**Constantine Phipps to Lord Lansdowne**

**TNA FO 403/305 (Further Papers respecting Ill-treatment by Officials in the Congo Free State 1900-1901, Confidential No 7948)**

Mr. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne. - (Received November 23.)

No. 216. Africa)

Brussels, November 21, 1900.

My Lord,

With reference to Sir F. Plunkett's despatches Nos. 97, 98 and 118, Africa, of this year, relative to atrocities committed by the Congo officials on the occasion of the revolt of the Budjas, it is satisfactory to learn that, after a searching inquiry, the perpetrators have been brought to justice and punished in what appears to be an exemplary manner.

The superior officer, who had been indicated in the newspaper correspondence on the subject, turns out to be M. Mathys, who has been sentenced to fifteen years, whilst Lieutenant Lacroix, who declares that he acted under Lothaire's orders, has been sentenced to twelve years penal servitude, equivalent, in that climate, as M. Cuvelier pointed out, to a death sentence.

The Court appears to have experienced considerable difficulty in sifting the truth of the accusations owing to the prevarication and equivocations of the native witnesses, who,

transported long distances to the scene of the trial, had been trooped together during a prolonged period. Although it is declared that the general opinion on the spot was that there was great exaggeration as to the acts attributed to these officials, the Court arrived at a series of "considerants" of a very formidable character, including one to the effect that the prisoners had even inculcated cannibalism in the pursuance of their acts of vengeance.

The defence produced various letters from the notorious Lothaire, Director of the Company implicated, which all concluded with advice to "Abir", and the State Attorney expressed his regret at not being able to prosecute the Society itself, and at not seeing in the dock "the person whom he regarded as the principal culprit" (Lothaire).

In the case of Mathys, the only extenuating circumstance adduced referred to the difficulty of his position, "in the midst of a population savage in character and often hostile"; the same circumstance being brought forward in the case of Lacroix, with the addition that his antecedents were good.

After the frequent denials of justice which have been attributed to the Congo authorities, it is at last satisfactory to find sentences passed to which apparently no exception can be taken, and to learn that other trials will ensue arising out of the events in question.

It appears probably, however, that the sentences will, to some extent, be commuted.

I have &c

(signed) Constantine Phipps.

**Constantine Phipps to Lord Lansdowne**

**TNA FO 403/305 (Further Papers respecting Ill-treatment by Officials in the Congo Free State 1900-1901, Confidential No 7948)**

Mr. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne. - (Received February 6.)

No. 3. Africa)

Brussels, February 4, 1901

My Lord,

THE "Patriote", the so-termed anti-Congo organ, which for some time has not published articles as to the atrocities in that State, reproduces this morning one from the Socialist paper "Le Peuple", recapitulating the various convictions of perpetrators of these atrocities.

The events referred to appear still to be those of the Budja revolt in Mongalla. But it is noticeable that Van Eycken, who was alleged in M. Lorand's speech in the Chamber (See Sir F. Plunkett's No. 110 Africa, of the 20th April, 1900), to have been massacred by the natives out of revenge for his cruelties, now turns out to have forfeited his bail of 15,000 frc after the judicial inquiry had, the "Peuple" declares, established the truth of the allegations against him.

On the one hand these statements are all propagated by such newspapers as the "Patriote" or as the "Peuple", a Socialist organ; but on the other hand, the Congo Department might easily obtain copies of the depositions made before the M'Boma Courts, and could, by making a clean breast of the whole circumstances, prove that the superior authorities were ignorant of, and not responsible for, these atrocities.

Up to the present moment we have only M Van Eetvelde's indignant denials and such cut and dried explanations of the system of inspection adopted by the Superior Congo Government as may be found in the inclosure to Sir F. Plunkett's No. 117, Africa of the 25th April, 1900.

It is satisfactory to see by the inclosed the extract from the "Etoile Belge" that energy is still exhibited judicially in the punishment of the guilty agents and the recapture of the one

who had escaped.

I have &c

(signed) Constantine Phipps.

enclosures:

Extract (in French) from the "Patriote" of February 4, 1901.

