



By now we were in the Southern end of Belgium. Our family had expected to return to Antwerp, but we knew that the Germans were going to stay. We were still on the train.

Belgium has three classes of trains. 1st Class is luxury. Its seats are soft and comfortable. Next comes 2nd Class, also fine. Last is 3rd Class, in which we were riding. It isn't exactly bad, but not as comfortable as the others.

Evening was getting near, and I, always looking outside, watched for British soldiers, but I did not see any. It was too dark for me to see anything now, so I leaned back. Another hour went by, I was half asleep already. Then I heard an airplane's motor. I told my mother. There were about 6 persons in our compartment. I kept on looking up into the dark sky, but couldn't see a thing. I still heard a motor. There is such a pleasant rhythm on the tracks, as the train goes over them. Suddenly I could see an airplane since it wasn't totally dark outside. As much as I knew about airplanes, I thought it was an English Bomber, because its wings were "backward".

Then our train stopped. The people in our compartment all looked out, and began to murmur loudly. There was a belief that we could be bombed. But looks like I was correct about the plane being English or French. Then with a push the train started again.

My eyes couldn't stay open very long anymore, so I went to sleep near my mother's side.

Next thing I remember is that I heard loud noises, which woke me up. As I looked out of the window I could see that we were in a station, but I don't know the name of the town. Outside I saw people running in every direction. It was completely dark in our compartment. I couldn't even keep my eyes open, but I wanted to look around. Then our compartment door opened, and some people looked around and asked us if there was any room in our compartment. I believe a man came in. The train whistle blew, and the train was ready to depart, just as a woman came running when we were ready to close our compartment door. A man helped her on the train. I saw she had a small baby in her arms. Now she was sitting right across from me. The woman began to speak to my mother about how terrible things are now, and how bad it is to have a little baby during such times. This lady looked like 30 years old to me. The woman and my parents continued to talk, but I soon fell asleep. I probably fell asleep about 11PM.



I remember I heard loud noises in our compartment; this of course woke me up. My father was standing straight trying to get our luggage off the racks. People were speaking low but excitedly. Then came a "conducteur" or porter, running through the compartment telling everyone to leave the train immediately because it was not continuing. We began to say to ourselves "they can't mean that", telling us to leave the train, when I found out that it was 2AM in the morning. We did not know what to do, but just did what everyone else had done. We began to think that we would be caught by the Germans. Finally we descended our train, finding out that we were in a large field in the midst of farms. My father carried the large valise on his shoulder, and my mother, sister and I, carried small packages and bags. We were standing near our "deserted" train with all other people. At last the crowd began to move away from this spot. Together with all other people we also left. Since it was about 2 in the morning it was still very dark outside. I remember seeing "millions" of stars. We were slowly trudging over the vast farmland. People had to rest every once in a while. Finally, after walking for over 1/2 hour, half awake, we began to see houses. We reached the road and walked straight ahead. By now we saw the inhabitants out of their beds, in front of their doors. There was not one light to be seen. Most of the inhabitants had their pajamas on. Some of them were kind and asked many of us if we wanted to come inside their house, and stay until morning arrived, but I am sure not very many accepted the kind offer. Most of us wanted to continue fleeing. It looked like a small town to me. By now it was possible to see fairly well. The sun was slowly rising. I remember of a little incident that happened on one of the town's streets. All the people were walking in a long column. Our family was all together, until I saw my first British soldier. He was standing in a garage near a lot. Since it was still dark out I could not see him too well. I stood for a moment right in front of him. He winked at me, but then I became a little bashful and ran after my parents with my head looking at the soldier in back.

At that time whenever I saw an English soldier I felt "safe" inside of myself. My parents had called me when I was still behind. Now I already caught up with them. We walked a little while until we arrived at a railroad junction. By now it was already light outside. There was a white fence on each side of the rails. As everybody reached the opposite side we began to put our packs near a corner of the street and we sat on them. My mother told me to try to sleep as much as I can, but I couldn't. I believe that about 30 minutes had gone by until we started to walk again. By now we knew where we were. The name of the town was "Renaix", about 30 miles from the nearest French soil.