

## The Three Congolese Holocausts

- THE BELGIAN-CONGOLESE WAR: 1885 – 1908: 10 million dead
- 1977? Carter?
- THE FIRST AMERICAN-CONGOLESE WAR: 1996 – 2003: 5.4 million dead
- THE NEVER-ENDING WAR: 2003 – to present. Unknown numbers dead.

### The Belgian-Congolese Holocaust

King Leopold II of Belgium was responsible for the deaths and mutilation of 10 million Congolese Africans during the late 1800's. The spoils of modern day Belgium owes much to the people of the Congo River Basin.

In a testament to the hideous brutality of the European colonial era and imperialism in its finest form, during the 1880s, when Europe was busy dividing up the continent of Africa like a vast chocolate cake, King Leopold II of Belgium laid personal claim to the largely uncharted [Congo Free State](#). The 905,000 square miles (76 times larger than Belgium) of African rainforest held a vast fortune in rubber plantations, a commodity in high demand in late 19th century industrial Europe.

### The Silent Holocaust: The Belgian Genocide of the Congo



In our reflection upon the grand history and innumerable events of humanity's past we are inevitably forced to once again encounter the horrors and inhuman transgressions that our forebearers have made against others as well as the transgressions that have been made against our

forebearers by others. In contemporary history there is perhaps no event more horrid and incomprehensible as the Holocaust. Following the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany, his Aryan Ideal was put forth with unforeseen adamancy. To better facilitate the securing of Germany (and eventually continental Europe) for Aryan people, his racial agenda called for the elimination of *untermenschen* (subhumans), most of whom were, in Germany, Jewish people. Over the duration of World War II (and preceding this conflict) Hitler and his Aryan henchmen facilitated the mass elimination of nearly 6 million Jews. In addition to this, 4 million Slavs, Poles, and rarer minorities such as blacks were systematically eliminated. While the Jews were obviously not the only victims of the Holocaust or the mass German onslaught against those they deemed enemies and inferiors, the incessant memorials to this heinous and savage crime have characterized this event as one that has solely affected Jews. The term "Holocaust" has become effectively synonymized with "Genocide of Jews" although this is highly inaccurate and extremely disrespectful to those of other faiths and ethnicities who also died at the hands of the Nazis, the label "untermenschen" seared into their corpses.

One may often wonder why the plight of the Jewish people has become so well known, so mourned over, and so thoroughly impressed into the global collective consciousness. Why have so many, even the ancestors of those who perpetrated the heinous acts against the Jewish people, shuddered at mere thoughts and reflections of the brutality and callousness expressed by the German people towards their scorned Jewish enemies? And why is it that the innumerable casualties of Africans, Native Americans, Asians, and virtually all non-white ethnic groups of the world are deemed unworthy of tears, mourning, and remembrance. For them, a mere "sorry" must suffice for the tens of millions they lost, and the plight and suffering of their ancestors is merely swept under the rug, cast into oblivion---forgotten. While our school textbooks devote entire chapters to the subject of Jewish suffering, especially the Holocaust, other genocides, such as that of the Congolese, have not merited even paragraphs.

In the West, they never fail to remind us of the plight of the Jews and the extreme, gory adversity that they have ostensibly endured throughout the history of man. Holocaust memorials are erected, dates are observed, reparation money is distributed to the victims and their descendants, nations are commandeered and offered as polite compensation. As for the memory of the millions of blacks who died en route in the Atlantic Slave Trade (not to mention their brethren who died either tilling fields or being beaten to their demise), the millions of Native Americans who died throughout the Americas after the arrival of Europeans, and the millions who died at the hands of European colonialists in Africa, there is no memory. There has been no effort to mitigate the residual effects of

the atrocious acts, no effort to appease the disturbed and restless spirits of those wronged. Memorials are few, acknowledgment is scant, and nowhere are apologies to be found. "It wasn't *me* who did it--- it was those people back then."

During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the infamous Scramble for Africa was at its pinnacle. Every European superpower that was anything readily and enthusiastically partook in military conquest of African nations. Though several sovereign African states proved themselves formidable and presented valiant reciprocation of European aggression (most notably the Zulu, Asante, Herero, and Ethiopians) most African states succumbed to European belligerence rather easily. European technology, political impetus, and a most rabid and feral type of aggression were simply too much for most Africans to resist. And so, upon Mother Africa, colonialism was imposed with great ardency, and for the first time Africa was under the yoke of Europe. It was unprecedented.

