

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Thank you - your ongoing membership makes Leonardo English possible.
If you have questions we'd love to hear from you: hi@leonardoenglish.com

Episode #289

King Leopold II of Belgium | The Butcher of Congo

16th Aug, 2022

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:11] The show where you can listen to fascinating stories, and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about King Leopold II of Belgium, The Butcher of Congo.

[00:00:30] To his people, King Leopold II was much loved.

[00:00:34] To the world, he was a humanitarian and a [philanthropist](#)¹.

[00:00:38] It was all a huge lie.

¹ a person who gives money to good causes

[00:00:41] The Builder King of a new, small European country [set his sights](#)² on the continent of Africa.

[00:00:48] What would follow would be years of [exploitation](#)³, [torture](#)⁴, and death.

[00:00:54] So, let's get started on this dark but important story.

[00:00:59] Before we begin, let's have a little bit of historical context.

[00:01:03] Leopold II was born in 1835.

[00:01:07] He was the second son of King Leopold I, but his older brother, Louis Philippe, died in infancy, before Leopold was born, making Leopold the [heir](#)⁵ to the Belgian throne.

[00:01:21] His father, Leopold I, was the first King of Belgium, after the country [broke off](#)⁶ from The Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815.

[00:01:30] So Belgium as an independent country was only 20 years old when Leopold II was born, and 50 years old when Leopold became king, aged only 30 himself.

² made it the object of his attention

³ the fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work

⁴ the act of causing great physical pain as punishment

⁵ the person who would legally receive his father's title after his death

⁶ became separated

[00:01:44] Belgium as both a kingdom and a country was established as a constitutional [monarchy](#)⁷, meaning that the newly formed [monarch](#)⁸ was a “[sovereign](#)⁹ who [reigns](#)¹⁰ but does not rule.”

[00:01:57] This meant that the new king and his children acted as non-political heads of state, much like Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom.

[00:02:07] On a practical basis, this meant that the [monarch](#) held some power but wasn't absolute.

[00:02:13] So, we have a new, young king, of a new, young country.

[00:02:18] King Leopold II 's early political career had focused on the development of Belgium and its expansion as a kingdom.

[00:02:26] In practical terms, what did expansion mean?

[00:02:30] Well, it meant the [acquisition](#)¹¹ of colonies around the world.

[00:02:34] As a young man, Leopold had travelled widely, visiting India and China as well as travelling around Africa.

⁷ a country that has a king or queen

⁸ a king or queen

⁹ a king or queen

¹⁰ is a king, sits on the throne

¹¹ the process of getting or gaining possession of them

[00:02:43] After he became king, at the age of 30, his country saw major social and economic developments that supported the Belgian people; [secular](#)¹² schooling for children, voting rights for all men, and various laws against child labour were successfully passed.

[00:03:01] So far so good.

[00:03:03] These progressive improvements [endeared](#)¹³ King Leopold to his people. He was much loved and respected.

[00:03:11] [All the while](#)¹⁴, King Leopold's hopes to expand and grow the Belgian Empire continued.

[00:03:18] He earned the [moniker](#)¹⁵, the nickname, "the Builder King", as he commissioned a large number of public works, buildings, and urban projects throughout the country.

¹² not controlled by the church

¹³ caused them to like him

¹⁴ during all this time

¹⁵ nickname

[00:03:30] But it is how he [funded](#)¹⁶ these projects and beyond, that the legacy of King Leopold II of Belgium becomes more [insidious](#)¹⁷, more [sinister](#)¹⁸ and the effects of his [reign](#)¹⁹ still [echo](#)²⁰ even today.

[00:03:46] Remember that as a new kingdom, Belgium [lacked](#)²¹ physical territory outside of the country's borders, having lost much of its global connection after it [broke away](#)²² from the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

[00:03:59] Meanwhile countries throughout Europe, like the UK, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands, had hundreds of years to expand their colonial reach across the world on nearly every continent.

[00:04:15] King Leopold wanted for himself what these countries had.

[00:04:19] He wanted more personal power.

[00:04:22] King Leopold II felt that a country without a colony could not achieve historical significance, or importance, and his country, Belgium, was late to the party.

