

"Father and mother are dead." After that my oldest sister was caught, too, in the bush, and they left my little brother and sister alone in the bush to die, because heavy rain came on, and they had not had anything to eat for days and days. At night they tied my hands and feet for fear that I should run away. In the morning they caught three people—two had children; they killed the children. Afterwards I was standing outside, and a soldier asked me, "Where are you going?" I said, "I am going home." He said, "Come on." He took his gun; he put me in the house; he wanted to kill me. Then another soldier came and took me. We heard a big noise; they told us that the fighting was over, but it was not so. When we were going on the way they killed ten children because they were very, very small; they killed them in the water. Then they killed a lot of people, and they cut off their hands and put them into baskets and took them to the white man. He counted out the hands—200 in all; they left the hands lying. The white man's name was "CD." After that CD sent us prisoners with soldiers to P* to ST. ST told me to weed grass. When I was working outside a soldier came and said: "Come here;" and when I went he wanted to cut my hand off, and so I went to the white man to tell him, and he thrashed the soldier.

On our way, when we were coming to P*, the soldiers saw a little child, and when they went to kill it the child laughed so the soldier took the butt of the gun and struck the child with it, and then cut off its head. One day they killed my half-sister and cut off her head, hands, and feet because she had on rings. Her name was Q Q Q. Then they caught another sister, and they sold her to the W W* people, and now she is a slave there. When we came to P* the white man said to send word to the friends of the prisoners to come with goats to buy off some of their relatives. A lot were bought off, but I had no one to come and buy me off because father was dead. The white man said to me, "You shall go to" The white man (ST) gave me a small boy to care for, but I thought he would be killed, so I helped to get him away. ST asked me to bring the boy to him, but I said: "He has run away." He said he would kill me, but

(Signed) U U.

Signed by U U before me.

(Signed) ROGER CASEMENT,
His Britannic Majesty's Consul.

Inclosure 4 in No. 3.

(See p. 34.)

Notes in the Case of V V, a Native of L L in the Mantumba District, both of whose hands have been hacked or beaten off, and with reference to other similar cases of Mutilation in that District.*

I FOUND this man in the station at Q* on, and learned that he had been kept by the missionaries for some years, since the day when a party of native teachers had found him in his own town, situated in the forest some miles away from Q*. In answer to my inquiry as to how he came to lose his hands, V V's statement was as follows:—

"State soldiers came from P*, and attacked the R R* towns, which they burned, killing people. They then attacked a town called A B* and burned it, killing people there also. From that they went on to L L*. The L L* people fled into the forest, leaving some few of their number behind with food to offer to the soldiers—among whom was V V. The soldiers came to L L*, under the command of a European officer, whose native name was T U. The soldiers took prisoner all the men left in the town, and tied them up. Their hands were tied very tight with native rope, and they were tied up outside in the open; and as it was raining very hard, and they were in the rain all the time and all the night, their hands swelled, because the thongs contracted. His (V V's) hands had swollen terribly in the morning, and the thongs had cut into the bone. The soldiers, when they came to L L*, had only one native a prisoner with them; he was killed during the night. At L L* itself eight people, including himself (V V) were taken prisoners; all were men; two were killed during the night. Six only were taken down in the morning to Y Y*. The white man ordered four of the prisoners to be released; the fifth was a Chief, named R R R. This Chief had come back to L L* in the night to try secretly to get some fire to take back into the forest, where the fugitives were hiding. His wife had become sick during the heavy rain in the forest, and the Chief wanted the fire for her; but the soldiers caught him, and he was taken along with the rest. This Chief was taken to P*, but he believes that on the way, at Z Z*, he tried to escape, and was killed. V V's hands were so swollen that they were quite useless. The soldiers seeing this, and that the thongs had cut into the bone, beat his hands against a tree with their rifles, and he was released. He does not know why they beat his hands. The white man, T U, was not far off, and could see what they were doing. T U was drinking palm-wine while the soldiers beat his hands with their rifle-butts against the tree. His hands subsequently fell off (or sloughed away). When the soldiers left him by the waterside, he got back to L L*, and when his own people returned from the forest they found him there. Afterwards some boys—one of whom was a relation—came to L L*, and they found him without his hands.

There was some doubt in the translation of V V's statement whether his hands had been

cut with a knife; but later inquiry established that they fell off through the tightness of the native rope and the beating of them by the soldiers with their rifle-butts.

On the 14th August, I again visited the State camp at Irebu, where, in the course of conversation with the officer in command, I made passing but intentional reference to the fact that I had seen V V, and had heard his story from himself. I added that from the boy's statement it would seem that the loss of his hands was directly attributable to an officer who was apparently close at hand and in command of the soldiers at the time. I added that I had heard of other cases in the neighbourhood. The Commandant at once informed me that such things were impossible, but that in this specific case of V V he should cause inquiry to be instantly made.

On my return from the Lulonga River I found that this remark in passing conversation had borne instant fruit, although previous appeals on behalf of the boy had proved unsuccessful. The Commissaire-Général of the Equator District had, learning of it, at once proceeded to Lake Mantumba, and a judicial investigation as to how V V lost his hands had been immediately instituted. The boy was taken to Bikoro, and I have since been informed that provision has been made for him and a weekly allowance.

When at the village of B C*, I had found there a boy of not more than 12 years of age with the right hand gone. This child, in answer to my inquiries, said that the hand had been cut off by the Government soldiers some years before. He could not say how long before, but judging from the height he indicated he could not then have been more than 7 years of age if now 12. His statement was fully confirmed by S S S and his relatives, who stood around him while I questioned him. The soldiers had come to B C* from Coquilhatville by land through the forest. They were led by an officer whose name was given as "U V." His father and mother were killed beside him. He saw them killed, and a bullet hit him and he fell. He here showed me a deep cicatrized scar at the back of the head, just at the nape of the neck, and said it was there the bullet had struck him. He fell down, presumably insensible, but came to his senses while his hand was being hacked off at the wrist. I asked him how it was he could possibly lie silent and give no sign. He answered that he felt the cutting, but was afraid to move, knowing that he would be killed if he showed any sign of life.

I made some provision for this boy.

The names of six other persons mutilated in a similar way were given to me. The last of these, an old woman, had died only a few months previously, and her niece stated that her aunt had often told her how she came to lose her hand. The town had been attacked by Government troops and all had fled, pursued into the forest. This old woman (whose name was V W) had fled with her son, when he fell shot dead, and she herself fell down beside him—she supposed she fainted. She then felt her hand being cut off, but had made no sign. When all was quiet and the soldiers had gone, she found her son's dead body beside her with one hand cut off and her own also taken away.

Of acts of persistent mutilation by Government soldiers of this nature I had many statements made to me, some of them specifically, others in a general way. Of the fact of this mutilation and the causes inducing it there can be no shadow of doubt. It was not a native custom prior to the coming of the white man; it was not the outcome of the primitive instincts of savages in their fights between village and village; it was the deliberate act of the soldiers of a European Administration, and these men themselves never made any concealment that in committing these acts they were but obeying the positive orders of their superiors. I obtained several specific instances of this practice of mutilation having been carried out in the town of Q* itself, when the Government soldiers had come across from P* to raid it or compel its inhabitants to work.

Inclosure 5 in No. 3.

(See p. 43.)

Circular dated October 20, 1900.

LE Gouvernement a délégué à des Sociétés Commerciales opérant dans certaines parties du territoire non soumise à l'action immédiate de son autorité une partie de ses pouvoirs en matière de police générale.

Ces Sociétés sont dites avoir "le droit de police." Des interprétations erronées ont été données à cette appellation.

On a voulu y voir l'attribution aux Directeurs de ces Sociétés et même à des agents subalternes, du droit de diriger des opérations militaires offensives, "de faire la guerre" aux populations indigènes; d'autres, sans même s'inquiéter d'examiner quelles pouvaient être les limites de ce droit de police, se sont servis de moyens que cette délégation avait mis entre leurs mains, pour commettre les abus les plus graves.

C'est-à-dire que "le droit de police" qui leur donnait le moyen de se protéger eux-mêmes et l'obligation de protéger les individus contre l'abus de la force, allait complètement à l'encontre de l'un de ces buts principaux.

En présence de cette situation, j'ai décidé que "le droit de police," terme dont je conserve provisoirement l'emploi, ne laisserait que le pouvoir de réquisitionner, à l'effet de maintenir ou de rétablir l'ordre, la force armée qui se trouvera soit dans la Concession, soit en dehors, mais même dans ce cas il doit être bien entendu que les officiers de l'État conserveront, au cours des événements le Commandant [? commandement] des soldats et seront seuls juges, sous leur responsabilité, des opérations militaires qu'il importerait d'entreprendre.

Les armes perfectionnées que les Sociétés posséderaient dans leurs diverses factoreries ou établissements et qui doivent faire l'objet comme les armes d'autres Sociétés n'ayant pas le droit de police, d'un permis modèle B, ne peuvent en aucun cas sortir des établissements pour lesquels elles ont été délivrées.

Quant aux fusils à piston ils ne peuvent être mis en dehors des factoreries qu'entre les mains des Capitais et à condition que ceux-ci aient un permis suivant modèle C.

Les fusils à piston ne sortiront ainsi des factoreries qu'isolément. Ne pouvant être remis en dehors des établissements commerciaux dans les mains de groupes plus ou moins importants ils ne constitueront ainsi jamais une force offensive.

Je donne à nouveau les ordres les plus formels pour que tous les fonctionnaires de l'État concourent à faire réprimer les infractions à ces strictes défenses.

Le Gouverneur-Général,
(Signé) WAHIS.

Boma, le 20 Octobre, 1900.

(Translation.)

THE Government have delegated to commercial Companies operating in certain parts of the territory not subject to the immediate exercise of Government authority a part of their powers in matters of general police.

These Companies are described as having "the right of police." Erroneous interpretations have been given to this expression.

It has been held by some as giving to the Directors of these Companies, and even to inferior officers, the right to undertake offensive military operations, to "make war" on the native population; others, without even troubling to ascertain what the limits of this right of police might be, have used the means afforded by this delegation of power to commit the gravest abuses.

That is to say, "the right of police," which gave them the means of protecting themselves, and imposed upon them the obligation of protecting individuals against abuse of force, was used in a manner absolutely opposed to one of these principal objects.

In view of these circumstances, I have decided that "the right of police," an expression the use of which I retain provisionally, shall imply no more than the power of requisitioning, with a view to maintaining or restoring order, the armed force existing either within or without the Concession; but even in this case it must be well understood that the officers of the State will retain command of the soldiers during the proceedings, and will be the sole judges, on their own responsibility, of the military operations which it may be desirable to undertake.

Improved weapons which the Companies possess in their various factories or establishments and for which, as for the arms of other Companies not having the right of police, a permit, form (B), must be taken out, may not in any case be removed from the establishments for which they were issued.

With regard to cap-guns, they may not be removed from the factories except into the hands of the Capitais, and on the condition that the latter are in possession of a permit, form (C).

Cap-guns will thus only be removed from the factories one by one. As they cannot be issued from the commercial establishments into the hands of more or less numerous groups, they will thus never constitute a means of offence.

I again give the most formal orders that all the State officials co-operate to repress violations of these strict prohibitions.

The Governor-General,
(Signed) WAHIS.

Boma, October 20, 1890.

Inclosure 6 in No. 3.

(See p. 56.)

Note of Information taken in the Charge of Cutting off the boy I I's hand, preferred to Mr. Casement by the People of E.*

AT village of E* in the CD* country, on left bank of ED*, tributary of the X* River.

Y Y, with many of the townsmen and a few women and children, also present.

A lad, about 14 or 15 years of age, I I by name, whose left hand had been cut off, the stump wrapped up in a rag, the wound being yet scarcely healed, appears, and, in answer to Consul's question, charges a sentry named K K (placed in the town by the local agent of the La Lulanga Society to see that the people work rubber) with having done it. This sentry is called, and after some delay appears with a cap-gun.

The following inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the loss of I I's hand then takes place:—

The Consul, through W W, speaking in E F*, and X X repeating his utterances both in F G* to the sentry and in the local dialect to the others, asks I I, in the presence of the accused: "Who cut off your hand?"

I I: "The sentry there."

The sentry denies the charge (interrupting), and stating that his name is T T T and not K K. Consul requests him to keep silence—that he can speak later.

Y Y is called and questioned by Consul through the interpreters. After being exhorted to speak the truth without fear or favour, he states:

"The sentry before us cut off I I's hand."

Consul: "Did you yourself witness the act?"

Answer: "Yes."

Several of the Headmen of the town called upon by the Consul to testify.

To the first of these, who gave his name as Z Z, Consul asked, pointing to I I's mutilated wrist-bone: "Who cut off this boy's hand?"

Z Z (pointing to the sentry): "That man did it."

The second, who gave his name as A A A, asked by Consul: "Who cut off this boy's hand?"

Answers: "K K."

The third, giving his name as B B B, asked by Consul: "Who cut off this boy's hand?"

Answers: "This man here, the sentry."

Z Z (re-questioned): "Did you yourself see this sentry cut off this boy's hand?"

Answer: "Yes, I saw it."

A A A (re-questioned): "Did you yourself see this sentry cut off this boy's hand?"

Answers: "I should think so. Did I not get this wound here" (pointing to a cut by the tendon Achilles on the left heel) "the same day, when running away in fright? My own knife wounded me. I let it fall when I ran away."

Consul questions I I: "How long ago was it your hand was cut off?"

Answer: "He is not sure."

Two fellow-villagers—young men, named C C C and D D D—step out and state that they remember. The act occurred when the clay was being dug over at CD, when the slip-plate for the steamers was begun.

E E E, of E*, another section of the village of R**, questioned by Consul: "Did you see this lad's hand cut off?"

Answer: "Yes. I did not actually see it being cut off. I came up and saw the severed hand and the blood lying on the ground. The people had run away in all directions."

Consul asked interpreters to ask if there were others who had seen the crime and charged K K with it.

Nearly all those present, about forty persons, nearly all men, shouted out with one voice that it was K K who did it.

Consul: "They are all sure it was K K here?"

Universal response: "Yes; he did it."

Consul asked the accused K K: "Did you cut off this boy's hand?"

This question was put in the plainest language, and repeated six times, with the request that a plain answer—"yes" or "no"—should be given.

The accused failed to answer the question, beginning to talk of other things not relevant to the question, such as that his name was T T and not K K and that the people of R** had done bad things to him.

He was told to confine himself to the question put to him, that he could talk of other things later, but that now it was his place to answer the questions put, just as simply and plainly as the others had answered. He had heard those answers and the charge they levied against him, and he should answer the Consul's questions in just the same way.

The accused continued to speak of irrelevant subjects, and refused or failed to give any answer to the question put to him.

After repeated attempts to obtain answer to the question: "Did you or did you not cut off this boy I I's hand?"

Consul states: "You are charged with this crime. You refuse to answer the questions I put to you plainly and straightforwardly as your accusers have done. You have heard their accusation. Your refusal to reply as you should reply—viz., yes or no—to a direct and simple question leaves me convinced that you cannot deny the charge. You have heard what has been charged against you by all these people. Since you decline to answer as they did, you may tell your story your own way. I shall listen to it."

Accused began to speak, but before his remarks could be translated to me through X X first, to whom he spoke direct, and then through W W, a young man stepped out of the crowd and interrupted.

There was noise and then the man spoke:—

He stated he was F F F of R**. He had shot two antelopes, and he had brought two of their legs to this sentry as a gift. The sentry refused to accept them, and tied his wife up. The sentry said they were not a sufficient present for him, and he kept F F F's wife tied up until he, F F F, paid him 1,000 brass rods for her release.

Here a young man giving his name as G G G stepped into the ring and accused the sentry of having robbed him openly of two ducks and a dog. They were taken from him for no reason save that the sentry wanted them and took them by force.

Consul again turned to the sentry and invited him to tell his story, and to give his answer to the charge against him in his own way. Consul enjoined silence on all, and not to interrupt the sentry.

K K stated that he did not take G G G's ducks. The father of G G G gave him a duck. (All laughed.) It is true that F F F killed two antelopes and gave him the two legs as a gift but he did not tie up his wife or require money for her release.

Consul: "That is all right. That finishes the ducks and the antelopes' legs; but now I want to hear about I I's hand. Tell me what you know about I I's hand being cut off."

K K again evaded the question.

Consul: "Tell him this. He is put here by his master in this town, is he not? This is his town. Now, does he say he does not know what goes on here where he lives?"

The sentry states: "It is true that this is his town, but he knows nothing about I I's hand being cut off. Perhaps it was the first sentry here before he came, who was a very bad man and cut people's hands off. That sentry has gone away—it was he who cut hands off, not himself. He does not know anything of it."

Consul: "What was the name then of this bad sentry, your predecessor, who cut people's hands off? You know it?"

The sentry gives no direct answer, and the question is repeated. He then gives a statement about several sentries, naming three, as predecessors of himself here at R**.

Here a man named H H H jumped up, interrupting, and asserted that those three sentries did not reside at R**, but had been stationed in his own town—his, H H H's, town.

Consul (to the sentry): "How long have you been in this town?"

Answer: "Five months."

Consul: "You are quite sure?"

Answer: "Five months."

Consul: "Do you, then, know this boy I I? Have you seen him before?"

Answer: "I do not know him at all."

Here the entire auditory roared with laughter, and expressions of admiration at the sentry's flying powers were given vent to.

The sentry, continuing, stated that possibly I I comes from H H H's town. Anyhow, he (the sentry) does not know I I; he does not know him at all.

Here F F F stepped out and said he was full brother of I I; they had lived here always. Their father was U U U, now dead; their mother is also dead.

Consul (to the sentry): "Then it is finished. You know nothing of this matter."

The sentry: "It is finished. I have told you all. I know nothing of it."

Here a man giving his name as I I I, of K K*, the neighbouring section of R**, came forward with his wife.

He stated that the other sentries in their town were not so bad, but that this man was a villain.

The sentry had tied up his wife—the woman he brought forward—and had made him pay 500 rods before she was released. He had paid the money.

Here Consul asked I I how his hand had been cut off. He and C C C and D D D stated that he had first been shot in the arm, and then when he fell down the sentry had cut his hand off.

Consul: "Did you feel it being cut off?"

Answer: "Yes, I felt it."

This terminated the inquiry. The Consul informed Y Y and the people present that he should report what he had seen and heard to the Congo Government, and that he should beg them to investigate the charge against the sentry, who deserved severe punishment for his illegal and cruel acts. The things that the sentry was charged with doing were quite illegal, and if the Government of his country knew of such things being done, the perpetrators of such crimes would, in all cases, be punished.

(Signed) ROGER CASEMENT,
His Britannic Majesty's Consul.

Inclosure 7 in No. 3.

(See p. 59.)

Circular of September 7, 1903, forbidding Soldiers armed with Rifles from going out on Service without Europeans over them.