In 1885, King Leopold of Belgium surveyed a map of Africa and tacitly observed



the territorial highlights of nations that had been conquered by his continental cohorts. He was less than satisfied at the many possessions of Great Britain, the foremost Empire of the world, as well as those Germany, France, and Italy. Both a sense of envy and consternation overtook him. If Belgium could not conquer African territory then its status as a legitimate European power bastion would be thereby threatened. Before his eyes, all of his rivals were declaring war on African people throughout and acquiring territory, slave labor, and abundant resources. Hell bent on capitalizing off of the violent exploitation, King Leopold appealed at the Berlin Conference of 1885 and was granted the territory that would become the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). The Congo was unbelievably wealthy---her jungles, soils, and wildlife abounded in rubber, ivory, and minerals. King Leopold's personal army, the Force Publique, was swept up in a desirous frenzy to acquire this wealth that by 1908, when European powers actually had to retake the Congo from Belgium because of the gross genocide and carnage that had been wrought, it was conservatively estimated that over 10 million Congolese had died. That would be

around 50 percent of the Congo's population, an undoubtedly astounding amount. It is often contested that these estimates are grossly inaccurate and in reality a figure significantly higher than 10 million would be more fitting to account for these gross tragedies.

Like the nations controlled by his relatives, King Leopold II was transfixed upon the idea of white supremacy and white colonial domination. To impose European control upon Africa, they would stop at nothing. King Leopold not only extracted tremendous amounts of wealth from the land and henceforth bolstered the economy of Belgium (as well as his own personal wealth) but he did so through enslavement of almost all of the native populace. To King Leopold, these Africans were "subhumans" and "savages" and "life not worthy of life". Each and every Congolese soul who perished at his behest was victim to a man who assigned absolutely no value or worth to the lives of Africans. To him, their lives may as well have been nothing---animals exceeded them in significance. King Leopold was a man who believed wholly (and shared this belief with many of his European colonizing cohorts) that the value of white life was infinitely greater than that of a black life. After all, beyond labor or sexual satisfaction, the black life had no true worth.

If the black inhabitants of the Congo were "noble savages" then it is only fair to christen their Belgian masters as "savage nobles". Though the whites characterized the Africans as primitive, feral, and less than human, closer to simian creature, it was not the Africans who committed savagery and animalistic barbarity upon "cultured" Europeans. King Leopold's henchmen utilized almost every known form of torture and punishment to murder Congolese people. Congolese were beaten, shot, beheaded, burnt to death, hung, starved, stabbed, impaled, infected with disease, and whipped to death. Those who didn't die from the cruel punishment often endured lifelong injuries such as castrated genitals, severed limbs, severe burns, loss of eyes, and permanent scars from whips. Those who managed to remain physically unscathed still endured the pain of slave labor and the psychological torment that such an imposing and cruel slavocracy imposed upon them. No man was free from the yoke of King Leopold's fierce, callous oppression, and every single inhabitant of the Congo was in some great way victim to the bloody subjugation. Contending with more conservative, doctored estimates, some estimate that up to 30 million Congolese perished during the brutal regime of King Leopold II as a direct result of his vicious efforts.



In 1960 the Congo became an independent state with Patrice Lumumba being its first prime minister. He was assassinated with the CIA being implicated, although some say that his murder was actually the responsibility of Belgium. (3) But nevertheless, the CIA was planning to kill him. (4) Before his assassination the CIA sent one of its scientists, Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, to the Congo carrying “lethal biological material” intended for use in Lumumba’s assassination. This virus would have been able to produce a fatal disease indigenous to the Congo area of Africa and was transported in a diplomatic pouch.

Much of the time in recent years there has been a civil war within the Democratic Republic of Congo, fomented often by the U.S. and other nations, including neighboring nations. (5)

In April 1977, Newsday reported that the CIA was secretly supporting efforts to recruit several hundred mercenaries in the U.S. and Great Britain to serve alongside Zaire’s army. In that same year the U.S. provided \$15 million of military supplies to the Zairian President Mobutu to fend off an invasion by a rival group operating in Angola. (6)

In May 1979, the U.S. sent several million dollars of aid to Mobutu who had been condemned 3 months earlier by the U.S. State Department for human rights violations. (7) During the Cold War the U.S. funneled over 300 million dollars in weapons into Zaire (8,9) \$100 million in military training was provided to him. (2) In 2001 it was reported to a U.S. congressional committee that American companies, including one linked to former President George Bush Sr., were stoking the Congo for monetary gains. There is an international battle over resources in that country with over 125 companies and individuals being implicated. One of these substances is coltan, which is used in the manufacture of cell phones. (2)

NOVEMBER 30, 2012

## **Genocide in Silence (The First American-Congolese War)**

by DANIEL KOVALIK

The most catastrophic human rights disaster since World War II has been unfolding in the Democratic Republic of The Congo (“DRC” or “Congo”) since the mid-1990’s. While the numbers of the victims are hard to know for certain, there are credible reports of at least 5 million and quite possibly over 6 million civilians killed, half of whom were children under the age of 5 years old. Despite these staggering numbers, the Congo has received little attention in the press, and certainly much less than the human rights situations in countries like The Sudan (Darfur), the former Yugoslavia, Libya and now Syria – that is, countries in which the U.S. wished to intervene –

though the tragedy in the Congo is much worse than in any of those countries.

