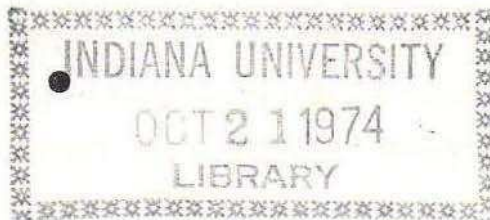


PUBLIC DEPT

A
Preliminary Report
on the atrocities
committed by the
Congolese Army
against the white population
of the
Republic of the Congo
before the intervention
of the Belgian Forces.

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**REPORT BY H. EXC. L. MERCHERS
MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF BELGIUM**

On July 28, 1960, MR. L. MERCHERS, Minister of Justice of Belgium gave to the press the following preliminary report on the atrocities committed by the Congolese Army against white people in the Congo, which motivated the intervention of the Belgian Armed Forces.

When Mr. Kanza, Minister of the Congo to the U.N., appeared before the Security Council, he qualified these atrocities as PETTIS ABUS, minor abuses. When Mr. P. Lumumba, Prime Minister of the Congo, addressed the press at the U.N., he declared that possibly a few European women had "been disturbed in their honor". Later, when in Canada, Mr. Lumumba stated that nothing of the kind had happened. When he was confronted with the declaration of the American Ambassador to the Congo Mr. C. Timberlake who, on his arrival from the Congo, declared that American missionaries had been raped by Congolese, Mr. Lumumba, according to the press, denied this.

In the meantime, the press reported that 291 Belgian women had testified to the ignoble treatment they had suffered, that about 300 men had been brutalized and beaten and that about twenty men had been killed.

Events in the Congo, following the mutiny of the Congo Armed Forces, rapidly took a tragic turn, which forced the Belgian Government to take urgent measures to protect white residents, both Belgian and foreign. These measures were dictated by human considerations and the imperative duty to save men, women and children who found themselves in immediate and extreme danger.

These measures had become for the Belgian Government an inescapable moral duty following the mutiny of the Congo Armed Forces which were in charge of maintaining order in the country.

A number of Congolese leaders have tried to mislead world opinion by casting doubts on the tragic reality of the facts. In view of this, the Belgian Government decided that it was its urgent duty to inform the world about the acts of violence and the atrocities that have taken place.

In relation to the scope of the mutiny, the number of persons killed seems to have been relatively small, at least on the basis of the information that is at present available. It is impossible to say at this stage how many of the people that are missing, were killed.

On the other hand, the acts of abasement of human dignity, of humiliation, of the most extreme actions against mankind and the civilized conception of human values, were the rule, as if there had been given an order to do all that was possible to humiliate men and women but to avoid before world opinion, the reproach of massacres.

The Belgian Government intends to bring all the facts to light. By Royal Decree of the 16th of July 1960, a Commission of Inquiry was created, in charge of investigating all the acts of violence perpetrated against human beings in the Congo since the day when Belgium freely and generously granted independence to that country.

In order to ensure the objective and independent character of the Commission, it is composed exclusively of high judges of Belgian courts. It is presided over by a Counselor of the *Cour de Cassation*. Its three members are Counselors at the Courts of Appeal of the realm.

The Commission is not under the control of the Government: its sole obligation toward the authorities is to submit a report on its mission and findings. It has extensive powers and it can call on the cooperation of courts and judges in the country, on the police and even on private individuals.

Cases are investigated by judges, public prosecutors, members of the bar, as well as by the usual personnel of the police and the gendarmerie.

Some inquiries are conducted by women investigators who are in charge of collecting information of a very personal and delicate nature: women judges, women inquirers, social assistants and women doctors.

All these steps were taken to enable victims and witnesses to be heard at home or at a place of their own choice, with the tact and discretion required by the situation.

The Belgian radio has broadcast appeals to induce victims and witnesses who were not approached by the investigators, to take the initiative of making a statement either in writing to the Commission of Inquiry, Palace of Justice Brussels, or of getting in touch directly with the police station of their own choice.

The Commission is taking every precaution to keep its investigation as discreet as possible. It refuses to communicate the names of the victims and the witnesses and other elements of information which might help to identify the persons that were questioned.

The preliminary results of the thorough and extensive investigation which the Commission is undertaking at present, are only cursorily described in the following pages.

The Commission started its investigation on the 17th of July, the flow of witnesses continues and what information we possess at the present moment is only a fraction of what we shall have the profound regret to learn later.

However, it must be stressed that the facts described in the present preliminary report are among those which the Commission can retain as established and proved as of now. Cases which left the slightest doubt have been omitted until they can be verified on the basis of evidence given by direct and impartial witnesses. On the other hand, it was not possible to publish in this preliminary report all the information which the Commission has already verified. A complete report may be published later, probably in the form of a White Book.