ÉTAT INDÉPENDANT DU CONGO.

Boma, le 7 Septembre, 1903.

LA lecture de rapports sur des opérations et reconnaissances militaires démontre que les prescriptions formelles—et si souvent répétées—du Gouvernement concernant l'instruction d'envoyer des soldats armés sous la conduite de gradés noirs ne sont pas observées rigoureusement.

Je constate même avec regret de la part de certains fonctionnaires et agents cette mauvaise volonté à se conformer à ces instructions, qui sont pourtant dictées par le souci des intérêts supérieurs de l'État.

Les opérations militaires doivent être conduites d'après les règlements sur le service en campagne que nos officiers et sous-officiers doivent appliquer fréquemment au cours des exercices journaliers et d'après les nombreuses prescriptions sur la matière. Et à cet effet le personnel supérieur, avant de se prononcer sur les opérations à conduire aura, au préalable, à examiner si les moyens dont disposent leurs sous-ordres sont suffisants.

J'ai l'honneur d'inviter les Chefs territoriaux à rappeler à leur personnel les instructions qui précèdent et à l'informer de ce que toute contravention à la défense d'envoyer des soldats armés

sous la conduite de gradés noirs sera sévèrement réprimée et de nature même à provoquer la révocation de l'agent en faute.

Les soldats doivent être l'objet d'une surveillance constante afin qu'il leur soit impossible de se livrer à des cruautés auxquelles pourraient les pousser leurs instincts primitifs.

Les instructions défendent aussi d'employer les soldats au service des courriers et des transports.

Malgré cela on continue en maints endroits à pratiquer ce déplorable usage.

Il importe que les soldats ne soient plus constamment distraits de leur garnison et de leur métier militaire et qu'ils restent, en tout temps, sous le contrôle de leurs chefs; l'instruction et l'éducation militaires des hommes de la force publique ne peuvent qu'y gagner.

Je prie, en conséquence, le personnel intéressé de faire cesser immédiatement l'état de choses signalé ci-dessus: le service des courriers doit être assuré par des travailleurs ou des hommes spécialement désignés à cet effet.

Si l'autorité juge nécessaire, dans certains cas, de faire escorter soit un courrier soit un convoi de marchandises, il faut que la patrouille soit organisée réglementairement et commandée par un Européen.

Ce n'est qu'à titre tout à fait exceptionnel et si c'est absolument nécessaire que cette patrouille pourra être commandée à défaut d'Européen par un gradé de choix et de confiance.

Mais dans ce cas, que l'autorité aura à justifier, les hommes commandés par un gradé noir devront être munis du fusil à piston d'armement qui constitue une bonne arme défensive.

Le Vice-Gouverneur-Général,
(Signé) F. FUCHS.

(Translation.)

INDEPENDENT STATE OF THE CONGO.

Boma, September 7, 1903.

THE perusal of reports on military operations and reconnaissances shows that the formal orders of the Government, so frequently repeated, respecting the instruction to send armed soldiers under the command of black non-commissioned officers, are not rigorously observed.

I even note with regret this disinclination, on the part of certain officials and agents, to conform to these instructions, which are, however, dictated by care for the higher interests of the State.

Military operations must be conducted in accordance with the regulations respecting service in the field, of which our officers and non-commissioned officers must make frequent application at daily drill, and in accordance with the numerous instructions in the matter. And to this end the superior staff, before deciding on the operations to be undertaken, must ascertain beforehand whether the means at the disposal of those below them are sufficient.

I have the honour to invite the territorial Chiefs to remind their staff of the preceding instructions, and to inform them that any breach of the rule forbidding the dispatch of armed soldiers under the command of black non-commissioned officers will be severely put down, and may lead to the dismissal of the agent in fault.

The soldiers must be the object of constant supervision, so that it may be impossible for them to commit cruelties to which their primitive instincts might prompt them.

The instructions also forbid the employment of the soldiers on post or transport work.

Nevertheless, this deplorable custom continues to obtain in many places.

It is important that the soldiers should not in future be constantly withdrawn from their garrison and from their military duties, and that they should remain at all times under the control of their Chiefs. This cannot fail to improve the instruction and military education of the men of the public force. I therefore request the staff whom it concerns to put an end at once to the above-mentioned condition of affairs; the postal service must be assured by workmen or by men specially chosen for that purpose.

If the authorities deem it necessary in certain cases to have the post or a convoy of merchandise escorted, the patrol must be organized according to the regulations, and must be commanded by a European.

It is only in most exceptional cases, and if it is absolutely necessary, that this patrol can, failing European, be commanded by a specially-selected and trustworthy non-commissioned officer.

But in such cases, which will have to be justified by the authorities, the men commanded by a black non-commissioned officer must be provided with a regulation cap-gun, which constitutes a good defensive weapon.

The Vice-Governor-General,
(Signed) F. FUCHS.

Inclosure 8 in No. 3.

(See p. 59.)

Circular of Governor-General Wahis, addressed to the Commissioners of District and Chiefs of Zones.

LA qualité du caoutchouc exporté du Congo est sensiblement inférieure à ce qu'elle était il y a quelque temps. Cette différence a plusieurs causes, mais la principale résulte de l'adjonction

au latex qui devrait être récolté, d'autres latex de valeur très inférieure ou même des matières poussiéreuses quelconques.

Cette cause de perte peut et doit disparaître. Les Commissaires de District et Chefs de Zone qui ont tous de l'expérience, connaissent les moyens de fraude que les indigènes cherchent souvent à employer.

Ils ont à prendre des mesures pour empêcher d'une façon complète ces tromperies. Il n'est pas douteux que là où la population se soumet à l'impôt il ne sera pas impossible de l'amener à fournir un produit pur, mais il faut pour atteindre ce but une surveillance constante; dès que l'indigène constatera qu'elle se relâche, il essaiera de diminuer son travail en prenant du latex de mauvaise qualité, quand il obtient celui-ci facilement, ou en ajoutant au produit des matières étrangères.

Chaque fois que ces fraudes sont constatées elles doivent être réprimées. Les Commissaires de District et Chefs de Zone ont à examiner fréquemment les produits, afin de faire à temps des observations à leurs Chefs de Poste, et à ne plus laisser perdurer des situations qui causent le plus grand préjudice.

A cette cause de la diminution de la valeur du caoutchouc, il faut ajouter celle provenant de l'emballage défectueux du produit, qui par suite voyage souvent pendant plusieurs mois dans les plus mauvaises conditions. L'on peut dire qu'à cause de cette négligence une notable partie des efforts qui ont été faits pour obtenir une production en rapport avec la richesse du pays, doivent être considérés comme perdus, puisque la valeur du caoutchouc peut diminuer de moitié par suite de ce manque de soin.

J'ajouterai que la valeur du caoutchouc, même pur de tout mélange, a diminué depuis quelque temps sur tous les marchés; il faut donc que les Chefs Territoriaux fassent non seulement disparaître les deux causes de pertes qu'ils peuvent éliminer, mais encore qu'ils compensent la troisième en faisant des efforts continus pour augmenter la production dans la mesure prescrite par les instructions.

Mon attention sera d'une façon constante, fixée sur les prescriptions que je donne ici.

Le Gouverneur-Général,
(Signé) WAHIS.

Boma, le 29 Mars, 1901.

(Translation.)

THE quality of the rubber exported from the Congo is sensibly inferior to what it was some time ago. This difference arises from several causes, but principally from the addition, to the latex which is fit to be gathered, of other kinds of latex of very inferior value, or even of any dust-like matter.

This cause of loss can and must be removed. The Commissioners of districts and Chiefs of zones, who all have experience, know the fraudulent means which the natives often try to employ.

They must take measures completely to prevent these frauds. It cannot be doubted that in those parts where the population submits to the tax it will not be impossible to lead the natives to furnish pure produce; but in order to effect this, constant supervision is necessary, for as soon as the native notices that the supervision is becoming lax he will try to lessen his work by taking latex of a bad quality, if he obtains it easily, or by adding foreign matter.

Whenever these frauds are discovered they must be put down. The Commissioners of districts and Chiefs of zones must examine the produce at frequent intervals, in order to report in time to their Heads of stations, and not to permit a condition of affairs which is most prejudicial.

To this cause of the decline in the value of rubber must be added that arising from defective packing of the produce, which thus often travels during several months under the worst conditions. Much of the effort which has been taken to obtain produce in keeping with the richness of the country may be said to be lost through this neglect, for the value of the rubber may be diminished by half through this want of care.

I may add that the value of rubber, even when free from all admixture, has gone down in every market for some time past; territorial Chiefs must, therefore, not only remove the two causes of loss which they can eliminate, but they must also try to neutralize the third by making unceasing efforts to increase production to the extent laid down in the instructions.

The orders which I have here given will have my constant attention.

The Governor-General,
(Signed) WAHIS.

Boma, March 29, 1901.

No. 4.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Phipps.

Sir,
Foreign Office, February 11, 1904.
WITH reference to Sir C. Phipps' despatch of the 19th September, 1903, I transmit to you herewith a Memorandum which has been prepared in reply to the note respecting the condition of affairs in the Congo addressed by the Government of

the Independent State on the 17th September last, to the Powers parties to the Act of Berlin.

I request you to communicate this Memorandum to M. de Cuvelier, and in doing so to call special attention to the inclosed Report by Mr. Casement, His Majesty's Consul at Boma, upon his recent visit to certain districts of the Upper Congo.

I am, &c.

(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

Inclosure in No. 4.

Memorandum

HIS Majesty's Government have not until now offered any observations upon the note from M. de Cuvelier of the 17th September last, because they desired, before doing so, to learn the result of the inquiries instituted by Mr. Casement, His Majesty's Consul at Boma, during the visit which he has recently paid to certain districts of the Upper Congo.

Mr. Casement returned to this country at the beginning of last month, and has since furnished the report of which a copy is annexed to this Memorandum for communication to the Congo Government. The report will also be communicated to the Powers parties to the Berlin Act, to whom the despatch of the 8th August last was addressed, and it will be laid before Parliament.

The descriptions given in the report of the manner in which the administration is carried on and the methods by which the revenue is collected in the districts visited by Mr. Casement constitute a grave indictment, and need no comment beyond the statement that, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, they show that the allegations to which reference is made in the despatch were not without foundation, and that there is ample ground for the belief that there are, at any rate, extensive regions in which the pledges given under the Berlin Act have not been fulfilled.

M. de Cuvelier's note dwells at considerable length upon the necessity of the natives contributing by some form of taxation to the requirements of the State, and upon the advantage of their being induced to work. The history of the development of the British Colonies and Protectorates in Africa shows that His Majesty's Government have always admitted this necessity. Defects of administration of the character referred to in M. de Cuvelier's note are, no doubt, always liable to occur in dealing with uncivilized races inhabiting vast areas and differing in manners, in customs and in all the attributes which are necessary for the construction of a social system. But whenever difficulties have arisen, most notably in the case of the Sierra Leone insurrection of which M. de Cuvelier makes special mention,* prompt and searching inquiry has been publicly made, redress of grievances has been granted where due, and every endeavour has been made to establish such considerate treatment of the natives as is compatible with the just requirements of the State.

The reference to the disturbed state of Nigeria appears to relate to the campaign undertaken early last year against Kano and Sokoto. The campaign was not a measure of "military repression" in the sense of being the suppression of a native rising. It was necessitated by the hostile action of powerful Mahomedan Chiefs within the Protectorate, over whom authority had not been previously asserted, who refused to maintain friendly relations with the Administration, hospitably entertained the murderer of a British officer and declared that the only relations between themselves and the Government were those of war. By the mention of the loss of 700 lives reference is no doubt made to the action at Burmi on the 27th July last, when about that number of the enemy were killed, including the ex-Sultan of Sokoto and most of the Chiefs who had joined him, while on the British side Major Marsh, the Commanding Officer, and ten men were killed, and three officers and sixty-nine men were wounded. This decisive and successful action completely broke up the party of the irreconcilables as well as a remnant of the Mahdi's following.

The military operations which are now in progress in Somaliland have been forced upon His Majesty's Government, as is generally known, by the assumption of power on the part of a fanatical Mullah, and by the cruelties which he practised upon tribes within the British Protectorate.

* The 62 convictions mentioned occurred between July 1894 and March 1898, not February 1896, as stated in the quotation from an "English publicist."

In both these cases, measures of military repression have been necessary to save the territories in question from falling once more under the complete control of uncivilized or fanatical Rulers, and of thus relapsing into barbarism. The Congo Government and other Powers possessing Colonies in Africa have had to meet similar contingencies, and no blame is attached to them, nor, so far as His Majesty's Government are aware, has ever been attached to them, for adopting measures to protect the cause of civilization.

After dealing with the treatment of natives, M. de Cuvelier's note proceeds to explain the views of the Congo Government with regard to the system of trade now existing in the State. The opinion of His Majesty's Government has been set forth; they hold that the matter is one which could properly be the subject of a reference to the Tribunal at The Hague, but they are still awaiting an answer on this point from the Powers to whom the despatch of the 8th August was addressed.

Memoranda will be forwarded separately giving examples of injuries suffered by British subjects which have been the cause of complaint. These Memoranda have been prepared in order to confirm the statement, upon which M. de Cuvelier throws doubt, that the time of His Majesty's Consul had been principally occupied in the investigation of such cases.

Foreign Office, February 11, 1904.

No. 5.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to His Majesty's Representatives at Paris, Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Rome, Madrid, Constantinople, Brussels, The Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Lisbon.

Sir, Foreign Office, February 12, 1904.

I TRANSMIT to you, for communication to the Government to which you are accredited, a collection of papers, as marked in the margin,* which relate to the present condition of affairs in the Independent State of the Congo.

In handing these documents to the Minister for Foreign Affairs I request that you will call special attention to the Report by Mr. Casement, His Majesty's Consul at Boma, upon his recent visit to certain districts of the Upper Congo, and that you will at the same time inquire when an answer may be expected to my despatch of the 8th August last.

I am, &c.

(Signed) LANSDOWNE.

* Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4.

VERIFICATION NO. 1 (1904)

THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF THE CONGO
 MEMORANDUM TO HIS MAJESTY'S REPRESENTATIVES AT PARIS, BERLIN, VIENNA, ST. PETERSBURGH, ROME, MADRID, CONSTANTINOPLE, BRUSSELS, THE HAGUE, COPENHAGEN, STOCKHOLM, AND LISBON

RECEIVED AT THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
 FEBRUARY 12 1904

RECEIVED AT THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
 FEBRUARY 12 1904

AFRICA. No. 7 (1904).

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING THE

ADMINISTRATION

OF THE

INDEPENDENT STATE OF THE CONGO.

[In continuation of "Africa No. 1 (1904)".]

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty.
June 1904.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE,
BY HARRISON AND SONS, ST. MARTIN'S LANE,
PRINTERS IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

And to be purchased, either directly or through any Bookseller, from
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AFRICA. No. 1 (1904).

CORRESPONDENCE and Report from His Majesty's
Consul at Boma respecting the Administration of
the Independent State of the Congo.

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Com-
mand of His Majesty. February 1904.*

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SONS.

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Further Correspondence respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo.

[In continuation of "Africa No. 1 (1904)".]

No. 1.

Sir C. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne.—(Received March 14).

My Lord,

Brussels, March 13, 1904.

I HAVE the honour to inclose the rejoinder on the part of the Congo Government to the Report of His Majesty's Consul at Boma on the condition of the Congo.

In handing these "Notes" to me this afternoon M. de Cuvelier was instructed to call my attention to the passage where his Government expresses a desire to be placed in possession of the full Report, including names, dates, and places referred to. The "Notes" will be communicated to-morrow to the Representatives of the other Powers.

I have, &c.

(Signed) CONSTANTINE PHIPPS.

Inclosure in No. 1.

Notes on the Report of Mr. Casement, Consul of His Britannic Majesty, of the 11th December, 1903.

A LA séance de la Chambre des Communes du 11 Mars, 1903, Lord Cranborne avait dit :—

"We have no reason to think that slavery is recognized by the authorities of the Congo Free State, but reports of acts of cruelty and oppression have reached us. Such reports have been received from our Consular officers."

Le Gouvernement de l'État du Congo demanda, par lettre du 14 Mars, 1903, à son Excellence Sir C. Phipps, de bien vouloir lui communiquer les faits qui avaient été l'objet de rapports de la part des Consuls Britanniques.

Cette demande ne reçut pas de suite.

La dépêche de Lord Lansdowne du 8 Août, 1903, portait :—

"Representations to this effect (alleged cases of ill-treatment of natives and existence of trade monopolies) are to be found . . . in despatches from His Majesty's Consuls."

L'impression était ainsi créée qu'à cette date le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté se trouvait en possession de renseignements Consulaires concluants : la nécessité d'un voyage de M. le Consul Casement dans le Haut-Congo n'en a pas moins paru évidente. La réflexion s'ensuit que les conclusions de la note du 8 Août étaient au moins prématurées ; il s'en déduit également que, contrairement à l'appréciation de cette note, il a été loisible au Consul Britannique d'entreprendre dans les régions intérieures tel voyage qui lui convenait. Il est à noter en tout cas que le "White Paper" (Africa, No. 1, 1904), qui vient d'être présenté au Parlement, ne contient pas, nonobstant le désir qu'en a réitéré l'État du Congo, ces rapports Consulaires antérieurs, qui, cependant, offraient d'autant plus d'intérêt qu'ils dataient d'un temps où la campagne présente n'était pas née.

