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To the Editor of The Guardian guardian.letters@theguardian.com
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Ophain Bois Seigneur Isaac December 19 2018

Dear Sir,

I wish to react to the article published in your columns

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/09/belgium-addresses-postwar-apartheid-in-colonial-congo>

To illustrate my reactions, I am summarizing and commenting hereunder some unacceptable statements. Should you wish to learn more, you will find in attachment my analysis and detailed comments.

- **Segregation was total.** Wrong, the colour bar, as known in the USA and South Africa, did not exist in the Congo. It is true that the Whites and the Blacks did not socialize as much as they should have done but in non-colonial environments workers and managers do not either.
- **For white people, it was a world of free healthcare.** Free healthcare was for everyone in the Congo, Blacks and Whites; the quality of medical support was universally recognized.
- **Adult black men were referred to as “boy”** “. In the Congo the boy was a young man employed in domestic services. As to the general relationship, the use of the first name or often nicknames was the rule.
- **Africa Museum reopens after a six-year renovation.** We are scandalized by the overall presentation of the colonial times. The Museum management, unfortunately, is deeply divided on the role of the Museum and its position vis à vis the monarchy. Ideologists have clearly won. It is a real disgrace as the image of Belgium is negatively damaged.
- **A square in the Belgian capital was named after Patrice Lumumba.** The saga of this square is far from settled. As matter of fact it doesn't exist! A pole with a plate isn't a square!
- **The colonial past still casts a shadow over how black Belgians are treated today.** The problem of racism isn't limited to colonial times and Belgium today. Are Blacks and Whites equally treated in the UK?
- **The best-known chapters of Belgium's colonial past are the beginning and end: the cruelty and greed of Leopold II and the assassination of Lumumba.** The whole paragraph is a disgrace and should not have passed the test of facts vs opinions. Read your deontology code!

- **Under Leopold's rapacious rule, as many as 10 million people were killed, according to an estimate by historian Adam Hochschild.** These references are demonstrating your bias and your participation to the vast campaign of public opinion disinformation about Leopold II. I suggest you read the attached booklet "Glance at the past". Adam Hochschild isn't an historian.
- **Patrice Lumumba as Congo's first democratically elected leader assassinated in 1961.** The assassination of Lumumba is without doubt a shame but it took place within a period of troubles, following the independence, triggered off by his devastating inaugural speech and last but not the least, the cold war. Lumumba did not evaluate properly the dominating influence of the USA in Africa and particularly in the Congo. His trip to Moscow sealed his destiny. The Belgian officer, present on the spot, was an observer, not a decision maker.
- **... we have a small favour to ask.** What!!! After reading this article the only "small favour" which comes to my mind, is a friendly advice: Go back to university, read once again your deontology code and apologise to your subscribers for having neglected or ignored your duties of professional journalists.

Sincerely yours,
André Schorochoff
Former Managing Director of Urome

Attachments: Detailed analysis of the article
Booklet Glance at the past