2. Colonisation and 'reform' of the Congo

> "I cannot touch on this subject without rendering my homage to the noble efforts of His Majesty the King of the Belgians, the founder of a work which is to-day recognised by almost all the Powers, and which by its consolidation may render precious services to the cause of humanity".[1]
> Otto von Bismarck

On 26 February 1885, upon the closing ceremony of the Berlin Congo Conference, the presiding German Chancellor paid this special tribute to a newcomer on the imperial stage. After Bismarck praised the agreement on the political and economic rules and ideological legitimation for the on-going European conquest of Central Africa, he announced, with similar enthusiasm, the international approval of Léopold II's claim of sovereignty over the most significant part of the Congo Basin in the name of an allegedly philanthropic organisation under the personal control of the Belgian king. When Léopold proclaimed the formation of the 'Congo Free State' to the world two months later, about 20 million people living in a territory 30 times larger than Belgium officially lost their sovereignty to European invaders.

However, as *chapter 2.1* initially shows, the region had been heavily affected by European expansionism. As early as the 17th century, Portugal had turned the Western coastal area into a loosely controlled colony. When Europeans began to approach the interior of Central Africa in the mid-19th century, they encountered the region destabilised by the effects of the transcontinental slave trade and its integration into an increasingly globalised capitalist economy. Reports about rich and undeveloped natural resources eventually attracted Léopold's attention. In 1876, he initiated an allegedly disinterested colonial movement, and between 1879 and 1884, a military expedition under the leadership of Henry M. Stanley laid the foundations for the future colony. Through promises of free trade and a philanthropic and abolitionist agenda, Léopold achieved popular support and eventually diplomatic recognition for his colonial enterprise. The proclamation of the Free State in 1885 was followed by the quick establishment of a colonial administration and an extensive war of occupation. Soon after the fierce primary

1 Otto von Bismarck, in "'Protocol No. 10' of the Berlin Conference, 26 February 1885," reproduced in the appendix of Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 434–440, here 436.

resistance of pre-colonial states and communities was broken, the Free State began to revoke its free-trade commitments and established a state-controlled monopoly economy. At the same time, a brutal system of coercive labour was installed that forced the African population to collect cash crops such as wild rubber. Multiple resistance efforts and armed rebellions ignited by the notorious 'Congo atrocities' were met with ruthless repression by the Free State, and the escalating circle of violence led the colony into murderous turmoil.

Chapter 2.2 demonstrates that the occurrences in the Free State did not remain unnoticed for long. Between 1890 and 1897, the first accounts of atrocities against Africans, repression against Europeans and restrictions of free trade reached the press. Afterwards, a loose network of evangelicals, merchants, journalists and humanitarians began to expose the details of the 'Congo Scandal'. In 1904, after a devastating report of the British Consul Roger Casement, 'Congo Reform Associations' were established in Great Britain and the United States. After an intense public relations struggle with apologists for the Free State, Léopold was forced to conduct an official investigation. The report of the Commission of Inquiry, published in late 1905, confirmed most charges raised by the reformers in the years before and ended the 'period of doubt and denial'. However, disappointed by the reluctance of Léopold to implement thorough reforms, British and American reformers increased their public protests. Between 1906 and 1908, the Congo Reform Associations abandoned their organisation as elitist pressure groups. With the help of experienced evangelical grassroots activists, and based on the success of magic lantern lectures and atrocity photography, protest against the Congo Scandal turned into a mass movement supported by hundreds of thousands of Britons and Americans. Faced with an escalating international protest movement, rising diplomatic pressure and domestic opposition, Léopold eventually accepted the annexation of his private colony by the Belgian state. In November 1908, the Congo Free State became 'Belgian Congo'. Despite the initial scepticism of many reformers, most Congo opponents eventually approved the political reforms the new colonial administration announced. The American reform association quietly ceased to exist in 1910. Its British counterpart upheld low-scale activity until 1913 when it announced its political victory and dissolved.

As *chapter 2.3* finally discusses, the Congo reform movement was mainly a middle-to-upper-class campaign and was dominated by male and 'white' activists. As such, its social structure reflected the traditional composition of 19th-century philanthropic and abolitionist pressure groups in Victorian Britain and New England. Nonetheless, while radical Black intellectuals and most Labour or Socialist organisations maintained a critical distance, a small number of West African and African-Americans, women and working-class leaders prominently contributed to the reform movement. This included the former Liberian political leader Edward W. Blyden, the historian and Baptist George W. Williams, the educator Booker T. Washington and the Presbyterian missionary William S. Sheppard from the United States, as well as the Irish historian Alice Stopford Green, the English missionary and photographer Alice Seeley Harris and the leader of the British Independent Labour Party and future British prime minister Ramsay MacDonald. However, the position of these exceptional activists in the overall campaign remained marginal. Moreover, their inclusion was fundamentally based on their

support for an imperial agenda and the exclusion of the Congolese 'savages' from the public sphere.

2.1 'A slice of the magnificent African cake': Congo Free State and Congo Scandal

The Congo Basin, as one of the oldest areas of human settlement, culture and civilisation, looks back to a vibrant, ancient past that could hardly further contradict European myths about Africa as 'a continent without history'.[2] By the first millennium CE, several waves of migration had established an 'ethnically' and religiously diverse, yet culturally and economically interconnected, mosaic of villages, communities and chiefdoms in the region's rainforests, savannahs, grasslands and riverbanks. Stateless societies remained dominant in the forests, but innovations in agriculture and metallurgy gradually allowed higher population densities, more complex social organisation, and the formation of large bureaucratic and 'multi-ethnic' states from the 13th century onwards. The Luba and Lunda Empires, stretching from the Southern Kasai to the Katanga Lakes in the East, the Kuba confederation in the Kasai river region, and the powerful kingdoms and "robust empires" surrounding the Great Lakes flourished and maintained their sovereignty across vast territories well into the 19th century.[3]

However, integration into the transatlantic slave trade and emerging global economic relations since the 15th century had initiated political, economic, social and cultural transformations and thus reconfigured and destabilised the complex, centuries-old Central African polity. Preceded by the invasion of East African slave and ivory traders, the region became vulnerable to the coming colonial conquest.

The kingdom Kongo and Portugal

The kingdom Kongo in the Atlantic coastal region was profoundly shaped by the early wave of European globalisation since Portuguese seamen explored the Congo River mouth in 1482. They made contact with a prosperous kingdom of six provinces and three million inhabitants, governed by a spiritual and mundane leader who presided over a highly centralised bureaucratic, military and financial state apparatus. Still free of any

2 As claimed by the German philosopher Hegel, see Georg W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2012 [1899/1830]), 99.

3 David van Reybrouck, *Congo* (London: Fourth Estate, 2015), 60 ('robust'); see Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 14 and C. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 23–26. Gondola has also collected valuable literature recommendations for those interested in the history of pre-colonial Congo (196–7). For archaeological evidence indicating human settlement as far as 90,000 BCE, see John E. Yellen, "Barbed Bone Points," *African Archaeological Review* 15, no. 3 (1998); for a discussion of ancient and antique African history, see the volume Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Africa and Africans in Antiquity* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2001); for African history preluding the colonial encroachment, see C. Magbaily Fyle, *Introduction to the History of African Civilization* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999). Concerning the Great Lakes region, the critical account of Jean-Pierre Chrétien is worth reading, see Jean-Pierre Chrétien, *The Great Lakes of Africa* (New York: Zone Books, 2006).

concept of racial inferiority or an analogy of Africa with savagery and darkness, early travel reports from the West Coast of Africa were full of admiring descriptions of prosperous cities and wealthy courts.[4] The Portuguese were by all accounts not surprised to find a prosperous African society so far south. In the first half of the 15th century, when Prince Henry the Navigator organised the first overseas explorations into the Atlantic and down the West African coast, he was as much fascinated by the prospect of finding the legendary *Rio de Oro* in West Africa and a passage to the spice markets of India as by the idea of making contact with a powerful Christian kingdom that had haunted the European imagination for centuries. In an attempt to find a symbolic escape from Muslim encirclement, fables of strong Christian allies far away in Asia or Africa had given rise to what has been called a "Christian Ethiopianism". They served as a "myth of liberation" from Islam and found expression in a positive iconography of Black Africans that centred on legendary figures like 'Prester John' or the 'Queen of Sheba' since the 12th century.[5]

Soon after the first contact, Portugal and Kongo established friendly diplomatic, cultural and economic relations. The Kongolese nobility converted to Christianity and sent their children for education to Lisbon and Rome. Under the reign of Afonso I (1506–1543), Catholicism became the official state religion, and literacy and the Latin language were spread throughout the ruling elite. Combined with trade profits and the introduction of new crops and technologies, the intercontinental cooperation initiated a period of prosperity in the West African realm.[6]

Within decades, however, the emerging transatlantic slave trade turned the alliance into a serious menace for the Kongolese society. Attracted by extraordinary profits, both Europeans and Africans engaged in ever more ruthless manhunts to satisfy the exploding demand for forced labour from the American sugar plantations. In exchange, the region was flooded with guns, powder and liquor. Public security quickly deteriorated, and moral disintegration and a decrease of economic productivity culminated in political turmoil. As Afonso furiously complained in an official letter to the Portuguese king, the "lure of profit and greed" was "ruining our kingdom and the Christianity". The African Christian king was especially furious that the slave hunters "rob their compatriots, including members of their own families and ours, without considering whether they are Christians or not". At one point, even some of Afonso's closest relatives disap-

4 See Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 36.

5 Ibid., 25 ('myth'), 28 ('Ethiopianism'). Around Europe, these icons were able to overcome earlier Christian mythologies centering on a duality between light and darkness, in which the colour black became charged with negative connotations such as sin, demons and the [Muslim] devil, see ibid., 23–26.

6 For a historical account of the Kingdom Kongo and its integration into the Atlantic trade, see John Thornton, "The Origins and Early History of the Kingdom of Kongo, c. 1350–1550," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 1 (2001); John Thornton, "Demography and History in the Kingdom of Kongo, 1550–1750," *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 4 (1977); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 13–128.

peared on their journey to Portugal – presumably captured on the high sea and sent as slaves to Brazil.[7]

Afonso's attempts to ban the slave trade in his realm remained unsuccessful and brought him into sharp conflict with the foreigners. After his death in 1545, a century of steady dissolution followed. Internal conflicts between the ruling elite and a growing fracture between the Christianised rulers and the traditional rural population allowed the Portuguese to turn the region into a loosely governed colony gradually, and they successfully fought off attempts to restore the kingdom to its former power in the 17th and 18th centuries.[8]

Capitalist globalisation and Central African 'exploration'

Still, for a long time, the European presence was largely limited to the coastal regions. Lunda, Luebe, Kuba and other empires in the interior preserved the military and political strength to engage in the slave trade gainfully and secure their borders from hostile penetration. However, the mono-economic focus on the export of slaves structurally weakened their economic systems, a dynamic that dramatically accelerated due to the commencing American and European industrialisation between the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as its impact on overseas trade. Increasingly, Africa was conceived as a reservoir for immense natural resources to fuel European factories and a market for cheap manufactured goods. The emerging commercial relations had a cardinal transformative impact on the African economies. Subsistence production was further neglected in favour of collecting profitable cash crops, and local artisans, like textile weavers, were increasingly unable to compete against industrial commodities African customers preferred. As a result of this crisis of adaptation, production and technological innovation declined, leading to a gradual de-industrialisation, large-scale famines and general social disorder.[9]

The so-called 'legitimate trade' gradually replaced the transatlantic slave trade. At the turn of the 19th century, the institution of slavery was stumbling. On the one hand, under the impact of an overproduction crisis of American agriculture, the most important market for African slaves had collapsed. On the other hand, rising moral objections had led to powerful abolitionist movements in Europe and America. In 1807, both Great

7 Afonso to the king of Portugal, July 1526, quoted in Gondola, *History of Congo*, 33; also see Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 7–20. The enslavement of Christian and highborn Kongolese prefigured a dramatic turn in the European conception of Africans. Following the drastic expansion of the transatlantic slave trade and the establishment of slave societies in the American colonies, new, colour-coded legitimation myths emerged. The biblical 'Curse of Ham' became *the* "ideological cornerstone" of the enslavement of Africans in the 17th century: David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 168. With the rising importance of the transatlantic slave trade, 'blackness' was gradually introduced into an initially colourless Christian discourse, see ibid. and Hund, *Rassismus*, 58–59.