Given the current situation with rebels taking the city of Goma in the eastern Congo, I decided to talk to Kambale Musavuli, one of the most important human rights advocates for the Congo. Mr. Musavuli is from the capital of the Congo, Kinshasa, and is now the spokesperson for the Washington-based Friends of the Congo, and currently resides in D.C. He has written and spoken extensively on the situation facing the people of the Congo, including in the Washington Post, and in the powerful movie, “Crisis in the Congo,” which can be found at [friendsofthecongo.org](http://friendsofthecongo.org). He kindly spoke to me yesterday by phone, and excerpts of that interview follow:

*DK: Ok, wonderful. So, my first question would be just to cut to the chase, well, first of all, what is happening right now in the Congo that we should be concerned about?*

*KM: A militia group that has taken over cities in the eastern part of Congo. And this militia group is calling itself M23 . . . The Congo’s neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda, are supporting and arming the rebel groups inside of the Congo. . . . And that situation that has caused over 650,000 people to be displaced, scores have been killed, there are summary executions, women are being raped by the rebel militia groups, and all of this accompanied by a most deafening silence by the world governments to bring an end to this crisis.*

*DK: What role does the United States have in all of this?*

*KM: Well, as I mentioned, there are conflicts and the rebel groups, the militia group actually I would rather call them militia. The militia group they are supported by Rwanda for the most part, and Uganda is also supporting them. Rwanda and Uganda are United States allies. They receive our taxpayers’ money, their leadership is trained by our military and they operate*

as trained police of the world for the United States. So you see Ugandan soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia. And you see Rwanda soldiers in Sudan, especially Darfur, and in Haiti. Doing these peacekeeping operations where the U.S. has interests, and because of that, the United States is mighty silent despite the evidence that exists. And the evidence that even the US government recognizes — remember the United States has withheld \$200,000 to the Rwanda government because of the support to rebel groups in Congo, which means they have evidence of what Rwanda is doing in the Congo. Yet, we are still providing them [Rwanda] with \$240 million of our tax monies. So the US is playing the very negative role in continuing to support nations that are supporting, training, arming, and equipping the rebels in the Congo and at the United Nations even playing a bigger role in being an obstacle to peace in the Congo. By that I mean Susan Rice, the United Nations Ambassador from the US, has blocked the reports according to many. Let me go back, so it is clear what I am saying. Susan Rice, the US Ambassador to the UN, according to many diplomats, has blocked the release of the reports; there were two UN reports that were supposed to be published, and the first one was supposed to come out in June. Diplomats from the Security Council have shared with the media and different contacts in New York that she single-handedly was blocking the report from being published and wanted to give Rwanda an opportunity to respond to the UN report documenting involvement in supporting rebel groups in the Congo. The second report ...

*DK: Have you seen those reports?*

KM: Both of them have been released.

DK: OK.

KM: But they are released because, what actually took place is that the people who were working on the report even under pressure from the United States, they leaked the report to the press.

*DK: OK.*

KM: Because the press gets it and the press, specifically Reuters, was publishing excerpts from the report. [See, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/17/us-congo-democratic-rwanda-uganda-idUSBRE89F1RQ20121017>] The columnist even said, “how come this report is not being published?” So it was impossible for the Security Council not to publish the content of the report because there were already eyes which have seen what was in the report. Same thing happened to the second one, but the second one was just published about 10 days ago, last week, and before the report was published, the UN was to put forward the resolution to condemn Rwanda for supporting rebel groups. We have been getting information that Rwanda’s name was taken off the resolution, so the resolution is only saying that any external support to rebels, to the M23 militia group, should be stopped, pretty much not naming who is supporting the rebels. So seeing that, what we are letting Americans know is your government is complicit in the displacement of 650,000 people in the Congo. Scores of people killed because they [the U.S. officials] choose to . . . cover for these allies in Africa to the detriment of human rights of people living in The Congo.