Le Rapport actuel signale qu'en certains points visités par le Consul, la population se trouve en décroissance. M. Casement n'indique pas les bases de ses recensements comparatifs en 1887 et en 1903. Il est à se demander comment pour cette dernière

année le Consul a pu établir ses chiffres au cours de visites rapides et hâtives. Sur quels éléments certains s'appuie-t-il, par exemple, pour dire que la population des localités riveraines du Lac Mantumba *semble* avoir diminué dans les dix dernières années de 60 à 70 pour cent ? En un point désigné F*, il déclare que l'ensemble des villages ne compte pas aujourd'hui plus de 500 âmes ; quelques lignes plus loin, ces mêmes villages ne comportent plus que 240 habitants en tout. Ce ne sont là que des détails, mais ils caractérisent immédiatement le défaut de précision de certaines appréciations du Consul. Au reste, il n'est malheureusement que trop exact que la diminution de la population a été constatée ; elle est due à d'autres causes qu'à un régime excessif ou oppressif exercé par l'Administration sur les populations indigènes. C'est en premier lieu la maladie du sommeil, qui décime partout les populations en Afrique équatoriale. Le Rapport remarque lui-même que : "a prominent place must be assigned to this malady,"¹ et que cette maladie est "probably one of the principal factors," de la diminution de la population.² Il suffit de lire la lettre du Révérend John Whitehead (Annexe II du Rapport), citée par le Consul, pour se rendre compte des ravages de la maladie, à laquelle ce missionnaire attribue la moitié des décès dans la région riveraine du district. Dans une interview récente, Mgr. Van Ronslé, Vicaire Apostolique du Congo Belge, avec l'autorité qui s'attache à une grande expérience des choses d'Afrique et à des séjours prolongés en de multiples résidences au Congo, a montré l'évolution du fléau, le dépérissement fatal des populations qui en sont frappées, quelles que soient d'ailleurs les conditions de leur état social, citant entre autres les pertes effrayantes de vies dues à ce mal dans l'Uganda. Que si l'on ajoute à cette cause fondamentale de la dépopulation au Congo, les épidémies de petite vérole, l'impossibilité actuelle pour les tribus de maintenir leur chiffre par des achats d'esclaves, la facilité de déplacement des indigènes, il s'explique que le Consul et les missionnaires aient relevé la diminution du nombre d'habitants de certaines agglomérations, sans que nécessairement ce soit le résultat d'un système d'oppression. L'Annexe No. I reproduit les déclarations sur ce point de Mgr. Van Ronslé. Ce qu'il dit des conséquences, sur le chiffre numérique de la population, de la suppression de l'esclavage, se trouve reproduit ailleurs :—

"The people (slave)* are for the most part originally prisoners of war. Since the Decree of Emancipation they have simply returned to their own distant homes, knowing their owners have no power to recapture them. This is one reason why some think the population is decreasing, and another is the vast exodus up and down river."³—"So long as the Slave Trade flourished, the Bobangi flourished, but with its abolition they are tending to disappear, for their towns were replenished by slaves."⁴

Le Consul cite des cas, dont du reste les raisons lui sont inconnues, d'exode d'indigènes du Congo sur la rive Française. On ne voit pas à quel titre il en ferait grief à l'État, si l'on en juge d'après les motifs qui ont déterminé certains d'entre eux, à preuve les exemples de ces émigrations, donnés et expliqués par un missionnaire Anglais, le Révérend Père W. H. Bentley. L'un est relatif à la station de Lukolela :—

"The main difficulty has been the shifting of the population. It appears that the population, when the station was founded in 1865, was between 5,000 and 6,000 in the riverine Colonies. About two years later, the Chief, Mpuki, did not agree with his neighbours or they with him. When the tension became acute, Mpuki crossed over with his people to the opposite (French) side of the river. This exodus took away a large number of people. In 1890 or 1891, a Chief from one of the lower towns was compelled by the majority of his people to leave the State side, and several went with him. About 1893, the rest of the people at the lower towns either went across to the same place as the deposed Chief, or took up their residence inland. Towards the end of 1894, a soldier who had been sent to cut firewood for the State steamers on an island off the towns, left his work to make an evil request in one of the towns. He shot the man who refused him. The rascal of a soldier was properly dealt with by the State officer in charge ; but this outrage combined, with other smaller difficulties, to produce a panic, and nearly all the people left for the French side, or hid away inland. So the fine township has broken up."⁵

L'autre cas a trait à la station de Bolobo :—

"It is rare indeed for Bolobo, with its 30,000 or 40,000 people, divided into some dozen clans, to be at peace for any length of time together. The loss of life from these petty wars, the number

¹ Rapport, p. 21.

² Idem, p. 26.

³ M. Boudot, missionnaire de la Congo Batolo Mission. "Regions Beyond," Décembre 1901, p. 337.

⁴ W. H. Bentley, "Pioneering on the Congo," II, p. 229.

⁵ Idem, p. 243.

of those killed for witchcraft, and of those who are buried alive with the dead, involve, even within our narrow limits here at Bolobo, an almost daily drain upon the vitality of the country, and an incalculable amount of sorrow and suffering. . . . The Government was not indifferent to these murderous ways. . . . In 1890 the District Commissioner called the people together, and warned them against the burying of slaves alive in the graves of free people, and the reckless killing of slaves which then obtained. The natives did not like the rising power of the State. . . . Our own settlement among them was not unattended with difficulty. . . . There was a feeling against white men generally, and especially so against the State. The people became insolent and haughty. . . . Just at this time . . . as a force of soldiers steamed past the Moye towns, the steamers were fired upon. The soldiers landed, and burnt and looted the towns. The natives ran away into the grass, and great numbers crossed to the French side of the river. They awoke to the fact that Bula Matadi, the State, was not the helpless thing they had so long thought. This happened early in 1891."¹

Ces exemples donnent, comme on le voit, à l'émigration des indigènes, des causes n'ayant aucun rapport avec—

The methods employed to obtain labour from them by local officials and the exactions levied on them.²

Le Rapport s'étend longuement sur l'existence des impôts indigènes. Il constate que les indigènes sont astreints à des prestations de travail de diverses sortes, ici sous forme de fournitures de "chikwanges" ou de vivres frais pour les postes Gouvernementaux, là sous forme de participation à des travaux d'utilité publique, tels que la construction d'une jetée à Bolobo, ou l'entretien de la ligne télégraphique à F——— ; ailleurs sous la forme de la récolte des produits domaniaux. Nous maintenons la légitimité de ces impôts sur les populations natives, d'accord en cela avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté, qui, dans le Mémoire du 11 Février, 1904, déclare que l'industrie et le développement des Colonies et Protectorats Britanniques en Afrique montrent que le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté a toujours admis la nécessité de faire contribuer les natifs aux charges publiques et de les amener au travail. Nous sommes d'accord également avec le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté que si en cette matière des abus se commettent, comme, il est vrai, il s'en est produit en toutes Colonies, ces abus appellent des réformes, et qu'il est du devoir de l'autorité supérieure d'y mettre fin et de concilier, dans une juste mesure, les nécessités Gouvernementales avec les intérêts bien entendus des indigènes.

Mais l'État du Congo entend à cet égard se mouvoir librement dans l'exercice de sa souveraineté—comme, par exemple, le Gouvernement Britannique explique dans son dernier Mémoire l'avoir fait à Sierra-Leone—en dehors de toute pression extérieure ou de toute ingérence étrangère, qui seraient attentatoires à ses droits essentiels.

Le Rapport du Consul vise manifestement à créer l'impression que la perception de l'impôt, au Congo, est violente, inhumaine et cruelle, et nous voulons, avant tout, rencontrer l'accusation si souvent dirigée contre l'État, que cette perception donnerait lieu à d'odieux actes de mutilation. A cet égard, la lecture superficielle du Rapport est de nature à impressionner, par l'accumulation complaisante, non pas de faits nets, précis, vérifiés, mais de déclarations et d'affirmations des indigènes.

Une remarque préliminaire s'impose sur les conditions dans lesquelles le voyage du Consul s'est effectué.

Qu'il l'ait voulu ou non, M. le Consul Britannique a apparu aux populations comme le redresseur des griefs, réels ou imaginaires, des indigènes, et sa présence à La Lulonga, coïncidant avec la campagne menée contre l'État du Congo, en une région où s'exerce depuis longtemps l'influence des missionnaires Protestants, devait fatalement avoir pour les indigènes une signification qui ne leur a pas échappé. C'est en dehors des agents de l'État, en dehors de toute action ou de tout concours de l'autorité régulière que le Consul a fait ses investigations ; c'est assisté par des missionnaires Protestants Anglais qu'il a procédé ; c'est sur un vapeur d'une Mission Protestante qu'il a fait son inspection ; c'est dans les Missions Protestantes qu'il a généralement reçu l'hospitalité ; dans ces conditions, il a dû inévitablement être considéré par l'indigène comme l'antagoniste de l'autorité établie.

Nous n'en voulons d'autre preuve que le fait caractéristique d'indigènes, pendant le séjour du Consul à Bonginda, s'attroupant à la rive, au passage en pirogue d'agents de la Société "La Lulonga" et s'écriant :—

"Votre violence est finie, elle s'en va ; les Anglais seuls restent ; mourez vous autres !"

¹ W. H. Bentley, "Pioneering on the Congo," II, pp. 234-236.

² Rapport, p. 29.

Et cet aveu significatif d'un missionnaire Protestant qui, à propos de ce fait, explique :—

"The Consul was here at the time, and the people were much excited, and evidently thought themselves on top. . . . The people have got this idea (that the rubber work was finished) into their heads of themselves, consequent, I suppose, upon the Consul's visit."

Dans ces circonstances, en raison de l'état d'esprit qu'elles révèlent chez les indigènes, en raison de leur caractère impressionnable et de leur désir naturel de se soustraire à la charge de l'impôt, il n'était pas douteux que les conclusions auxquelles arriverait le Consul ne seraient pas autres que celles de son Rapport.

Il suffira, pour mettre ce point en évidence et pour caractériser le manque de valeur de ses investigations, de s'arrêter à un seul cas, celui sur lequel s'est porté tout l'effort de Mr. Casement, nous voulons parler de l'affaire Epondo. C'est celle de l'enfant II dont le Rapport parle aux pages 56, 58, et 78.

Il est indispensable d'entrer un peu longuement dans les détails de cette affaire, qui sont significatifs.

Le Consul se trouvait, à la date du 4 Septembre, 1903, à la Mission de la "Congo Bololo Mission," à Bonginda, de retour d'un voyage dans la Rivière Lopori, au cours duquel il n'avait constaté aucun de ces actes de mutilation qu'il est d'usage de mettre à la charge des agents au Congo.

A Bonginda, des indigènes d'un village voisin (Bossunguma) viennent le trouver et lui signalent entre autres qu'une "sentinelle" de la Compagnie "La Lulonga," nommée Kelengo, avait, à Bossunguma, coupé la main d'un indigène du nom d'Epondo, dont les blessures étaient à peine guéries. Le Consul se transporte à Bossunguma; il est accompagné des deux Révérends W. D. Armstrong et D. J. Danielson et se fait présenter l'indigène estropié, lequel, "en réponse à la question du Consul, accuse de ce méfait une sentinelle nommée Kelengo (placée dans cet endroit par l'agent local de la Société 'La Lulonga' pour vérifier si les indigènes récoltaient du caoutchouc)." Ce sont les termes du Consul : il s'agissait en effet d'établir un rapport de cause à effet entre la récolte du caoutchouc et ce cas prétendu de cruauté.

Le Consul procède à l'interrogatoire du Chef et de quelques indigènes du village. Ils répondent en accusant Kelengo; la plupart déclarent avoir été témoins oculaires du fait. Le Consul fait demander par ses interprètes s'il se trouve là d'autres témoins qui ont vu le crime et en accusent Kelengo : "presque tous les individus présents, au nombre environ de quarante, s'écrient d'une seule voix que c'est Kelengo le coupable."

Il faut lire toute cette enquête telle qu'elle a été libellée par le Consul lui-même, en des sortes de procès-verbaux des 7, 8, et 9 Septembre (Annexe 2), pour se rendre compte de l'acharnement avec lequel les indigènes accablent Kelengo, et des dénégations de l'accusé se heurtant à l'unanimité de tous ceux qui le chargent. De partout surgissent les dénonciateurs et de la foule surexcitée jaillissent les accusations les plus diverses : il a coupé la main d'Epondo, enchaîné des femmes, volé des canards et un chien ! L'attention du Consul ne veut pas s'éveiller en présence du caractère passionné des dépositions; sans autre garantie de leur sincérité, sans autre contrôle de leur véracité, il considère son enquête comme concluante, et, de même qu'il s'était substitué au Parquet pour l'instruction de l'affaire, de même il préjuge la décision de l'autorité compétente en déclarant à la population assemblée que "Kelengo deserved severe punishment for his illegal and cruel acts." Dramatisant l'incident, il emmène avec lui la prétendue victime, l'exhibe le 10 Septembre devant le Chef de Poste de Coquilhatville, auquel il remet la copie de son enquête, et le 12 Septembre, il adresse au Gouverneur-Général une lettre qu'il qualifie de "personal and private," dans laquelle il prend texte entre autres de l'incident pour accuser "the system of general exploitation of an entire population which can only be rendered successful by the employment of arbitrary and illegal force." Cette enquête terminée, il reprenait aussitôt la route du Bas-Congo.

Les circonstances de fait eussent-elles été exactes, encore serait-on frappé de la disproportion des conclusions que le Consul en déduit, en généralisant avec emphase son système de critiques contre l'État du Congo. Mais le fait même, tel qu'il l'a présenté, est inexact.

En effet, dès la dénonciation du Consul connue du Parquet, celui-ci se rendit sur les lieux en la personne du Substitut du Procureur d'État, M. Gennaro Bosco, et procéda à une enquête judiciaire dans les conditions normales en dehors de toute influence étrangère. Cette enquête démontra que M. le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique avait été l'objet d'une machination ourdie par les indigènes, qui, dans l'espoir de n'avoir

plus à travailler, avaient comploté de représenter Epondo comme la victime de procédés inhumains d'un capita d'une Société commerciale. En réalité, Epondo avait été victime d'un accident de chasse et mordu à la main par un sanglier; la blessure s'était gangrenée et avait occasionné la perte du membre, ce qui avait été habilement exploité par les indigènes vis-à-vis du Consul. Nous joignons (Annexe 3) les extraits de l'enquête faite par le Substitut relatifs à cette affaire Epondo. Les dépositions sont typiques, uniformes et concordantes. Elles ne laissent aucun doute sur la cause de l'accident, attestent que les indigènes ont menti au Consul, et révèlent le mobile auquel ils ont obéi, dans l'espoir que l'intervention du Consul les déchargerait de l'obligation de l'impôt. L'enquête montre Epondo, enfin acculé, rétractant ses premières affirmations au Consul, et avouant avoir été influencé par les gens de son village. Il est interrogé :—

"D. Persistez-vous à accuser Kelengo de vous avoir coupé la main gauche ?

"R. Non; j'ai menti.

"D. Racontez alors comment et quand vous avez perdu la main.

"R. J'étais esclave de Monkekola, à Malele, dans le district des Bangala. Un jour, j'allai avec lui à la chasse au sanglier. Il en blessa un avec une lance, et alors la bête, devenue furieuse, m'attaqua. Je tâchai de me sauver avec la suite, mais je tombai; le sanglier fut bientôt sur moi, m'arrachant la main gauche, au ventre et à la hanche gauche. Le comparant montre les cicatrices aux endroits désignés, et spontanément se met par terre pour faire voir dans quelle position il se trouvait lorsqu'il fut attaqué et blessé par le sanglier.

"D. Depuis combien de temps cet accident vous est-il arrivé ?

"R. Je ne me rappelle pas. C'est depuis longtemps.

"D. Pourquoi alors aviez-vous accusé Kelengo ?

"R. Parce que Momaketa, un des Chefs de Bossunguma, me l'a dit, et après tous les habitants de mon village me l'ont répété.

"D. Les Anglais vous ont-ils photographié ?

"R. Oui, à Bonginda et à Lulanga. Ils m'ont dit de mettre bien en évidence le moignon. Il y avait Nenele, Mongongolo, Torongo, et autres blancs, dont je ne connais pas les noms. Ils étaient les blancs de Lulanga. Mongongolo a porté avec lui six photographies."

Epondo a réitéré ses déclarations et rétractations spontanément à un missionnaire Protestant, M. Faris, résidant à Bolengi. Ce Révérend a remis au Commissaire-Général de Coquilhatville la déclaration écrite suivante :—

"Je soussigné E.-E. Faris, missionnaire, résidant à Bolengi, Haut-Congo, déclare que j'ai interrogé l'enfant Epondo, du village de Bosongoma, qui a été chez moi le 10 Septembre, 1903, avec Mr. Casement, le Consul d'Angleterre, et que j'ai mené à la Mission de Bolengi, le 16 Octobre, 1903, selon la requête de M. le Commandant Stevens, de Coquilhatville, et que le dit enfant m'a dit aujourd'hui, le 17 Octobre, 1903, qu'il a perdu sa main par la morsure d'un sanglier.

"Il m'a dit également qu'il a informé Mr. Casement que sa main a été coupée par un soldat, ou bien d'un des travailleurs de blancs, qui ont fait la guerre dans son village pour faire apporter le caoutchouc, mais il affirme que cette dernière histoire qu'il m'a dite aujourd'hui est la vérité.

"E.-E. FARIS.

"A Bolengi, le 17 Octobre, 1903."

L'enquête aboutit à une ordonnance de non-lieu ainsi motivée en ce qui concerne le cas Epondo :—

"Nous, Substitut du Procureur d'État près le Tribunal de Coquilhatville;

"Vu les notes rédigées par le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique, à l'occasion de sa visite aux villages d'Ikandja et Bossunguna, dans la région des Ngombe, d'où résulte que le nommé Kelengo, garde forestier au service de la Société 'La Lulonga,' aurait—

"(a.) Coupé . . . , la main gauche au nommé Epondo.

"(b.)

"(c.)

"Vu l'enquête faite par M. le Lieutenant Braeckman, confirmant en partie l'enquête faite par le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique, mais le contredisant en partie, et ajoutant aux accusations précédemment faites à Kelengo, celle d'avoir tué un indigène nommé Baluwa;

"Vu les conclusions posées par cet officier de police judiciaire tendant à faire naître des soupçons assez graves sur la vérité de toutes ces accusations;

"Attendu que tous les indigènes qui ont accusé Kelengo, soit au Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique, soit au Lieutenant Braeckman, convoqués par nous, Substitut, ont pris la fuite, et tout les efforts faits pour les retrouver n'ont abouti à aucun résultat; que cette fuite discrédite évidemment leurs affirmations;

"Que tous les témoins interrogés dans notre enquête attestent . . . qu'Epondo a perdu la main gauche parce qu'un sanglier la lui a arrachée . . . ;

"Qu'Epondo confirme ces attestations, avouant qu'il a menti par suggestion des indigènes de

Bossunguma et Ikondja, qui espéraient de se soustraire à la récolte du caoutchouc moyennant l'intervention du Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique, qu'ils jugeaient très puissant ;

“ Que les témoins, presque tous indigènes des villages accusateurs, confirment que tel fut le but de leur mensonge ;

“ Que cette version, indépendamment de l'unanimité des affirmations des témoins et des parties lésées, se présente aussi comme la plus plausible, parce que personne n'ignore, soit la répugnance des indigènes pour le travail en général et la récolte du caoutchouc, soit leur facilité à mentir et à porter de fausses accusations ;

“ Qu'elle est confirmée par l'opinion, nettement formulée, du missionnaire Anglais Armstrong, qui retient les indigènes ‘capables de tout complot pour éviter de travailler, et surtout de faire le caoutchouc’ ;

“ Que l'innocence de Kelengo étant complètement prouvée, il n'y a pas lieu à le poursuivre ;

“ Par ces motifs :

“ Nous, Substitut, déclarons non-lieu à poursuivre le nommé Kelengo, garde forestier au service de la Société ‘La Lulonga,’ pour les crimes prévus par les Articles 2, 5, 11, 19 du Code Pénal.

Le Substitut,
(Signé) Bosco.

“ Mampoko, le 9 Octobre, 1903.”