8 See Gondola, *History of Congo*, 30–35.

9 See ibid., 36–46. At the beginning of the transcontinental trade, Central Africa had a highly developed and praised textile industry, see Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 49. For commercial transformations, see the chapters in the volume Robin Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Britain and the United States passed legislation that prohibited the transatlantic slave trade, although slavery itself would, for the time being, remain legal. [10] Paradoxically, abolitionism increased the pressure on the struggling Congolese polities. Since navy patrols in the Atlantic enforced the British ban, the remaining customers had relocated to the Indian Ocean and largely boosted the long-existing East African slave trade. By the 1820s, militarised slave-hunters, mostly Swahili-speaking Africans of Muslim faith who would later be labelled by European travellers as 'Arabs', raided ever deeper into the territory of the Lunda and Luebe Empires and neighbouring societies, turning the whole Eastern Upper Congo into a frontier zone of the transformation within the international slavery system.[11]

Increased warfare and militarisation further intensified the general socio-economic crisis in Central Africa. Migration movements and conflicts between concurring elites accelerated the disintegration of the once-powerful states governing the region, which soon became susceptible to foreign invasion. Mighty Muslim warlords and caravan leaders loosely connected to the Sultan of Zanzibar forcefully integrated large parts of Eastern Congo into their conquest states, often inherited titles from older nobility lines, and established a vast network of tributary villages and chiefdoms. Ivory and slave traders like Hamad bin Muhammad bin Juma bin Rajab el Murjebi (known as Tippu Tip) in the Upper Congo and the Lualaba, or Msiri in Katanga, had acquired considerable wealth and, most importantly, modern weapons and large-scale armies to defend their economically well-organised but autocratic realms.[12]

This political transformation established the pre-conditions for the later European infiltration. Until then, the Congo Basin had been spared by an increasingly violent expansion of colonial possession at the West African coasts, accompanied by a new ardour for geographical discoveries and commercial opportunities after the end of the Napoleonic wars. However, in 1816, when a British expedition sailed up the Congo River to explore what was "almost a blank on our charts", the region became a fascinating mystery for a new generation of adventurers, waiting to be mapped and conquered.[13]

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10 A debate about the question if economic or humanitarian considerations had been more important for the ban of the slave trade has been ongoing since the publication of Eric E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010 [1944]). Interestingly, a similar controversy developed in the historical evaluation of the Congo reform movement. While earlier research has credited the international campaign with reducing the brutality in the rubber production in the Congo, Robert Harms argued that the actual end of the rubber regime was the result of an exhaustion of rubber vines. See Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 77.

11 See Edward A. Alpers, "The East African Slave Trade," in *An Economic History of Tropical Africa*, ed. J. M. Konczacki and Z. A. Konczacki (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013 [1977]), 206–215.

12 See Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa, 1884–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 [1979]), 108–10; Gondola, *History of Congo*, 16, 36; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 159–60.

13 James H. Tuckey and Christen Smith, *Narrative of an Expedition to Explore the River Zaire, Usually Called the Congo, in South Africa, in 1816 under the Direction of Captain J. K. Tuckey, R.N.*, 2 vols. (New York: William R. Gilley, 1818), Vol. 1, v ('almost'). On background and the course of Tuckey's expedition, see Roger Anstey, *Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 1–9.

In 1832, a British almanac proudly asserted that the "great dark continent is now being attacked on all sides".[14] While previous Portuguese encroachments had been contained by the hostile reaction of the now floundering Central African states, the slave caravans from Zanzibar had no objection to escorting paying European individuals towards the interior. Moreover, when, by the 1840s, the use of quinine for prevention had significantly lowered the risk of malaria,[15] a steady flow of European and especially British adventurers, including David Livingstone, Richard Burton, John Speke, James Grant and Francis Baker, approached the Great Lakes region in Eastern Central Africa.[16]

As discussed in the introduction, the first generation of Central African 'explorers' who brought with them a firm baggage of racist stereotypes about Africans and a strict belief in the universal validity of European concepts of morality, sexuality, gender roles and labour ethics, played a central role in the popularisation of the 'myth of the dark continent' and the 'civilising-mission' narrative. While expeditions like the iconic search for the sources of the Nil, of course, increased European knowledge, the emerging travel literature firmly stipulated the misrepresentation of the political, social and economic crisis of Central Africa as an expression of natural inferiority and cultural backwardness in the European imagination, and of a continent awaiting its 'salvation' through 'civilised' Europeans.[17]

While the Central African exploration and travel literature had at best a loose relation to reality, the combination of racist clichés and often fantasised or greatly exaggerated 'adventures' successfully obscured the often monotonous and exhausting daily routine of the so-called discoverers. After skilful editors had turned the reports inside out to maximise sensation, they achieved a great popular success. [18] Many of their authors

14 Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, *The British Almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge for the Year 1832* (London: Charles Knight, 1832), 178 ('great').

15 For the influence of medical improvements on the European exploration of Africa, see Philip D. Curtin, "The End of the 'White Man's Grave'?," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 1 (1990).

16 David Livingstone, a pioneering Scottish missionary who had slowly travelled North from the Cape Colony to the Zambesi river starting in 1840, achieved legendary status as the first European to cross the continent from Luanda on the Atlantic Coast to Quelimane at the Indian Ocean from 1853 to 1856, and explored the Zambesi river between 1858 and 1864. Between 1857 and 1859, Richard Burton and John Speke approached from Zanzibar to search for the sources of the Nile, the most prestigious task for contemporary geographers. The same goal motivated new expeditions of Speke together with James Grant from 1860 to 1863, of Samuel and Francis Baker between 1861 and 1865, and again of Livingstone in 1866. See David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: Murray, 1857); Richard F. Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860); John Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (New York: Harper, 1864); David Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries and of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa.* (London: John Murray, 1865).

17 See chapter 1.

18 On the physical hardships of Burton and Speke, see James L. Newman, *Paths Without Glory* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2010); on the editing process of Livingstone's journals through the imperial activist Horace Waller, see Dorothy O. Helly, *Livingstone's Legacy* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987); on the commercial success of travel literature, see Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 180.

became rich men and international celebrities, and within years, the African 'explorers' became modern 'heroes', maybe the first truly global popular stars.[19]

Hence, when the last expedition of Livingstone, still regarded as the 'missionary-explorer' "par excellence", apparently ended in disaster, and he lost contact with Europe for years, the *New York Herald* decided to set up a large rescue operation. In 1871, Henry Morton Stanley, a young Welsh-American journalist, commanded an eight-month march across East Africa and was finally able to locate Livingstone in bad health in Ujiji at Lake Tanganyika. Stanley returned to London with Livingstone's journals, albeit not with the lost hero himself, who had decided to stay in Africa. Still, the successful mission and his best-selling account instantly turned the journalist into a prominent, albeit not an uncontroversial, African traveller.[20]

The members of the British Royal Geographic Society, in particular, looked at Stanley with discomfort, embarrassed that an American journalist had managed to find Livingstone, while not one of their relief expeditions had been successful. In 1873, the Society dispatched Verney Lovett Cameron to support the sick national idol. The expedition quickly learned of Livingstone's death, however, and Cameron turned to geographical exploration himself. In a two-year-long journey, the British naval officer managed to cross Central Africa from East to West as the first European, passing largely through the Katanga region and modern Angola. Afterwards, Cameron devotedly demanded an abolitionist mission to end "the cursed traffic in human flesh". However, he also highlighted the commercial benefits of such an endeavour. In a letter to the *London Times* published in January 1876, he enthusiastically described "a magnificent and healthy country of unspeakable richness". Full of abundant resources of coal, gold, copper, iron and silver, it would quickly "repay any enterprising capitalists that might take this matter in hand", as he added.[21]

Léopold's grab for the Congo Basin

However, much to Cameron's frustration, the British government showed no interest in annexing the territory that he had intended to claim for Queen Victoria. Still, one 'enterprising capitalist' in Belgium actually read Cameron's accounts with the greatest interest. Léopold II, haunted by a so-far unsatisfied hunger for an empire, immediately embarked to London for a personal meeting with the recently returned explorer.[22]

19 See Berny Sèbe, *Heroic Imperialists in Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)).

20 Andrew F. Walls, "The Legacy of David Livingstone," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (1987): 125 ('excellence'); see Gondola, *History of Congo*, 47–49; Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 65–67; Henry M. Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1872).

21 Verney L. Cameron, *Across Africa*, 2 vols. (London: Daldy, Isbister & Co, 1877), Vol. 2, 338 ('cursed'); letter of Cameron, reproduced in 'Royal Geographic Society', *The Times*, 11 January 1876, 3 ('magnificent', 'repay'). For an (uncritical) overview of Cameron's expedition, see James A. Casada, "Verney Lovett Cameron," *The Geographical Journal* 141, no. 2 (1975).

22 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 35.

The first Belgian king, Léopold I, had already unsuccessfully attempted to acquire overseas possessions. He had hoped that colonial activities would unify the young nation, which had in 1830 seceded from the Netherlands to form a constitutional monarchy but was chronically debilitated by conflicts between Flames and Walloons, Liberals and Catholics.[23] For his eldest son, colonial ambitions became not only a national priority but also a personal obsession. Even before his ascension to the throne, the then-Duke of Brabant had been deeply annoyed that Belgium, as it seemed to him, "not sufficiently remembered that the sea washes one of her boundaries". Impatiently, the prince urged in the early 1860s that "the moment is come for us to extend our territories". The benefits would be extensive, he promised, and as was common in imperial discourse, he had recourse to economic, demographic and nationalist arguments. A colony would unlock new markets and customers, provide new jobs and emigration opportunities for "the surplus of our population", extend tax revenues and finally ensure "a certain increase of power, and a still better position among the great European family", the future king claimed.[24]

However, the Belgian parliament and population showed little passion for the colonial dreams of their royals. Hence, when Léopold II followed his father to the throne in 1865, he had concluded that Belgium would never support his ambitions if he could not "make her learn" the taste of imperialism in the first instance. In the next ten years, he entered into serious negotiations with several already established colonial powers to purchase a piece of their empire – not for Belgium, but as his personal possession. Still, his attempts remained unsuccessful. When Cameron's accounts about the rich resources of the Congo Basin reached him early in 1876, Léopold decided to turn all his colonial ambitions to Central Africa; he was determined to obtain a "slice of this magnificent African cake", as he wrote in a letter to the Belgian minister in London.[25]

Instead of openly admitting his territorial ambitions, however, Léopold began a series of well-staged political manoeuvres to establish himself as an altruistic sponsor of the now-popular 'civilising mission' towards Africa. The king relied on the two major narratives related to the contemporary public with interest in Africa, geographic discoveries and the suppression of the slave trade "at its source" in East Africa, and he mobilised his two major assets, royal prestige and financial resources. Shortly after his

23 In the 1840s, a Belgian colonial company established short-lived settlements in Guatemala, Brazil, Missouri, Pennsylvania and Guinea, see Baron Edouard E.F. Descamps, *New Africa* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1903), 390.

24 Léopold II, quoted in ibid., 393 ('not sufficiently'), 394 ('moment' etc.). Also see Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 51.

25 Léopold II to Henri-Alexis Brialmont, 26 July 1863, reproduced in Léon Le Febve de Vivy, *Documents d´Histoire Précolonial Belge (1861–1865)* (Brussels: Académie Royale des Science Coloniales, 1955), 18–24, here 23 ('make'); Léopold II to Baron Henry Solvyns, 17 November 1877, reproduced in Pierre van Zuylen, *L'Échiquier Congolais Ou le Secret du Roi* (Bruxelles: Charles Dessart, 1959), 43–44 here 43 ('slice' [translation F.L.]). Léopold had asked the Netherlands for a part of Borneo in 1866; approached Portugal for concessions in Timor, Mozambique and Angola; considered the Transvaal; negotiated 1870–1875 with Spain for territory in the Philippines; and inquired with the British about New Guinea in 1875, before turning to South-West Africa and Indo-China. See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 19–20.

consultation with Cameron in London, Léopold launched plans for a huge international African conference.[26]

In September 1876, he gathered delegates from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Austria and Russia in the royal palace in Brussels, bringing together some of the most reputable explorers, humanitarians and scholars concerned with Africa.[27] At this 'Geographical Conference', Léopold suggested that the international community should combine forces to "open up" and 'civilise' the Congo Basin and abolish the East African slave trade. The conference culminated in the formation of an 'Association Internationale pour l'Exploration et la Civilisation de l'Afrique Central' ('African International Association'), and its first president was elected without great surprise: Léopold himself.[28]

Within weeks, the Belgian king had successfully become a major player in imperial policy. He successfully located his colonial ambitions within the framework of legitimising discourses about a civilising duty and an anti-slavery mission towards Africa and was met with utmost sympathy by missionaries, abolitionists, humanitarians, merchants and scientists around the globe. National committees of the Association were set up in Belgium, Germany, Austria, France and the United States, a blue flag with a golden star was defined for the Association, and the first expeditions were launched.[29]

However, the committees outside Belgium were not able to maintain significant funding or activism. Reservations about the international character of the exploration of the Congo remained high in official imperial spheres, and the Association never properly constituted itself as a multinational organisation. Soon, the major colonial powers began to work under their national flag, as exemplified by Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza's hoisting of the French tricolour at the Northern Shores of the Congo. Within two years, the organisation had ceased any activity outside of its Executive Committee in Brussels, over which Léopold continued to preside. This was not an unpleasant situation. Established as an international organisation, the Association had quickly become a centralised body firmly controlled by the royal palaces in Brussels and almost exclusively

26 Émile Banning, *Africa and the Brussels Geographical Conference* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1877), xiii ('source'); see Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 85–95 and Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 39–40.

