

Atrocities in the Belgian Congo - Documents

Document 1

Source: Representation of the Berlin Conference (in 1884), in the German "Illustrated Newspaper." Representatives of the European powers met to determine the procedures for Imperialism in Africa and other areas of the world.



Document 2

Source: Photograph taken in 1897, unknown photographer. Belgian King Leopold II brought 267 Congolese people to his country estate to display them in a mock African village. It became a popular practice at World's Fairs and Expos. (In ["Where 'Human Zoos' Once Stood, A Belgian Museum Now Faces Its Colonial Past, September 26, 2018](#))



Document 2

Source: "Foot and hand of child dismembered by soldiers, brought to missionaries by dazed father". (A father - Nsala - stares at the hand and foot of his five year-old daughter, which were severed as a punishment for having harvested too little caoutchouc/rubber.) Photograph taken by Missionary Alice Seely Harris at Baringa, Congo State, May 15, 1904.



Document 3

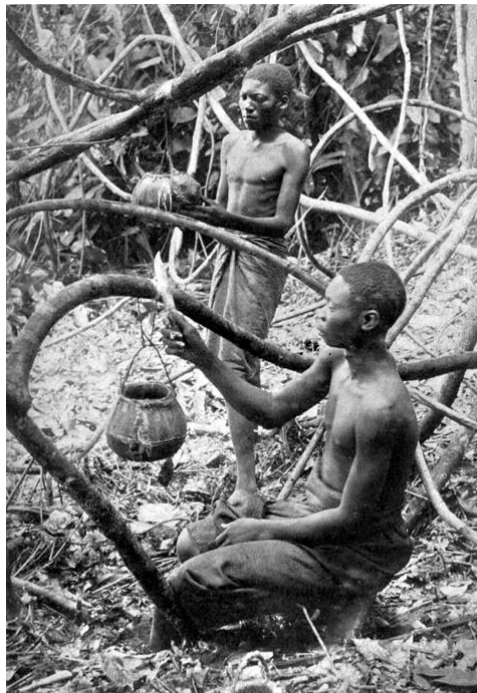
Source: Bompenju and Lofiko (brothers of Nsala), a third person, John Harris and Edgar Stannard with the hands of Lingomo and Bolengo, which have allegedly been killed by sentries of the ABIR. Photograph taken by missionary Alice

Seely Harris in Baringa, Congo State, May 19, 1904.



Document 4

Source: Photograph of men Collecting Rubber in Forest of Lusambo (Lualaba-Kassai), ca. 1904.



Document 5

Source: From the Report on the Administration of the Congo Free State to the British House of Commons. Speech

given in 1908 by the British Consul (Diplomat) Roger Casement, who was an Irish Nationalist, humanitarian, and poet.

. . . on the 25th of July (1903) we reached Lukolela, where I spent two days. This district had, when I visited it in 1887, numbered fully 5,000 people; today the population is given, after a careful enumeration, at less than 600. The reasons given me for their decline in numbers were similar to those furnished elsewhere, namely, sleeping-sickness, general ill-health, insufficiency of food, and the methods employed to obtain labor from them by local officials and the exactions levied on them.

. . . A careful investigation of the conditions of native life around (Lake Mantumba) confirmed the truth of the statements made to me--that the great decrease in population, the dirty and ill-kept towns, and the complete absence of goats, sheep, or fowls--once very plentiful in this country--were to be attributed above all else to the continued effort made during many years to compel the natives to work india-rubber. ...

. . . Two cases (of mutilation) came to my actual notice while I was in the lake district. One, a young man, both of whose hands had been beaten off with the butt ends of rifles against a tree; the other a young lad of 11 or 12 years of age, whose right hand was cut off at the wrist. . . . I both these cases the Government soldiers had been accompanied by white officers whose names were given to me. Of six natives (one a girl, three little boys, one youth, and one old woman) who had been mutilated in this way during the rubber regime, all except one were dead at the date of my visit.

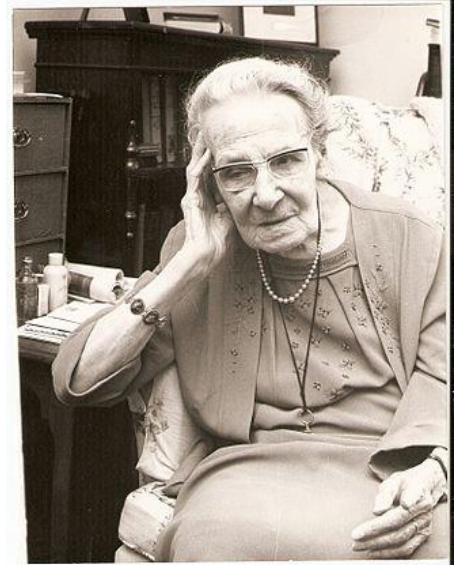
[A sentry in the employ of one of the concessionary private companies] said he had caught and was detaining as prisoners (eleven women) to compel their husbands to bring in the right amount of rubber required of them on the next market day. . . . When I asked what would become of these women if their husbands failed to bring in the right quantity of rubber . . . , he said at once that then they would be kept there until their husbands had redeemed them.

Document 6

Source: Photograph of and Interview with Alice Seely Harris in 1970 by the BBC, when she was 100 years old.

Begin at 7:30, go through 10:01. This piece of her interview discusses how she and her husband gave evidence against Leopold II for his atrocities in the Congo as well as how she ended up taking the photograph she took of Nsala in 1904.

<https://soundcloud.com/autographabp/alice-seeley-harris-interview>



Document 7

Source: BBC News Article "[Belgian king expresses 'deepest regrets' for DR Congo colonial abuses,](#)" 30 June 2020.