¹⁶ provided money for

¹⁷ secretly harmful or dangerous

¹⁸ very bad, evil

¹⁹ period of being king

²⁰ have an effect or impact

²¹ didn't have

²² became separated

[00:04:35] As the second king of a new country, he felt it was both his right and his duty to establish his own colonies.

[00:04:43] In a letter to his brother, he wrote “the country must be strong, [prosperous](#)²³, therefore have colonies of her own, beautiful and calm.”

[00:04:54] On at least two occasions, he hoped that Queen Isabella II of Spain would [cede](#)²⁴, would give The Philippines to Belgium, but he [lacked](#) both the funds and the support of his own government.

[00:05:07] He would have to look elsewhere.

[00:05:10] Like many other European powers, King Leopold [set his sights on](#)²⁵ the continent of Africa, with its rich [repository](#)²⁶ of raw materials like palm oil, [ivory](#)²⁷, diamonds, [tin](#)²⁸, tea and cocoa.

[00:05:24] After the failed attempts to acquire territory for Belgium, King Leopold II, ever [ambitious](#)²⁹, formed a plan to gain control over the Congo.

²³ successful financially

²⁴ allow him to have it, give

²⁵ had it as the object of his attention

²⁶ a place where a natural resource is found in significant quantities

²⁷ the hard white substance found in the tusks (very long pointed teeth) of elephants

²⁸ a silver-white metal

²⁹ having a strong wish to be successful

[00:05:35] But this time, he tried a different tactic, removing the need for his government's financial support and executive power altogether.

[00:05:44] In 1876, he formed a private holding company called the International African Society.

[00:05:52] Publicly, this company was an international scientific and [philanthropic](#)³⁰ association, and indeed, the name does sound friendly and innocent.

[00:06:02] Its mission [pledged](#)³¹ to [suppress](#)³² the East African Slave trade, guarantee free trade with other colonies and encourage humanitarian efforts.

[00:06:13] He sold this lie well.

[00:06:16] He used the cover of this private holding company to establish a colony in the Congo region for his own financial gain and personal power.

[00:06:26] He wanted his own personal kingdom in Africa, not for Belgium, but for himself.

³⁰ helping poor people

³¹ formally promised

³² end, remove

[00:06:32] To get his Congolese Kingdom, in 1879, he [contracted](#)³³ the Welsh-American explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley, who used his knowledge of the region and the [indigenous](#)³⁴ Congolese culture to convince the Congolese leaders to sign [treaties](#)³⁵.

[00:06:50] Through [deception](#)³⁶, the local leaders signed away their rights and the use of their own land.

[00:06:56] The chiefs did not know exactly what they had signed, but by signing, they accepted the flag of something called the Congo Association, an association that was part of Leopold's holding company.

[00:07:10] The names and details aren't so important, but what Leopold had essentially [tricked](#)³⁷ the Congolese leaders into doing was handing over the control of their land to him.

[00:07:23] With that [tricky](#)³⁸ part out of the way, King Leopold's next step was to legally acquire the Congo.

³³ arranged to work for him

³⁴ relating to the people who originally lived there

³⁵ formal agreements

³⁶ the act of hiding the truth

³⁷ fooled, cheated

³⁸ difficult, sensitive

[00:07:30] He achieved this at something called the Berlin Conference, in Germany which was held between 1884-1885.

[00:07:39] It's here that the Western world powers came together to divide up the continent of Africa - without the consideration of actual African [indigenous](#) peoples, I might add, and to agree that King Leopold was recognised as, the [sovereign](#), or supreme ruler, of what was called the "Congo Free State."

[00:08:00] Of course, this is [horrendous](#)³⁹ in itself, but perhaps it's even worse when you consider quite how much land had been given to Belgium.

[00:08:09] Belgium is a tiny European country, just over 30,000 km².

[00:08:16] During the Berlin Conference, King Leopold was awarded a piece of land totalling 2,600,000 square kilometres, more than 80 times the size of Belgium and home to 20 million people.

[00:08:30] In May of 1885, it became King Leopold's own private colony.