27 Participants included the 'explorers' Cameron, James A. Grant, Georg A. Schweinfurth, Gustav Nachtigall; the presidents or vice-presidents of the Geographical Societies in Berlin, London, Vienna, Paris and St. Petersburg; the British merchant William Mackinnon; the British liberal politician Sir Thomas F. Buxton, grandson of a famous abolitionist; and several notable parliamentarians, philanthropists, academics, diplomats and colonial administrators from Germany, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Russia. See Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 149–51.

28 "Speech Delivered by the King at the Opening of the Conference: Léopold II at the Brussels Geographical Conference, 12 March 1876," reproduced in the appendix of Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 151–54, here 152 ('open up'). Also see ibid., 152–154; Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, 57–64; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 39–46; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 93–101.

29 For the early international activities of the Association, see Jesse S. Reeves, *The International Beginnings of the Congo Free State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1894), 17–26; McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 6.

funded by the Belgian king. Since public sympathy towards the African Association remained high, Léopold was still able to conceal his colonial desires behind a philanthropic and abolitionist agenda. Moreover, he had established a network of loyal combatants in support of his grab for the Congo, supplementing his already well-established contacts in the European business world and the Belgian diplomatic body.[30]

Stanley and the foundation of colonialism in the Congo

In the search for a man on the ground, Léopold once more turned to an adventurer who stumbled out of the Congolese rainforest. After Livingstone's death, Henry M. Stanley set off for a new expedition of considerable size, once more privately financed by the *New York Herald*, and also supported by the British *Daily Telegraph*. On an almost three-year-long journey, he ruthlessly forced his porters and rowers 11,000 km 'Through the Dark Continent', arriving in Boma in August 1877. On his expedition, Stanley finally settled the disputes about the sources of the Nile and the process of the Congo. Written by a skilled journalist, Stanley's once again bestselling travel accounts further sharpened his profile as the most celebrated Western explorer of the century. In his book, Stanley began his invention of a spatial and cultural identity for the new "territorial construction now known as the Congo", as has been rightfully argued.[31] Together with his subsequent monographs, newspaper articles and lectures, Stanley established the European image of the Congo as "Darkest Africa", the most savage, hostile and backward core of the 'Dark Continent', as is discussed in detail in chapter 3.1. At the same time, Stanley presented the Congo as a fertile, rich and densely populated area with enormous economic potential. In a lecture tour through 50 larger British towns in 1878, he praised Central Africa as a reservoir of immense natural resources and a future market for manufactured goods.[32]

Nonetheless, like Cameron before him, Stanley had to learn that London was, at this point, not interested in new colonial escapades.[33] His great popular success, moreover, was still flawed. Rumours about sexual misconduct and a general lack of 'mannered' behaviour and the immense costs of his expedition led to disapproval within the aristocratic and political elites of the British Empire. Moreover, Stanley, who had been a "private individual, travelling as a newspaper correspondent", as a contemporary critic reminded, had recklessly used military force on his 'geographical' expedition. The rising star shot Africans "as if they were monkeys", even a confident racist and devoted

30 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 42–46.

31 Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 26.

32 See Stanley, *Darkest Africa*; Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 365 (lecture tour); also see ibid., 372–377.

33 Letter of Stanley to the Daily Telegraph, 12 December 1877, quoted in Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 54 ('highway').

imperialist like the veteran 'explorer' Burton privately complained, and several British philanthropist organisations tried to halt his reception in England.[34]

Léopold, on the other hand, was little deterred by the controversies surrounding the celebrity explorer. On the contrary, he was convinced that Stanley would be able to establish the network of international stations outlined in the geographical conference. His agents had courted the American since he first set foot on European soil in 1878, and in June, disappointed by his reception in England, Stanley went to Brussels to discuss the terms of another expedition.[35]

By then, Léopold's closest advisors had been made to understand that his ultimate plan was to "transform these [international] stations into some Belgian settling" once they were firmly established.[36] Still, a direct approach to territorial claims was considered dangerous because it would offend other European powers. Hence, the new expedition was carefully designed as a non-political and international endeavour. Officially, Stanley was ordered to establish a chain of posts under the flag of the African International Association, as well as some trading stations in the name of a newly formed 'Comité d'Étude du Haut-Congo', a fund established by an international syndicate to explore the commercial abilities of a railway to bypass the cataracts in the lower region of the Congo river. To make the stations self-sufficient, Stanley was to establish means of communication and acquire some land surrounding the posts.[37]

On August 14, 1879, Stanley arrived at the Congo River mouth with a mission that officially largely complied with the philanthropic narrative Léopold had established. In private, however, he was more openly instructed by the new Secretary-General of the African Association and the Comité to install a racist regime. "It is clearly understood that in this project there is no question of granting the slightest political power to negroes", Colonel Strauch emphasised: "That would be absurd. The white men, heads of the stations, retain all power". Stanley, moreover, was no fool, and he saw clearly that his employer ultimately hoped "to make a Belgian dependency of the Congo basin". Far from being repelled, he urged Léopold not to take the humanitarian zeal too seriously and began his defining but secret task of creating a new colonial state run under the personal authority of Léopold.[38]

Meanwhile, Léopold further increased his direct personal influence. Following the bankruptcy of one of the subscribing companies of the Comité, Léopold bought out the remaining investors of the syndicate, making him its only shareholder in November 1879. Shortly after, the Committee was dissolved, and a new organisation formed as

34 'Letters of Henry Stanley from Equatorial Africa to the Daily Telegraph', *Edinburgh Contemporary Review*, no. 147 (1878): 167 ('private'); Richard F. Burton to John Kirk, quoted in John Bierman, *Dark Safari* (New York: Alfred D. Knopf, 1990), 182 ('monkeys'). Also see Frank McLynn, *Stanley* (London: Pimlico, 2016), who discusses Stanley's sadistic personality and oppressed sexuality; and Felix Driver, "Henry Morton Stanley & His Critics," *Past and Present* 133 (1991).

35 See McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 7; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 54.

36 Léopold II. to Solvyns, 17 November 1877, in Zuylen, *L'Échiquier Congolais*, 43 ('transform' [translation F.L.]). Also see Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 109–11.

37 See Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 109–11.

38 Colonel Maximilien C. F. Strauch to Stanley, undated, reproduced in Albert Maurice, ed., *H.M. Stanley* (London: W.&R. Chambers, 1955), 22–23, here 23 ('clearly', 'absurd'); Stanley, quoted in Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 60 ('hopes').

its successor: the 'Association International du Congo'/'International Association of the Congo'. It closely resembled the older African International Association in name but was fully owned and controlled by Léopold himself. At first, all three names were used for the on-going colonial mission in the Congo. Soon, however, Léopold exclusively referred to the International Association of the Congo.[39]

In the following three years, Stanley founded several stations, from Boma up-stream towards the huge basin he had baptised Stanley Pool, where the river was navigable towards the inland, and he recklessly pushed gangs of workers to build a connecting road. With him, individual traders and evangelical missionary societies came to the country on Léopold's specific invitation. The pioneering George Grenfell and Thomas Comber quickly established a set of missionary posts at the lower Congo and also at Stanley Pool for the British Baptist Missionary Society.[40] A Livingston Inland Mission under the guidance of the Irish evangelicals Grattan and Fanny Guinness ran several posts at the lower Congo, as well. Moreover, English, French, Belgian, Dutch and Portuguese traders established shops and houses in the Lower Congo Basin. In this early period, traders, evangelical missionary societies and Stanley's expedition developed a close relationship based on the practical need for co-operation and protection and a sense of European solidarity on the colonial frontier.[41]

Although progress was evident, Léopold was not fully content. He sorrowfully monitored the advancements of de Brazza who had, in October 1880, managed to obtain a treaty with a local chief regarding a newly founded post on the northern shores of Stanley Pool. In contrast to Great Britain, a majority of the French public supported the actual annexation of the territory, not least due to negative sentiments towards the 'Anglo-Saxon' operation of Stanley, and in November 1882, de Brazza's treaty was ratified by the French parliament. By now, the imperial race to Central Africa had fully developed. The executive circles of Léopold's colonial endeavour knew they had to increase the pace. Stanley, at first reluctant due to bad health, was convinced to embark for another Congo expedition in 1883. To outrun de Brazza's French mission, Stanley quickly established military dominance on the Congo River. By the end of 1883, an armada of eight steamships and an expedition force of 100 European and 600 recruited African soldiers armed with Krupp guns and 1,000 quick-firing rifles was able to operate from Stanley Pool up to 1,000 miles away, at the outer station at Stanley Falls, successfully preventing the French mission from expanding south.[42]

With the military backup, Léopold's emissaries fanned out to complete their most important task: obtaining treaties from local nobles that delegated their sovereign rights – to the Committee and International Association of the Congo, however, and not to the African International Association, which had been quietly dissolved. As

39 See Reeves, *International Beginnings*, 20–21.

40 For a contemporary account of the mission of Grenfell and Comber, see Harry H. Johnston, *George Grenfell and the Congo,* 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1908).

41 See Ruth Slade, "English Missionaries and the Beginning of the Anti-Congolese Campaign in England," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 33, no. 1 (1955): 37; David Lagergren, *Mission and State in the Congo* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1970), 66, 95.

42 See Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Abacus, 1991), 143–64; see Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 115–21.

Léopold made clear, the treaties must be "as brief as possible and […] must grant us everything". It was a bizarre and inglorious spectacle. In return for a few worthless gifts, mostly illiterate rulers signed treaties that they most likely did not understand and might have seen as simple declarations of friendship. Still, with their signature, they allegedly agreed to transfer all sovereign rights on the communal land that they never 'owned' in the European sense. More than 400 of these dubious treaties were collected within the shortest time and brought to Europe by Stanley in 1884. For the empire-builder, the task was over: "All has been done that has been possible in the Congo, and Europe should be the theatre of operations now".[43]

The diplomatic theatre and the formation of the Congo Free State

Stanley was right. While his swift establishment of a military predominance had, for the time being, prevented France from enlarging their sphere of influence, the aim of acquiring recognised sovereignty was now primarily a question of international policy. The official establishment of a French colony in Central Africa had suddenly put a significant clash between European imperial ambitions in the region on the horizon, and it initiated a hasty period of diplomacy. Within the competing interests, Léopold needed official recognition of the Association's sovereign rights by the relevant powers, and he had to fight off concurring claims to the region by France and Portugal. The British Gladstone government had offered to accept Portugal's long-lasting territorial claims to the Congo River mouth in exchange for free trade guarantees to prevent France from extending its dependence. The prospect of this Anglo-Portuguese treaty was serious for the Association because it would cut off the newly established stations from their access to the sea.[44]

Léopold's staff began breathless diplomatic activity. Myriad letters and memoranda were sent to the capitals of Europe and the United States, and soon Germany's and France's disapproval of the treaty became known. Moreover, the Association's carefully cultivated philanthropic image and its strategically established network of clients and allies proved their value. Public protest supported by chambers of commerce, missionary societies and philanthropic organisations successfully prevented the British government from ratifying the treaty with Portugal.[45]

In the United States, Portugal's claims were publicly combated by the Black American politician, historian and Baptist minister George W. Williams, as well as by two radical white supremacists: Henry S. Sanford, a former United States minister in Belgium and board member of the African International Association, and John T. Morgan, the influential Democratic Senator of Alabama and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Although politically, they hardly aligned with each other, the three men

43 Léopold II to Strauch, 16 October 1882, reproduced in Maurice, *H.M. Stanley*, 161 ('brief'); Stanley to Léopold II, 22 April 1884, reproduced in Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 224–27, here 225 ('theatre'). For a reproduction of one of these treaties, see ibid., 196.