It is with reluctance that the often painful details that follow are published. The events are described as factually as possible. But in view of some of the statements which cast a doubt on the real savagery of which the whites in the Congo were the victims, the Belgian Government thinks that it is necessary to provide full information on some acts which have been proved for certain, even if the publication of them may seem offensive to certain codes of decency.

The report that follows only gives a fragmentary picture of what happened:

- 1) In the province of Leopoldville
- 2) In the Kasai province
- 3) In the Equator province

I. Province of Leopoldville

A. KISANTU and INKISI

Mrs. was at home on the 5th of July, 1960, at Kisantu with her mother and four children. Around 4 p.m. African soldiers pushed her in a bedroom, and raped her, all four of them in turn. Between 7 and 8 p.m. twelve soldiers and an African gendarme came back to the house. After having pushed out the husband and the children, the twelve soldiers raped her in the same room. Altogether Mrs. was raped sixteen times.

Miss was at Inkisi with three friends in the night of the 5th to the 6th of July. African soldiers seized her, threw her on the floor and maltreated her over her whole body in view of raping her. A Congolese chauffeur succeeded in chasing them away. Miss thus escaped raping, but is at present under treatment.

On the 6th of July, 1960, at Inkisi, Mr. was slapped in the face and hit with rifle butts by African soldiers who took him to prison. With two other white men, whom he named, he was forced during more than one hour and a quarter to flatten coils of barbed wire with his bare feet.

When he was taken out of prison, he was hit in the spine with a rifle butt so hard that he fell on the ground, whereupon he was hit over the whole body in the same manner. After this, he was brutally dragged back to his home. During the night, African soldiers returned to his house and forced Mr. and two other white men to stay with uplified arms in the backyard of the house. Meanwhile, a number of soldiers attempted to rape the women in the house.

At Inkisi, on July the 6th, 1960, Mrs. only just escaped raping, thanks to a nervous crisis of a friend, which frightened the assaulters.

On the 6th of July, 1960, at Inkisi, Miss was at home around 8:30 p.m. with three friends, when five or six soldiers entered the house. Two or three of them dragged one of the young women in a room. When she cried for help, Miss burst into the room where her friend was fighting the assaulters, but the soldiers grasped her and dragged her from one side to another of the room. They tried to rape her, tearing her clothes and hitting her. But they

did not succeed. A black policeman put an end to the scene. A few minutes later, a Congolese sergeant broke into the room and tried several times to rape one of the ladies in the presence of her four children. The lady fainted two or three times. The soldier thereupon attacked another young lady and dragged her into an adjoining room from which cries for help could be heard. The soldier remained about fifteen minutes with his victim.

B. BANZA-BOMA

On the 5th of July, 1960, Mrs. was at Banza-Boma with a very small child. Mrs. said that she was two months pregnant. Soldiers forced her to come out on the barza. She was raped by four soldiers in succession.

Mrs. said that around the same time a lady, whose name she mentioned, was raped at Banza-Boma.

At Banza-Boma, on the 6th of July, 1960, around noon, Mrs. was raped by a Congolese soldier at gunpoint, after her husband had been taken away by soldiers accompanied by the secretary of the ABAKO at Madimba.

C. MATADI

On the 8th of July, at Matadi, the Swiss subject N.... was arrested around ten o'clock by Congolese policemen. At the Damoi camp, he was hit in the back with rifle butts, while a policeman told him, literally: "that's independence". Later he was insulted, humiliated and hit with rifle butts.

At Matadi, on the 8th of July around 11 o'clock, 12 Congolese policemen arrived in the city and, threatening with rifles, look away the valid male population.

Mrs. had taken refuge in a house with four other ladies and children. The policemen returned to loot the houses, smash the doors and break the windows. One of the Congolese policemen entered the room where the women and children were together. He took away a girl of 14 threatening with his gun. When she heard the cries of horror and pain of the child, Mrs. realized that the policeman was raping her. After that, Mrs. was also raped.

When Mrs. cried, the policeman put his knife on her throat. Mrs. noticed traces of blood offering proof that the girl was raped. After Mrs. two other ladies were raped.

The fourth lady escaped thanks to the intervention of an African priest and a European.

On the 8th of July, at Matadi, Mrs. was staying in a villa together with six other ladies. A Congolese patrol burst into the house,

smashing the door. Several of them were wearing civilian clothes, others were in uniform. Mrs. was isolated in a bedroom and raped.