[00:08:37] King Leopold in all his colonial [manoeuvring](#)⁴⁰ had convinced multiple imperial powers that he, not the country of Belgium, should be in personal control of this territory in the Congo.

³⁹ extremely bad

⁴⁰ careful moves

[00:08:50] These powers believed that under his direction, the region would see a [suppression](#)⁴¹ of the slave trade, and efforts to push humanitarian policies.

[00:09:01] As an added bonus, Leopold would continue to spread Western ideals and Christianity to the continent, all starting in what he would call the “Congo Free State”.

[00:09:13] The reality was that the “Congo Free State” was anything but free.

[00:09:19] [In the pursuit of](#)⁴² financial supremacy, King Leopold quickly went to work and raised a private, [brutal](#)⁴³, army.

[00:09:28] Remember the [treaties](#) Sir Henry Stanley got signed on his behalf?

[00:09:33] King Leopold controlled the use of the land and forced many Congolese men to work without pay.

[00:09:40] Life got significantly worse when in 1887, a Scotsman by the name of John Boyd Dunlop, improved the pneumatic [rubber](#)⁴⁴ [tire](#)⁴⁵, with so doing creating an international market for [rubber](#).

⁴¹ stopping, end

⁴² in order to achieve

⁴³ cruel or very violent

⁴⁴ a flexible substance made from parts of tropical plants

⁴⁵ a covering placed round a wheel to form a soft contact with the road

[00:09:54] King Leopold's "Congo Free State" had one of the world's largest supplies of [rubber](#) trees.

[00:10:01] If you thought this might have been good news for the Congolese people, because their country was rich in this material that was now in high demand, you couldn't be further from the truth.

[00:10:12] To meet the international market needs and satisfy his own [greed](#)⁴⁶, King Leopold forced the villages to [harvest](#)⁴⁷ [rubber](#) for him, and [imposed](#)⁴⁸ [harsh](#)⁴⁹ [quotas](#)⁵⁰, high targets on what the villages had to produce.

[00:10:28] To [harvest](#) the [rubber](#), the Congolese people had to cut the [vines](#)⁵¹ of the trees, and then often cover their bodies with the [rubber](#) just to then painfully [scrape it off](#)⁵² to collect it.

⁴⁶ wish to continuously earn more money

⁴⁷ collect, gather

⁴⁸ officially forced

⁴⁹ very hard, unfair and severe

⁵⁰ targets on what the villages had to produce

⁵¹ the main long and thin parts of the plants

⁵² remove it using a sharp instrument

[00:10:42] If villages didn't meet their [quotas](#), their targets, Leopold's private army would impose [horrific](#)⁵³ punishments.

[00:10:51] They would [hold women and children hostage](#)⁵⁴.

[00:10:54] The army would [withhold](#)⁵⁵ food from children, sexually harass the woman, and [beat](#)⁵⁶, [whip](#)⁵⁷ and [mutilate](#)⁵⁸ the village men if they did not [harvest](#) enough of the wild plant to meet the [quotas](#).

[00:11:07] In response to the inhuman treatment, there were frequent [uprisings](#)⁵⁹ by the villagers. They fought the soldiers, hid in the forest and would even destroy the [rubber](#) trees, [rendering](#)⁶⁰ them [useless](#)⁶¹.

⁵³ causing horror and shock

⁵⁴ hold women and children as security for performance or meeting their targets

⁵⁵ refuse to give it to

⁵⁶ strike, hit

⁵⁷ hit them with an instrument with strips of leather tied to a handle

⁵⁸ injure them very seriously especially by cutting off body parts

⁵⁹ acts of resistance or opposition

⁶⁰ causing them to be

⁶¹ of no use, unusable

[00:11:20] But it was [to no avail](#)⁶², King Leopold used his private army to [suppress](#) any and all rebellions.

[00:11:30] Those who refused to work for King Leopold were [beaten](#)⁶³, [mutilated](#)⁶⁴, or even murdered.

[00:11:37] Indeed there is a horrible picture from this time of a poor Congolese man sitting down looking at a [severed](#)⁶⁵ foot and hand, a cut off foot and hand.

[00:11:47] These belonged to his five year old daughter, and were cut off as a punishment for her father not [harvesting](#)⁶⁶ enough [rubber](#).