44 See Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, especially 139–167.

45 See ibid. and Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 125–27.

had all been lured by the suggestion that African-Americans could participate in the colonisation of the Congo and potentially permanently settle in Léopold's colony.[46]

In those days, the question of the social, civil and legal status of the former Black slaves was probably the most probing political debate and social question in the United States. Four million African-Americans had been technically declared free by Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Act and were effectively liberated after the capitulation of the confederated rebels in 1865. Nonetheless, radical white supremacists organised in the Democratic Party, and the White League or the Ku-Klux-Klan effectively prevented the implementation of the federal provision for 'racial' equality' issued after the end of the civil war through organised racist street terror, political discrimination, parliamentarian blockades and legal rescissions. After the withdrawal of the last federal troops in 1877, the Democratic Redeemer governments in the South implemented the so-called 'Jim Crow' laws that officially introduced social segregation and legal and civic discrimination and thus reinstalled a 'legally' enacted regime of white supremacy.[47]

For some radical racists, among them Sanford and Morgan, the latter a former Confederate Brigadier General and, according to some sources, Grand Dragon of the Ku-Klux-Klan, 'white' dominance was not enough. Instead, they envisioned the creation of a racially homogenous 'white' America through the permanent repatriation of the recently emancipated slaves.[48] Despite the opposition of influential Black leaders such as Frederick Douglas and Booker T. Washington, the 'back-to-Africa' movement remained popular among African-Americans, as well. Williams, for instance, not only hoped that the "enlightened Negroes in America" would "turn to Africa with its problems of geography and missions" but find a safe place to settle in the Congo.[49]

The public protest of Morgan, Sanford and Williams proved as successful as it had in Great Britain. In December 1883, a friendly reference to the "nuclei of states established at twenty-two stations" in the annual message of U.S. President Chester A. Arthur

46 For further discussions of this unlikely alliance, see chapters 4.1 and 5.1.

47 For a classical historic analysis of the 'Jim Crow'-era, see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, commemorative ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002 [1955]); for a short sociological approach, see Ruth Thompson-Miller and Joe R. Feagin, "The Reality and Impact of Legal Segregation in the United States," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Racial and Ethnic Relations*, ed. Pinar Batur and Joe R. Feagin, 2nd ed. (Cham: Springer, 2018), 203–12.

48 For Sanford, see Lysle E. Meyer, "Henry S. Sanford and the Congo," *African Historical Studies* 4, no. 1 (1971). For Morgan, see John T. Morgan, "The Future of the Negro," *The North American Review* 139, no. 332 (1884); Jones, *Brightest Africa*, 55–56 and Baylen, "John Tyler Morgan", 125. For Morgan's Klan membership, see Keith S. Heber, "Ku Klux Klan in Alabama during the Reconstruction Era," in *The Encyclopedia of Alabama*, by Alabama Humanities Foundation. 2010, http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2934, n.p.

49 George W. Williams, *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880*, 2 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1883), Vol. 1, vi–vii ('enlightened', 'turn'). Also see George W. Williams, "A Report Upon the Condition of the State of Congo," (St. Paul de Loanda: 14 October 1890), 5. On the popularity of the 'back-to-Africa movement' in the late 19th century and the fierce controversy among African-Americans, see Kenneth C. Barnes, *Journey of Hope: The Back-to-Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) and Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

indicated a decisive breakthrough in Léopold's complicated manoeuvres.[50] Immediately afterwards, Morgan and Sanford urged official recognition of the Association's sovereignty. Concerning Stanley's treaties, Morgan noted that the United States themselves were built upon the legitimacy of "independent chiefs of savage tribes [to] cede to private citizens (persons) the whole or part of their states". After a while, the Secretary of State Frederick T. Frelinghuysen came to the conclusion that "there is nothing in international law to prevent a philanthropic association from founding a state", and in February 1884, both chambers passed a favourable resolution introduced by Morgan. In April, the United States was the first state that officially recognised the Association as a friendly state.[51]

This major diplomatic success was quickly followed by a decisive settlement with France. By dropping claims to the Kouilou-Niari region and, most importantly, by granting Paris a "right of Pre-emption" to all possessions of the Association in case of its dissolution, France was convinced to remain north of Stanley Pool.[52] This was a brilliant political move: suddenly, Britain's and Germany's foremost interest, preventing France from acquiring the Congo Basin, was coupled to the establishment and persistence of a sovereign state under Léopold's control. The Association guaranteed Great Britain and Germany unrestricted access to the Congo in bilateral agreements, and after some hesitation, Germany followed in November 1884 and officially recognised the Association.[53]

It was only days before the start of the most prestigious political event in the history of the colonial subjugation of Africa: the Berlin Congo Conference of 1884/85. After the quick proclamation of new protectorates and colonies of Germany, France, Portugal, Britain and Léopold throughout the African continent, European imperial powers and the United States were assembled by Bismarck to avoid a further clash of geopolitical ambitions or potentially even armed conflicts between European states in the imperial conquest of Central Africa.[54] Despite its canonical place in historical accounts of 19th-century imperialism, historians and legal scientists still argue about the long-term historical significance of the Berlin negotiations that did not initiate the colonial 'partition' of Africa, as became commonly believed, but attempted to give the on-going 'scramble' a legal and ideological framework.[55] However, for the further materialisation of European power in the Congo, and also the history of the Congo reform movement, the outcome

50 Chester A. Arthur, "Message to the Senate and House of Representatives, 4 December 1883," in *State Papers, etc., etc., etc., of Chester A. Arthur, President of the United States*, ed. Arthur C. Alan, 199–225 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 209 ('nuclei').

51 John T. Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo Country in Africa* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), 6 ('independent'); Letter of Secretary of State Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, 13 March 1884, quoted in ibid., 11 ('founding a state'); see John T. Morgan, "In the Senate of the United States. 26 February 1884," McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 17–21.

52 "Exchange of Notes Between the Congo Free State and France, Respecting the Right of Pre-Emption of France over the Territory of the Congo Free State. 22, 29 April 1884," in *The map of Africa by treaty*, ed. Edward Hertslet, 2nd ed. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1896), Vol. 1, 215–16, here 215.

53 See Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 131–32 and Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 246–47.

54 See Henry W. Wack, *The Story of the Congo Free State* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 22–24.

55 See Matthew Craven: Between law and history, 31–36; W. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 75–126.

of the conference was more than symbolic. It established the principles of freedom of trade and missionising in the Congo Basin, ideologically legitimised Europe's invasion in Central Africa as a 'civilising mission' and culminated in the international recognition of Léopold's colonial organisation as a sovereign state.

On 26 February 1885, "a complete accord" on the establishment of the political and commercial neutrality in the Congo and free navigation on the Congo River and the Niger was announced.[56] The concluding 'General Act of the Conference of Berlin' declared that "the commerce of all nations shall enjoy complete liberty", and it explicitly forbade any "monopoly or privilege". Moreover, it guaranteed special protection to Christian missionaries and allocated the right to "erect religious edifices" and "to organize missions belonging to all forms of worships". This unequal contract was legitimised by promises of the signatory powers to care for "the conservation of the indigenous population" they had just en passant dispossessed of all sovereign rights and commitments to "the amelioration of their moral and material conditions". Thus, the "lofty ideals" of Livingstone's civilising mission narrative were taken up by major political leaders for the first time.[57]

Finally, Léopold's diplomatic manoeuvres came to a successful conclusion in Berlin, as well. His special envoys had convinced the assembled state delegates that the International Association could ensure the implementation of the neutrality obligations of the General Act and assured that no other significant power would incorporate the region into its existing empire. France, Great Britain and Belgium followed in the official recognition, and Britain repudiated its treaty with Portugal. Lisbon accepted under protest that the Association gained co-sovereignty over the Congo River mouth and obtained a small stretch of land connecting Stanley Pool to the Atlantic. When Bismarck rendered his initially quoted special homage to Léopold's work in the Congo, the international recognition of the private, allegedly philanthropic International Association of the Congo as a sovereign state was finally approved.[58]

The establishment of the colonial order in Brussels and the Congo

Still mostly unwilling to be financially or politically pulled into the colonial adventures of their monarch, both the Catholic government faction and the Liberal opposition in the Belgian parliament approved Léopold as the king of a second state. After the European missionaries and merchants that had already settled in the Congo Basin had been informed, a diplomatic circular sent on 1 August 1885 officially proclaimed that 'The Congo Free State'/'L'État Independent du Congo' was now established in the possessions of the former International African Association.[59]

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56 Otto von Bismarck, in "'Protocol No. 10' of the Berlin Conference", 435 ('complete').

57 *General Act of the Conference of Berlin Concerning the Congo*, 26 February 1885, reproduced in *The American Journal of International Law* 3, no. S1/Supplement Official Documents (1909), 7–25, here Art. 1 ('complete liberty'), Art. 5 ('monopoly'), Art. 6 ('erect', 'organize', 'conservation', 'amelioration'); Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 254 ('lofty').

58 See "'Protocol No. 10' of the Berlin Conference", 434–40; Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 225–55.

59 "Conférence de Berlin," in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 22.

Supported by a council of reputable scholars and advisers, Léopold quickly established a highly centralised and well-equipped colonial administration in Brussels and developed a legal arrangement for the new state. He appointed three 'Administrators-General', namely his associate Strauch as director of the decisive Interior Department, the Belgian diplomat Edmond van Eetvelde as the person responsible for foreign relations, and Hubert-Jean van Neuss to preside over finances.[60]

The post of a governor-general linked the colonial superstructure in the metropolis to the administrative headquarters of the Free State in Boma. He ruled over the second hierarchy of colonial bureaucracy in the periphery, stretching from district chiefs to sector chiefs down to the post chiefs, who ran the state stations. Despite Stanley's hope for the job, Léopold chose the British army officer Sir Francis de Winton as the first governor-general; he was, however, replaced in 1886 by the Belgian doctor of law Camille Janssen.[61]

State inspectors controlled the colonial administration and, at least in theory, an independent judiciary system presided over by a Supreme and Appeal Court in Boma. Still, every state employer directly reported to Léopold. As 'Roi-Souverain', the Belgian King was both sovereign and head of state of the Congo, an exceptional conception among the colonial states of the 19th century. Léopold understood the Congo as his private property, ruled with the power of an absolutist monarch. He was the only source of colonial law and was free to promote or dismiss anyone in state service at any time.[62]

In 1886, a colonial army and police corps, the Force Publique, was established and equipped with modern rifles, artillery and machine-guns. A few dozen European officers trained and commanded a force of what quickly became several thousand African soldiers, to a large extent former slaves and conscripts purchased from local agents or chiefs, and about one-third were recruits from in Zanzibar and West Africa.[63]

Since Léopold had not yet reached a final agreement with Portugal and Britain over the borders of the Free State, newly armed expeditions fanned out to quickly establish a state presence in the more remote regions of his realm, such as Katanga in the southeast or the Bahr-e-Ghazal in the north. State-sponsored expeditions such as that of the German explorer von Wissman travelled up the Kasai, the Lulua and many other uncharted tributaries of the Congo, and they carried the Free State flag south and west of Stanley Pool. Together with the explorations of missionaries (such as the Baptists Grenfell and Comber), private merchants and trading companies, these excursions soon mapped about 10,000 miles of navigable waterways and made contact with the societies and communities in the Upper Congo.[64]

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60 See "Organisation du Gouvernement (Royal Decree, 30 October 1885)," in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 25–26.

61 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 88–96. A good account of the state's organisation is also given in Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 10–13.

62 See Vangroenweghe, *Du Sang*, 101–2.

63 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82.

64 See Hermann W. von Wissman, *My Second Journey through Equatorial Africa from the Congo to the Zambesi in the Years 1886–7* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1891); George Grenfell and T[homas] J. Comber, "Explorations by the Revs. George Grenfell and T. J. Comber, on the Congo, from Stanley Pool to Bangala, and up the Bochini to the Junction of the Kwango," *Proceedings of the Royal Geo-*

The weak capital base of the new colony limited its expansion, however. Since the buyout of other corporate investors from the Comité to increase his political influence, Léopold had funded his colonial undertaking practically alone. In 1885, he had already invested some Fr 10 million and was almost running out of assets. The Berlin Act stipulated free trade and prohibited import duties; thus, without any substantial tax income, the Free State could only rely on some export duties. Attempts to raise loans of Fr 100 million at international financial markets failed due to a lack of confidence in the new state. Funding the costly exploring expeditions, infrastructure works, founding and maintaining state posts and general administration became ever more problematic. Hence, the colonial administration expanded only slowly, and even by the end of the 1890s, the state merely doubled its number of stations.[65]

Moreover, recruiting suitable personal was a persistent challenge for the new state. The risk of colonial service in the Congo was high, and almost only ex-military men were willing to join even the Free Sate's civil administration, which soon resembled that of a "military regime", as a contemporary observer remarked. Considering the lack of qualified applications, the Free State's offices in Brussels, like those of its predecessor organisations, were often willing to accept applicants with little experience and qualification. In consequence, the colonisation of the Congo was distinctively young, and the proportion of middle-, lower-middle- and working-class officers was high.[66] Moreover, candidates for colonial service were sought globally, and two-thirds of the civil administrators of the young Free State and a considerable amount of the Force Publique officers were non-Belgians.[67]

In consideration of the limited financial and human resources, the Free State specifically encouraged the steady stream of missionaries, merchants and adventurers, hoping for their assistance in establishing colonial order and infrastructure. Supported by the guarantees of the Berlin Congo Act and bilateral agreements that stipulated similar rights,[68] and at the specific invitation of Léopold, traders and missionaries poured

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graphical Society and Monthly Record of Geography 7, no. 6 (1885); Charles S. Bateman, *The First Ascent of the Kasai* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1889); Gondola, *History of Congo*, 61.

