it and made a basis for any expressions of gratitude with which we are already overwhelmed.

With best wishes

Yours very sincerely

Herbert C. Hoover