Mrs. Z. was at Matadi, on the 8th of July around one o'clock at noon, when three soldiers of the Force Publique came to search the house. One of them raped Mrs. Z.

D. SANDA

Mrs. was arrested by approximately ten soldiers of the Force Publique at her home in the Seke-Banza territory on the 9th of July. She was taken to Sanda. She was assaulted, kicked over her whole body, and dragged over the ground by her hair. Around eleven o'clock at night, four soldiers, among whom a Congolese non-commissioned officer, forced her, together with another lady, to work for two hours in the savannah under the menace of their guns. They were severely injured.

Back home, the two ladies were separated. One of them was raped three times by the non-commissioned officer, according to what Mrs. heard.

Mrs. herself was raped three times by three different soldiers. The following morning, Congolese soldiers twisted her hand, which is still bandaged.

A third and a fourth lady, the latter Portuguese, could avoid being raped by offering 500 francs to soldiers during the same night of the 8-9th of July. Like the others, they were forced to pluck weeds, under the menace of death.

E. ZANZI-KUA

Mr. was staying at Malanga and during the night of the 11th of July fled in the direction of Angola. A convoy of several cars was attacked at Zanzi-Kua near the offices of the ABAKO. One of the cars was carrying his wife and his two daughters. The car in front of his was stopped by Congolese. He tried to escape but was fired at several times. His wife was hit in the face by a bullet and dropped dead.

F. KIMPESE

At Kimpese, on the 13th of July, around six p.m. about twelve soldiers and a hundred civilians came to the house of Mr. who was taken away by car with his wife and his three children below 16 in the direction of Leopoldville. The woman was separated from her husband, and in the car that took her away with her two youngest

children, she was raped three times by the Congolese soldiers. They hit the child aged 9, and undressed a baby of two "to make sure that it was a boy".

Mrs. was raped at Kimpese in the night of the 13th to the 14th of July, at the same time as Mrs. B. She was raped a second time, at the same time as five other women. The following day, on the road to Thysville, the women were placed in a line, and raped a third time, some of them in the presence of their children.

Mrs. A was raped four times at Kimpese in the night of 13-14th of July, in the presence of her child aged 3.

Mrs. X was raped ten times at Kimpese in the night of the 13-14th of July, in the presence of her children, after her husband was roped and clubbed.

G. WONO (Thysville)

On the 13th of July, two families, among which that of Mrs. A. at Wono, took refuge in the savannah, but they were discovered by Congolese policemen. The men were roped and pushed with a pregnant woman on a truck. Four other women were pushed on another truck and transferred to Kimpese where the women were shut in a small room with five other women and four children. Around nine at night one woman was taken out and raped, later two more underwent the same treatment, and later still Mrs. A. was raped. She was taken back to the cell, but taken out again three or four times by a policeman who raped her each time.

The following day the families were pushed on a truck. At a stop, the soldiers dragged women and children into the bush and raped the former. Mrs. A. was raped five or six times in the presence of her child and other children.

On the road to Thysville, she was hit in the right eye and still bears traces of it.

Mrs. A. was thus raped at least ten times.

Mr. lived at Wono when on the 13th of July Congolese policemen broke into his house. They tied his hands together with telephone wire, and forced him on his knees. He was slapped in the face, clubbed and hit with rifle butts in the back and on the arms and kicked in his back and on his legs. Natives took part in this. His three companions received the same treatment. He was pushed on a truck by two Congolese, one of them holding him by the head and the other by the feet. At that moment the natives seemed to watch them with pity. While the women were pushed on the other truck, the whites were beaten again. The natives used violence trying

to put rotten manioc into their mouth. At every stop between Wono and Kimpese, the prisoners were stoned and beaten by the natives. The brother of Mr. escaped death thanks to a member of the ABAKO.

At Zombe, the men were roped together three by three by the neck, and were once more beaten up by the natives and the policemen.

Imprisoned at Kimpese, they had to lie down on the cement floor. They were obliged to urinate in their trousers and forced to drink from a cup in which the blacks had urinated. They were repeatedly beaten until dawn.

During the transfer to Lukala, they were beaten once more by the soldiers, beaten again at Lukala, and sent to Thysville, where they were looked after by a doctor.

H. CAMP HARDY

On the fourth of July, after the four days of festivities which had marked the proclamation of independence, the whites noticed that excitement among the Congolese soldiers was growing. At night, this excitement had become disquietening.

Armed with machetes, the threatening Congolese soldiers told their officers that they were now the masters. After they had broken into the munition depots, they were in fact so.