65 See Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 111–16.

66 Testimony of Rev. C. L. Whitman, reproduced in John T. Morgan and Thomas S. Barbour, *Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Kongo* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 29–30, here 30 ('military'). See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 52–55, 68–70.

67 Most foreign Free State agents were recruited in Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Norwegian and Denmark; Force Publique recruits came from Great Britain, the United States, Italy and, once more, Scandinavian countries, which additionally formed the backbone of the Congo's river marine. See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82 and 100–107. For the cultural and context of the high Swedish or rather Italian involvement in the Congo, see Lotten G. Reinius, "Exhibiting the Congo in Stockholm," in *National Museums*, ed. Simon J. Knell et al. (London: Routledge, 2014), 406–7; Liliana Elena, "Overseas Europeans," in *New Dangerous Liaisons*, ed. Luisa Passerini et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 76. For a discussion of the special social diversity of the colonial master class in the Congo and their negative inclusion in an imagined community of colonial 'whiteness', see chapter 5.1.

68 See "Convention Between Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the International Association of the Congo. 16 December 1884", in *The map of Africa by treaty*, vol. 1, ed. Edward Hertslet, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1896), 223–26; Treaty of Amity, Commerce Navigation, and Extradition, U.S.–Independent State of the Congo. 24 January 1891, in *The Statutes at*

into the region. The state generously granted land to Anglicans, Free Churchmen and Lutherans, and it specifically encouraged the work of Protestant British and American evangelical missionary societies. By early 1890, 27 missionary posts were established in the Congo. Eight belonged to the American Baptist Missionary Union, which had taken over the stations of the Livingstone Inland Mission in 1884 due to its financial difficulties, and seven to the British Baptist Missionary Society. Three stations were run by the Congo Balolo Mission, created in 1889 by Henry Grattan Guinness Jr, the son of the founder of the Livingstone Inland Mission. Similarly, three posts had been established by the American Methodist Bishop William Taylor, two by the Protestant Swedish Missionary Society and four by Catholic missionaries.[69]

Soon after, Samuel Lapsley and William S. Sheppard founded a station in the Kasai region for the American Presbyterian Congo Mission. This was the first Black missionary assigned by the strictly segregated Southern Presbyterian Church to Africa in 1890. Moreover, after initial hesitation, Roman Catholics and Jesuits from Belgium established themselves in the Congo starting in 1891, as well. [70] Hence, by the early 1890s, several hundred missionaries were engaged in the Congo, and they came from Great Britain, America, Germany, Sweden and France. Christian missionaries had founded a quickly growing network of missionary posts in the Upper Congo, which were connected by several steamships run by the missionary societies.[71]

Moreover, in 1886, Henry Sanford, who had received the first state concession as a reward for his loyal service to Léopold, brought the first private trading companies to the Upper Congo. He and his co-investors launched the 'Sanford Exploring Expedition', which recruited adventurous Europeans, including the later prominent reformers Roger Casement and Herbert Ward, to manoeuvre the first commercial steamers from Stanley Pool and to establish a network of trading posts and factories.[72] Together with the Dutch Nieuwe Afrikaansche Handels-Vennootchap, which arrived in 1889, private capital increasingly began to unlock the local ivory and caoutchouc for European markets. In the same year, an ambitious initiative was launched in Belgium. The Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie brought together small- and medium-scale Belgian investors and was led by Albert Thys, a decisive middle-man between Léopold and private business and capital in Belgium who soon replaced Strauch as

Large of the United States of America, ed. The Secretary of State (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), Vol. 27, 926–35.

69 See Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 22 (who did not count in the soon-established Presbyterian station).

70 On the background and early experience of the Presbyterian mission, see Stanley Shaloff, *Reform in Leopold's Congo* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), 13–44; on Catholic mission in the Congo, see Arthur-Marie T. Vermeersch, "Congo Independent State and Congo Missions," in *The Catholic encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al., Vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908), 235–36.

71 See John H. Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1912), 274.

72 See James P. White, "The Sanford Exploring Expedition," *The Journal of African History* 8, no. 2 (1967): 291–302.

Administrator-General of the Interior. The Compagnie founded several branches in the lower Congo and soon operated most of the Free State's imports and exports.[73]

Moreover, Léopold also approached private capital to realise major infrastructure works, such as the proposed railway between Stanley Pool and Matadi. In 1889, Thys had managed to raise Fr. 15 Million from Belgian, British and German investors to form the Compagnie du Chemin du Fer du Congo. Supported by a Fr. 10 million Belgian loan, and in exchange for commercial privileges, the consortium launched the ambitious railway project, which aimed to replace the expensive and laborious portage system.[74]

Hence, although in most of the Congo Basin, daily life was still completely unaffected by the aspiring colonial state, the "colonial trinity" of state, church and private enterprise slowly established spots of colonial control surrounding the isolated administrative, missionary and trading posts. The remoteness and limited means of communication gave the European colonisers significant autonomy and a high dependency on local nourishment. Although it varied in intensity, every new administrative post quickly developed a "parasitic relationship" with surrounding villages and towns and forcefully extracted building material or foodstuff for its sustenance.[75] This so-called 'corvée', a reference to traditional systems of compulsory public works in feudalism, was legitimised, as in other colonial societies, as a special form of non-monetary tax. State agents, missionaries and traders also began to pursue the transformation of economic, social and private life to establish a new colonial identity for the African societies. Europeans attempted to control everything from sexual reproduction, gender roles, language and spirituality to the organisation of labour and spatial settlement to comply with the standards of Christian morality and capitalist commerce, the two main aspects of the 'civilizing mission'.[76]

War of occupation and primary resistance

However, the expansion and consolidation of foreign rule, demands for taxes and interference with local trade and traditions significantly increased the enmity of African communities.[77] The attempt to violently subdue the Congo Basin initiated an almost three-decade-long period of primary resistance against European conquerors began. State-sponsored as much as private expeditions soon acquired the character of armed campaigns, and the military power of the state expanded continuously. Just a few years after its formation, the Force Publique had become the most powerful of the new colo-

73 Branches included the 'Compagnie des Magasins généraux', the 'Société anonyme belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo', which would later absorb the Sanford Expedition, and the 'Compagnie des Produits du Congo'. See Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire Générale du Congo* (Paris : Duculot, 1998), 326–27.

74 See ibid., 327. The work, which took almost ten years, was defined by extreme hardships: 132 Europeans and at least 1800 Africans died, see Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 114.

75 Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 26 ('trinity'); Roes, "Mass Violence", 653 ('parasitic').

76 See Roes, "Mass Violence", 651, 656–659; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 161.

77 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 52, Roes, "Mass Violence", 637; Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 26.

nial institutions, and it acted as a state within the colonial state and further strengthened the general militaristic character of colonialism in Congo.[78]

Nonetheless, the military operations of the colonial conquistadors proved enormously complicated. Operating thousands of kilometres away from military command, in almost unknown territory with extremely challenging climatic and environmental conditions, the colonisers faced severe resistance by, among others, Zande in the northeast, and by Topoke and Mbesa in the equatorial region of the Congo, and casualties among the African soldiers and European officers of the Force Publique were tremendously high. However, many of the socially and economically disintegrated polities in the Central Congo region were structurally too weak to sustain an organised, long-term resistance against the foreign invaders, especially since the pressure of slave raids from the East had increased. Political fragmentation allowed the colonisers, moreover, to form alternating alliances with concurring chiefdoms and draw on local auxiliaries. Many African elites chose to collaborate with the invaders, and the superior weaponry of the Free State campaigns forced the remaining resisting forces in Central Congo to retreat to guerrilla warfare by the early 1890s.[79]

Much more challenging were the autocratic states of Muslim warlords such as Tippu Tip or Msiri in the Eastern part of Léopold's claimed territory. Their powerful realms were founded on the military strength of large-scale armies, which were also equipped with modern weapons that had been traded against slaves from the interior of the continent. When, in 1886, forces of a relative of Tippu Tip attacked and occupied the state station at Stanley Falls, the colonial military thus knew they had to take the matter seriously. Only recently, on the northern boundaries of the Free State, a man called Muhammad Ahmad bin Abd Allah had proclaimed himself to be the Muslim messiah, the Mahdi, and had led a successful revolt against Anglo-Egyptian rule, cumulating in the fall of Khartoum in March 1885 and the beheading of the Governor-General Charles G. Gordon, an admired British imperial war 'hero'.[80]

The British public was outraged about Gordon's death and was desperate to organise assistance for the governor of the southern Soudanese Equatoria province, a German Muslim convert who went by the name of Emin Pasha. Pasha held out with several thousand staff and troops in Lado but was under siege by the Mahdi forces, as well. When a committee was formed in December 1886 to organise assistance, Léopold agreed to let Stanley, who was still in the king's service, serve as the leader of a large 'Emin Pasha Relief Expedition', comprised of several hundred men and carrying hundreds of tons of ammunition and Europe's most modern weaponry.[81] Hiram Maxim personally "donated as a gift one of his wonderful" automatic guns, Stanley gratefully wrote, which he then carried, mounted with a shield on a steamer; it was a prototype of the machine gun

78 By 1895, the Force Publique reached the strength of 6,000 soldiers supported by several thousand local auxiliaries, and with 16,000 armed Africans commanded by 360 Europeans in 1905, it had become the largest colonial army of its kind in Africa. See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 116. For an closer account of the organisation of the Force Publique that at times lacks a critical distance, see chapter 2 in Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, here especially 59–60 and 82.

79 See Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 41–43; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 52–55 and 68.

80 See Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 218–38, 259–75.

81 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 122–24.

that would ultimately become the most effective and most murderous tool in Europe's conquest of Africa.[82]

Léopold had hoped that Stanley could open up a connection from the Congo to the Nile and that he could come to an agreement with the revolting Muslims in the East of his realm; fearing, like the rulers of German East Africa, an extension of the Sudanese Mahdi uprising. As it happens, the veteran explorer convinced Tippu Tip to ally with the European colonisers. He accepted to serve as a Free State governor in Stanley Falls with the rights to exploit the resources of the region, and he ordered his dependents to refrain from hostilities with the European colonisers. In exchange, Tip vaguely promised to suppress the slave trade in his dominion, and he personally joined the Relief Expedition.[83]

The relief expedition itself became a disaster; it was forced to approach the southern Soudan from the West to meet Léopold's territorial ambitions, a much longer and more dangerous way up the Congo River that passed through unchartered forest territory. Starting at the Atlantic in March 1887, it took Stanley more than a year to reach Emin Pasha in April 1888. While Stanley's advance columns were by then run down by starvation and combat, the rear column was even more dramatically hit by diseases, lack of food supply and desertion. Two of the European officers died, like hundreds of African porters, and the expedition needed another year to reorganise and convince the reluctant Emin Pasha to follow them to the East coast.[84]

The British and American public soon witnessed a fierce controversy once the catastrophic fate of the rear column and the high death toll of the expedition became known. Stanley publicly accused Tippu-Tip, and also his European officers, of being responsible for the losses of the expedition, charges vigorously denied by the accused or their bereaved. J. Rose Troup, a surviving member of the rear guard, blamed Stanley instead, as did the accounts of the deceased Edmund M. Barttelot and James S. Jameson, published by family members.[85] By then, however, the public admiration of Stanley had augmented to such a hyperbolic glorification and "hero-worship", as Jameson's father had to admit, that his popularity was hardly damaged by the rear guard disaster.[86]

In the Congo, the effects of the public debate were more serious, however. Utterly offended by Stanley's charges, Tippu Tip had retrenched to Zanzibar in May 1890 to fight off the accusations. With the governor of Stanley Falls more than 1,000 miles away from

82 Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 98 ('donated'); Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 82.

83 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 124–26.

84 See Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 316–35. For the curious career of Emin Pasha, see Christian Kirchen, *Emin Pascha* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014); for a substantial historiographic account of the relief expedition, see Iain R. Smith, *The Emin Pasha Relief Expedition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

85 See J. Rose Troup, "A Word about the Rear-Guard," *The North American Review* 152, no. 412 (1891); Walter G. Barttelot, *The Life of Edmund Musgrave Barttelot* (London: Richard Bentley, 1890); Mrs. James S. Jameson, ed., *The Story of the Rear Column of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition* (New York: United States Books Company, 1891).

