

PARIS, May 23, 1940

Report by Mr BEHAL, Raymond, Stationmaster at St-ROCH, on the events which took place at St-ROCH station from Saturday 18th to Monday 20th May 1940.

The days of May 15, 16 and 17 had been very difficult from the point of view of "traffic" because of the passage of numerous Belgian and French retreat trains (troops, evacuated civilians, equipment, machines) which were added to the trains of TCO, Sanitary facilities, recalled permits, French and English supplying.

The average movements at St-ROCH cabin 1 during these three days were 190 per 24 hours.

On Saturday 18th at 3.30 pm, a squadron of about fifteen German bombers attacked the station.

At that time, the W 4310 troop train from the West for CANTIN (?) was on V.D. (*right-hand track*) ROUEN, stopped at S.C. (*stop signal*) 23 of cabin 2, waiting for a freeway to AMIENS; The train 6.900 M.V.K. was on track 2 of the right-hand garages. Our shunting machine removed empty K (*covered wagons*) from the dead end track 4, cabin side 2.

In the garages on the left were, on tracks 13 and 19, the two shunting machines assigned to the earthworks of the La Hotoie connection.

The bombardment lasted about 25 minutes; into the garages and on main tracks, between cabins 2 and 3, about thirty projectiles of different types: bombs striking at ground level, incendiary, destruction, time bombs, etc fell.

This attack killed about 25 people and wounded about the same number, especially among the English soldiers who were in the 4310.

The telephone calls were completely interrupted, except from B.V. (*station building*) to signal box X, cabin 1 and AMIENS.

The new hospital ambulances arrived about 20 minutes after the bombing. The English soldiers raised their dead and wounded, helped by the French soldiers of the R.M.S. depot installed at the ZEIGLER branch.

The victims, including our agents from the three Services, were transported to the new hospital.

I was not able to obtain precise information about the fate of our agents despite the enquiries at the hospital (which was evacuated the next day).

Among the officers of the station, Brigadier MAHIOU, Theodore was killed near the shunting machine at the same time as this machine engineer and fireman; the shunting team man LUGET, detached from SERQUEUX, was very seriously wounded.

A number of officers near the point where the projectiles fell were very shocked and deaf the following day; among others

- the office chief G.P.V. LELEU, Gustave
- the shunting chief THELLIER, René
- the shunting chief CAMUSEAU, Robert
- the team members CARRE and FAQUIER
- the facteur mixte HUBAUT.

The canton chief LERICHE was found among the dead temporarily deposited in the waiting room, as well as the conductor of the 6.900 whose I don't know the name.

The engineers and firemen of the five machines at the station were all killed or injured.

Mr. ROUAULT, Chief Engineer of Traction, who came to the scene took, I believe, the information concerning his officers.

Material damage was very high; all the garage and traffic tracks cut off, except the track 20, passing through the P.V. (*low speed*) yard, connects the cabins 2 and 3, as well as the unloading tracks which s P.V.

In agreement with Mr. GALINE, Principal Inspector Assitant, arrived on the scene, very soon after the bombing, it was decided to restore the ROUEN traffic by way of track 20.

Several fires had occurred in the wagons originally parked on tracks 7 and 9 (about 70 wagons loaded with wood, coal, clothing, etc.). A dozen wagons were overturned on the adjacent tracks. Despite the firemen intervention and the use of the station fire extinguishers, these fires could not be completely controlled and wagons were still burning on Monday morning.

The last third of train 4310 (W troops) had been particularly affected, and about ten wagons were partly destroyed or overturned to the right garage.

A train of Belgian refugees towards the West, stopped at the passenger station, was not reached and was able to continue its march towards SALEUX, by way of track 20, after visiting the track; the trains from ROUEN to AMIENS circulated by the same track.

The traffic on the BOULOGNE track was not interrupted.

The Service of the Track was able to restore the V.G. (*left track*) ROUEN around 19h and the crane of 32 tons of AMIENS was brought at 8 pm on this track to begin the clearing of the V.D. (*right track*)

On the same day, at 11.30 pm, a new attack by air was carried out under almost identical conditions, the fires facilitating the location of the station. The projectiles fell approximately in the same area between cabins 2 and 3. But this time the two main ROUEN tracks were cut 50 meters from the cabin 2 by a 10 meters diameter funnel and new fires occurred into wagons parked on the left. There were no casualties or serious injuries, as the officers were able to take shelter (the operations of repairing the roads and clearing were in progress).