[00:11:56] The more [exploitation](#), the more economic gain for King Leopold, the richer he became.

[00:12:03] For the people he [exploited](#)⁶⁷, the opposite was clearly true.

[00:12:07] Life in Congo was [upended](#)⁶⁸, it was turned on its head.

⁶² without success

⁶³ struck, hit

⁶⁴ damaged very seriously, especially by having body parts cut off

⁶⁵ cut off

⁶⁶ collecting, gathering

⁶⁷ treated unfairly in order to get profit from their work

⁶⁸ turned on its head

[00:12:12] The [regime](#)⁶⁹ affected agriculture, and caused [widespread](#)⁷⁰ disease and starvation.

[00:12:19] It's reported that as many as 10 million Congolese people died in the Congo Free State under King Leopold's rule.

[00:12:27] Back in Belgium, with his royal [coffers](#)⁷¹ full, with plenty of money in his bank account, the Builder King went to work [erecting](#)⁷² monuments and constructing private estates.

[00:12:39] The Belgian people, [blind to](#)⁷³ the destruction of the Congo, were [delighted](#)⁷⁴ when in 1897 their king shipped 267 Congolese people to Brussels, the Belgian capital, to be put on display, in a [vile](#)⁷⁵ case of a human zoo.

[00:12:58] King Leopold put Congolese people on display for public viewing on his country estate where he built a [mock](#)⁷⁶ African village.

⁶⁹ the system or rule of the authority

⁷⁰ affecting a lot of people

⁷¹ boxes for keeping money

⁷² building

⁷³ not able to see or know about

⁷⁴ very pleased

⁷⁵ unacceptable, morally bad

⁷⁶ not real, imitation

[00:13:07] During their time, several died of [pneumonia](#)⁷⁷ and influenza and were buried in unmarked graves.

[00:13:14] This [horrendous](#) excuse for entertainment became so popular that a permanent exhibition was established.

[00:13:22] Even as late as 1958, when Belgium hosted the World's Fair, and Congo was still part of Belgium, Congolese people were again put on display, with what is thankfully believed to be the world's last "human zoo".

[00:13:38] Although the worst of this [brutality](#)⁷⁸ was all taking place thousands of kilometres away from Europe, and out of sight of European eyes, eventually King Leopold's [exploitation](#) of the Congolese people became international news.

[00:13:53] In 1890, a former African-American soldier in the Union Army, turned Baptist minister named George Washington Williams made a visit to the Congo Free State.

[00:14:04] He saw the devastation that King Leopold's private colony had done to the region.

[00:14:10] With his own eyes, he saw evidence of slavery that King Leopold had promised to suppress.

⁷⁷ a serious infection of the lungs

⁷⁸ cruel or violent behaviour

[00:14:15] From the Congo, Williams wrote a letter titled “An Open Letter to His [Serene](#)⁷⁹ Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and [Sovereign](#) of the Independent State of Congo.”

[00:14:29] In it he addressed the vast number of humanitarian crimes he had witnessed along with the [inhumane](#)⁸⁰ treatment of the Congolese people by King Leopold.

[00:14:39] In the letter he accused King Leopold of a [multitude](#)⁸¹ of crimes, including [fraud](#)⁸², [arson](#)⁸³ and murder, among many others.

[00:14:49] He [called out](#)⁸⁴ the [manipulation](#)⁸⁵ by Sir Henry Stanley of the Congolese leaders and asked the international community to [intervene](#)⁸⁶.

[00:14:58] George Washington Williams was just one of many voices in the growing crowd of critics to the horrific abuses of power in the Congo Free State.

⁷⁹ supreme, royal (a style of addressing royalty)

⁸⁰ unfair and causing suffering

⁸¹ a large number

⁸² getting money by fooling or deceiving people

⁸³ the crime of intentionally setting fire to property

⁸⁴ directed attention to

⁸⁵ the action of controlling the Congolese people to their advantage

⁸⁶ be involved

[00:15:07] In 1903, a diplomat by the name of Roger Casement wrote and shared a report that described and confirmed the scale of the crimes against the Congolese people.