On the 5th, the officers assembled on the hill overlooking the European city, with their wives and children. In the night of the 5-6th of July, whites were detained in their houses. On the 6th, a Congolese delegation, which included Mr. Diomi, a Congolese cabinet minister, tried to restore calm among the Congolese. It saw how three officers from another camp had been seriously wounded by the Congolese soldiers, and brought back, some of them in a state of collapse, on stretchers to Camp Hardy. The same evening there was an intervention of President Kasavubu and Premier Lumumba and the officers returned to their home.

From the 7th to the 10th, the whites resumed work normally, but the Congolese did not show up.

On the 11th, in the afternoon, armed black soldiers disarmed the officers and non-commissioned officers, put them in prison, after having taken away their possessions, and beaten them with rifle butts.

At the same time, the whites of Sonankulu were imprisoned in the Thysville goal. They were humiliated, stripped, spat in the face, beaten and ridiculed.

Finally, officers from the two camps and civilians among whom there were priests whose beard they attempted to burn, were locked

the same cell. They were left without anything to eat or to drink. It is true that some of them were given some water, but it seemed to come from the latrines. Others were permitted to have somebody send for food at home, but in the case of one soldier who fetched food, the wife of the officer who gave it to him was raped.

As to the acts of violence committed against men, following cases may be mentioned:

On the 6th of July, at Thysville, a man named C.... was taken by Congolese soldiers to Camp Hardy, under the hostile shouts of the population. He was beaten and, among others, he was hit with a rifle butt in the back.

The man named V.... was at Thysville, Camp Hardy, on the 5-6th July. He was put in prison for two days without food, under the menace of an automatic weapon, with his wife and three children below 12. After he was set free, he was arrested again on the 11th around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. He was stripped like the others, hit with fists, feet and rifle butts. Two of his companions were mortally wounded. For two more days they were left without drink or food. Soldiers attempted to drown them in a barrel filled with water, but a sergeant prevented them from doing so.

Mr. lived at the military Camp Hardy at Thysville. On the 6th of July, and again on the 11-12th of July, he was beaten by native soldiers.

M.... a Belgian officer, said that the situation deteriorated in the camp at Thysville on the 5th of July. The officers were practically prisoners, and two of them were beaten with sticks and stoned. On the 11th of July, M.... was put in a prison cell after having been beaten and hit with a rifle butt. For about three days, he and the other prisoners were without food or drink. At a certain moment, they received water, but M.... thinks that it was water from the latrines.

After the men had been made defenseless, the majority of the white women were raped.

Raping scenes have been described by the victims in lurid terms. The Congolese soldiers attacked all the women, even those that were visibly pregnant, women that had recently given birth to a child, and sick women. To get what they were after, they committed acts of violence and threatened with their weapons. In a great many cases, they threatened the children with death to make their mothers give in.

Some women were raped by a great many men in succession and could not tell the number of assaults committed against them. In many cases, these scenes took place in the presence of children and, in particular, in the presence of the children of the victims.

Some ladies sacrificed themselves to avoid the worst for their children or for a sick friend. Not all the girls escaped the soldiers' brutality.

It must be noted, that some of the victims lost conscience as a result of the acts of violence. When they thought that their victims were dead, the soldiers ran away.

Of the 29 white women that have already been questioned by the Commission, 19, or two thirds of them, have admitted that they were raped. This figure only includes the cases of rape certified by the statement of the victim, excluding the numberless attempts at rape.

Some women escaped the acts of violence, either by feigning absence (one of them shut herself up with her girl for two days in a washroom), or thanks to the intervention of a Congolese soldier who remained faithful.

These cases of rape present a serious danger of venereal contagion.

A few concrete examples:

As stated already, the man named V was at the Hardy Camp, Thysville, on the 5-6th of July. He was imprisoned for two days without food, with his wife and three children aged less than 12, under the menace of an automatic weapon. After he was freed, he was arrested again on the 11th of July, around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. He was stripped, like the others, and hit with fists, feet and rifle butts. Two of his companions were mortally wounded. For two more days, they were deprived of food and drink. Soldiers tried to drown him in a barrel filled with water, but a sergeant prevented them.

On the same day (11th of July), his wife was assaulted in her bedroom. She was hit with fists and rifle butts by six soldiers, who got hold of her and made deep cuts in her arms, of which the Commission has found traces. They stripped her of her underwear and raped her. Six soldiers held her tight and motionless, while an undetermined number of soldiers raped her. They stood in line while waiting for their turn. Her three children were present at the scene, crying loudly.

Other soldiers got hold of her daughter aged less than 12 and raped her several times.

Shortly afterwards, three soldiers again entered her room and raped Mrs. Z..... in turn. While one of them raped her, the two others held her motionless. The children were again present.

Shortly after they left, other soldiers came to the house and raped Mrs. Z in the same manner.