86 Andrew Jameson, preface to*The Story of the Rear Column of the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition*, ed. by Mrs. James S. Jameson (New York: United States Books Company, 1891), xv-xxvi, here xx ('hero-worship'); see Stanley, *Darkest Africa*; Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 122–65. See chapters also 4.1 and 5.1 for further discussions of Stanley's impact on the Victorian masses.

his post, as much as from the capital of his realm, Tippu Tip's authority was seriously debilitated. He had left close relatives in charge; however, his subordinates were deeply sceptical of the alliance with the Free State. The commercial rivalry soon led to further violent clashes between European colonisers and Muslim African merchants.[87]

At the beginning of the 1890s, pressure rose, moreover, through the outcome of a large anti-slavery conference held in Brussels. In 1888, the French Cardinal Lavigerie, Archbishop of Carthage and Algiers and 'Primate of Africa', had launched a public campaign against the slave trade in East Africa, which brought new impetus to the abolitionist movements in France, Belgium and Britain. On an emotional speaking tour through Europe, the founder of the 'White Fathers', a Catholic missionary society that had established posts in the Great Lakes region starting in the late 1870s, argued for a crusade against the so-called 'Arab' slavery realms in Eastern Africa leading to foundations of new 'Anti-Slavery Societies' in several European countries. The abolitionist campaign was merged with imperial rhetoric and anti-Muslim polemic. To "leave Africa to the Mussulmans" would be a great mistake, the Cardinal maintained, for "wherever there is a Mussulman, European civilisation encounters an enemy".[88]

Impressed by the great public support in Britain, but also concerned about the increasing Muslim disturbances in East Africa, the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury proposed an international conference on the suppression of the slave trade to be hosted by Léopold. The Belgian king was happy to comply with the request. Léopold had been worried that private and religious anti-slavery intervention in the Eastern Congo would challenge his sovereignty in the Congo and hoped to further accentuate his philanthropic image, which had been tarnished since his alliance with the slave-trader Tip became known in Europe.[89]

Between 8 November 1889 and 2 July 1890, the international delegates gathered in Brussels and finally agreed upon the General Act of the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference.[90] The Act renewed the Berlin principles, as it bound the ratifying powers to "give aid and protection to commercial enterprise" and to "protect without distinction of creed, the missions which are already or that may hereafter be established".[91] As in Berlin, this colonial contract was legitimised not only as an anti-slavery programme but also as a 'civilising mission' towards the allegedly 'savage' African population. In well-established racist terms, the Brussels act promised "to increase their welfare; to

87 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 126–32.

88 'A Cardinal on Slavery', *The Globe*, 10 October 1889, 3; also see William Mulligan, "The Anti-Slave Trade Campaign in Europe, 1888–90," in *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. William Mulligan and Maurice J. Bric (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 149–70; Amalia R. Forclaz: Humanitarian Imperialism, especially 14–44.

89 On the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference, see Daniel Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 47–50; Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 396–98.

90 Signatory powers were the Congo Free State, the United Kingdom, France, the German Empire, the Kingdom of Portugal, the Kingdom of Italy, The Kingdom of Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Russian Empire, Austria-Hungary, Sweden-Norway, Denmark, the Ottoman Empire, hence the Berlin powers, and the United States, Zanzibar and Persia.

91 *General Act of Brussels*, 2 July 1890, https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/m-ust000001-0134.pdf, here Art. II Sec. 2 ('give aid'), Art. II Sec. 3 ('protect'). Similar guarantees were integrated into the bilateral "Treaty of Amity U.S.–Congo" from 1890, see Art. I and IV.

raise them to civilization and bring about the extinction of barbarous customs, such as cannibalism, and human sacrifices".[92]

Beneath this "cloak of altruism",[93] the Brussels Act contained precise obligations to enforce European power in the region militarily. Under the pretext of "counteracting the slave-trade in the interior of Africa", the assembled imperial powers declared their commitment to found a connected chain "of strongly occupied stations" in Eastern and Central Africa and "fortified posts" on the banks of rivers and lakes. Moreover, "expeditions and flying columns" were to operate between the outposts "to support repressive action" against the Muslim slave traders.[94] The European imperial powers, heavily struggling against the well-armed 'Arab insurrections', defined a zone "between the 20th parallel of North latitude and the 22nd parallel of South latitude, and extending westward to the Atlantic Ocean and eastward to the Indian Ocean", in which "the importation of firearms, and especially of rifles and improved weapons, as well as of powder, ball and cartridges" was from then on only allowed to equip the colonial states and individual European traders and travellers.[95]

However, it was not at all evident how the shaky European military presence should cope with the Muslim rulers, who, if they combined forces, could call about 100,000 fighters to arms. For the time being, Léopold still hoped to incorporate them into his state without open warfare.[96] Hence, in 1890, two Free State expeditions were dispatched to negotiate with Msiri, ruler of the mighty Yeke Kingdom in his residential city, Bunkeya. Msiri controlled most of the Katanga region in the southeast of the Congo and had established a trading empire roughly the size of Great Britain, which managed to trade from coast to coast in Central Africa. Only recently, Msiri had allowed a few missionaries of the British Plymouth Brethren surrounding Frederick S. Arnot to settle in his capital, and their descriptions of the rich copper resources already mentioned by Livingstone and Cameron renewed Léopold's interest, and also that of Cecil Rhodes, in the region.[97]

Although he accepted the establishment of a Free State post in the area, Msiri refused to sign any treaties with the European envoys. To repel potential British claims to the region, Léopold then granted substantial concessions to the Compagnie du Katanga, a newly founded consortium that combined British and Belgian private with Free State interests. In 1891, another armed expedition reached Bunkeya, this time in the name of the mighty Compagnie. Instead of perpetuating negotiations, the British leader of the expedition, William Stairs, simply hoisted the Free State flag over the capital city. In the following skirmish, Msiri was shot and died. As it turned out, the King had become deeply unpopular due to his authoritarian rule and inability to react to a raging famine

92 *General Act of Brussels 1890*, Art. II.
93 McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 205.
94 *General Act of Brussels 1890*, Art. I.
95 Ibid., Art. VIII.
96 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 134–39.
97 See Fred S. Arnot, *Garenganze*, 2nd ed. (London: James E. Hawkins, 1889); Robert I. Rotberg, "Plymouth Brethren and the Occupation of Katanga, 1886–1907," *The Journal of African History* 5, no. 2 (1964): 286–90.

in his realm. Stairs was able to enlist one of Msiri's sons along with many neighbouring chiefs and declared the annexation of the territory in the name of the Free State.[98]

The followers of Tippu Tip further north were not likely to give in that easily. Léopold had ordered refraining from any direct military confrontation; however, Belgian expeditions blocked the slave routes towards the East, freed the captives of the Muslim caravans and seized their ivory in the name of the Free State, as agreed upon in the Brussels Act. Increasingly, intermediate Muslim leaders reacted violently against this dramatic interference into their economic and political power. After a private European trading company operative was killed in August 1892, open warfare broke out, despite Tippu Tip's and Léopold's reluctance. In November 1892, Tippu Tip's son Sefu attacked Stanley Falls but was driven back by the local Force. In the following two years, the war between the Congo Free State and the 'Arab' states involved several thousand men on both sides. However, Sefu was unable to convince the quarrelling Muslim potentates to rally under his command, and by 1894, he was defeated by the better-armed colonial army.[99]

State monopoly capitalism and repression of Europeans

With his most significant commercial rivals eliminated, Léopold was now ready to cash in on his investments. To date, the financial situation of the Free State remained disastrous, despite a F 25 million loan issued by the new Belgian government. Funding for the continuously expanded Force Publique and its ever-escalating operations had led to exploding state expenses. The military and security sector soon absorbed more than half of the official state budget. In order to gain control over its escalating budget deficits, the Free State administration decided to gradually revoke the free trade obligations of the Berlin Conference and other international and bilateral treaties. Despite the renewed commitment to give "aid and protection to commercial enterprise" in the General Act of the Anti-Slavery Conference, Léopold had successfully used the Brussels negotiations to achieve a revision of the Berlin Act: it allowed the Free State to install a 10% import duty, officially to finance the promised abolitionist work in the Eastern Congo.[100]

Moreover, since 1889, a series of (at times concealed) decrees and reforms attempted to secure a more substantial part of the lucrative ivory and emerging rubber trade for the state itself. In 1891, the Free State eventually affirmed its exclusive control over the resources of the areas under direct state control and, in 1892, prohibited all private trade with rubber from most of the state's own domains.[101] Administrators would from then

98 In 1894, Britain reluctantly accepted the Free State claim to the region. See Gondola, *History of Congo*, 61–64; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 136–37.

99 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 138–41; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 169–76; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 55–58. For a contemporary account of the Congolese-Arab war, see Sidney L. Hinde, *The Fall of the Congo Arabs* (London: Methuen & Co., 1897), 25.

100 *General Act of Brussels 1890*, Art. II Sec. 2, ('aid'); see Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 114–16, 157. For a discussion of early state finances, see Vangroenweghe, *Du Sang*, 105–12.

101 See "Exploitation du Caoutchouc et Autres Produits Végétaux (Royal Decree, 17 Ocotober 1889)", in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: F. Hayez, 1889), 218–19; "Exploitation du Caoutchouc dans les Terres Domaniales (Royal Decree, 30 October 1892)", in *Bulletin Officiel*.

on "enforce rigorously the rights of the State", all Europeans were warned.[102] The effect of these proclamations was dramatic, since Administrator-General de Winton had, in an initially often neglected verdict, declared as early as July 1885 that all "*terres vacants*", meaning land not built over or in active cultivation, belonged to the state.[103]

Hence, the Free State had established a monopoly on the two most important natural 'cash crops' of the region at a time when lack of infrastructure made the more complex export of palm oil or minerals less remunerative. In the second half of the 19th century, ivory was a highly demanded basic material for luxury products, and its export allowed extraordinary profit rates. Hence, the massive untouched ivory resources between Stanley Pool and Stanley Falls and the huge elephant herds in Southern Sudan were central economic incentives for the European scramble for geostrategic influence in Central Africa, and for the invasion of European and Eastern African trading expeditions. Rubber, on the other hand, had become suitable for the mass production of consumer goods and key components of machines.[104]

With the reform of its political economy, the Free State had entered into open conflict with local and Eastern African ivory traders. As described above, the seizure of ivory stock of the Muslim merchants by the state, moreover, was a direct cause for the outbreak of the so-called 'Arab wars' in 1892.[105] However, the new policy was also an open attack on private European and American business interests, as well, and was strongly opposed by private competitors such as the consortia represented by Thys or Sanford, which could hardly compete with the state-sponsored trade exempted from ever-rising duties and taxes.[106]

Probably surprised by the fierce reaction of some of his closest allies, Léopold defined parts of the Kasai region in Lower Congo as an explicit 'Free Trade Zone' in 1892. However, the majority of the land was still declared a 'Domaine Privé', in which private enterprise remained prohibited and exclusive state ownership of land prevailed. An immense portion of the latter was in 1896 turned into the so-called 'Domaine de la Couronne', a region that was directly exploited by the Belgian king as his private property.[107]

Année 1892, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: F. Hayez, 1892), 307–312; see also Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 117–18.

102 Circular of Lieutnant Le Marinel (1892), quoted in [Edmund D. Morel], "The Congo Scandal I. The Domaine Privé, and How It Was Created", *The Speaker*, 28 July 1900: 463–64, here 464.

103 Art. 2 of "Régime Foncier (Decree by the Administrator-General, 1 July 1885)", in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 31.

104 See Martha Chaiklin, "Ivory in World History – Early Modern Trade in Context," *History Compass* 8, no. 6 (2010): 540; Stephen L. Harp, *A World History of Rubber* (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), 13–16.

105 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 158–60; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 118–20; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 196–98.

106 See Vangroenweghe, *Du Sang*, 101–12; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 197–201; Morel, "Congo Scandal I", 463–64; Edmund D. Morel, *Affairs of West Africa* (London: W. Heinemann, 1902), 327–42.

107 See "Domaine de la Couronne", in *Bulletin Officiel. Année 1902*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: Hayez, 1902), 151–52; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 201. The 'Crown Domain' would later generate the funds for the extensive public works sponsored by Léopold in Brussels and Ostende, a visible reminder of Belgians murderous colonial past until today.