A torpedo fallen two meters from the entrance of the concrete shelter from the track to the cabin 3 commotioned all the occupants of the shelter: among other,

- the shunting chief LEGRAND Désiré,
- the shunting chief assistant POTIER, Alfred
- the facteur mixte THELLIER, René

(The shunting chief with the same name and first name had been shaken in the morning).

- the team officer FLANDRE, Marceau.

There may have been others.

The traffic to and from ROUEN nevertheless remained possible by track 20 and continued until the following Sunday morning. The BOULOGNE main tracks had not yet been touched.

On Sunday morning around 10am telephone communications were restored between BP (*Post Office*), cabin 3 and SALEUX. Track 1 of the garages on the left was restored by the Third Division and the traffic was able to resume by this route to ROUEN and by track 20 to ROUEN.

A number of passenger, troops, supplies and evacuees trains could thus continue to pass until noon, passenger trains taking in passing the emigrants of AMIENS who had come very numerous at St-ROCH station. These travellers were grouped in the cellars-shelters of the B.V. and called whenever there appeared a train for a direction. All disorder and panic were thus avoided.

It should be noted that on Saturday and Sunday, the metric gauge S.E. railway started steam trains and railcars which evacuated a few hundred people towards AUMAËLE.

On Sunday, May 19, at noon, while the English train P 2.058 turning back from AMIENS to ROUEN was track 1 of the left-hand garages and the passengers train 262 ROUEN-AMIENS on track 20, the planes appeared again (There was no more siren, nor DCA).

Being at B.V., I just had been given the order to the shunting chief officer, BOURGEOIS, who was at cabin 3, to dispatch the P.2.058 train. But a great number of English soldiers had come down from the train and the latter could not leave at once. The projectiles began to fall. Finding myself on the platform, I had only time to quickly get into my office, and lay on the floor against a pile of sacks on the ground which protected a double door.

At the same time, a bomb fell a few meters from the Secretariat Office (fortunately unoccupied) blowing 2/3 of the building side AMIENS.

I found myself buried under the rubble and lost consciousness for about 20 minutes. Taking up my senses, I succeeded in gradually disengaging myself and taking refuge in the cellar of my dwelling where my eldest son and my mother were, who had been surprised while they were going down to the cellar with two nuns and a few people waiting a train to ABBEVILLE.

The partition wall of the staircase of the cellar had collapsed and half blocked the access.

The planes continued to fly over the station for an hour while machine-gunning and throwing projectiles.

I was quite bruised all over my body and if I was not crushed under the rubble it was because my desk projected against the pile of bags on the ground protected me in part.

As soon as the noise of the planes disappeared, I left the cellar.

Among the officers and travellers who were in the B.V. shelters (about 250 people) none was injured, only the facteur mixte FAUVEAU who was in the telephone office had been heavily concussed.

After observing that traffic was no longer possible, I invited the travellers to leave the station and go to the country.

M. HITZEL, Principal Inspector Assitant, came to St-ROCH station to see what had happened.

During a tour with him, we could see that the main BOULOGNE tracks had been touched this time towards the cabin 1, as well as the CANAPLES track, the SE track and the bridges (not destroyed, however).

Only the BOULOGNE V.G. simply deformed seemed possible to a prudent circulation. A supply train stopped on this track, under the tunnel of La Longueville, could be brought back to the station at the man's pace and continued towards ABBEVILLE. This is the last train that went through St-ROCH station.

We had no telephone communication and had no electric light since the day before.

Because the hydraulic crane was reached, the inlet valve had been closed in the morning.

When we went into the garages, we met the duty officers and some English and French soldiers who had been able to take shelter during the bombing.

The travellers of train 262 as well as the English soldiers of P. 2.058 had scattered everywhere, and there must have been only about ten British soldiers killed and as many wounded. They were taken away by the English army (AMIENS hospitals being evacuated).

As no service was possible at that time, and finding myself exhausted by a very hard service since May 11, the lack of sleep and the wounds received at noon, I asked Mr. Hitzel to spend the night in POULAINVILLE, a village near AMIENS where my wife very seriously ill and my two youngest children were.