*DK: Now, Susan Rice is one of those, how would you say it, she believes in this R2P, this right, or this “responsibility to protect” doctrine.*

KM: Yet in R2P there is no “C”. That’s what we’ve been saying. We say that in R2P there is no “C”; this means there is no “C” for Congo. According to US policy, this means that The Congo is not to be protected. The evidence is overwhelming. You don’t even have to read the newspaper to find out what

is happening. You can actually talk to Congolese, walk on the ground in the areas where the militia group is. But, and we know that the US government is aware of how bad it's happening. They are denying the report from the United Nations. The head of the UN mission to the Congo, Roger Meece, is an American. He is in contact. We have attaches there. What is happening in the Congo is visible. But the responsibility to protect has not been activated for the Congo, so why I have to ask. Why, what is the right of the United States to talk about the issue of Syria, when we know what is happening in the Congo, and we know the perpetrators, and the perpetrators are backed by our allies, and that's the discussion that needs to happen as they push for R2P and we see that this does not apply to the Congo.

They are very aware of the situation — the UN mission, the US government, all the way up to the White House and the National Security Council, they are very aware of the situation. And I'm using the evidence that the US government withdrew \$200,000 to Rwanda for a military academy. They did so because they had evidence that Rwanda was supporting rebel groups. So I'm using their own information about their knowledge of what is happening, and yet they're not taking action. This is complicity. If you are aware, just as we took action to end the Holocaust in Europe, if we know in the Congo millions have died from, estimates take the number to over 6 million, and half of them are children under the age of 5, and we remain silent when we know what is happening, we are really complicit. And in a very tangible way because we are supporting the two oppressive regimes in Rwanda and Uganda, and in turn these nations are using the support that we are giving them to create, fabricate militia groups which are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. And when one has the proper evidence, there should be outrage. I am not appealing to the government. The appeal is to the American people, the people that I meet every day in the streets, with whom I share what is happening in the Congo. They ask me, "What can I do to help?" . . . So I'm appealing to them, I'm letting them know your government is complicit in the killing of the people in

the Congo through its support of Rwanda and Uganda who have been implicated in the massacre in the Congo by numerous respectable organizations such as Human Rights Watch, a United Nations group of experts. If you want to help me, hold your government accountable for supporting oppressive regimes in Africa. That would mean in this case stop supporting Rwanda and Uganda militarily. Stop supporting oppressive regimes in Rwanda and Uganda. That will go a long way for peace in the Congo.

*DK: And Kambale, why do you think the US is continuing to support Rwanda and Uganda even knowing that these atrocities are being committed? What interests are they protecting?*

KM: Economic interests and military interests. Economic interests in Congo are that which we need in our daily life. The coltan which comes out the Congo can be found in your cell phone, the cobalt of the Congo can be found in the battery of your phone and all the different resources the Congo has.

Rwanda and Uganda have become the broker of Congo's minerals, and they loot Congo's mineral resources while they commit atrocities. . . . Chaos allows resources to leave from the Congo at a cheap price, and of course it's not actually just leaving it's actually being stolen from the Congolese people. The second one is military interest. Rwanda and Uganda their militaries have been trained by the United States. Since the era when the American soldier was killed in Somalia in Mogadishu, the US did not want to have any of the troops in Africa anymore. So the U.S. created a system in which they would train all the foreign military missions. I mean, can you imagine that in Afghanistan today, we have Ugandan soldiers in Afghanistan fighting the war on terror. How many Americans know that? We have Rwandan soldiers in Haiti and in Sudan. These missions can be deployed across the world to protect US interests around the world. . . . So, the US government is valuing profits before people, and ignoring the fact that people have the right to life, to human rights. . . .

*DK: Kambale, did you have some hope that Barrack Obama, who is a child of Africa himself, being part Kenyan, did you have hopes that he would help the Congo?*

KM: I will be very honest with you. I had hope for Obama before November 4, 2008. And I had hope for him to do something about the Congo because as a senator he wrote 156 bills, only 2 of them passed. One of them was on mercury export and the second one was called "The Democratic Republic of Congo Relief Security Democracy Promotion Act." So, President Obama today, as a senator wrote a bill about the Congo which was signed into law in December of 2006 by George Bush, and is really comprehensive in holding the responsible parties accountable in Africa. However, these bills are completely ignored. So I have been a human rights advocate, I have mobilized people in this country to let them know that the President that we have is not addressing the situation in the Congo while I know he was really knowledgeable of the situation even when he was on the Foreign Affairs Committee as a senator. And I have tried to share this knowledge with the left in America who had faith in the Democratic Party and that Obama would do something positive after being re-elected. I said this is not how Washington works. You hold your president accountable. And even now we have proof that the situation in the Congo has worsened. . . . We cannot depend on the politicians to do anything. Anything in American gets done because the folks stand up. Even during the Civil Rights, Americans knew about holding the government accountable. . . .