Si nous avons insisté sur les détails de cette affaire, c'est qu'elle est considérée par le Consul lui-même comme d'une importance capitale et qu'il se base sur ce seul cas pour conclure à l'exactitude de toutes les autres déclarations d'indigènes qu'il a recueillies.

“ Dans le seul cas sur lequel j'ai pu enquêter personnellement, dit-il¹—celui de l'enfant II—j'ai trouvé cette accusation établie sur les lieux, sans apparemment une ombre de doute quant à la culpabilité de la sentinelle accusée.”

Et plus loin :—

“ Dans le village de R*, j'ai eu seulement le temps de faire enquête sur l'accusation faite par II.²

Et ailleurs :—

“ Il était évidemment impossible que je puisse vérifier sur place, comme dans le cas de l'enfant, les déclarations que me firent les indigènes. Dans ce seul cas, la vérité des accusations fut amplement démontrée.”³

C'est aussi à propos de cette affaire que, dans sa lettre du 12 Septembre, 1903, au Gouverneur-Général, il disait :—

“ When speaking to M. le Commandant Stevens at Coquilhatville on the 10th instant, when the mutilated boy Epondo stood before us as evidence of the deplorable state of affairs I reprobated, I said: ‘I do not accuse an individual, I accuse a system.’”

La réflexion s'impose que si les autres informations du Rapport du Consul ont toutes la même valeur que celles qui lui ont été fournies dans cette seule espèce, elles ne peuvent, à aucun degré, être considérées comme probantes. Et il saute aux yeux que dans les autres cas où le Consul, de sa propre déclaration, ne s'est livré à aucune vérification des affirmations des indigènes, ces affirmations ont moins de poids encore, si possible.

Il faut reconnaître, sans doute, que le Consul s'exposait délibérément à d'inévitables mécomptes, de par sa manière d'interroger les indigènes,—ce qu'il faisait, en effet, à l'aide de deux interprètes : “ par l'intermédiaire de Vinda, parlant en Bobangi, et de Bateko, répétant ses paroles dans le dialecte local,”⁴ de sorte que le Consul était à la merci non seulement de la sincérité de l'indigène interrogé, mais encore de la fidélité de traduction de deux autres indigènes, dont l'un, d'ailleurs, était un de ses serviteurs, et dont l'autre, semble-t-il, était l'interprète des missionnaires.⁵ Quiconque s'est trouvé en contact avec l'indigène sait cependant son habitude du mensonge : le Révérend C. H. Harvey constatait :⁶—

“ Les natifs du Congo qui nous entouraient étaient méprisables, perfides, et cruels, impudemment menteurs, malhonnêtes et vils.”

¹ Rapport, p. 58.

² Idem, p. 58.

³ Idem, p. 56.

⁴ Voir Annexe No. 2.

⁵ “Regions Beyond,” 1900, p. 198.

⁶ “Regions Beyond,” Janvier-Février 1903, p. 53.

Et le fait n'est pas non plus sans importance,—si l'on veut exactement se rendre compte de la valeur des témoignages,—de la présence aux côtés de Mr. Casement, qui interrogeait les indigènes, de deux missionnaires Protestants Anglais de la région, présence qui, à elle seule, a dû nécessairement orienter les dépositions.¹

Nous dépasserions nous-mêmes la mesure si, de ce qui précède, nous concluons au rejet en bloc de toutes les informations indigènes enregistrées par le Consul. Mais il en ressort à l'évidence qu'une telle documentation est insuffisante pour asseoir un jugement fondé, et que ces informations obligent à une vérification minutieuse et impartiale.

Que si l'on dégage du volumineux Rapport du Consul, les autres cas qu'il a vus et qu'il enregistre comme des cas de mutilation, on constate qu'il en cite deux comme s'étant produits au Lac Matumba² “il y a plusieurs années.”³ Il en cite quelques autres—sur le nombre desquels les renseignements du Rapport ne semblent pas être concordants⁴—qu'il renseigne comme ayant été commis dans les environs de Bonginda,⁵ précisément en cette région où s'est placée l'enquête Epondo et où, comme on l'a vu, les esprits étaient montés et influencés. Ce sont ces affaires que, dit-il, il n'a pas eu le temps d'approfondir,⁶ et qui, au dire des indigènes, étaient imputables aux agents de la Société “La Lulanga.” Étaient-ce là des victimes de la pratique de coutumes indigènes, que les natifs se seraient bien gardés d'avouer ? Les blessures constatées par le Consul étaient-elles dues à l'une ou l'autre lutte intestine entre villages ou tribus ? Ou bien était-ce réellement le fait de sous-ordres noirs de la Société ? On ne saurait se prononcer à la lecture du Rapport, les indigènes, ici comme toujours, étant la seule source d'informations du Consul et celui-ci s'étant borné à prendre rapidement note de leurs multiples affirmations en quelques heures de la matinée du 5 Septembre, pressé qu'il était par le temps “to reach K* (Bossunguma) at a reasonable hour.”⁷

Nonobstant la considération qu'il attache à “l'air de franchise” et “à l'air de conviction et de sincérité”⁸ des indigènes, l'expérience faite par lui-même commande incontestablement la prudence et rend téméraire son appréciation : “qu'il était clair que ces hommes déclaraient soit ce qu'ils avaient réellement vu de leurs yeux, soit ce qu'ils pensaient fermement dans leurs cœurs.”⁹

Toutefois, il suffit que soient signalés ces quelques faits, actes de cruauté ou non, auxquels se réduisent en définitive ceux constatés personnellement par le Consul, sans qu'il puisse à suffisance de preuve en établir les causes réelles, pour que l'autorité doive y porter son attention et pour que des enquêtes soient ordonnées à leur sujet. A cet égard, le regret doit être exprimé de ce que l'exemplaire du Rapport, communiqué au Gouvernement de l'État Indépendant du Congo, ait systématiquement omis toute indication de date, de lieu, de noms. Il n'est pas à méconnaître que ces suppressions rendront excessivement malaisée la tâche des Magistrats Instructeurs, et, dans l'intérêt de la manifestation de la vérité, le Gouvernement du Congo formule le vœu d'être mis en possession du texte complet du Rapport du Consul.

On ne s'étonnera pas si le Gouvernement de l'État du Congo s'élève, en cette occasion, contre le procédé de ses détracteurs, mettant dans le domaine public la reproduction de photographies d'indigènes mutilés, et créant cette odieuse légende de mains coupées à la connaissance ou même à l'instigation des Belges en Afrique. C'est ainsi que la photographie d'Epondo, estropié dans les conditions que l'on sait, et qui “a été deux fois photographié,” est probablement une de celles circulant dans les pamphlets Anglais comme preuve de l'exécration de l'administration des Belges en Afrique. On a vu une revue Anglaise reproduisant la photographie d'un “cannibale entouré des crânes de ses victimes,” et la légende portait : “In the original photograph, the cannibal was naked. The artist has made him decent by covering his breast with the star of the Congo State. It is now a suggestive emblem of the Christian veneered cannibalism on the Congo.”¹⁰ A ce compte, il suffirait, pour jeter le discrédit sur l'Administration de l'Uganda, de mettre dans la circulation des clichés reproduisant

¹ Voir Annexe No. 2 : “Present, Rev. W. D. Armstrong and Rev. D. J. Danielson, of the Congo Balolo Mission of Bonginda, Vinda Bidiloo (Consul's Headman) and Bateko, as interpreters, and His Britannic Majesty's Consul.” Ce passage est omis dans l'Annexe 6 du Rapport du Consul (p. 78).

² Rapport, p. 34.

³ Idem, pp. 76, 77.

⁴ Comparez Rapport, pp. 54, 55, et 58.

⁵ Rapport, pp. 54, 55.

⁶ Idem, p. 56.

⁷ Idem, p. 56.

⁸ Idem, p. 62.

⁹ Idem, p. 57.

¹⁰ “Review of Reviews,” February 14, 1903.

les mutilations dont le Dr. Castellani dit, dans une lettre datée d'Uganda, du 16 Décembre, 1902, avoir constaté l'existence aux environs mêmes d'Entebbe: "Il n'est pas difficile d'y rencontrer des indigènes sans nez, sans oreilles, &c."¹

C'est dire que dans l'Uganda comme au Congo, les indigènes sacrifient encore à leurs instincts sauvages. Mr. Casement a prévu l'objection en affirmant:—

"It was not a native custom prior to the coming of the white man; it was not the outcome of the primitive instincts of savages in their fights between village and village; it was the deliberate act of soldiers of a European Administration, and these men themselves never made any concealment that in committing these acts they were but obeying the positive orders of their superiors."²

L'articulation d'une aussi grave accusation, sans qu'elle soit en même temps étayée sur des preuves irréfragables, semble donner raison à ceux qui pensent que les emplois antérieurs de Mr. Casement ne l'avaient pas préparé entièrement aux fonctions Consulaires. Mr. Casement est resté dix-sept jours au Lac Mantumba, un lac, dit de 25 à 30 milles de long et de 12 ou 15 milles de large, entouré d'épaisses forêts.³ Il ne s'est guère éloigné de la rive. On ne voit pas dès lors quelles investigations utiles il a pu faire sur les mœurs d'autrefois et les habitudes anciennes des populations. La constatation que ces tribus sont encore très sauvages et adonnées au cannibalisme⁴ permet de croire, au contraire, qu'elles n'étaient pas exemptes de la pratique de ces actes cruels qui, d'une manière générale en Afrique, étaient le cortège habituel de la barbarie des mœurs et de l'anthropophagie. Dans une partie des régions que le Consul a visitées, les témoignages des missionnaires Anglais ne sont à cet égard que trop instructifs. Le Révérend McKittrick, parlant des luttes meurtrières entre indigènes, dit ses efforts d'autrefois auprès des Chefs pour pacifier la contrée: ". . . . Nous leur dîmes qu'à l'avenir nous ne laisserions plus passer par notre station aucun homme armé de lance ou de couteau. Notre Dieu était un Dieu de paix, et nous, ses enfants, nous ne pouvions supporter de voir nos frères noirs se couper et se blesser l'un l'autre (cutting and stabbing each other)."⁵ "Lorsque j'allais çà et là dans la rivière, dit un autre missionnaire, on me montrait les endroits de la rive d'où avaient coutume de partir les guerriers pour capturer les canots et les hommes. Il était affligeant d'entendre décrire les terribles massacres qui avaient lieu d'habitude à la mort d'un grand Chef. Un trou profond était creusé en terre, où des vingtaines d'esclaves jetés après que leurs têtes avaient été coupées (after having their heads cut off), et sur cette horrible pile, on plaçait le cadavre du Chef couronnant ce carnage humain indescriptible."⁶ Et les missionnaires constatent combien encore en ces jours actuels les indigènes reviennent aisément à leurs anciennes coutumes. Il apparaît aussi que cette autre affirmation du Rapport⁷ qu'à la différence d'aujourd'hui, les indigènes autrefois ne s'enfuyaient pas à l'approche d'un steamer, n'est pas d'accord avec les récits des voyageurs et explorateurs.

Il est, en tout cas, à remarquer que le Consul n'a constaté dans le territoire où s'exerce l'activité de la Société A.B.I.R. aucun de ces faits de cruauté qui eût pu être représenté comme imputable aux agents commerciaux. La coïncidence est à relever, puisque la Société A.B.I.R. est précisément une Compagnie à Concession et qu'on ne cesse d'attribuer au régime des Concessions les conséquences les plus désastreuses pour les indigènes.

Ce qui domine les innombrables questions touchées par le Consul et la multiplicité des menus faits qu'il a recueillis, c'est de savoir si vraiment cette sorte de tableau d'une existence misérable, qui serait celle des indigènes, répond à la réalité des choses. Nous prendrons pour exemple la région de la Lulunga et du Lopori, parce que là se trouvent, depuis des années, des centres de Missions de la "Congo Balobo Mission." Ces missionnaires y sont établis en des endroits les plus distants et les plus intérieurs: à Lulonga, Bonginda, Ikau, Bougandanga, et Baringa, tous points situés dans la région où opèrent la Société "La Lulonga" et la Société A.B.I.R.; Ils sont en contact suivi avec les populations indigènes, et une revue spéciale mensuelle, "Regions Beyond," publie régulièrement leurs lettres, notes, et rapports. Que l'on parcoure la collection de ce recueil; nulle part, à aucun moment avant Avril 1903—à cette dernière date, la motion de Mr. Herbert Samuel était, il est vrai, annoncée au Parlement—on ne trouve trace d'une appréciation quelconque signalant ou révélant que la situation

¹ "La Tribuna" de Rome.

² Rapport, Annexe 4, p. 77.

³ Rapport, Annexe 4, p. 30.

⁴ Rapport, p. 30.

⁵ "Ten Years at Bonginda," D. McKittrick, "Regions Beyond," p. 21.

⁶ "Congo Contrasts," Mr. Boudot, "Regions Beyond," 1900, p. 197.

⁷ Rapport, p. 34.

générale des populations indigènes dût être dénoncée au monde civilisé. Les missionnaires s'y félicitent de la sympathie active des agents, officiels, et commerciaux à leur égard,¹ des progrès de leur œuvre d'évangélisation,² des facilités que leur apporte la création de routes,³ de la pacification des mœurs, "dû à la fois aux missionnaires et aux commerçants,"⁴ de la disparition de l'esclavage,⁵ de la densité de la population,⁶ du nombre grandissant de leurs élèves, "grâce à l'État, qui a donné des ordres pour que les enfants fussent menés à l'école,"⁷ de la disparition graduelle des pratiques indigènes primitives,⁸ du contraste enfin entre le présent et le passé.⁹ Admettra-t-on que ces missionnaires Chrétiens et Anglais, qui, au cours de leurs itinéraires, visitaient les postes de factorerie et étaient témoins des marchés de caoutchouc, se seraient rendus complices par leur silence d'un régime inhumain ou tortionnaire? Un des Rapports annuels de la "Congo Bolobo Mission" dit dans ses conclusions: "Dans l'ensemble, le coup d'œil rétrospectif est encourageant. S'il n'y a pas eu une avance considérable, il n'y a pas eu de triste déception, et il n'est aucune opposition définitive à l'œuvre. . . . Il y a eu de la disette et des maladies parmi les natifs, notamment à Bonginda. . . . A part cela, il n'y a pas eu de sérieux empêchements au progrès. . . ." Et, parlant incidemment des effets bienfaisants du travail sur l'état social des indigènes, un missionnaire écrit: "The greatest obstacle to conversion is polygamy. Many evils have been put down, e.g., idleness, thanks to the State having compelled the men to work; and fighting, through their not having time enough to fight."¹⁰ Ces appréciations des missionnaires nous paraissent plus précises que les données d'un Rapport à chaque page duquel, pour ainsi dire, on lit: "I was told;" "it was said;" "I was informed;" "I was assured;" "They said;" "it was alleged;" "I had no means of verifying;" "It was impossible to me to verify;" "I have no means of ascertaining," &c. En dix lignes, par exemple, on rencontre quatre fois l'expression: "appears;" "would seem;" "would seem;" "do not seem."¹¹

Le Consul ne semble pas s'être rendu compte que c'est le travail qui constitue l'impôt indigène au Congo, et que cette forme d'impôt se justifie autant par son caractère moralisateur que par l'impossibilité de taxer autrement l'indigène, en raison même du fait, constaté par le Consul, que l'indigène n'a pas de numéraire. Cette dernière considération fait, pour en donner un autre exemple, que sur 56,700 huttes imposées dans la North-Eastern Rhodesia, 19,653 payent la taxe "in labour" et 4,938 la payent "in produce."¹² Que ce travail soit fourni directement à l'État ou à telle ou telle entreprise privée, qu'il soit adapté, selon les possibilités locales, à telles prestations ou à telles autres, sa justification a toujours l'une de ses bases dans ce que le Mémoire du 11 Février dernier reconnaît être la "necessity of the natives being induced to work." Le Consul s'inquiète surtout de la qualification à donner à la fourniture du travail; il s'étonne, si c'est là un impôt de ce que cet impôt soit payé et recouvrable parfois par des agents commerciaux. Dans la rigueur des principes, il est à reconnaître, en effet, que la rémunération d'un impôt heurte les notions fiscales ordinaires; elle s'explique cependant en fait si l'on songe qu'il s'est agi de faire contracter l'habitude de travail à des indigènes qui y ont été réfractaires de tout temps. Et si cette idée du travail peut être plus aisément inculquée aux natifs sous la forme de transactions commerciales entre eux et des particuliers, faut-il nécessairement condamner ce mode d'action, notamment dans des régions dont l'organisation administrative n'est pas complétée? Mais il s'impose que, dans leurs rapports de cet ordre avec les indigènes, les agents commerciaux, comme d'ailleurs les agents de l'État eux-mêmes, s'inspirent de pratiques bienveillantes et humaines. A cet égard, les éléments que fournit le Rapport du Consul seront l'objet d'une étude approfondie, et si le résultat de cet examen révélait des abus réels ou commandait des réformes, l'Administration supérieure agirait comme l'exigeraient les circonstances.

Nul n'a jamais pensé, d'ailleurs, que le régime fiscal au Congo eût atteint d'emblée la perfection, notamment au point de vue de l'assiette de l'impôt et des moyens de

¹ "Regions Beyond," 1900, p. 150; 1902, p. 209.

² Idem, *passim*.

³ Idem, 1900, p. 150.

⁴ Idem, 1901, p. 27.

⁵ Idem, 1900, p. 199.

⁶ Idem, 1900, pp. 243, 297, 306.

⁷ Idem, 1901, p. 40; 1902, p. 315.

⁸ Idem, 1901, p. 40.

⁹ Idem, 1900, p. 196.

¹⁰ "Regions Beyond," 1901, p. 43.

¹¹ Idem, 1901, p. 60.

¹² Rapport, p. 28.

¹³ "Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia," 1900-1902, p. 408.

recouvrement. Le système des "chefferies," bon en soi en ce qu'il place entre l'autorité et l'indigène l'intermédiaire de son chef naturel, procédait d'une idée mise en pratique ailleurs :—

"The more important Chiefs who helped the Administration have been paid a certain percentage of the taxes collected in their districts, and I think that if this policy is adhered to each year, the results will continue to be satisfactory and will encourage the Chiefs to work in harmony with the Administration."¹

Le Décret sur les chefferies² établissait le principe de l'impôt, et sa perception selon "un tableau des prestations annuelles à fournir, par chaque village, en produits, en corvées, travailleurs ou soldats." L'application de ce Décret a été formulée en des actes d'investiture, des tableaux statistiques et des états de prestation, dont les modèles sont reproduits à l'Annexe IV. Contrairement à ce que pense le Rapport, ce Décret a reçu l'exécution compatible avec l'état d'avancement social des tribus; de nombreux actes d'investiture ont été dressés et des efforts ont été faits pour établir des états de répartition équitable des prestations. Le Consul eût pu s'en assurer dans les bureaux des Commissariats, notamment des districts du Stanley-Pool et de l'Équateur qu'il a traversés; mais il a généralement négligé les sources d'informations officielles. Sans doute, l'application fut et devait être limitée dans les débuts, et il a pu en résulter que les demandes d'impôts ont atteint, pendant quelque temps, les seuls villages dans un certain périmètre autour des stations; mais cette situation s'est améliorée progressivement au fur et à mesure que, les régions plus distantes se trouvant englobées dans la zone d'influence des postes gouvernementaux, le nombre des villages astreints à l'impôt s'est accru successivement et que les taxes ont pu être réparties sur un chiffre plus grand de contribuables. Le Gouvernement vise à ce que le progrès soit constant dans cette voie, c'est-à-dire à ce que l'impôt soit le plus équitablement réparti et soit, autant que possible, personnel; le Décret du 18 Novembre, 1903, tend à ce but en prescrivant l'établissement de "rôles des prestations indigènes" de manière que les obligations de chacun des natifs soient nettement précisées.

