



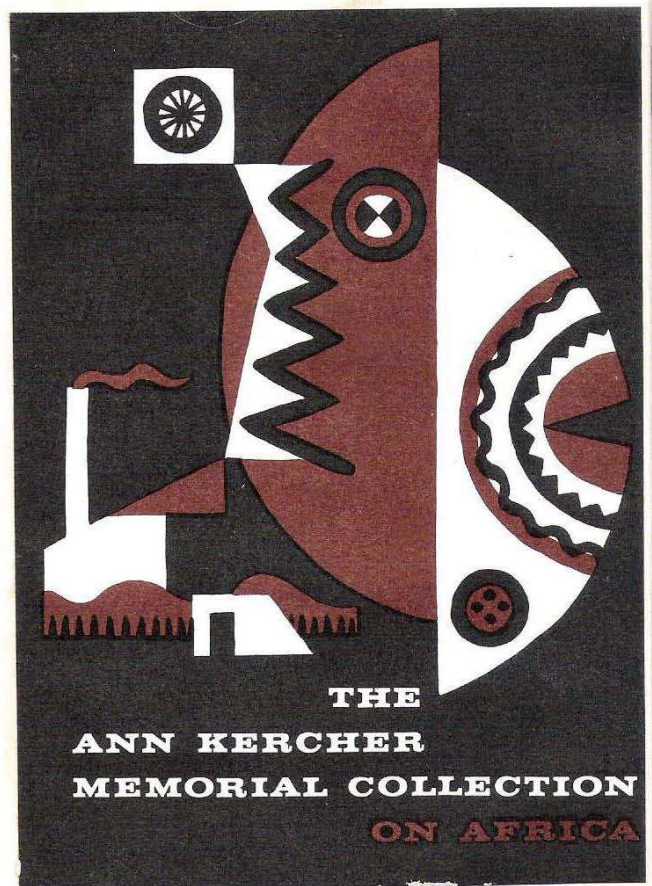
BELGIAN CONGO

AT WAR

Published by the
Belgian Information Center
630 Fifth Ave., New York

BELGIAN CONGO AT WAR

DT
646
45
1942



PUBLISHED BY
THE BELGIAN INFORMATION CENTER
// 630 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN 49001

"A Primitive Mass of Natives" Becomes a Body of Loyal Colonial Citizens

Silence is such a beautiful and permanent thing that, whenever it is broken by the spoken word or by print, an excuse is called for: that is the origin of prefaces, introductions and forewords. Especially in wartime, when economy in every field is imperative, a reason should be given for every effort which, at first sight, does not seem indispensable.

The publication of this brochure is justified by the fact that the American public generally is not aware of the rôle the Belgian Congo is playing in the world conflict, and by another far more important fact, namely, that Belgium has assumed the white man's burden in a territory 80 times its own size and has achieved in four score years a work of civilization and progress to which practically all who know the Congo render homage. Under a regime of economic internationalization, Congo commerce has developed rapidly and the motherland Belgium has spared no sacrifices to increase the Congo's economic significance in world trade, although it was bound by the international status of its colony to deal on a perfectly equal basis with other peoples.

The well known American author, Negley Farson, states in *Behind God's Back* that: "The Belgians seem to have shown a great deal of uncommon good sense in handling their Congo problem."

The tremendous sacrifices Belgium has imposed upon itself to help the Congo native out of Arabian slavery and to deliver him from disease, have been rewarded by the loyalty and the devotion of the 15,000,000 Negroes in the Congo. Already in World War I, our Negro troops fought bravely and effectively against the Germans in Africa. The conquest of Tabora and the surrounding region was the culminating point of their forceful action. Today, the

populations of the former German colonies have not yet forgotten the treatment inflicted upon them by the "magnificent blond beasts of prey," for whose arrival Frederic Nietzsche longed so much. The colonial troops of the Belgian Congo readily gave their lives for their homeland and its white protectors. As Negley Farson wrote, "It is well to the credit of the Belgians that they have taken this very primitive mass of Congo natives and are, yearly and inevitably, giving them better living conditions and a practical education."

Again, in 1941, they went on the march against the Italian strongholds in Southern Abyssinia. More than 500 of them died on the burning plateaus of the Gala Sidamo region, but they conquered Asosa, Gambela and Saio, took 15,000 prisoners and swept the enemy from the entire region. Today they are ready for further action.

As the war moved on in the Far East, important production centers of valuable war materials were lost to the Allies, and the importance of the Belgian Congo as a producer of copper, tin, manganese, rubber, palm oil, fiber, etc., became more apparent. Since the 10th of May, 1940, the Belgian Congo has been staunchly on the side of the Allies. It has not wavered. The purpose of this brochure is to tell the American public how this African territory, as large as one third of the United States, is bracing itself to an ever-increased effort for the Allied victory. Too often this effort is ignored, sometimes it is minimized. The Belgian colonizers of the Congo had a double object: to combat ignorance and to repair injustice. To a certain extent, this brochure aims to do the same.

THE BELGIAN INFORMATION CENTER

The Belgian Congo is at War and is Waging War

by *ALBERT DE VLEESCHAUWER*



We are at war and we are waging war.

In the common strife, the Belgian Congo brings all it is, all it has, all it can.

Congo troops with Belgian officers and N. C. O.'s are on the march beyond the colony's frontiers and have distinguished themselves in no small manner in the Ethiopian campaign. More and still more troops and equipment will be available as, when and where they are needed.

The Congo transports and highways have been offered to the Allies. Already South African regiments have used them to join the battle lines.

In the all-important economic field also, the Belgian Congo has entered the service of the Allies. Its economic doc-

trine and practices have been rapidly adapted to the new conditions and, whilst everything is being done to maintain the potentiality of the Congo wealth, there is no hesitation whatsoever when it comes to sacrificing any riches in favor of the war effort.

Our contacts with the British Government are constant and the economic and financial treaties we signed with that Government are proof of our good will, just as is our military cooperation on land, on sea and in the air.

With the British colonies and Dominions our understanding is complete. In the course of my journeys to Africa, I paid good-neighbor visits to the Governors of Gambia, Sierra-Leone and Nigeria. In company with the Congo Governor-General and the chief of the Congo staff, I officially visited Kenya in order to show better than by speeches our will to act in perfect harmony with our Allies. At Nairobi we had conversations of a military and economic nature. In the Union of South Africa, I had highly useful meetings with that eminent statesman, General Smuts, to discuss various problems interesting our two countries. We reached an agreement on most of them and started preliminary negotiations towards a satisfactory solution for the others, always keeping in mind the will to better relations between the two countries and to further the all-out effort to win the war.

The moral and economic relations between the Belgian Congo and America have always been on a friendly footing. Today when, because of the Oriental and the European Nazis' aggression, the United States are in the war, these relations will be ever increasing. In that respect, the inauguration of the Congo Clipper Line is heartily welcome; it is also an omen for the war aftermath.

Through the various factors outlined which all converge towards unity with the Allies, through the important share taken up wholeheartedly by the Belgian Congo, we feel confident that we shall speedily obtain the liberation of our beloved Belgium and regain our freedom and independence.