Moreover, shortly after the installation of the so-called domain system, huge areas of the state-claimed land, the Domain Privé, were either sold or leased to major corporations and entities such as the Compagnie du Katanga (in 1900, integrated into the Comité Special du Katanga) the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company (founded in 1892, whose name in 1898, after British capital withdrew, was shortened to Abir), or the 'Societé Anversoise du Commerce du Congo' in the North ('Anversoise', also established in 1892). These companies were granted an absolute monopoly over the exploitation of natural resources in their defined spheres of influence, and they effectively executed sovereignty based on their own police corps, largely devoid of state intervention. The concession companies attracted international private capital; however, the state always maintained a 50% share of interest. Hence, Léopold's influence and financial gain through the corporations remained high.[108]

The increasingly restrictive policy of the Free State was not limited to the commercial sector. A strict preference for Belgian nationality was soon implemented at all levels of civil and military administration, revealing Léopold's persistent will to establish a truly national Belgian colony in the Congo.[109] Moreover, the initially "most cordial" relation between the American and British Protestant missionaries and the colonial administration, for instance, increasingly deteriorated due to competition over the best strategic grounds for stations and concurrence of the state- and missionary-owned steamer transportation system. Increasingly, the Free State began to favour Catholic and Belgian missionary societies and restricted the movement and sustenance of Protestants. After 1897, the Free State refused to allocate any new land to the American and British evangelical societies, which was once more a violation of the Brussels and Berlin Conventions, as well as of bilateral agreements.[110]

The 'economics of coercion' and the Congo atrocities

Soon after its formation, the Free State had to readjust its monopolistic colonial economy, however. Ivory exports had exploded from 5,824 kilos in 1888 to 273,287 kilos in 1895 and were thus responsible for more than half of the overall exports from the Congo during those years. However, the boom period was short. Like the East African traders before them, the European colonisers were entirely concerned with short-term profits and took no precautions to sustain the elephant herds. Within years, the supply collapsed due to the uncontrolled shoot-out of this ruthless 'robber economy'.[111]

108 Other concessionary companies established in the Free State included the Lomami Company, the Lulonga Company, the Grands Lacs Company, the Comptoir Commercial Congolais and the Societé Générale Africaine, see Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 330–33; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 159–60. For a map of the concession areas, see Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 78.

109 On the changing recruitment policies, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–107; chapters 4.2 and 5.2.

110 Slade, "English Missionaries", 37 ('cordial'). On the deteriorating relation between Protestant missionaries and the state, see ibid.; Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 109–92, 223; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 46; McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 212.

111 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 117–21.

At the same time, however, the rising demand for India rubber in European and American factories strengthened the second pillar of colonial exploitation in the Congo. Due to the invention of pneumatic tires for bicycles in 1886 by the Scottish veterinary John B. Dunlop and later for automobiles in 1895 by the Michelin brothers, rubber became an increasingly precious raw material. Like the ivory trade, the export of rubber extracted from the liana Landolphia was especially attractive for the colonial state, and private companies for its collection and transport could be made without extensive investment in infrastructure. The export of wild rubber extracted from the liana Landolphia soon exploded from 123,000 kilos in 1890, before the establishment of the concessionary system, to 5,316 million kilos in 1900, and accounted by then for 84% of the overall Free State exports.[112]

The shift from an ivory- to a rubber-based export economy led to a fundamental transformation of the colonial mode of production, precisely to an increase of coercion in the organisation of African labour. Initially, the colonial economy was largely based on free employment. While the communities surrounding the colonial stations were, starting with the formation of the Free State, obliged to engage in public work as a form of 'labour tax' and supply the colonisers with food and building material, the large-scale railway construction project between Matadi and Stanley Pool was predominantly achieved through free wage labour of Africans recruited in other African regions.[113]

For the transportation of ivory, while the railway was still under construction, the state already had increasingly recourse to coercion to secure sufficient porters from the local inhabitants. With the rubber boom starting in the mid-1890s, forced labour became dramatically extended. While the ivory accumulation had largely relied on the expertise of a few highly trained, specialised and well-paid local elephant hunters, the collection of wild rubber extracted from vines in the Congolese forests relied on unqualified but people-intensive work.[114]

Since the increasingly hostile local African population was reluctant to work for the European invaders, the colonial state and the European rubber companies began to establish a brutal system of compulsory labour. As in other colonies, forced labour was legitimised by Léopold as the "firm and parental" authority that was needed to Africans who were sunk in "primitive barbarism" and had "no such inclination" to "conform to the usage of civilisation", meaning to work for the capitalist economy circle.[115]

Moreover, the colonised population was expected to collect the rubber claimed by the state or private companies for a low price, or as part of a labour tax.[116] The state explicitly ordered its agents to maximise the production, and both state and companies' employees were offered high provisions for the amount of the collected rubber by adding to small basic salaries, and they were fined for non-reached yearly quotas. To increase

112 See Harp, *History of Rubber*, 10–16. For the export figures, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 122.

113 The conditions of work were nonetheless catastrophic, and contracts were frequently prolonged or otherwise broken. See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 119–25.

114 See Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 73.

115 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians', Léopold II, 16 June 1897," reproduced in the appendix of Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*, 285–88, here 285 ('primitive'), 286 (rest).

116 Robert Harms, "The World Abir Made," *African Economic History*, no. 12 (1983): 133–7.

their profit, the isolated agents forced the surrounding villages to collect ever more amounts of rubber.[117]

As in the ivory trade, little concern was invested in a sustainable harvest, and destructive methods of rubber tapping soon destroyed the wild rubber lianas. The "deadly spiral of declining production and increasing violence" fuelled by the private greed of local agents and pressure of state and business companies, supported by the racist scorn of most colonial subjects, rapidly led to the establishment of an extremely violent system of economic exploitation.[118]

To reach rising quotas, locals, often including women and children, had to extend their areas of harvest, often marching for days from their villages. With no time left to till their fields or pursue their own business or handcraft, the local subsistence economy, which had already been under severe pressure by war, slave raids and the flood of European commodities, quickly collapsed, and famines and disease spread. Both state and companies resorted to repression, terror and psychological warfare to ensure the rubber collection. The hostage-taking of the women and children of a given community was widespread; they were imprisoned at the colonial posts and only released after their fathers and husbands could present a certain amount of collected rubber. Many died in these notorious 'maisons d'hotages', where women were often left without food and were vulnerable to sexual violence by Europeans and African soldiers.[119]

State or concessionary companies despatched punitive expeditions whenever a community refused to deliver their dues of produce and work or challenged the colonial authority. Moreover, permanent representatives of colonial authority were installed in each village to ensure obedience. These so-called capitas or sentries, armed African supervisors in service of the state or private companies, enforced the colonial order and their personal claims with extreme violence.[120]

Obligated by their European superiors to account for every bullet used, the practice of presenting severed hands as proof of 'faithful' use of firearms became widespread. Originally only practised on dead bodies, soldiers and capitas occasionally also mutilated living villagers, either as a form of punishment, or to legitimise the personal use of guns for hunting. Until today, the cutting off of hands is one of the most drastic symbols of the atrocities in the Congo. The use of the so-called chicotte, an extremely painful and destructive whip made of hippotamus leather, became similarly notorious. The slightest opposition to the colonial order was brutality punished. Offenders were extensively whipped, often leading to severe injuries or death, put in chains or executed on the spot.[121]

The violent and exploitative rubber system established "economics of coercion", reckless both against humans and the environment; finally, though, they made European investment in the Congo extremely profitable. From the late 1880s until 1910, rubber prices quadrupled, and rubber exports from the Congo exploded up to a value of about Fr 44 million in 1905. Since the Free State held significant shares of every large

117 See ibid., 132; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 161.

118 Harms, "The World", 136 ('spiral'); see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 121–30.

119 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 163–64.

120 See Harms, "The World", 131–33.

121 See Roes, "Mass Violence", 640.

concession company, by the turn of the century, its until-then extremely deficient budget had given way to a huge surplus; however, its profits were based on plunder, abuse and murder.[122]

Rebellions, resistance and the escalation of violence

Political repression and cultural oppression through the administrative and religious colonial institutions had thus become supplemented by a violently enforced economic exploitation. "Botofi bo le iwa", 'Rubber is death', had, according to later opponents of the Congo Free State, become a proverb among the Africans living under the rubber regime. [123] Unsurprisingly, the African communities reacted with various forms of opposition to this deadly "triple mission" of the colonial regime, as Congolese historians have pointed out. Even if one takes into account that former elites often chose to collaborate with the foreign regime and that the primary resistance of pre-colonial states and confederations against the foreign occupation had been militarily subdued, the history of the Free State remained "above all a history of African resistance to the imposition of colonial rule".[124]

Since the implementation of the forced rubber tax in the mid-1890s, the whole Central and Upper Congo once more became the stage of an enduring anti-colonial struggle. This resistance happened after the actual occupation; it was manifold and stretched well into the everyday of colonial society. If possible, whole communities fled the terror in the immediate surrounding of colonial posts, leaving former villages, cities and prosperous regions unpopulated. Coercive economics were answered with strikes, as within the railway and portage camps,[125] or with sabotage, as in the rubber domains, for instance, where vines were deliberately destroyed to harm the economic foundation of the colonisers.[126]

A subtle yet powerful means of resistance was the process of naming, a central discursive battlefield of colonialism. The mapping, re-naming and classifying of landmarks, populations or individuals was an essential aspect of the formation of colonial power. This extremely traumatic practice included the denial or wiping out of the existing culture, and it incorporated not only the land but also the people into a dominant, European and Christian master culture. Yet Congolese resisted this process by holding on to traditional names and even succeeded in turning this weapon of naming against their masters. Native nicknames, often worn with pride by the colonisers, frequently implied skilful insults or references to colonial violence the Europeans did not realise. The Bakongo named the ruthless Stanley 'Bula Matadi', 'the breaker of the rocks'; a nickname he would wear with honour for the rest of his life. However, for the locals, it was hardly a compliment. While they were impressed with how Stanley's engineers reformed the land with dynamite, they realised that he was no less violent against them

122 Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 116 ('economics'). Also see Gondola, *History of Congo*, 66–67.
123 John Harris, *Rubber Is Death* (London: Regions Beyond Missionary Union, 1904), 1.
124 Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 26 ('triple'), 44 ('above all'); Gondola, *History of Congo*, 92–96.
125 See Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 41–57.
126 See Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 82.

than against the surrounding nature. With time, the name 'Bula Matadi' became a synonym for the oppressive and alienating colonial state.[127]

In a similarly subversive way, Congolese attempted to turn the imposed Christian religion into a rebellious cultural tool by linking traditional popular religiousness and Christian mythology to anti-colonial messages.[128] In the later 17th century, the Portuguese had already faced a prophetical, legitimated anti-colonial movement led by Ndona Beatrice. The noble Bakongo woman claimed to be possessed by Saint Anthony of Padua, who had allegedly chosen her to overcome the foreign occupation. Still, in the 1920s Belgian colonisers fought hard to suppress the rural, popular-religious Kimbanguist movement.[129]

Nonetheless, despite migration and the forms of economic and cultural resistance, armed opposition was the determinant aspect of the persistent anti-colonial resistance. The forced tax collection and labour recruitment, accompanied by extreme repression, frequently led to a violent reaction by those to be colonised. Temporally and spatially limited rebellions often evolved into open warfare. While politically and militarily too weak to substantially defeat the colonial state, the communities and societies throughout the rubber domains were still strong enough to vanquish the Europeans on many occasions, especially in the remoter areas where colonial authority remained fragile. Many times, they organised endemic armed attacks on Europeans, regardless of whether they were state, company or church employees.[130] These retaliations were met with punitive expeditions that led to ransacking and plunder, which were once more answered by attacks on trading posts and factories, and on the African sentries or capitas representing the colonial order in villages and towns. In several instances, these skirmishes led to full-scale and well-organised revolts that threatened all Europeans and were only suppressed with the utmost effort of the Force Publique.[131]

A new, unexpected enemy was actually created by the colonisers themselves. Harsh treatment, racist attitudes and disrespect against African soldiers and traditional leaders by European officers led to a series of major mutinies in the Force Publique that began with an uprising of the Luluabourg garrison in Kasai in 1895. Well trained and equipped mutineers at one point even endangered the colonial capital of Boma, and some of the rebellions went on for years; the Luluabourg insurgents were only defeated as late as in 1908.[132]

However, although some of these rebellions were organised around traditional leaders, both the mutineers and the rising rural population lacked a clear political perspec-

127 See Osumaka Likaka, *Naming Colonialism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 101–18; Gondola, *History of Congo*, 52.

128 Jean Stengers and Jan Vansina, "King Leopold's Congo, 1886–1908," in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. 3, ed. Roland Oliver and George N. Sanderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 345–50.

129 On Ndona, see John K. Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); on the Kimbanguists, see Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 47–49.