Extract (in French) from the "Etoile Belge" of February 5, 1901.

**Constantine Phipps to Lord Lansdowne**

**TNA FO 403/305 (Further Papers respecting Ill-treatment by Officials in the Congo Free State 1900-1901, Confidential No 7948)**

Mr. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne. - (Received February 11.)

No. 3. 216. Africa)

Brussels, February 9, 1901

My Lord,

I have the honour to inclose the text of the Judgment of the Court of Appeal at Boma, in the case of Moray, confirming the sentence of penal servitude for ten years passed upon hat agent in September 1900.

It will be seen that extenuating circumstances were admitted by the Court, which declared that it was right to take into consideration "the examples afforded to him by his chiefs in showing no respect for the lives and rights of the natives."

Both M. van Eetvelde and M de Cuvelier have recently called my attention to very severe sentences recently passed by the Congo Courts on the delinquent agents and officers as proving the determination of the Congo authorities to repress all cruelties inflicted on the natives, the sentences passed being in that climate the equivalent to death sentences.

I observed to M. van Eetvelde only yesterday, when referring to this Judgment, it was to be regretted that some of the depositions were not made public in order to show how far the superior officers were pursued by the system in the forced collection of rubber really the parties responsible for these cruelties. The strict Regulations issued by the Congo Government, which has been cited in the "atrocity debate", and to which he made reference, had clearly been inoperative to repress these deplorable abuses. I also referred to the alleged

production of baskets of left hands as a proof of the Government's orders having been executed.

M. van Eetvelde, who now is ready to discuss these accusations more temperately than he apparently used to do, indignantly denied these accusations, and declared solemnly that in the depositions which he had examined no mention had ever been made of hands cut off living bodies. The native tribes had, according to their known practice, cut the left hands off dead bodies and produced them as proof of the results of punitive expeditions, strongly though that practice had been condemned and repressed. Warlike operations effected by uncivilized tribes were rarely unattended by cruel acts, but he could not understand formal indictments being brought against the Congo Government on the mere authority of Socialist orators and such newspapers as the "Petite Blue", which had brought accusations of a similar cruel nature against even the British troops in South Africa, accusations which he did not for a moment support. I said that these latter accusations, contemptible as they were, had been carefully sifted, reported upon, and disproved, and the Congo Government could not, in my opinion do better, by making a clean breast of the depositions taken, than indicate how far any evidence had been given of the effects of the "civilization par le travail" pursued. Any such searching inquiry would do more to remove the onus from the Congo Government than mere denials, however solemn.

M. van Eetvelde said no Government was in the habit of making public such judicial depositions, and again, referred to the vigorous character of the repression by the judicial authorities and the severe sentences passed. I remarked that he could not be surprised, in view of the material before us, if His Majesty's Government hesitated to support any extension being accorded as to the area over which such processes of civilization were effected.

I have &c

(signed) Constantine Phipps.

Enclosure: Extract (in French) from the "Petit Blue" of February 7, 1901.

**Constantine Phipps to Lord Lansdowne**

**TNA FO 403/305 (Further Papers respecting Ill-treatment by Officials in the Congo Free State 1900-1901, Confidential No 7948)**

Mr. Phipps to the Marquess of Lansdowne. - (Received November 4.)

(No. 139)

Brussels, October 31, 1901

My Lord,

With reference to my despatch No. 135 of the 20th instant, I have the honour to inclose extracts from a somewhat obscure financial Antwerp newspaper, "L'Actulite Financiere" relative to certain acts of cruelty against natives by agents of the Abir (Congo) Company in 1899 and 1900. It is curious to notice that in the second of these extracts Lacroix and Moray (on whom severe sentences have been passed) are mentioned as being still in the Congo. These crimes were consequently perpetrated before their arrest.

A statement is published by the "Independance" this morning to the effect that the Secretary of the Interior of the Congo formally authorizes it to contradict the entire information thus supplied to the Antwerp paper.

No data, however, are supplied to support this contradiction.

I have &c

(signed) Constantine Phipps.

P.S. Baron van Eetvelde informs me that this paper is a mere blackmailing sheet. C.P.