"Chaque année, dit l'Article 28 de ce Décret, les Commissaires de District dresseront dans les limites de l'Article 2 du présent Règlement (c'est-à-dire dans la limite de quarante heures de travail par mois par indigène), les rôles des prestations à fournir, en espèce et en durée de travail par chacun des indigènes résidant dans les territoires de leur district respectif." Et l'Article 55 punit "quiconque, chargé de la perception des prestations, aura exigé des indigènes, soit comme impôt en nature soit comme heures de travail, des prestations d'une valeur supérieure à celles prévues dans les rôles d'impositions."

Nul n'ignore que le recouvrement de l'impôt se heurte parfois au mauvais vouloir, et même au refus de payer. La démonstration qu'en fait le Rapport du Consul pour le Congo est corroborée par l'expérience faite, par exemple, dans la Rhodésie.

"The Ba-Unga (Awemba district), inhabitants of the swamps in the Chambezi delta, gave some trouble on being summoned to pay taxes."³—"Although in many cases whole villages retired into the swamps on being called upon for the hut tax, the general result was satisfactory for the first year (Luapula district)."⁴—"Milala's people have succeeded in evading taxes."⁵—"A few natives bordering on the Portuguese territory, who, owing to the great distance they reside from the Native Commissioners' stations, are not under the direct supervision of the Native Commissioners, have so far evaded paying hut tax, and refused to submit themselves to the authority of the Government. The rebel Chief, Mapondera, has upon three occasions successfully eluded punitive expeditions sent against him. . . . Captain Gilson, of the British South Africa Police, was successful in coming upon him and a large following of natives, and inflicting heavy losses upon them. . . . His kraal and all his crops were destroyed. He is now reported to be in Portuguese territory. . . . Siji M'Kota, another powerful Chief, living in the northern parts of the M'toko district, bordering on Portuguese territory, has also been successful in evading the payment of hut tax, and generally pursuing the adoption of an attitude which is not acceptable to the Government. I am pleased to report that a patrol is at present on its way to these parts to deal with this Chief, and to endeavour to obtain his submission. It will be noted that the above remarks relate solely to those natives who reside along the borders of our territories, and whose defiant attitude is materially assisted by reason of this proximity to the Portuguese border, across which they are well able to proceed whenever they consider that any meeting or contact with the Native Commissioner will interfere in any way with their indolent and lazy life. They possess no movable property which might be attached with a view to the recovery of hut tax unpaid for many years, and travel backwards and forwards with considerable freedom, always placing themselves totally beyond the reach of the Native Commissioner."⁶

¹ "Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia," 1900-1902, p. 424.

² Décret du 6 Octobre, 1891 ("Bulletin Officiel," 1891, p. 259).

³ "Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia," 1900-1902, p. 409.

⁴ Idem, p. 410.

⁵ Idem, p. 410.

⁶ Idem, pp. 145, 146.

C'est là un exemple de ces "punitive expeditions" auxquelles l'autorité se voit obligée de recourir parfois, et aussi de ce procédé des natifs, non spécial aux indigènes Congolais, de se déplacer en territoire voisin pour se soustraire à l'exécution de la loi.—Que si, au Congo, dans le recouvrement des prestations indigènes, des cas, parmi ceux cités par le Consul, ont réellement dépassé les limites d'une rigueur juste et pondérée, ce sont là des circonstances de faits que des investigations sur les lieux pourront seules élucider, et des instructions seront, à cet effet, données à l'administration de Boma.

Il ne peut être davantage accepté, jusqu'à plus ample informé, les considérations du Rapport sur l'action des gardes forestiers au service de la Société A.B.I.R. et de "La Lugonga." Ces sous-ordres sont représentés par le Consul comme exclusivement préposés à "obliger par force la récolte du caoutchouc ou les approvisionnements dont chaque factorerie a besoin."¹ Une autre explication a cependant été donnée, mais elle n'émane pas d'un indigène, à savoir que ces gardes forestiers ont pour mission de veiller à ce que la récolte du caoutchouc se fasse rationnellement et d'empêcher notamment que les indigènes ne coupent les lianes.² On sait, en effet, que la loi a prescrit des mesures rigoureuses pour assurer la conservation des zones caoutchoutières, a réglementé leur exploitation et a imposé des plantations et replantations, en vue d'éviter l'épuisement complet du caoutchouc, comme on l'a vu par exemple dans la "North-Eastern and Western Rhodesia."³ Les Sociétés et particuliers exploitants ont de ce chef une lourde responsabilité et ont incontestablement une surveillance minutieuse à exercer sur les modes et procédés de récoltes. La raison d'être de ces gardes forestiers peut donc, en réalité, être tout autre que celle dite par le Consul; en tout cas, les plaintes formulées à ce sujet formeront l'un des points de l'enquête au Congo, de même que cette autre remarque du Rapport que l'armement de ces gardes forestiers serait excessif et abusif. Il faut dès à présent remarquer que dans ses évaluations du nombre des gardes armés, le Consul procède par déductions hypothétiques⁴ et qu'il dit lui-même: "I have no means of ascertaining the number of this class of armed men employed by the A.B.I.R. Company."⁵ Il donne le détail que le fusil d'un de ces hommes était marqué sur la crosse: "Dépôt 2,210." Or, il est évident qu'une telle indication ne peut avoir la signification que voudrait lui donner le Consul que pour autant qu'il soit établi qu'elle se rapporte à un numérotage des armes utilisées dans la Concession, et tel n'est pas le cas, car cette marque: Dépôt n'est employée ni par les Agents de l'État ni par la Société, et il est à supposer qu'elle constitue une ancienne marque, soit de fabrication, soit de magasin. Quant à l'armement des capitais, le Consul ne doit pas ignorer que ce point—qui n'est pas sans difficulté, puisqu'il faut à la fois tenir compte de la nécessité de la défense personnelle du capita et de l'écueil d'un usage abusif de l'arme qui lui est confiée—n'a cessé d'être l'objet de l'attention de l'autorité supérieure. Il n'y a pas que la seule Circulaire du 20 Octobre, 1900, reproduite par le Consul, qui ait traité la question; il en est tout un ensemble, datant notamment des 12 Mars, 1897, 31 Mai et 28 Novembre, 1900, et 30 Avril, 1901. Nous les reproduisons en Annexes, comme témoignant de l'absolue volonté du pouvoir de faire appliquer strictement les dispositions légales en la matière (Annexe V). Nonobstant les précautions incessantes, le Consul a constaté que plusieurs capitais n'étaient pas porteurs de permis—ces permis ne se trouvaient-ils pas au siège de la Direction?—et que deux d'entre eux étaient armés d'armes de précision.⁶ Ces quelques infractions ne suffiraient évidemment pas pour conclure à une sorte de vaste organisation armée, destinée à terroriser les indigènes. Cette autre Circulaire du 7 Septembre, 1903, reproduite à l'Annexe VII du Rapport du Consul, montre, au contraire, le soin que met le Gouvernement à ce que les soldats noirs réguliers eux-mêmes soient en tout temps sous le contrôle des officiers Européens.⁷

Telles sont les premières remarques que suggère le Rapport de M. Casement, et nous nous réservons de le raconter plus en détail, lorsque seront en possession du Gouvernement les résultats de l'enquête à laquelle les autorités locales vont procéder. Il sera remarqué que le Gouvernement, ne voulant pas paraître faire dévier le débat,

¹ Rapport, p. 44.

² Annexe 3, p. 26.

³ "Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia," 1900-1902, pp. 397 et suivantes.

⁴ Rapport, p. 57.

⁵ Idem, p. 42.

⁶ Idem, p. 43.

⁷ La Circulaire du 7 Septembre, 1903, concerne "l'interdiction" d'envoyer des soldats armés sous la conduite des gradés noirs, et non, comme le dit la copie erronée produite par le Consul "l'instruction" (Annexe 7 du Rapport, p. 80).

n'a pas soulevé la question préjudicielle au sujet des formes, à coup sûr insolites, en lesquelles le Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique a agi en territoire étranger. Il n'échappera pas combien le rôle que s'est attribué le Consul en instituant des sortes d'enquêtes, en faisant comparaître des indigènes, en les interrogeant comme par voie d'autorité, en émettant même des espèces de jugements sur la culpabilité d'accusés, est en dehors des limites des attributions d'un Consul. Les réserves qu'appelle ce mode de procéder doivent être d'autant plus formelles que le Consul intervenait de la sorte en des affaires où n'étaient intéressés que des ressortissants de l'État du Congo et relevant exclusivement de l'autorité territoriale. M. Casement s'est chargé de se désavouer lui-même lorsque, le 4 Septembre, 1903, il écrivait au Gouverneur-Général: "I have no right of representation to your Excellency save where the persons or interests of British subjects dwelling in this country are affected." Il était donc conscient de ce qu'il outrepassait les devoirs de sa charge, lorsqu'il investiguait sur des faits d'administration purement intérieure et empiétait ainsi sur les attributions des autorités territoriales, à l'encontre des règles du droit Consulaire.

"The grievances of the natives have been made known in this country by . . . , who brought over a Petition addressed to the King, praying for relief from the excessive taxation and oppressive legislation of which they complain."

Ces lignes sont extraites du "Report for 1903 de la British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society," et les natifs dont il est question sont les indigènes des Iles Fiji. Ce Rapport continue:—

"The case has been brought before the House of Commons. The grievances include forced labour on the roads, and restrictions which practically amount to slavery; natives have been flogged without trial by Magistrate's orders and are constantly subject to imprisonment for frivolous causes. Petitions lodged with the local Colonial Secretary have been disregarded. Mr. Chamberlain, in reply to the questions asked in Parliament, threw doubt upon the information received, but stated that the recently appointed Governor is conducting an inquiry into the whole situation in the Fiji Islands, in the course of which the matter will be fully investigated."

Ces conclusions sont les nôtres au sujet du Rapport de M. Casement.

Bruxelles, le 12 Mars, 1904.

(Translation.)

DURING the sitting of the House of Commons of the 11th March, 1903, Lord Cranborne observed:—

"We have no reason to think that slavery is recognized by the authorities of the Congo Free State, but reports of acts of cruelty and oppression have reached us. Such reports have been received from our Consular Officers."

The Government of the Congo State addressed a letter on the 14th March, 1903, to Sir C. Phipps, requesting him to be good enough to communicate the facts which had formed the subject of any reports from British Consuls.

No reply was received to this application.

Lord Lansdowne's despatch of the 8th August, 1903, contained the following passage:—

"Representations to this effect (alleged cases of ill-treatment of natives and existence of trade monopolies) are to be found . . . in despatches from His Majesty's Consuls."

The impression was thus created that at that date His Majesty's Government were in possession of conclusive evidence furnished by their Consuls: but none the less it seemed clearly necessary that Consul Casement should undertake a journey in the Upper Congo. It would appear, therefore, as if the conclusions contained in the note of the 8th August were at least premature; it equally follows that, contrary to what was said in that note, the British Consul was at liberty to undertake any journey in the interior that he thought fit. In any case, it is to be observed that, in spite of the repeated applications of the Congo State, the White Paper ("Africa No. 1 (1904)") recently presented to Parliament does not contain any of these former Consular Reports, which nevertheless would have been the more interesting as dating from a time when the present campaign had not yet been initiated.

The present Report draws attention to the fact that in certain places visited by the Consul the population is decreasing. Mr. Casement does not give the facts on which he bases his comparative figures for 1887 and 1903. The question arises how, during the course of his rapid and hasty visits, he was able to get his figures for this latter year. On what facts, for instance, does he found his assertion that the riverain population of Lake Mantumba seems to have diminished from 60 to 70 per cent. in the course of the last ten years. He states that at a certain place designated as F* the population of all the villages together does not at present amount to more than 500 souls; a few lines further on these same villages are spoken of as only containing 240 inhabitants altogether. These are only details, but they show at once what a lack of precision there is in certain of the deductions made by the Consul. It is, no doubt, unfortunately only too true that the population has diminished; but the diminution is due to other causes than to the exercise on the native population of a too exacting or oppressive Administration. It is owing chiefly to the sleeping-sickness, which is decimating the population throughout Equatorial Africa. The Report itself observes that "a prominent place must be assigned to this malady,"¹ and that this malady is "probably one of the principal factors" in the diminution of the population.² It is only necessary to read the Rev. John Whitehead's letter, quoted by the Consul (Annex II to the Report) to obtain an idea of the ravages of the malady, to which this missionary attributes half of the deaths which take place in the riverain parts of the district. In a recent interview Mgr. Van Ronslé, Vicar Apostolic of the Belgian Congo, who speaks with the authority of one who has had a large experience of African matters, and has resided for long periods in many different localities in the Congo, explained the development of this scourge and the inevitable decay of the populations it attacks, whatever the conditions of their social existence; mentioning among other cases the terrible loss of life caused by this disease in Uganda. If to this principal cause of the depopulation of the Congo are added small-pox epidemics, the inability of the tribes at the present moment to keep up their numbers by the purchase of slaves, and the ease with which the natives can migrate, it can be explained how the Consul and the missionaries may have been struck with the diminution of the number of inhabitants in certain centres without that diminution necessarily being the result of a system of oppression. Annex I contains the declarations on the subject made by Mgr. Van Ronslé. His remarks as to the effect of the suppression of slavery on the numbers of the population are printed elsewhere:—

"The people (slave) are for the most part originally prisoners of war. Since the Decree of emancipation they have simply returned to their own distant homes, knowing their owners have no power to recapture them. This is one reason why some think the population is decreasing, and another reason is the vast exodus up and down river."³

"So long as the Slave Trade flourished the Bobangi flourished, but with its abolition they are tending to disappear, for their towns were replenished by slaves."⁴

The Consul mentions cases, the causes of which, however, are unknown to him, of an exodus of natives of the Congo to the French bank. It is not quite clear on what grounds he attaches blame to the State on their account, to judge at least from the motives by which some of them have been determined—for instance, the examples of such emigration which are given and explained by the Rev. W. H. Bentley, an English missionary. One relates to the station at Lukolela:—

"The main difficulty has been the shifting of the population. It appears that the population, when the station was founded in 1886, was between 5,000 and 6,000 in the riverain Colonies. About two years later the Chief Mpuki did not agree with his neighbours or they with him. When the tension became acute, Mpuki crossed over with his people to the opposite (French) side of the river. This exodus took away a large number of people. In 1890 or 1891 a Chief from one of the lower towns was compelled by the majority of his people to leave the State side, and several went with him. About 1893 the rest of the people at the lower towns either went across to the same place as the deposed Chief or took up their residence inland. Towards the end of 1894 a soldier, who had been sent to cut firewood for the State steamers on an island off the town, left his work to make an evil request in one of the towns. He shot the man who refused him. The rascal of a soldier was properly dealt with by the State officer in charge; but this outrage combined with other smaller difficulties to produce a panic, and nearly all the people left for the French side, or hid away inland. So the fine township has broken up."⁵

¹ Report, p. 21.

² Idem, p. 26.

³ M. Boudot, missionary of the Congo Batolo Mission. "Regions Beyond," December 1901, p. 337.

⁴ W. H. Bentley. "Pioneering on the Congo," II, p. 229.

⁵ Idem, p. 243.

The other refers to the station at Bolobo:—

"It is rare indeed for Bolobo, with its 30,000 or 40,000 people, divided into some dozen clans, to be at peace for any length of time together. The loss of life from these petty wars, the number of those killed for witchcraft, and of those who are buried alive with the dead, involve, even within our narrow limits here at Bolobo, an almost daily drain upon the vitality of the country, and an incalculable amount of sorrow and suffering. . . . The Government was not indifferent to these murderous ways. . . . In 1890, the District Commissioner called the people together, and warned them against the burying of slaves alive in the graves of free people, and the reckless killing of slaves which then obtained. The natives did not like the rising power of the State. . . . Our own settlement among them was not unattended with difficulty. . . . There was a feeling against white men generally, and especially so against the State. The people became insolent and haughty. . . . Just at this time . . . as a force of soldiers steamed past the Moye towns, the steamers were fired upon. The soldiers landed and burnt and looted the towns. The natives ran away into the grass, and great numbers crossed to the French side of the river. They awoke to the fact that Bula Matadi, the State, was not the helpless thing they had so long thought. This happened early in 1891."¹

It will be seen that these examples do not attribute the emigration of the natives to any such causes as:—

"The methods employed to obtain labour from them by local officials and the exactions levied on them."²

The Report dwells at length on the existence of native taxes. It shows how the natives are subject to forced labour of various kinds, in one district having to furnish the Government posts with "chikwangués," or fresh provisions, in another being obliged to assist in works of public utility, such as the construction of a jetty at Bolobo, or the up-keep of the telegraph line at F*; elsewhere being obliged to collect the produce of the domain lands. We maintain that such imposts on the natives are legitimate, in agreement on this point with His Majesty's Government, who, in the Memorandum of the 11th February last, declare that the industry and development of the British Colonies and Protectorates in Africa show that His Majesty's Government have always admitted the necessity of making the natives contribute to the public charges and of inducing them to work. We also agree with His Majesty's Government that, if abuses occur in this connection—and undoubtedly some have occurred in all Colonies—such abuses call for reform, and that it is the duty of the authorities to put an end to them, and to reconcile as far as may be the requirements of the Government with the real interests of the natives.

But in this matter the Congo State intends to exercise freely its rights of sovereignty—as, for instance, His Majesty's Government explain in their last Memorandum that they themselves did at Sierra Leone—without regard to external pressure or foreign interference, which would be an encroachment upon its essential rights.

The Consul, in his Report, obviously endeavours to create the impression that taxes in the Congo are collected in a violent, inhuman, and cruel manner, and we are anxious before all to rebut the accusation which has so often been brought against the State that such collection gives rise to odious acts of mutilation. On this point a superficial perusal of the Report is calculated to impress by its easy accumulation not of facts, simple, precise, and verified, but of the declarations and affirmations of natives.