Since my dwelling was completely destroyed, I had no refuge to spend the night. The temporary workman PLANCHON, the main shunter chiefs BOURGEOIS and DUPLAN stayed at the station and Mr. WAQUET, interim had to come to take the night at 20h.

I then invited my eldest son, aged 20, to go by bicycle by road to AUMALE.

My mother, whom I had left with the nuns, was no longer there; they probably had to seek refuge elsewhere. I vainly sought them in the vicinity of the station where many buildings were burning.

Around 5.30 pm I went to POULAINVILLE after burning in the hearth of a machine the military documents that I had succeeded in releasing. I could not take away the money that was in the G.V. safe, this one being buried together with the spare keys. The amount that was there was not expected to be significant given the slowdown in commercial traffic.

The bombing of the town and the stations of LONGUEAU, AMIENS and St-ROCH was renewed several times during the night from Sunday to Monday.

On Monday, May 20 at around 7am. I arrived at the St-ROCH station coming from POULAINVILLE. At the station there was only M. COMTE and his son, neighbouring merchants, who had returned to their homes and were again surprised by the planes, and had taken shelter in the cellars of the station.

I made a tour around the station and to the approaches of the main tracks, and found that new projectiles had reached the tracks. One of them had raised the two main tracks of BOULOGNE at the km. 2 near the bridge "BEAUVAIS"; others had fallen against cabin 1 near the bridges, etc.

The planes continued to bombard the city.

During my tour I met officers of the AMIENS Track Service who were withdrawing to CONTY and learned from them that the staff of the 4th Arrondissement of Exploitation offices were going to regroup at LUZIERES-LES-CONTY.

The guard MAUDUIT of P.N. (*level crossing*) 47, who had come to the station, told me that the bridge on the road to ABBEVILLE was partly collapsed on the AMIENS-CANAPLES line near MONTIERES.

From then on I had no reason left to stay at the station. I enrolled on the blackboard a notice to the officers who could present themselves, to get in contact as soon as possible with the station of the Nord Region closest to the place where they would go and to give their address.

I then quitted the station, and went to M. DEBOUVRIE's, a gas merchant, Paris road, with whom I am in friendship, in order to ask him to continue, if possible, to seek my mother. M. DEBOUVRIE stayed in fact at his depot to set fire to his tanks of gasoline in case of German approach. He accepted to take me by car to CONTY, passing by the station of SALEUX. I wanted to realize that there was no train to St-ROCH waiting at SALEUX, and whether the station was still occupied.

The train station was closed but intact. There was no train waiting; I put the signals to the stop towards BACOUEL. The fuel tanks of the DESMARAIS Brothers' establishments connected to the station were in flames.

I left for CONTY and from there, after a short rest, went by bicycle to LUZIERES where I could find nobody. I returned to CONTY station where the chief informed me that Mr. HITZEL had passed shortly before, and declared that he was heading towards GRANDVILLIERS, then BEAUVAIS.

I continued on my bike to GRANDVILLIERS where I arrived around 6pm. The stationmaster could not give me any information about the place where the Arrondissement had withdrawn.

In GRANDVILLIERS, I found M. THERY, principal district chief of AMIENS and his service officers, with whom I remained in contact.

After spending the night in a barn, we set off for BEAUVAIS, Tuesday the 21st at 5am. Arrived at BEAUVAIS towards 8h, we were received by Mr. LACLAVIERIE, Divisional Inspector of Exploitation, who informed us that the assembly point of the retreated agents was at PARIS MONTPARNASSE, Maine station.

I thought it better to go to the Regional Service 18 rue de Dunkerque, where I arrived around 7 pm. and was received by M. GRANIER, Principal Inspector.

Having the body covered with bruises and abrasions that were beginning to become infected, I presented myself to the medical examination on Wednesday morning. I received all the necessary care, and the physician prescribed me a rest of five days.

During the difficult period we have been through, I have had nothing but to praise the courage and devotion of my officers who have spent themselves without counting.

I did not find any officer on Monday morning because they had thought, rightly, that their presence in the station where they could no longer do anything was no longer useful, while the fires were raging and the bombs continued to fall.

As I was unable to save any documents, this report has been prepared from memory.

On Saturday morning I made a complete remaining at station with indications of the nature of the goods, their origin and the names of the recipients.

Although I am no longer in possession of this document, I have been able to establish approximately the situation as it was on Monday morning.

Attached is the statement established from memory.

(signed) BEHAL