[00:15:20] He travelled to the Congo and got first hand accounts of the murder and destruction committed by King Leopold's private army.

[00:15:29] At last, the world was starting to wake up to the horrors of the Congo Free State.

[00:15:34] In 1905, the American Author Mark Twain published a politically [satirical](#)⁸⁷ [pamphlet](#)⁸⁸ called "King Leopold's [Soliloquy](#)⁸⁹."

[00:15:43] In 1909, British author, Arthur Conan Doyle published a book called the Crime of the Congo.

[00:15:51] Joseph Conrad's [seminal](#)⁹⁰ work, or his most famous work, Heart of Darkness, which was published in 1899, tells the story of a sailor who works for a Belgian trading company as a ferry boat captain somewhere in Africa.

⁸⁷ very hard, unfair or severe

⁸⁸ a thin small book with a few pages

⁸⁹ a speech in a play that the character speaks to himself

⁹⁰ most famous or important

[00:16:05] In it he [remarks on](#)⁹¹ the imperialism and racism of the colonisation of the Congo.

[00:16:11] And another [notable](#)⁹² critic of King Leopold's regime was a man called Edmund Dene Morel, a shipping [clerk](#)⁹³ working in Liverpool, in England.

[00:16:22] Liverpool was a major [port of call](#)⁹⁴ for many shipping companies, including those sailing for Belgium and Belgian ships would deliver [rubber](#) to Liverpool from the Congo.

[00:16:33] Morel noticed the high volume of [rubber](#) being produced and delivered by Belgium.

[00:16:39] He knew that that volume of [rubber](#) could not be produced by anything other than slave labour.

[00:16:45] After his own investigation, his [suspicions](#)⁹⁵ proved correct.

⁹¹ comments on, mentions

⁹² worth mentioning

⁹³ a person who worked in an office

⁹⁴ a place where a ship stops while travelling

⁹⁵ the belief or idea that it could be true

[00:16:49] He wrote several anonymous articles, detailing and exposing the [atrocities](#)⁹⁶ in the Congo Free State.

[00:16:57] He wrote that this was, “the greatest crime that has ever been committed in the history of the world.”

[00:17:05] Although he was offered a [bribe](#)⁹⁷, a payment, from the shipping company in exchange for his silence, he declined, and in 1906 he published a book called “Red [Rubber](#)”, which was an [exposé](#)⁹⁸ of the horrors in the country.

[00:17:21] King Leopold pretended to be surprised about this, and responded to the international [outcry](#)⁹⁹ with an [inquiry](#)¹⁰⁰ of his own.

[00:17:30] He sent his own International Commission to the Congo Free State.

[00:17:34] His idea was to [bribe](#) the commission in his favour, but he was [foiled](#)¹⁰¹, it didn't work.

⁹⁶ violent and shocking acts

⁹⁷ payment to try to make someone do something

⁹⁸ a report in the media revealing or showing

⁹⁹ strong expression of anger and disapproval

¹⁰⁰ investigation, examination

¹⁰¹ prevented from succeeding

[00:17:42] Fortunately, a Christian [missionary](#)¹⁰² couple shared hard evidence with King Leopold's commission.

[00:17:48] The missionaries gathered together victims to share their [testimonies](#)¹⁰³ of abuse, enslavement, [mutilation](#)¹⁰⁴, and murder, all committed on behalf of King Leopold and his private colony.

[00:18:01] The Commission was then presented with photographic evidence of the crimes, photos which showed the horrors the Congolese suffered under King Leopold's rule.

[00:18:12] When the commission published and presented King Leopold with its 50 page report, he knew he had to [cover up](#)¹⁰⁵ his crimes as best as he could.

[00:18:21] He ordered that all papers and records detailing anything with the Congo Free State be burned.

[00:18:28] But the damage was done.

[00:18:30] In 1908, the Congo Free State became an official Belgian colony - remember, before this it was King Leopold II's personal kingdom.

¹⁰² sent to promote Christianity

¹⁰³ spoken statements, information

¹⁰⁴ the action of causing serious injuries by cutting off body parts

¹⁰⁵ hide

[00:18:41] Despite the clear evidence against King Leopold, the Belgian government bought it from him for 50 million francs.