There is a preliminary remark to be made in regard to the conditions in which the Consul made his journey.

Whether such was his intention or not, the British Consul appeared to the inhabitants as the redresser of the wrongs, real or imaginary, of the natives, and his presence at La Lulonga, coinciding with the campaign which was being directed against the Congo State, in a region where the influence of the Protestant missionaries has long been exercised, necessarily had for the natives a significance which did not escape them. The Consul made his investigations quite independently of the Government officials, quite independently of any action and of any co-operation on the part of the regular authorities; he was assisted in his proceedings by English Protestant missionaries; he made his inspection on a steamer belonging to a Protestant Mission; he was entertained for the most part in the Protestant Missions; and, in these circumstances, it was inevitable that he should be considered by the native as the antagonist of the established authorities.

Other proof is not required than the characteristic fact that while the Consul was at Bonginda, the natives crowded down to the bank, as some agents of the La Lulonga

¹ "Pioneering on the Congo," by the Rev. W. Holman Bentley, II, pp. 235-236.

² Report, p. 29.

Company were going by in a canoe, and cried out: "Your violence is over, it is passing away; only the English remain; may you others die!" There is also this significant admission on the part of a Protestant missionary, who, in alluding to this incident, remarked:—

"The Consul was here at the time, and the people were much excited and evidently thought themselves on top. . . . The people have got this idea (that the rubber work was finished) into their heads of themselves, consequent, I suppose, upon the Consul's visit."

In these circumstances, in view of the state of mind which they show to exist among the natives, in view of their impressionable character and of their natural desire to escape taxation, it could not be doubted but that the conclusions at which the Consul would arrive would not be other than those set forth in his Report.

To bring out this point, and to show how little value is to be attached to his investigations, it will be sufficient to examine one case, that on which Mr. Casement principally relies; we allude to the Epondo case. It is that of the child II, mentioned on pp. 56, 58, and 78 of the Report.

It is indispensable to enter somewhat at length into the details of this case, which are significant.

On the 4th September, 1903, the Consul was at the Bonginda station of the Congo Bolobo Mission, having returned from a journey on the Lopori, during the course of which he had not come across any of those acts of mutilation which it is the custom to attribute to officials in the Congo.

At Bonginda, the natives of a neighbouring village (Bossunguma) came to him and informed him, amongst other things, that a "sentry" of the La Lulonga Company, named Kelengo,¹ had, at Bossunguma, cut off the hand of a native called Epondo, whose wounds were still scarcely healed. The Consul proceeded to Bossunguma, accompanied by the Rev. W. D. Armstrong and the Rev. D. J. Danielson, and had the mutilated native brought before him, who, "in answer to Consul's question, charges a sentry named 'Kelengo' (placed in the town by the local agent of the La Lulonga Society to see that the people work rubber)" with having done it. Such are the Consul's own words: it was necessary to establish a relation of cause and effect between the collection of india-rubber and this alleged case of cruelty.

The Consul proceeded to question the Chief and some of the natives of the village. They replied by accusing Kelengo; most of them asserted that they were *eye-witnesses* of the deed. The Consul inquired through his interpreters if there were other witnesses who saw the crime committed, and accused Kelengo of it. "Nearly all those present, about forty persons, shouted out with one voice that it was 'Kelengo' who did it."

In order to understand the violence with which the natives accused Kelengo, and the unanimous manner in which the denials of the accused were rejected by his accusers, it is necessary to read the whole of the report of this inquiry, as drawn up by the Consul himself in a kind of *procès-verbaux*, dated the 7th, 8th, and 9th September (Annex II). From all quarters accusers appeared, and the excited crowd gave vent to all sorts of accusations: he had cut off Epondo's hand, chained up women, stolen ducks and a dog! The Consul did not allow his suspicions to be aroused by the passionate character of these accusations; without any further guarantee of their sincerity or further examination into their truth, he looked upon his inquiry as conclusive, and as he had taken upon himself the duties of the Public Prosecutor in making preliminary inquiries into the matter, so he anticipated the decision of the responsible authorities by declaring to the assembled people that "Kelengo deserved severe punishment for his illegal and cruel acts." He proceeded to dramatize the incident by carrying off the pretended victim, and exhibiting him on the 10th September to the official in command of the station at Coquilhatville, to whom he handed a copy of the record of his inquiry, and on the 12th September he addressed a letter to the Governor-General which he marked as "personal and private," and in which he makes the incident in question among others a text for an attack on "the system of general exploitation of an entire population which can only be rendered successful by the employment of arbitrary and illegal force." His inquiry terminated, he immediately started on his return journey to the Lower Congo.

Even if the circumstances had been correctly reported, the disproportion would still

¹ K K in "Africa No. 1 (1904)."

have been striking between them and the conclusions which the Consul draws when emphasizing his general criticisms of the Congo State. But the facts themselves are incorrectly represented.

As a matter of fact, no sooner did the Consul's denunciation reach the Public Prosecutor's Department than M. Gennaro Bosco, Acting Public Prosecutor, proceeded to the spot and held a judicial inquiry under the usual conditions free from all outside influences. This inquiry showed that His Britannic Majesty's Consul had been the object of a plot contrived by the natives, who, in the hope of no longer being obliged to work, had agreed among themselves to represent Epondo as the victim of the inhuman conduct of one of the capitas of a commercial Company. In reality, Epondo had been the victim of an accident while out hunting, and had been bitten in the hand by a wild boar; gangrene had set in and caused the loss of the member, and this fact had been cleverly turned to account by the natives when before the Consul. We annex (Annex No. 3) extracts from the inquiry conducted by the Acting Public Prosecutor into the Epondo case. The evidence is typical, uniform, and without discrepancies. It leaves no doubt as to the cause of the accident, makes it clear that the natives lied to the Consul, and reveals the object which actuated them, namely, the hope that the Consul's intervention would relieve them from the necessity of paying taxes. The inquiry shows how Epondo, at last brought to account, retracted what he had in the first instance said to the Consul, and confessed that he had been influenced by the people of his village. He was questioned as follows:—

Q. Do you persist in accusing Kelengo of having cut off your left hand?

A. No. I told a lie.

Q. State, then, how and when you lost your hand.

A. I was a slave of Monkekola's at Malele, in the Bangala district. One day I went out boar-hunting with him. He wounded one with a spear, and thereupon the animal, enraged, turned on me. I tried to run off with the others, but falling down, the boar was on me in a moment and tore off my left hand and (wounded me) in the stomach and left thigh.

The witness exhibits the scars he carries at the places mentioned, and lying down of his own accord shows the position he was in when the boar attacked and wounded him.

Q. How long ago did this accident happen?

A. I don't remember. It was a long time ago.

Q. Why did you accuse Kelengo?

A. Because Momaketa, one of the Bossunguma Chiefs, told me to, and afterwards all the inhabitants of my village did so too.

Q. Did the English photograph you?

A. Yes, at Bonginda and Lulanga. They told me to put the stump well forward. There were Nenele, Mongongolo, Torongo, and other whites whose names I don't know. They were whites from Lulanga. Mongongolo took away six photographs.¹

Epondo of his own accord repeated his declarations and retractations to a Protestant missionary, Mr. Faris, who lives at Bolengi. This gentleman has sent the Commissary-General at Coquilhatville the following written declaration:—

"I, E. E. Faris, missionary, residing at Bolengi, Upper Congo, declare that I questioned the boy Epondo, of the village of Bosongoma, who was at my house on the 10th September, 1903, with Mr. Casement, the British Consul, and whom, in accordance with the request made to me by Commandant Stevens, of Coquilhatville, I took to the mission station at Bolengi on the 16th October, 1903; and that the said boy has this day, the 17th October, 1903, told me that he lost his hand through the bite of a wild boar.

"He told me at the same time that he informed Mr. Casement that his hand was cut off either by a soldier or, perhaps, by one of those working for the white men ("travailleurs de blanc"), who have been making war in his village with a view to the collection of rubber, but he asserts that the account which he has given me to-day is the truth."

(Signed) "E. E. FARIS."

"Bolengi, October 17, 1903."

The inquiry resulted in the discharge of the prisoner, which, so far as it concerned the Epondo question, was in the following terms:—

We, Acting Public Prosecutor of the Court of Coquilhatville:

Having regard to the notes made by His Britannic Majesty's Consul, on the occasion of his visit to the villages of Ikandja and Bossunguma in the territory of the Ngombe, from which it would appear that a certain Kelengo, a forest guard in the service of the La Lulonga Company—

(a.) Cut off the left hand of a certain Epondo;

(b.);

(c.);

¹ See Annex No. 3.

Having regard to the inquiry instituted by Lieutenant Braeckman, which partly confirms the result of the inquiry instituted by His Britannic Majesty's Consul, but also partly contradicts it, and to the charges already brought against Kelengo adds that of having killed a native of the name of Baluwa;

Having regard to the conclusions arrived at by the police employé in question, which tend to raise grave doubts as to the truth of all these charges;

In view of the fact that all the natives who brought these charges against Kelengo, whether before His Britannic Majesty's Consul or Lieutenant Braeckman, on being summoned by us, the Acting Public Prosecutor, took to flight, and all efforts to find them have been fruitless; that this flight obviously throws doubt on the truth of their allegations;

That all the witnesses whom we have questioned during the course of our inquiry declare that Epondo lost his left hand from the bite of a wild boar;

That Epondo confirms these statements, and admits that he told a lie at the instigation of the natives of Bossunguma and Ikondja, who hoped to escape collecting rubber through the intervention of His Britannic Majesty's Consul, whom they considered to be very powerful;

That the witnesses, almost all inhabitants of the accusing villages, admit that such was the object of their lie;

That this version, apart from the unanimous declarations of the witnesses and the injured parties, is also the most plausible, seeing that every one knows that the natives dislike work in general and having to collect rubber, and are, moreover, ready to lie and accuse people falsely;

That it is confirmed by the clearly stated opinion of the English missionary Armstrong, who considers the natives to be "capable of any plot to escape work and especially the labour of collecting rubber";

That the innocence of Kelengo having been thoroughly established, there is no reason for proceeding against him;

On the above-mentioned grounds, we, the Acting Public Prosecutor, declare that there are no grounds for proceeding against Kelengo, a forest guard in the service of the La Lulonga Company, for the offences mentioned in Articles 2, 5, 11, and 19 of the Penal Code.

(Signed) Bosco,
Acting Public Prosecutor.

Mampoko, October 9, 1903

We have dealt at length with the above case because it is considered by the Consul himself as being one of the utmost importance, and because he relies upon this single case for accepting as accurate all the other declarations made to him by natives.

"In the one case I could alone personally investigate," he says,¹ "that of the boy II, I found this accusation proved on the spot without seemingly a shadow of doubt existing as to the guilt of the accused sentry."

And further on:—

"I had not time to do more than visit the one village of R**, and in that village I had only time to investigate the charge brought by II."²

And elsewhere:—

"It was obviously impossible that I should . . . verify on the spot, as in the case of the boy, the statements they made. In that one case the truth of the charges preferred was amply demonstrated."³

It is also to this case that he alludes in his letter of the 12th September, 1903, to the Governor-General, where he says:—

"When speaking to M. le Commandant Stevens at Colquilhatville on the 10th instant, when the mutilated boy Epondo stood before us as evidence of the deplorable state of affairs I reprobated, I said, 'I do not accuse an individual, I accuse a system.'"

It is only natural to conclude that if the rest of the evidence in the Consul's Report is of the same value as that furnished to him in this particular case, it cannot possibly be regarded as conclusive. And it is obvious that in those cases in which the Consul, as he himself admits, did not attempt to verify the assertions of the natives, these assertions are worth, if possible, still less.

It is doubtless true that the Consul deliberately incurred the certain risk of being misled owing to the manner in which he interrogated the natives, which he did, as a matter of fact, through two interpreters—"through Vinda, speaking in Bobangi, and

¹ Report, p. 58.

² Idem, p. 58.

³ Idem, p. 56.

Bateko, repeating his utterances . . . in the local dialect;¹ so that the Consul was at the mercy not only of the truthfulness of the native who was being questioned, but depended also on the correctness of the translations of two other natives, one of whom was a servant of his own, and the other apparently the missionaries' interpreter.² But any one who has ever been in contact with the native knows how much he is given to lying; the Rev. C. H. Harvey³ states that—

"The natives of the Congo who surrounded us were contemptible, perfidious and cruel, impudent liars, dishonest, and vile."

It is also important, if one wishes to get a correct idea of the value of this evidence, to note that while Mr. Casement was questioning the natives, he was accompanied by two local Protestant English missionaries, whose presence must alone have necessarily affected the evidence.⁴

We should ourselves be going too far if from all this we were to conclude that the whole of the native statements reported by the Consul ought to be rejected. But it is clearly shown that his proofs are insufficient as a basis for a deliberate judgment, and that the particulars in question require to be carefully and impartially tested.

On examining the Consul's voluminous Report for other cases which he *has seen*, and which he sets down as cases of mutilation, it will be observed that he mentions two as having occurred on Lake Mantumba⁵ "some years ago."⁶ He mentions several others, in regard to the number of which the particulars given in the Report do not seem to agree,⁷ as having taken place in the neighbourhood of Bonginda,⁸ precisely in the country of the Epondo inquiry, where, as has been seen, the general feeling was excited and prejudiced. It is these cases which, he says, he had not time to inquire into fully,⁹ and which, according to the natives, were due to agents of the La Lulunga Company. Were these instances of victims of the practice of native customs which the natives would have been careful not to admit? Were the injuries which the Consul saw due to some conflict between neighbouring villages or tribes? Or were they really due to the black subordinates of the Company? This cannot be determined by a perusal of the Report, as the natives in this instance, as in every other, were the sole source of the Consul's information, and he, for his part, confined himself to taking rapid notes of their numerous statements for a few hours in the morning of the 5th September, being pressed for time, in order to reach K* (Bossunguma) at a reasonable hour.¹⁰

Notwithstanding the weight which he attaches to the "air of frankness" and the "air of conviction and sincerity"¹¹ on the part of the natives, his own experience shows clearly the necessity for caution, and renders rash his assertion "that it was clear that these men were stating either what they had actually seen with their eyes or firmly believed in their hearts."¹²

Now, however, that the Consul has drawn attention to these few cases—whether cases of cruelty or not, and they are all that, as a matter of fact, he has inquired into personally, and even so without being able to prove sufficiently their real cause—the authorities will of course look into the matter and cause inquiries to be made. It is to be regretted that, this being so, all mention of date, place, and name has been systematically omitted in the copy of the Report communicated to the Government of the Independent State of the Congo. It is impossible not to see that these suppressions will place great difficulties in the way of the Magistrates who will have to inquire into the facts, and the Government of the Congo trust that, in the interests of truth, they may be placed in possession of the complete text of the Consul's Report.

It is not to be wondered at if the Government of the Congo State take this opportunity of protesting against the proceedings of their detractors, who have thought fit to submit to the public reproductions of photographs of mutilated natives, and have started the odious story of hands being cut off with the knowledge and even at the instigation of Belgians in Africa. The photograph of Epondo, for instance, mutilated in

¹ See Annex No. 2 (really Inclosure 6 in No. 3).

² "Regions Beyond," 1900, p. 198.

³ *Idem*, January–February, 1903, p. 53.

⁴ See Annex No. 2. "Present: Rev. W. D. Armstrong and Rev. D. J. Danielson of the Congo Balolo Mission of Bonginda, Vinda Bidilou (Consul's headman) and Bateko as interpreters, and His Britannic Majesty's Consul." This passage is omitted in Annex No. 6 of the Consul's Report (p. 78).

⁵ Report, p. 34.

⁶ *Idem*, pp. 76 and 77.

⁷ *Cf.* Report, pp. 54 and 55 and p. 58.

⁸ Report, pp. 54, 55.

⁹ *Idem*, p. 56.

¹⁰ *Idem*, p. 56.

¹¹ *Idem*, p. 62.

¹² *Idem*, p. 57.

the manner known, and who has "twice been photographed," is probably one of those which the English pamphlets are circulating as proof of the execrable administration of the Belgians in Africa. One English review reproduced the photograph of a "cannibal surrounded with the skulls of his victims," and underneath was written: "In the original photograph the cannibal was naked. The artist has made him decent by . . . covering his breast with the star of the Congo State. It is now a suggestive emblem of the Christian-venerated cannibalism on the Congo."¹ At this rate it would suffice to throw discredit on the Uganda Administration if the plates were published illustrating the mutilations which, in a letter dated Uganda, 16th December, 1902, Dr. Castellani says he saw in the neighbourhood of Entebbe itself: "It is not difficult to find there natives without noses or ears, &c."²

The truth is, that in Uganda, as in the Congo, the natives still give way to their savage instincts. This objection has been anticipated by Mr. Casement, who remarks:—

"It was not a native custom prior to the coming of the white man; it was not the outcome of the primitive instincts of savages in their fights between village and village; it was the deliberate act of the soldiers of a European Administration, and these men themselves never made any concealment that in committing these acts they were but obeying the positive orders of their superiors."³

That Mr. Casement should formulate so serious a charge without at the same time supporting it by absolute proof would seem to justify those who consider that his previous employment has not altogether been such as to qualify him for the duties of a Consul. Mr. Casement remained seventeen days on Lake Mantumba, a lake said to be 25 to 30 miles long and 12 to 15 broad, surrounded by dense forest.⁴ He scarcely left its shores at all. In these circumstances it is difficult to see how he could have made any useful researches into the former habits and customs of the inhabitants. On the contrary, from the fact that the tribes in question are still very savage, and addicted to cannibalism,⁵ it would seem that they have not abandoned the practice of those cruelties which throughout Africa were the usual accompaniments of barbarous habits and anthropophagy. In one portion of the districts which the Consul visited, the evidence of the English missionaries on this point is most instructive. The Rev. McKittrick, in describing the sanguinary contests between the natives, mentions the efforts to pacify the country which he formerly made through the Chiefs:—" . . . We told them that for the future we should not let any man carrying spears or knives pass through our station. Our God was a God of peace, and we, His children, could not bear to see our black brothers cutting and stabbing each other."⁶ "While I was going up and down the river," says another missionary, "they pointed out to me the King's beaches, whence they used to dispatch their fighting men to capture canoes and men. It was heartrending to hear them describe the awful massacres that used to take place at a great Chief's death. A deep hole was dug in the ground, into which scores of slaves were thrown after having their heads cut off; and upon that horrible pile they laid the Chief's dead body to crown the indescribable human carnage."⁷ And the missionaries speak of the facility with which even nowadays the natives return to their old customs. It would seem, too, that the statement made in the Report,⁸ that the natives now fly on the approach of a steamer as they never used to do, is hardly in accordance with the reports of travellers and explorers.