*DK: Well, this is very helpful. I, you know, I mean, it's hard to comprehend what's happening there, when you give figures of 6 million dead, you know that's the figure of the Holocaust. I mean, you're talking about a holocaust in the Congo. After World War II people said we'll never let this happen again, and here it's happening.*

KM: Yes, yes, yes. It's happening in total silence. You know, I'm thinking that for one person dead, people would ask for a minute of silence. But to do this for the Congo would shut them up forever. Because if for one person you ask for a minute of silence, with so many deaths in the Congo you would not be able to speak ever again. . . . But then it puts the question of do we think the African people are human beings? . . . I don't know if you are interviewing me from the context of what's going to happen a hundred years from now. Can you imagine a hundred years from now as children of the time are reading the history of this era, they will ask themselves, why did you take so long to stop this? Why did it have to take 16 years to stop the killing of 6 million? And history will judge us for our actions. But can when we among the people say that when we heard that 6 million people are dead, we did everything in our power to use our talent and our net worth . . . to stop it? And that's the call that we put out to people — that we have to stop it. Anywhere around the world where's its happening, we have to speak up because if we don't, it only comes back full circle. You know?

And I had a discussion with a German woman a month ago. And, I explained that under King Leopold of Belgium, 10 million Congolese people die. This was before the Holocaust! Then after the Holocaust, we are at 6 million again, and I challenged her, I hope you will help us stop the conflict. And her remark was that, "I have a lot of problems of my own to deal with." And I just replied to her these were the same statements that took place when they were killing the Jewish people. And if there were those people when it first started who decided to stop it, we wouldn't have 6 million Jews killed. And it's the same thing with the Congo today . . .

***Daniel Kovalik*** is a labor and human rights lawyer living in Pittsburgh. He currently teaches International Human Rights at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

# Congo's Vicious Kasai War Could Reignite The Great Congo War

Austin Bay Austin Bay | Posted: Sep 13, 2017

In August 2016, small but violent conflict erupted in the Democratic Republic of Congo's south-central Kasai region.

In the world beyond the Kasai region's five provinces (Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental, Sankuru and Lomami) the cause of the violent outburst was unclear. According to initial reports, it involved a local grievance.

The Kasai region's relative isolation contributed to the lack of information. However, President Joseph Kabila's government wanted to limit news coverage. A self-serving decision made by his regime and related to the upcoming November 2016 national election was the "local grievance" that deeply offended hundreds of thousands of citizens within the region. Members of the dominant Luba tribe scorned Kabila's decision as an arrogant cultural insult and an outright political crime.

A year later, the once opaque clash has spread and expanded. Officials with the UN's Congo peacekeeping operation are calling the chaos in Kasai Congo's and central Africa's most dangerous conflict.

Death toll estimates range from 3,000 to 6,000, but investigators discover new mass graves with mutilated bodies on a daily basis. Compared to Syria, the death toll is low. But Kasai has been a war of massacres, by the government and the rebels. Kabila's forces burn villages and those attacks create refugees. Now the numbers boggle. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that Kasai's violence has displaced about 1.5 million people. Over 30,000 refugees have fled across the border to Angola.

Kasai's core conflict pits the Kamuina Nsapu movement against the Congolese Army, police and pro-government militias.

Trouble began when a man named Jean-Prince Mpandi came to Kasai to claim the title of Kamuina Nsapu, the traditional (customary) chief of a local Luba clan. Mpandi was a critic of Kabila. The Kabila government denied him the office and appointed a Kabila supporter to the position. Mpandi objected to government interference in tribal affairs and called on local citizens to resist.

In August 2016, government forces killed him -- and the war was on. The rebel militia adopted the name Kamuina Nsapu and accused Kabila of seeking "unjust political domination".

In fall 2016, the Kamuina Nsapu was essentially a tribe-based militia. As the conflict spread, it has taken on the characteristics of a broader based anti-government movement whose rebellion has an anti-Kabila dimension -- and that element could nationalize the rebellion and reignite the Great Congo War.

The "unjust political domination" accusation resonates with other political and ethnic groups in Congo who oppose Kabila. Remember the November 2016 election to choose Kabila's successor?

The Kabila regime delayed preparations, and then finally canceled. His second term ended in December 2016, but he refused to vacate the office, making the absurd argument that his second term was really his first term