[00:18:49] One year later, in 1909 and at the age of 74, King Leopold died, a hero in his own country.

[00:18:59] But life as a Belgian colony wasn't much better than under King Leopold, and Belgium found more natural resources to [exploit](#)¹⁰⁶ than just [rubber](#).

[00:19:09] The Belgian government benefited from the Congo's [abundance](#)¹⁰⁷ of diamonds, gold, and [ivory](#) as all of these resources could be sold internationally for major profits.

[00:19:21] Now, given his crimes, one might assume that King Leopold II would be Belgium's least favourite [monarch](#).

[00:19:29] During his lifetime, this was certainly not the case.

[00:19:33] King Leopold was a much loved royal during his [reign](#) and his big lie about his role in the Congo [solidified](#)¹⁰⁸ his [adoration](#)¹⁰⁹ to the Belgian people.

[00:19:43] He helped [suppress](#) the slave trade!

¹⁰⁶ make use of or benefit from

¹⁰⁷ very large quantities

¹⁰⁸ made it stronger

¹⁰⁹ deep love and respect

[00:19:46] King Leopold helped to [spread](#)¹¹⁰ Western ideals and Christianity!

[00:19:50] King Leopold was a humanitarian!

[00:19:53] Or so the Belgian people were told.

[00:19:56] After his death, the government decided to keep King Leopold's legacy clear of his crimes against humanity.

[00:20:03] As a new country, the government did not want the outside world or its own people to know how far King Leopold's horrors extended, and the Congo remained a Belgian Colony until 1960.

[00:20:16] In the last few years, however, Belgium faced a [reckoning](#)¹¹¹ with King Leopold's legacy.

[00:20:23] For decades, history taught the Belgian people that King Leopold saved the Congo and that without Belgium, the Congo didn't exist.

[00:20:33] Now though, Belgium's and King Leopold's [barbarous](#)¹¹² past is [catching up with the times](#)¹¹³.

¹¹⁰ make it reach a lot of people

¹¹¹ punishment for past mistakes

¹¹² violent and merciless

¹¹³ getting known for what it is

[00:20:39] In an acknowledgment of the country's history, many of his statues have been [vandalised¹¹⁴](#), [defaced¹¹⁵](#), or removed altogether.

[00:20:48] Like many countries with histories of brutal colonisation practices, including the UK, of course, there are efforts to [come to terms with it¹¹⁶](#), and this is very much an ongoing process.

[00:21:01] As far as King Leopold II is concerned, there is no way to [whitewash¹¹⁷](#) what he did, no amount of saying “oh it was in the past”, which can explain his actions.

[00:21:13] And, quite rightly, there is nobody more deserving of the nickname that he is best known by: The Butcher of Congo.

[00:21:23] OK then, that is it for today's episode on King Leopold II.

[00:21:28] I know it's a dark subject, but it is an important one, so I hope you found it interesting.

[00:21:34] As always, I would love to know what you thought about this episode.

[00:21:37] If you are from Belgium, how did you learn about King Leopold in school?

[00:21:42] How has this changed over time?

¹¹⁴ damaged

¹¹⁵ deformed or disfigured

¹¹⁶ accept it, learn to live with it

¹¹⁷ hide the unpleasant facts about

[00:21:44] For those of you who come from countries with somewhat unpleasant colonial pasts, which—as an Englishman—I most certainly do, what do you think is the right way to deal with this?

[00:21:55] And if you come from a country that is a former colony, perhaps even if you come from Congo, what do you think is the right way to remember, or to not remember the colonial era?

[00:22:06] What do you think is the right way to deal with it?