Be this how it may, it is to be observed that nowhere in the territory which is the scene of the operations of the A.B.I.R. Company did the Consul discover any evidence of acts of cruelty for which the commercial agents might have been considered responsible. The coincidence is remarkable, since it so happens that the A.B.I.R. Company is a concessionary Company, and that it is the system of concessions to which are constantly attributed the most disastrous consequences for the natives.

What it is important to discover from the immense number of questions touched on by the Consul, and the multiplicity of minor facts which he has collected, is whether the

¹ "Review of Reviews," February 14, 1903.

² The "Tribuna" of Rome.

³ Report. Annex No. 4, p. 77.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 30.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 30.

⁶ "Ten Years at Bonginda." D. McKittrick. "Regions Beyond," 1900, p. 21.

⁷ "Congo Contrasts." Mr. Boudot. "Regions Beyond," 1900, p. 197.

⁸ Report, p. 34.

sort of picture he has drawn of the wretched existence led by the natives corresponds to the actual state of affairs. We will take, for instance, the district of the Lulunga and the Lopori, as the head-stations of the missions of the "Congo Balolo Mission" have been established there for years past. These missionaries are established in the most distant places in the interior, at Lulonga, Bonginda, Ika, Bongandanga, and Baringa, all of which are situated in the scene of operations of the La Lulonga and A.B.I.R. Companies. They are in constant communication with the native populations, and a special monthly review, called "Regions Beyond," regularly publishes their letters, notes, and reports. An examination of a set of these publications reveals no trace, at any time previous to April 1903—by that date, it is true, Mr. Herbert Samuel's motion had been brought before Parliament—of anything either to point out or to reveal that the general situation of the native populations was such as ought to be denounced to the civilized world. The missionaries congratulate themselves on the active sympathy shown them by the various official and commercial agents,¹ on the progress of their work of evangelization,² on the facilities afforded them by the construction of roads,³ on the manner in which the natives are becoming civilized, "owing to the mere presence of white men in their midst, both missionaries and traders,"⁴ on the disappearance of slavery,⁵ on the density of the population,⁶ on the growing number of their pupils, "especially since the State has issued orders for all children within reach to attend the mission schools,"⁷ on the gradual disappearance of the primitive customs of the natives,⁸ and lastly, on the contrast between the present and the past.⁹ Will it be admitted that these Christian English missionaries, who, during their journeys, visited the various factories, and witnessed markets of rubber being held, would, by keeping silence, make themselves the accomplices of an inhuman or wrongful system of government? Among the conclusions of one of the Annual Reports of the Congo Balolo Mission is to be found the following: "On the whole, the retrospect is encouraging. If there has been no great advance, there has been no heavy falling off, and no definite opposition to the work. . . . There has been much famine and sickness among the natives, especially at Bonginda. . . . Apart from this, there has been no serious hindrance to progress. . . ." ¹⁰ And speaking incidentally of the beneficial effect produced by work on the social condition of the natives, a missionary writes: "The greatest obstacle to conversion is polygamy. Many evils have been put down, e.g., idleness, thanks to the State having compelled the men to work; and fighting, through their not having time enough to fight."¹¹ These opinions of missionaries appear to us to be more precise than those expressed in a Report on every page of which it may be said one finds such expressions as: "I was told," "it was said," "I was informed," "I was assured," "they said," "it was alleged," "I had no means of verifying," "it was impossible for me to verify," "I have no means of ascertaining," &c. Within a space of ten lines, indeed, occur four times the expressions, "appears," "would seem," "would seem," "do not seem."¹²

The Consul does not appear to have realized that native taxes in the Congo are levied in the shape of labour, and that this form of tax is justified as much by the moral effect which it produces, as by the impossibility of taxing the native in any other way, seeing that, as the Consul admits, the native has no money. It is to this consideration that is due the fact, to give another example, that out of 56,700 huts which are taxed in North-Eastern Rhodesia 19,653 pay that tax "in labour," while 4,938 pay it "in produce."¹³ Whether such labour is furnished direct to the State or to some private undertaking, and whether it is given in aid of this or that work as local necessities may dictate, one ground of justification is always to be found in what the Memorandum of the 11th February last recognizes is the "necessity of the natives being induced to work." The Consul shows much anxiety as to how this forced labour should be described; he is surprised that if it be a tax it is sometimes paid and recovered by commercial agents. Strictly speaking, of course, it cannot be denied

¹ "Regions Beyond," 1900, p. 150; 1902, p. 209.

² *Idem*, *passim*.

³ *Idem*, 1900, p. 150.

⁴ *Idem*, 1901, p. 27.

⁵ *Idem*, 1900, p. 199.

⁶ *Idem*, 1900, pp. 243, 297, 306.

⁷ *Idem*, 1901, p. 40; 1902, p. 315.

⁸ *Idem*, 1901, p. 40.

⁹ *Idem*, 1900, p. 196.

¹⁰ *Idem*, 1901, p. 43.

¹¹ *Idem*, 1901, p. 60.

¹² Report, p. 78.

¹³ Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia, 1900-1902, p. 408.

that the idea of remunerating a person for paying his taxes is contrary to ordinary notions of finance; but the difficulty disappears if it is considered that the object in view has been to get the natives to acquire the habit of labour, from which they have always shown a great aversion. And if this notion of work can more easily be inculcated on the natives under the form of commercial transactions between them and private persons, is it necessary to condemn such a mode of procedure, especially in those parts where the organization of the Administration is not yet complete? But it is essential that in the relations of this nature which they have with the natives, commercial agents, no less than those of the State, should be kind and humane. In so far as it bears on this point the Consul's Report will receive the most careful consideration, and if the result of investigation be to show that there are real abuses and that reforms are called for, the heads of the Administration will act as the circumstances may require.

But no one has ever imagined that the fiscal system in the Congo attained perfection at once, especially in regard to such matters as the assessment of taxes and the means for recovering them. The system of "Chieftaincies," which is recommended by the fact that it enables the authorities and the native to communicate through the latter's natural Chief, was based on an idea carried into practice elsewhere:—

"The more important Chiefs who helped the Administration have been paid a certain percentage of the taxes collected in their districts, and I think that if this policy is adhered to each year, the results will continue to be satisfactory and will encourage the Chiefs to work in harmony with the Administration."¹

The Decree on the subject of these Chieftaincies² laid down the principle of a tax, and its levy in accordance with "a table of contributions to be made every year by each village in produce, forced labour, labourers, or soldiers." The application of this Decree has been provided for by deeds of investiture, tables of statistics, and particulars of contributions, forms of which will be found in Annex IV. In spite of what is stated in the Report, this Decree has been carried out so far as has been found compatible with the social condition of the various tribes; numerous deeds of investiture have been drawn up, and efforts have been made to draw up an equitable assessment of the contributions. The Consul might have found this out at the Commissioners' offices, especially in the Stanley Pool and Equator districts, which he passed through; but he neglected as a rule all official sources of information. No doubt the application of the Decree was at first necessarily limited, and it is possible that the result has been that for a certain time only such villages as were within a short distance from stations have been required to pay taxes; but this state of things has little by little altered for the better in proportion as the more distant regions have become included in the areas of influence of the Government posts, the number of villages subject to taxation has gradually increased, and it has been found possible to levy taxes on a greater number of persons. The Government aim at making progress in this direction continuous, that is to say, that taxation should be more equitably distributed, and should as much as possible be personal; it was with this object that the Decree of the 18th November, 1903, provided for drawing up "lists of native contributions" in such a way that the obligations of every native should be strictly defined.

"Article 28 of this Decree lays down that within the limits of Article 2 of the present regulations (that is to say, within the limit of forty hours' work per month per native) the District Commissioners shall draw up annual lists of the taxes to be paid, in kind or duration of labour, by each of the natives resident in the territories of their respective districts. And Article 55 punishes 'whoever, being charged with the levy of taxes, shall have required of the natives, whether in kind or labour, contributions which shall exceed in value those prescribed in the tables of taxes.'"

It is matter of common notoriety that the collection of taxes is occasionally met by opposition, and even refusal to pay. The proofs of this, which are to be found in the Report of the Consul for the Congo, are borne out by what has happened, for instance, in Rhodesia:—

"The Ba-Unga (Awemba district), inhabitants of the swamps in the Zambezi delta, gave some trouble on being summoned to pay taxes."³

"Although in many cases whole villages retired into the swamps on being called upon for the hut-tax, the general result was satisfactory for the first year (Luapula district)."⁴

"Milala's people have succeeded in evading taxes."⁵

¹ Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia, 1900-1902, p. 408.

² Decree of the 6th October, 1891 ("Bulletin Officiel," 1891, p. 259).

³ Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia, 1900-1902, p. 409.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 410.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 410.

"A few natives bordering on the Portuguese territory, who, owing to the great distance they reside from the Native Commissioners' Stations, are not under the direct supervision of the Native Commissioners, have so far evaded paying hut tax, and refused to submit themselves to the authority of the Government. The rebel Chief, Mapondera, has upon three occasions successfully eluded punitive expeditions sent against him. Captain Gilson, of the British South Africa Police, was successful in coming upon him and a large following of natives, and inflicting heavy losses upon them. His kraal and all his crops were destroyed. He is now reported to be in Portuguese territory. Siji M'Kota, another powerful Chief, living in the northern parts of the M'toko district, bordering on Portuguese territory, has also been successful in evading the payment of hut tax, and generally pursuing the adoption of an attitude which is not acceptable to the Government. I am pleased to report that a patrol is at present on its way to these parts to deal with this Chief, and to endeavour to obtain his submission. It will be noted that the above remarks relate solely to those natives who reside along the borders of our territories, and whose defiant attitude is materially assisted by reason of this proximity to the Portuguese border, across which they are well able to proceed whenever they consider that any meeting or contact with the Native Commissioner will interfere in any way with their indolent and lazy life. They possess no movable property which might be attached with a view of the recovery of hut tax unpaid for many years, and travel backwards and forwards with considerable freedom, always placing themselves totally beyond the reach of the Native Commissioner."¹

The above is an instance of those "punitive expeditions" to which the authorities are occasionally obliged to resort, as also of the native custom, which is not peculiar to the natives of the Congo, of moving into a neighbouring territory when they are seeking to evade the operation of the law. Whether in the process of collecting native taxes there have been cases in the Congo, amongst those mentioned by the Consul, in which the limits of a just and reasonable severity have been overstepped is a question of fact which investigation on the spot can alone ascertain, and instructions to this effect will be given to the authorities at Boma.

We are also unable to accept, on the information at present before us, the conclusions of the Report in regard to the conduct of the forest guards in the employ of the A.B.I.R. and La Lulonga Companies. These subordinate officers are represented by the Consul as being exclusively employed in "compelling by force the collection of india-rubber or the supplies which each factory needed."² It is true that another explanation has been given—though not, indeed, by a native—according to which the business of these same forest guards is to see that the india-rubber is harvested after a reasonable fashion, and especially to prevent the natives from cutting the plants.³ It is, indeed, well known that the law has made rigorous provision for preserving the rubber zones, has regulated the manner in which they are to be worked, and has made planting and replanting obligatory, with a view to avoiding the complete exhaustion of the rubber plant which has occurred, for instance, in North-eastern and Western Rhodesia.⁴ A heavy responsibility in this direction lies on the Companies and private persons engaged in developing the country, and it is obvious that they are bound to exercise the most careful superintendence over the way in which the harvest is collected. The object for which these forest guards are employed, therefore, may well be quite different from that alleged by the Consul; in any case, the complaints which have been made on this head will form a subject for inquiry in the Congo, as also the other remark of the Report that the manner in which these forest guards are armed is excessive, and liable to abuse. It is to be here observed that in calculating the number of these forest guards the Consul is obliged to rely on hypothesis,⁵ and that he himself admits: "I have no means of ascertaining the number of this class of armed men employed by the A.B.I.R. Company."⁶ He mentions that the gun of one of these men was marked on the butt "Dépôt 2210." But it is evident that such a mark can only have the significance which the Consul would like to see in it, in so far as it can be proved that it refers to the numbering of the arms used in the Concession, and such is not the case, since this particular mark "Dépôt" is not used either by the officials of the State or those of the Company, and it would seem that it is an old manufactory or store mark. In regard to the manner of arming the capitas, the Consul can hardly be ignorant that the higher authorities have always given great attention to the matter, which is, indeed, one surrounded with difficulties, seeing that while on the one hand it is necessary to consider the question of the personal protection of the capita, on

¹ Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia, 1900-1902, pp. 145, 146.

² Report, p. 44.

³ Annex III, p. 26.

⁴ Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia, 1900-1902, pp. 397, &c.

⁵ Report, p. 57.

⁶ Idem, p. 42.

the other the possibility of the arms in question being used for improper purposes must not be lost sight of. It is not only in the Circular of the 20th October, 1900, which the Consul has reprinted, that this question is dealt with; there is a whole collection of Circulars on the subject, among which may be mentioned those of the 12th March, 1897, 31st May and 28th November, 1900, and 30th April, 1901. Copies of them are annexed as proof of the fixed determination of the Government to see that the law relating to this question is strictly enforced (Annex V). Yet, in spite of all these precautions, the Consul has ascertained that several capitas were not provided with permits (perhaps they might have been found at the head office), and that two of them were furnished with arms of precision.¹ But these few infractions of the rule are obviously not enough to prove the existence of a sort of vast armed organization destined to strike terror into the natives. On the contrary, the Circular of the 7th September, 1903, printed in Annex VII of the Consul's Report, is a proof of the care taken by the Government that the regular black troops should always be under the control of European officers.²

Such are the preliminary remarks suggested by Mr. Casement's Report, and we reserve to ourselves the right of dealing with it more in detail as soon as the Government shall be in possession of the results of the inquiry which the local authorities are about to make. It will be observed that the Government, in its desire not to seem to wish to avoid the discussion, has not raised a question in regard to the manner, surely unusual, in which His Britannic Majesty's Consul has acted in a foreign country. It is obviously altogether outside the duties of a Consul to take upon himself, as Mr. Casement has done, to institute inquiries, to summon natives, to submit them to interrogatories as if duly authorized thereto, and to deliver what may be styled judgments in regard to the guilt of the accused. The reservations called for by this mode of procedure must be all the more formal, as the Consul was thus intervening in matters which only concerned subjects of the Congo State, and which were within the exclusive jurisdiction of the territorial authorities. Mr. Casement, indeed, made it his business himself to point out how little authorized he was to interfere when on the 4th September, 1903, he wrote to the Governor-General: "I have no right of representation to your Excellency save where the persons or interests of British subjects dwelling in this country are affected." It is thus obvious that he was aware that he was exceeding his duties by investigating facts which concerned only the internal administration, and so, contrary to all laws of Consular jurisdiction, encroaching on the province of the territorial authorities.

"The grievances of the natives have been made known in this country by —, who brought over a petition addressed to the King, praying for relief from the excessive taxation and oppressive legislation of which they complain."

These lines are extracted from the Report for 1903 of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and the natives referred to are the natives of the Fiji Isles. The Report goes on:—

"The case has been brought before the House of Commons. The grievances include forced labour on the roads, and restrictions which practically amount to slavery; natives have been flogged without trial by magistrate's orders, and are constantly subject to imprisonment for frivolous causes. Petitions lodged with the local Colonial Secretary have been disregarded. Mr. Chamberlain, in reply to the questions asked in Parliament, threw doubt upon the information received, but stated that the recently appointed Governor is conducting an inquiry into the whole situation in the Fiji Islands, in the course of which the matter will be fully investigated."

Such are also our conclusions in regard to Mr. Casement's Report.

Brussels, March 12, 1904.

¹ Report, p. 43.

² The Circular of the 7th September, 1903, has reference to the "prohibition" to dispatch armed soldiers in charge of black non-commissioned officers, and not, as would appear from the incorrect copy produced by the Consul, to the "instruction." (Annex VII of the Report, p. 80).

Annexe 1.

Déclaration de Mgr. Van Ronslé, Evêque de Thymbrim, Vicaire Apostolique du Congo Belge.

DANS son numéro du 23 Octobre, le "West African Mail" publie une série de lettres du Révérend J. W. Weeks, missionnaire Anglais, établi à Monsembe, district de Bangala. Ces lettres, émanant d'un auteur qui a habité la contrée de longues années et qui proteste d'ailleurs de sa parfaite sincérité et de sa bonne foi, m'offraient un intérêt particulier, ayant moi-même parcouru et habité la contrée depuis quatorze ans, et en étant revenu récemment.

Mr. Weeks fait preuve de prudence en limitant ses considérations à ce qu'il a vu sur les deux rives du Congo, entre Bokongo et Ikonungu, dans les villages Bangala, avoisinant Nouvelle-Anvers; mais il se hasarde un peu plus, en étendant ses affirmations à la plus grande partie du Congo navigable, c'est-à-dire, du Stanley-Pool à Bopoto.

Sa thèse est que, sur cet immense espace, les rives se dépeuplent et que les tribus dégèrent sous l'oppression de l'Etat, au moyen d'un système d'impositions, de déportations, et d'amendes.

Nous le reconnaissons, l'auteur ne formule pas positivement cette thèse ainsi généralisée; mais après l'avoir formulée spécialement pour Nouvelle-Anvers, il continue à décrire la situation générale de manière à faire croire que les populations riveraines sont toutes décimées parce que toutes sont également opprimées par le Gouvernement. Le lecteur ne peut pas tirer d'autres conclusions de ses lettres, ni interpréter autrement certaines propositions qui les résument.

Le souci de la vérité nous engage à mettre le public en garde contre des conclusions aussi hâtives.

L'auteur sait que parmi les tribus *Bobangi* (citées sous les noms de Bwembe, Bolobo, Lukolela), qui sont un *unfortunate dying people* (un peuple qui dépérit), le Gouvernement n'a jamais fait de recrutement de soldats ni de travailleurs, et que les impositions qui ont été exigées de leurs nombreux villages, établis le long du fleuve sur un parcours de 100 lieues, consistent à ravitailler trois postes, dont celui de Yumbi seul est important, et à entretenir (depuis deux ans) la route de la ligne téléphonique—impositions réellement insignifiantes pour ceux qui y mettent quelque peu de bonne volonté.

C'est un fait, en outre, que ces populations subissaient de grandes pertes dès 1890, époque à laquelle les impositions étaient nulles; et c'est un autre fait que leurs voisins de la rive Française, qui ne sont pas imposés, se meurent également, notamment ceux qui sont établis dans les environs de la Mission Catholique des Révérends Pères Français: Saint-Louis de Liranga. On pourrait d'ailleurs citer d'autres exemples de populations qui s'éteignent quoique à l'abri d'oppression.

Nous voilà donc en présence de dépeuplements qui ne sont certainement pas causés par l'oppression, et auxquels il faut chercher d'autres causes. Si donc les lettres de Mr. Weeks induisent en erreur pour la généralité des cas, il est dès lors permis de douter qu'elles nous exposent la situation véritable pour Nouvelle-Anvers. N'existe-t-il pas là aussi des causes autres que l'oppression?

