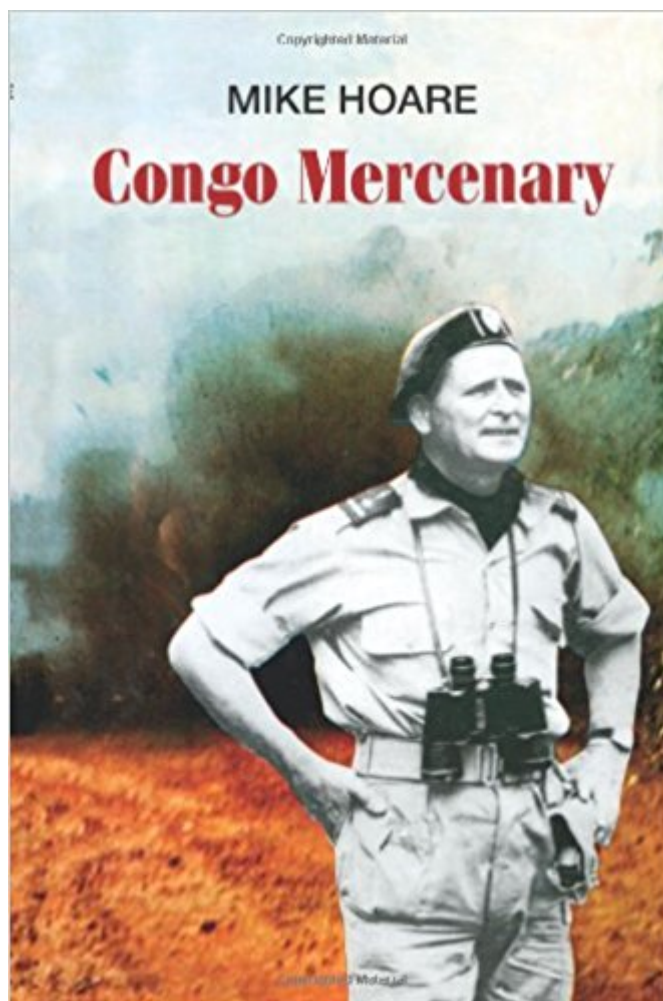


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Congo Mercenary



Synopsis

In July 1964, after four years of uneasy independence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was engulfed by an armed rebellion that spread throughout the country like a bush fire. The rebel soldiers struck terror into the hearts of civilians and National Army soldiers alike. Faced with this situation, the Congolese government hired legendary mercenary leader Mike Hoare to quell the uprising and bring order to the country. In *Congo Mercenary*, Mike Hoare tells the true story of his resolute band of mercenaries during the Congo war. In fascinating detail, Hoare describes how the mercenaries were recruited and trained, and then recounts their adventures through four combat campaigns over an 18-month period during which they liberated Stanleyville, fought rebels in the hinterland, freed hundreds of European hostages and restored law and order to the Congo. Originally published in 1967, and now including a new foreword by Mike Hoare, *Congo Mercenary* is a well-written and historically important account of one of the most brutal rebellions in Africa, as well as an accurate and gritty depiction of the mercenary life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mike Hoare is one of the 20th century's most famous adventurers, and clearly one of its most talented scribes. Hoare was born in India to Irish parents and educated in England. He emigrated to Africa in 1948 and fell in love with the land and its people. Though he is best known as a mercenary leader in the Congo and the Seychelles, his two new books describe his nonmilitary adventures on land and sea: *Mike Hoare's Adventures in Africa* and *Three Years with Sylvia* .

This review has two parts: comments on the story told by the book, and then comments about the book itself. First, the story. This is Colonel Hoare's personal account of his service in the Congo as a mercenary, helping the Congolese government put down a communist-backed revolt. Colonel Hoare is a good author, and his retelling of the events makes for a very fascinating read. This book may challenge any preconceptions you have about mercenaries and their use, and give you some insights into the mind of a mercenary commander. It documents the struggles he had getting his mercenary group (5 Commando) organized and trained, and of course their many experiences through 18 months of service, including heart-wrenching accounts of the atrocities inflicted by the rebels on the European (mostly Belgian) residents. This is better than any adventure novel--it really happened. If you are a student of military history, African history, or just like reading these types of stories, I highly recommend this book. Now for the book itself (e.g. the paper, binding, print quality, etc.). This is advertised as a reprint. To be more specific, this appears to be a reprint that was made by scanning an earlier printing and then reprinting it. The text is very readable, but is not "clean", like you would expect from a typeset edition. If you've ever scanned a B/W document (at 300 DPI, say) and printed it on your laser or inkjet printer, you'll get the idea. It's readable, but not perfect. This has two downsides: first, sometimes the text shows flaws in places where the scanning was imperfect (the scanning head moved slightly or some such thing). Second, the pictures look like they were printed at very high resolution on a laser printer, and are not the high quality photos that appeared in earlier editions of this book. I found this to be disappointing--thirty dollars isn't cheap. I have hardcover books (good ones) that cost less than this book, and for the price I would have hoped that more care and attention would be put into its preparation. Scanning, followed by the use of OCR software and several rounds of proofreading would have resulted in a book with much better print quality. This may have something to do with the fact that Paladin Press is a small publishing house, and so they may not have the resources to dedicate to making a better-quality reprint. That, or they chose not to use them. I would describe this book as a trade paperback. The quality of the paper and binding seem to be on par with other books of this type that I own. Take care of the book, and it should last a while, I would imagine. So, is the book worth the \$30 (plus shipping and tax)? If you really want a book by Colonel Hoare, you don't have much of a choice, as earlier editions of his books are much in demand and very expensive. Personally, I'm satisfied with it.

I had first read this book back in the '80's and have wanted to re-read it many times over the years. The story is just as compelling now as it was decades ago, and one big improvement is the quality of this paperback over the pulp paper version I had read back then. Hoare tells his story intelligently

and seems to go out of his way to avoid self-aggrandizement in this account of 5 Commando's key role in the Congo's fight against communist rebels in the '60's. While there is nothing in Hoare's writing that gives way to gratuitous detail, he starkly describes the vileness and viciousness of the rebels they were fighting. Those who like sanitized, revisionist history will likely be offended.

Mike Hoare, *Congo Mercenary* (London: Robert Hall, 1967). A firsthand account by the head of Commando 5 on a "rabbit shoot" to liberate the eastern Congo (including Stanleyville) from the Congolese rebels. The actual campaign turned out to have been much more difficult and problematical, but showed that in insurgent situations, speed is of the essence in tactical terms, but is most appropriate when coupled with strategic purpose. This work accents discipline and the weeding out "alcoholics, drunks, booze artists, bums and layabouts" who seem drawn to mercenary activity in that (and any other) era. The author also shows how "Column warfare from an infantryman's point of view is most unsatisfactory. Rough justice is also dealt out, not just to the "Simbas" but to mercenaries who act up (one who rapes a Congolese woman and then kills her has both of his big toes shot off by Hoare). Stanleyville is indeed "the Inner Station" of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The book ends with the military coup of Joseph Mobutu who ousts President Kasavubu and Prime Minister Moise Tshombe. Mobutu would rule the Congo for decades, loot it of billions of dollars and never pay his mercenaries or his army enough to keep them from behaving lawlessly. Penny wise and pound foolish it would appear.

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