[00:22:09] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:22:13] You can head right into our community forum, which is at community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:22:21] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:22:26] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Philanthropist	a person who gives money to good causes
Set his sights	made it the object of his attention
Exploitation	the fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work
Torture	the act of causing great physical pain as punishment
Heir	the person who would legally receive his father's title after his death
Broke off	became separated
Monarchy	a country that has a king or queen
Monarch	a king or queen
Sovereign	a king or queen
Reigns	is a king, sits on the throne
Acquisition	the process of getting or gaining possession of them
Secular	not controlled by the church

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #289
King Leopold II of Belgium | The Butcher of Congo

Endeared	caused them to like him
All the while	during all this time
Moniker	nickname
Funded	provided money for
Insidious	secretly harmful or dangerous
Sinister	very bad, evil
Reign	period of being king
Echo	have an effect or impact
Lacked	didn't have
Broke away	became separated
Prosperous	successful financially
Cede	allow him to have it, give
Set his sights on	had it as the object of his attention
Repository	a place where a natural resource is found in significant quantities
Ivory	the hard white substance found in the tusks (very long pointed teeth) of elephants

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #289
King Leopold II of Belgium | The Butcher of Congo

Tin	a silver-white metal
Ambitious	having a strong wish to be successful
Philanthropic	helping poor people
Pledged	formally promised
Suppress	end, remove
Contracted	arranged to work for him
Indigenous	relating to the people who originally lived there
Treaties	formal agreements
Deception	the act of hiding the truth
Tricked	fooled, cheated
Tricky	difficult, sensitive
Horrendous	extremely bad
Manoeuvring	careful moves
Suppression	stopping, end
In the pursuit of	in order to achieve

Brutal	cruel or very violent
Rubber	a flexible substance made from parts of tropical plants
Tire	a covering placed round a wheel to form a soft contact with the road
Greed	wish to continuously earn more money
Harvest	collect, gather
Imposed	officially forced
Harsh	very hard, unfair and severe
Quotas	targets on what the villages had to produce
Vines	the main long and thin parts of the plants
Scrape it off	remove it using a sharp instrument
Horrific	causing horror and shock
Hold women and children hostage	hold women and children as security for performance or meeting their targets
Withhold	refuse to give it to
Beat	strike, hit
Whip	hit them with an instrument with strips of leather tied to a handle

Mutilate	injure them very seriously especially by cutting off body parts
Uprisings	acts of resistance or opposition
Rendering	causing them to be
Useless	of no use, unusable
To no avail	without success
Beaten	struck, hit
Mutilated	damaged very seriously, especially by having body parts cut off
Severed	cut off
Harvesting	collecting, gathering
Exploited	treated unfairly in order to get profit from their work
Upended	turned on its head
Regime	the system or rule of the authority
Widespread	affecting a lot of people
Coffers	boxes for keeping money
Erecting	building

Blind to	not able to see or know about
Delighted	very pleased
Vile	unacceptable, morally bad
Mock	not real, imitation
Pneumonia	a serious infection of the lungs
Brutality	cruel or violent behaviour
Serene	supreme, royal (a style of addressing royalty)
Inhumane	unfair and causing suffering
Multitude	a large number
Fraud	getting money by fooling or deceiving people
Arson	the crime of intentionally setting fire to property
Called out	directed attention to
Manipulation	the action of controlling the Congolese people to their advantage
Intervene	be involved
Satirical	very hard, unfair or severe

Pamphlet	a thin small book with a few pages
Soliloquy	a speech in a play that the character speaks to himself
Seminal	most famous or important
Remarks on	comments on, mentions
Notable	worth mentioning
Clerk	a person who worked in an office
Port of call	a place where a ship stops while travelling
Suspensions	the belief or idea that it could be true
Atrocities	violent and shocking acts
Bribe	payment to try to make someone do something
Exposé	a report in the media revealing or showing
Outcry	strong expression of anger and disapproval
Inquiry	investigation, examination
Foiled	prevented from succeeding
Missionary	sent to promote Christianity

Testimonies	spoken statements, information
Mutilation	the action of causing serious injuries by cutting off body parts
Cover up	hide
Exploit	make use of or benefit from
Abundance	very large quantities
Solidified	made it stronger
Adoration	deep love and respect
Spread	make it reach a lot of people
Reckoning	punishment for past mistakes
Barbarous	violent and merciless
Catching up with the times	getting known for what it is
Vandalised	damaged
Defaced	deformed or disfigured
Come to terms with it	accept it, learn to live with it

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #289
King Leopold II of Belgium | The Butcher of Congo

Whitewash

hide the unpleasant facts about

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com