A notre avis, ces causes existent réellement. Il y en a deux qui tendent non seulement au dépeuplement des rives, mais à l'extinction même des tribus de Nouvelle-Anvers. Elles ne sont pas spéciales à cette région, mais communes à tous les villages riverains du fleuve. Elles suffisent à elles seules à expliquer une diminution extraordinaire de la population.

La première et la principale, c'est l'épidémie qu'on nomme communément la maladie du sommeil. Que cette maladie a enlevé beaucoup de monde, Mr. Weeks en convient; mais il ajoute qu'il pense que le progrès de la maladie a été activé par l'oppression et que sans celle-ci le mal n'aurait pas été si tenace. Mr. Weeks a trop d'expérience de l'Afrique pour ne pas s'apercevoir qu'il avance ici une inexactitude et une erreur.

Il le pense, mais il n'en donne pas la preuve. Il est un fait avéré et reconnu par les médecins et par tous ceux qui ont observé la maladie du sommeil, c'est que ce fléau, une fois introduit dans une région, en abat lentement mais sûrement tous les habitants et reste, quoi qu'on fasse, maître du terrain; une fois que ce mal a pris pied dans une population, il la détruit sans merci, quelles que soient les conditions de bien-être, de paix, et de tranquillité de cette population.

A l'appui de ceci, nous donnerons deux exemples de dépérissement que l'on ne pourra pas attribuer à l'oppression.

Notre Mission de Berghe-Sainte-Marie, contaminée par le contact des tribus *Bobangi* parmi lesquelles elle était située, a vu disparaître tous ses habitants jusqu'au dernier. Les 100 familles qui s'y étaient formées vivaient heureuses, dans des conditions presque idéales.

Autre fait: Les journaux ont relaté que dans l'Uganda, des Colonies Anglaises, on perd annuellement 50,000 personnes. Et aujourd'hui, à propos d'une découverte qu'aurait faite le Colonel Bruce, dans la matière en question, un journal écrit un article qui finit comme suit: "La maladie du sommeil continue à faire d'énormes ravages dans l'Uganda. Dans l'île de Brevuna, qui comptait 82,000 habitants, il n'y a plus que 22,000 individus, alors que la population de la Province de Basaga est complètement éteinte."

Si le travail et les occupations avaient une influence sur la maladie, ils auraient plutôt un effet tout à fait contraire à celui qu'on leur attribue. Mais nous n'y insistons pas, parce que le travail lui-même n'est pas un remède, mais tout au plus une espèce de réactif temporaire. Jusqu'à présent aucun moyen n'a pu vaincre la ténacité de cette maladie; mais, à notre avis, ses ravages seraient plus rapides en terrain inerte et endormi qu'en terrain actif.

Et voilà six ans que cette peste, indépendamment de toute autre cause, fait journellement des victimes chez les riverains de Nouvelle-Anvers; rien d'étonnant donc que la population y diminue rapidement, comme partout ailleurs où la maladie règne.

La cause que je place au second rang, en raison de son importance, n'est pas signalée par le Révérend Mr. Weeks. Elle consiste dans la suppression du commerce des esclaves et dans le défaut de la natalité; même l'hypothèse que les tribus Bangala fussent restées saines, cette cause les aurait rendues incapables de maintenir leur population à niveau, et aurait même eu pour effet de la diminuer considérablement.

Mr. Weeks estime que la population de Nouvelle-Anvers atteignait les 50,000 en 1890. Nous avons observé que parmi cette population, il y avait un nombre très considérable d'esclaves d'origine étrangère, notamment des Mongo. Disons qu'un tiers n'était pas originaire de Nouvelle-Anvers. Les Bangala les avaient acquis, soit par les guerres, soit par les rachats. Cette source d'acquisition leur a été fermée par le Gouvernement.

La natalité leur restait comme seul moyen de remplacer les morts. Or, même avant l'époque de la maladie, la moyenne des naissances était très basse. J'estime qu'elle ne dépassait pas l'unité par femme. Je ne dis pas par famille, parce que les hommes libres y sont tous polygames, au détriment des hommes esclaves, qui le plus souvent, n'ont pas de femme. Avec une telle moyenne de naissances, il ne leur était pas possible de conserver le même nombre d'habitants, et le défaut de la natalité, indépendamment de la maladie, causait nécessairement un recul. Or, depuis que l'épidémie a fait son apparition, ce défaut est doublé, et au moment où, à la suite des nombreux décès, le nombre des naissances aurait dû croître, il a diminué graduellement à mesure que la maladie devenait plus intense.

Le Révérend Mr. Weeks constate avec nous que les enfants sont si peu nombreux que le nombre des décès est de loin en avance sur celui des naissances, mais il attribue ce fait à l'expatriation des jeunes gens.

Qu'il veuille remarquer toutefois, que les jeunes Bangala qui ont été au service de l'Etat ou des Compagnies Commerciales étaient, à de rares exceptions près, d'anciens esclaves qui, généralement, ne possédaient pas de femme. Cette considération infirme cette dernière manière d'expliquer le petit nombre de naissances, la situation polygame restant à peu près la même après comme avant le départ de ces jeunes gens. Je pourrais corroborer ma manière de voir en citant l'exemple des tribus *Bobangi*, où il n'y a pas eu d'expatriations du tout.

Par ce qui a été dit, il est facile de comprendre que les deux causes précitées, de nature, indépendamment l'une de l'autre, au lieu de simplement réduire la population, sont assez puissantes pour l'éteindre complètement dans le cas où elles se combinent, comme à Nouvelle-Anvers et en général dans tous les villages riverains situés en aval de Bohaturaku; et nous pouvons déjà conclure que les assertions de Mr. Weeks, qui mettent tout le mal sur le compte de l'oppression, ne sont pas soutenables.

Il nous reste à signaler deux autres causes qui ne sont que secondaires. Elles n'ont pas eu d'influence sur le dépérissement constaté chez la race de Bangala: elles ont contribué relativement peu à diminuer le nombre d'individus appartenant à cette race; mais elles ont hâté le dépeuplement des rives du fleuve.

—L'une de ces causes, c'est l'abandon des emplacements riverains pour d'autres emplacements isolés à l'intérieur des terres, ou retirés dans les îles.—Peut-on légitimement conclure, comme le fait Mr. Weeks, que les populations quittent leurs villages pour échapper à des taxes qui les oppriment? Aucunement, à notre avis. Il suffit qu'il lui soit demandé un travail régulier quelconque aussi minime qu'il soit, pour que l'indigène mette tout en œuvre pour s'y dérober. S'il juge le déplacement comme un moyen sûr et efficace, il ne manquera pas d'y recourir. Le transport et la reconstruction de ses habitations ne lui demandent d'ailleurs pas grande besogne.

Il est passionné pour la liberté sauvage qu'il goûtait avant l'arrivée des Européens, et par laquelle l'homme libre vivait dans un *dolce farniente*, passant ses journées à se reposer, à fumer, à boire, à "palabrer" et à commander à ses esclaves.

Il y a en outre chez le noir une tendance générale à éviter tout contact avec les Européens, et à reculer devant la civilisation.

Enfin, une mortalité extraordinaire est une cause suffisante pour expliquer les déplacements; l'indigène, soit par superstition, soit par motif d'hygiène, ne reste pas sur l'emplacement où les décès deviennent nombreux.

L'autre cause enfin consiste dans les expatriations des jeunes Bangala.

Les engagements volontaires, d'abord, ont été nombreux. Se dérober, prendre un terme de service à l'Etat ou aux Compagnies Commerciales, voyager, voir du pays et gagner de l'argent était à la mode chez les jeunes gens. Mais depuis trois ou quatre ans, le recrutement de travailleurs chez la population riveraine de Nouvelle-Anvers a été interdit par le Gouvernement. Un grand nombre, toutefois, de ceux qui se sont ainsi engagés volontairement ne sont pas rentrés dans leurs foyers, mais restent éparpillés—de plein gré—dans les différentes localités d'Européens, parce qu'ils préfèrent leur état actuel à celui dans lequel ils se trouvaient antérieurement dans leur village. On peut aussi compter qu'il y a eu parmi ces expatriés volontaires un grand nombre de décès, causés principalement par la dysenterie et la pneumonie, surtout parmi ceux qui formaient les équipages des vapeurs.

Viennent ensuite les recrutements de soldats. A ma connaissance, parmi les populations de Nouvelle-Anvers, l'Etat n'a pas fait des recrutements réguliers pour son armée permanente. Il a jadis recruté des Bangala dans des circonstances exceptionnelles pour les employer comme auxiliaires dans certaines expéditions. Ces auxiliaires ont été rapatriés, ou ont eu l'occasion de l'être.

Les déplacements de villages et les expatriations doivent être considérés comme des causes partielles et secondaires, non pas du dépérissement des tribus, mais simplement de l'abandon des rives, et il n'est pas raisonnable d'en faire un grief au Gouvernement. L'aversion profonde pour tout travail l'attrait pour la sauvage indépendance chez l'homme libre; le désir de se soustraire à l'escla-

vage domestique et la passion des voyages, chez la classe inférieure, voilà le fond où il faut chercher les motifs de ces faits.

En examinant en détail les lettres de Mr. Weeks, je n'aurais pas de peine à y trouver d'autres considérations dignes d'être contredites, mais je crois avoir fait un travail suffisant en montrant que la dégénérescence et le dépeuplement constatés à Nouvelle-Anvers sont le résultat de causes et d'influences étrangères à ce que l'auteur des lettres appelle l'oppression.

(Signé) C. VAN RONSLÉ.

Le 14 Novembre, 1903.

Annexe 2.

Notes du Consul Casement sur sa Visite aux Villages d'Ekanza et de Bosunguma dans la Contrée de Ngombe, près de Mompoko, sur la Rive gauche de l'Ileka, Affluent de la Lulonga.

(Traduction.)

Le 17 Septembre, 1903.

En présence du Révérend W. D. Armstrong et du Révérend D. J. Danielson, de la Congo Balolo Mission de Bonginda, de Vinda Bidiloa ("headman" du Consul) et de Bateko, servant d'interprètes, et du Consul de Sa Majesté Britannique.¹

Le Chef de cette section de Bosunguma, du nom de Tondebila, avec beaucoup d'hommes du village et quelques femmes et enfants, étant présents.

Un garçon de 14 à 15 ans, du nom d'Epondo, dont la main gauche a été coupée, et dont le moignon est enveloppé dans une pièce de tissu, la blessure étant à peine guérie, apparaît, et en réponse à la question du Consul, accuse de cette mutilation une sentinelle nommée Kelengo (placée dans le village par l'agent local de la Société "La Lulonga" pour veiller à ce que les noirs travaillent le caoutchouc).

Cette sentinelle est appelée, et, après s'être fait quelque peu attendre, se présente armé d'un fusil à capsule.

L'enquête suivante sur les circonstances qui ont entouré la perte de la main d'Epondo est faite alors :—

Le Consul, par l'intermédiaire de Vinda, s'exprimant en Bobangi, et Bateko, répétant ses paroles en Mongo pour Kelengo—et dans le dialecte local pour les autres—demande à Epondo, en présence de l'accusé :

"Qui a coupé votre main ?"

Epondo : "La sentinelle Kelengo que voilà."

Kelengo nie le fait, interrompant, et disant que son nom est Mbilu, et non Kelengo. Le Consul le requiert de garder le silence—qu'il parlera après.

Le Chef du village, Tondebila, est appelé et questionné par le Consul, par l'intermédiaire des interprètes.

Après avoir été prié de dire la vérité sans crainte ni partialité, il déclare :

"La sentinelle Kelengo devant nous a coupé la main d'Epondo."

Le Consul : "Avez-vous été vous-même témoin de l'acte ?"

Réponse : "Oui."

Plusieurs des Chefs du village sont appelés par le Consul pour témoigner.

Au premier d'entre eux, qui déclare se nommer Mololi, le Consul demande, en désignant le poignet mutilé d'Epondo :

"Qui a coupé la main de ce garçon ?"

Mololi, désignant la sentinelle : "Cet homme-là l'a fait."

Le second, qui dit s'appeler Eyileka, est interrogé par le Consul : "Qui a coupé la main de ce garçon ?"

Réponse : "Kelengo."

Le troisième, qui déclare se nommer Alondi, est interrogé par le Consul : "Qui a coupé la main de ce garçon ?"

Réponse : "Cet homme-ci, Kelengo."

Mololi est questionné à nouveau :

"Avez-vous, vous-même, vu cette sentinelle couper la main de ce garçon ?"

"Oui, je l'ai vu."

Eyileka est questionné à nouveau :

"Avez-vous, vous-même, vu cette sentinelle couper la main de ce garçon ?"

Réponse : "Oui, je l'ai vu."

Alondi est questionné à nouveau :

"Avez-vous, vous-même, vu cette sentinelle couper la main de ce garçon ?"

Réponse : "Je le croirais. Si je ne m'étais pas blessé ici—il montre une coupure près du tendon d'Achille, au talon gauche—le même jour en m'enfuyant effrayé. Mon propre couteau m'a blessé... je l'ai laissé tomber en m'enfuyant."

Le Consul questionne Epondo :

"Combien de temps y a-t-il que votre main a été coupée ?"

Réponse : Il n'est pas sûr.

¹. Passage omis dans le texte de ces notes, tel qu'il se trouve reproduit à l'Annexe 6 du Rapport du Consul.

Deux jeunes hommes du même village, nommés Bonjingeni et Maseli, s'avancèrent et dirent qu'ils s'en souvenaient. Cela s'était passé pendant qu'on défrichait la terre sur la rive devant la station à Bonginda, quand on commençait à aménager un point d'accostage (un "slip") pour les steamers.

Mr. Danielson déclare que le travail en question—le défrichement de la rive—en vue de l'établissement du "slip" de la Mission de Bonginda, fut commencé le 21 Janvier de cette année.¹

Botoko, d'Ekanza, une autre section du village de Bosunguma, est questionné par le Consul :

"Avez-vous vu couper la main de ce garçon ?"

Réponse : "Oui. Je ne l'ai pas réellement vu couper. Je vins et je vis la main séparée et le sang couler sur le sol. Les gens s'étaient enfuis dans toutes les directions."

Le Consul demande aux interprètes de demander s'il y en avait d'autres qui avaient vu le crime et en accusaient Kelengo.

Presque tous ceux qui étaient présents, à peu près quarante personnes, presque tous des hommes, crièrent d'une seule voix que c'était Kelengo qui l'avait fait.

Le Consul : "Ils sont tous certains que c'était ce Kelengo que voici ?"

Réponse unanime : "Oui. Il l'a fait."

Le Consul demande à l'accusé Kelengo : "Avez-vous coupé la main de ce garçon ?"

Cette question a été posée dans le langage le plus clair possible, et a été répétée six fois, et il a été demandé qu'une réponse claire, par oui ou par non, soit faite.

L'accusé évite de répondre à la question, commençant à parler d'autres choses n'ayant pas de rapport avec la question—par exemple, que son nom était Mbilu et non Kelengo, et que les gens de Bosunguma lui ont fait de méchantes choses.

Il lui a été dit de se confiner dans les limites de la question qui lui a été posée, qu'il pourrait parler d'autres choses après, mais que maintenant il y avait lieu pour lui de répondre aux questions posées, tout aussi simplement et tout aussi clairement que les autres avaient répondu. Il avait entendu ces réponses et l'accusation portée contre lui, et devait répondre aux questions du Consul de la même manière.

L'accusé continua à parler de choses étrangères, et refusa ou évita de donner de réponse à la question qui lui était posée.

Après des tentatives répétées pour obtenir une réponse directe à la question : "Avez-vous, ou n'avez-vous pas, coupé la main de ce garçon Epondo ?" le Consul dit : "Vous êtes accusé de ce crime."

"Vous refusez de répondre aux questions que je vous pose clairement et franchement comme vos accusateurs l'ont fait. Vous avez entendu leur accusation."

"Votre refus de répondre comme vous devriez répondre, à savoir par oui ou par non, à une question directe et simple me laisse convaincu que vous ne pouvez nier l'accusation. Vous avez entendu ce dont vous avez été accusé par tout ce monde."

"Puisque vous ne consentez pas à répondre comme ils l'ont fait, vous pouvez raconter votre histoire comme vous voulez."

"Je l'écouterai."

L'accusé commence à parler, mais avant que ses remarques puissent m'être traduites par l'intermédiaire de Bateko d'abord, à qui il parle directement, et de Vinda ensuite, un jeune homme s'avance hors de la foule et interrompt.

Il y eut du bruit, puis cet homme parla.

Il dit qu'il était Cianzo, de Bosunguma. Il avait tué deux antilopes, et il porta deux de leurs jambes à cette sentinelle Kelengo pour lui en faire cadeau. Kelengo refusa son cadeau et lia sa femme. Kelengo dit que ce n'était pas un cadeau suffisant pour lui, et il tint la femme de Cianzo liée jusqu'à ce que lui (Cianzo) eût payé 1,000 baguettes de laiton pour sa rançon.

A ce moment un jeune homme, disant se nommer Ilungo, de Bosunguma, s'avança dans le cercle et accusa Kelengo de lui avoir volé ouvertement deux canards et un chien.

Ils lui furent pris sans aucun motif, sinon que Kelengo en avait besoin, et les prit de force.

Le Consul se tourna de nouveau vers Kelengo, et l'invita à raconter son histoire et à faire une réponse à l'accusation portée contre lui, de la manière qui lui convenait. Le Consul ordonna le silence à tous, et leur enjoignit de ne pas interrompre Kelengo.

Kelengo dit qu'il n'a pas pris les canards d'Ilungo. Le père d'Ilungo lui a donné un canard. (Tous rient.)

Il est vrai que Cianzo a tué deux antilopes et lui en a donné deux jambes en cadeau, mais il n'a pas lié la femme de Cianzo et n'a pas demandé d'argent pour rançon.

Le Consul : "C'est bien. Cela termine les canards et les jambes d'antilope ; mais maintenant je veux entendre parler de la main d'Epondo. Racontez-moi ce que vous savez au sujet de la main coupée d'Epondo."

Kelengo élude de nouveau la question.

Le Consul : "Dites-lui ceci. Il est posté par ses maîtres dans ce village, n'est-ce pas ? Ceci est son village. Maintenant en vient-il à dire qu'il ne sait pas ce qui se passe ici, où il vit ?"

Kelengo dit : "Il est vrai que ceci est son village, mais il ne connaît rien au sujet de la main coupée d'Epondo."

"Peut-être c'était la première sentinelle ici avant qu'il ne vint qui était un très méchant homme et coupait les mains."

"Cette sentinelle-là est partie ; c'était elle qui coupait les mains, pas lui, Mbilu. Il ne sait rien à ce sujet."

Le Consul : Quel était le nom, alors, de cette méchante sentinelle, votre prédécesseur, qui coupait les mains des gens ? Le connaissez-vous ?"

¹. Passage omis dans le texte annexé au Rapport.