130 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 115, 163–64; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 111–112.

131 See Daisy S. Martens, "A History of European Penetration and African Reaction in the Kasai Region of Zaire, 1880–1908" (PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1980), 143, 145–148. For the struggle of the Kuba, see Jan Vansina, *Being Colonized* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

132 See Gondola, *History of Congo*, 92–93; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 111.

tive. Their aim was to elude the direct grasp of the colonisers and their oppressive taxation, but not to repulse the European seizure of the Congo, an artificial political entity without any substantial 'national' meaning for most of its inhabitants. Albeit with high costs and brutality, the Free State was, time and again, able to defeat these isolated rebellions due to its modern weaponry and material superiority, its ruthless ideology of white supremacy legitimising extensive use of violence, and due to its ability to secure alternating alliances with African communities prepared to collaborate.[133]

The Free State had established a "culture of violence" that informed every part of the colonial relation until colonialism and violence had become "nearly synonymous". The circle of economic exploitation, resistance and repression created what has been described as a "multicausal, broadly based and deeply engrained social phenomenon" of mass violence in the Congo Free State.[134] The exact demographic effect of Congo colonialism and the relation of direct violence to the indirect social effects of colonial exploitation, as well as the classification of the Congo atrocities as genocidal, are still highly controversial among historians.[135] However, debates about historical and terminological classification should not detract from the realisation that the colonisation of the Congo was an extremely devastating expression of Europe's murderous colonial conquest of Africa in the Age of New Imperialism. The area claimed by the Congo Free State lost, within a few decades, by some estimates up to half of its suggested 20 million inhabitants in 1885. This was not only due to the immense death toll of armed conflicts but also due to rising mortality rates caused by exhaustion and malnutrition, spreading famines and diseases, combined with broader cultural effects of traumatic colonial oppression such as a generally declining birth rate and forced migration. Although, with the exception of bodily mutilations, every aspect of colonial oppression in the Congo had been practised by the other European imperial powers in one way or another, the specific combination of the instruments of colonial tyranny still led to an extreme intensity of the structural violence that defines every colonial relation.[136]

133 Nonetheless, these mutinies and rebellions served as a reservoir of counter-tradition for decades and would link the 'primary resistance' against colonial occupation in style, personal and lineage to the mid-20th century and its nationalist mass movements against Belgian colonialism. See Terence O. Ranger, "Connexions between 'Primary Resistance' Movements and Modern Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa.," *The Journal of African History* 9, no. 4 (1968): 632. Also see Gondola, *History of Congo*, 93.

134 Roes, "Mass Violence", 635 ('multicausal'); see Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 22.

135 See, for instance, Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 95. For a recent summary of the debates, see Roes, "Mass Violence", 643–47.

136 See Klose, *Human Rights*, 92. The recognition of an intrinsic relation of physical and epistemic violence to the history of European imperialism is only slowly finding its way into the conventional historiography, though; see Kim A. Wagner, "Savage Warfare," *History Workshop Journal* 85, April (2018): 218.

2.2 'To fight the forces of evil': The movement for 'Congo Reform'

In retrospect, the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference of 1889–90 was the last truly unspoiled political triumph of the Belgian King Léopold II in his propagandistic efforts to disguise his colonial ambitions as a philanthropic and abolitionist enterprise. In fact, George W. Williams, a participant of the conference, in 1890 was the first to systematically challenge the reputation of the Congo Free State. As mentioned above, the Black Baptist minister and historian had publicly supported the official recognition of Léopold's Congo colony in the 1880s. After a visit to Brussels and a personal audience with the Belgian king, he had enthusiastically embarked to the Congo in 1890 to investigate the potential of the Free State as the arena of a Black 'civilising mission', and potentially even a destination for a permanent settlement of African-Americans.[137]

However, Williams was deeply shocked by the actual state of the colony. After a journey up the Congo River, he composed an open letter to Léopold and a report to the president of the United States in which he collected twelve severe charges against the Free State administration. Inter alia, he criticised hostilities against independent European merchants, permanent violations of contracts and catastrophic conditions of African workers and soldiers, deadly food raids, the trafficking and capturing of women for prostitution, a state engagement in the slave trade, and unjust warfare against the local population. In a letter to the Secretary of State James G. Blaine, Williams summarised that he saw "many crimes against humanity" in the Congo State;[138] an early use of this important concept in its modern sense but not the first in the English language, as widely claimed.[139]

Williams can thus be credited with the first methodical investigation and criticism of the Free State system. However, while his charges were briefly discussed in the English-speaking press, Williams's "cry had not been listened to", as the Swiss Congo re-

137 Williams, *History of the Negro*; Vol. 1, vi-vii ('enlightened').

138 Williams to James G. Blaine, 15 September 1890, quoted in Francois Bontinck, *Aux Origines de l'État Indépendant du Congo* (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1966), 449 ('crimes'); see George W. Williams, "An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo," (Stanley Falls: 18 July 1890), 9–14; Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo". Also see Lyman, *Militarism, Imperialism*, 52.

139 See, for instance, Norman Geras, *Crimes against Humanity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 4; Andrew Clapham, *Human Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 39; Roger S. Clark, "History of Efforts to Codify Crimes Against Humanity," in *Forging a Convention for Crimes against Humanity*, ed. Leila N. Sadat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 10. Instead, Williams had already written of a "crime against humanity" in his reflection upon the immorality of US-American slave societies seven years earlier, Williams, *History of the Negro*, Vol. 1, 136. On a larger stage, U.S. President Harrison had called "the slave trade in Africa" a "crime against humanity" in his first annual message in December 1889 while speaking about the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference, Benjamin Harrison, "Annual Message of the President, 03 December 1889," in *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Transmitted to Congress, with the Annual Message of the President, 3 December 1889*, ed. U.S. Department of State (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1890), viii.

former René Claparède would later remark.[140] When a counterstatement from Stanley declared the accusations of Williams, who "was a negro", as the international celebrity casually noted, "a deliberate attempt of blackmail" based on "absolutely false" statements, the case was closed.[141]

Early exposure: the emergence of Congo criticism

Nonetheless, commercial milieus in Belgium and also Great Britain continued to raise objections against the monopolisation of the Congolese economy. Even some of Léopold's most loyal associates, such as the American Henry Sanford and the Belgian Albert Thys, who had been among the first private entrepreneurs to establish a presence in the Congo, attacked the new set of legislation with "vehemence" in their central organ, the Belgian 'Mouvement Geographique'. Ultimately, Governor Camille Janssen and Albert Thys resigned from their state posts in protest against restrictions of free trade guarantees, and the Belgian Prime Minster Beernaert threatened to do the same due to the potential international complications from the Free State policy.[142]

How far the state officials would go to eliminate concurring European trade became publicly known in 1895, when the 'Stokes Affair' triggered the first broader anti-Congolese press reaction in Great Britain. On 9 January 1895, the Belgian Captain Lothaire, who administered the Stanley Falls district, ordered the arrest of the well-known ivory trader Charles Stokes for charges of illegal trade and for allegedly supplying the revolting Butelele with arms and ammunition, which was prohibited by the Brussels Anti-Slavery Act. After what was broadly understood as "a sham trial, illegal in every particular" by contemporaries, Stokes was hanged on the 14 January without a hearing at the Appeal Court in Boma.[143] The British press reacted harshly against what was understood as a blunt attack on national reputation and imperial prestige already affected by the humiliating experience of the Johnston raid and the German Kruger telegram. The journalist and former 'explorer' Lionel Decle took the lead of the emerging press campaign against the Free State, and a nationalist outrage was aroused in British journals.[144]

At the same time, the first testimonies of Protestant missionaries drew attention to the treatment of Africans by the colonial state. In October, a Reuters interview with two anonymous sources, among them one missionary now believed to be John Weeks of

140 'Congo Merchants and the Congo Free State', in *London Daily News*, 5 November 1890, 2 ('meeting'); René Claparède, President of the 'Swiss League for the Defence of the Natives of the Congo', quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 19 ('cry').

141 'Stanley the Bugbear of Congo Land', *New York Herald*, 14 April 1891, 8 ('absolutely'). Moreover, Williams' early death in 1891 prevented any further commitment to the cause.

142 [Morel], "Congo Scandal I", 464 ('vehemence'); see Vangroenweghe, *Du Sang*, 109; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 197.

143 Henry R. Fox Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland* (London: P.S. King and Son, 1903), 200 ('sham trial').

144 See Lionel Decle, "The Murder in Africa," *The New Review* XIII, no. 79, December (1895): 588; W. Roger Louis, "The Stokes Affair and the Origins of the Anti-Congo Campaign, 1895–1896," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 43, no. 2 (1965), particularly 572–74. For the political aftermath of the Stokes Affair, see Foreign Office, ed., *Papers Relating to the Execution of Mr. Stokes in the Congo State* (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Harrison and Sons, 1896).

the British Baptist Missionary Society, pointed to unprovoked violence and atrocities, including mutilations, through the state to enforce rubber and ivory tributes. [145] A few weeks later, John B. Murphy of the American Baptist Missionary Union described in more detail the "horrors" including the hostage-taking of Christianised Africans and the cutting off of hands. This brutality would incite the African population to revolt against state (and missionary) authority, he added. In February and March 1896, the Swedish Rev. Sjöblom based in the Equator district directly charged the new Governor-General Wahis as being responsible for illegitimate "'attacks on villages, [and] burned and deserted houses'".[146]

In reaction to rising international irritation, the administration installed a new state inspector and a stricter penal code to highlight its commitment to addressing aggressive behaviour. Most importantly, after a proposal of Hugh G. Reid, president of the Association of British Journalists and loyal acolyte of the Congo State, a 'Commission for the Protection of the Natives' of six veteran missionaries was established on 18 September 1896. Grenfell, the leading representative of the British Baptist Missionary Society in the Congo, and his colleague William H. Bentley and Dr Aron Sims of the American Baptist Missionary Union accepted positions in the new commission along with three Catholics. However, the Free State also attacked the reputation of critical Protestant missionaries and began to circulate well-disposed judgments by respected public figures, including Stanley, that were meant to counterbalance the deteriorating public image.[147]

In consideration of the state's increasing preference for Catholic societies and furious reaction to the first public criticism, the executive councils of Protestant missionary societies in the United States and Great Britain considered material like that of Sjöblom "too 'hot'" for broad circulation. Despite better knowledge, members of the Commission soon announced that the situation in the Congo had improved, and for years to come, missionary societies limited themselves to private appeals to the colonial administration.[148]

Through the appeasement of the headquarters of the missionary societies, critical press coverage decreased considerably in the following years, and public awareness was directed towards other hot spots of imperial policy, such as the upcoming Fashoda Crisis, the Second Boer War, the American-Spanish War or the subsequent American occupation of the Philippines.[149] Still, since December 1896 saw the beginning of the prestigious Aborigines' Protection Society, one of the oldest British humanitarian pressure

145 See 'A Reign of Terror in the Congo State', *The Standard*, 14 October 1895, 3.

146 Murphy quoted in 'The Congo Free State', *The Times*, 18 November 1895, 6 ('horrors'); Sjöblom quoted in Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 180 ('attacks'). Also see Ruth Slade, *English-Speaking Missions in the Congo Independent State, 1878–1908* (Brussels: Academie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1959), 38–39.

147 See Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 438, 447; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 45; Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 194; Louis, "Stokes Affair", 572. For Stanley's reaction, see Henry M. Stanley, "The Belgians on the Congo," Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 16 September 1896, 4.

148 Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 182.

149 See ibid., 231; Slade, "English Missionaries", 38–40; Louis, "Stokes Affair", 583; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 49.

groups in imperial policy. It had originally supported Léopold and his colonisation programme but began to earnestly protest the "oppressive treatment of natives in the territories of the Congo Free State".[150] Under the leadership of secretary Henry Fox Bourne and with the considerable support of the liberal parliamentarian Sir Charles Dilke, the Society collected and distributed the few reports about abuses that still reached Europe. Missionaries in the field remained highly sceptical about the actual influence of the Protection Commission due to "the reluctance of the highest Congo State officials to investigate charges of inhumane treatment of natives". Sjöblom and Weeks continued to report forced labour in the rubber production, murder and the cutting off of hands.[151]

Moreover, a publication by a former British Force Publique officer, Sidney L. Hinde, claimed that the military success against the 'Arab' states in Eastern Congo was to a large extent based on the use of "cannibals" in the Force Publique.[152] Dilke caused a scandal about the alleged raids of cannibalistic soldiers in a debate in the House of Commons in an unsuccessful attempt to rally support for a new international conference to discuss the state of the Congo. Days after the debate, on 7 April, the Aborigines' Protection Society organised public meetings with Sjöblom, who stayed in London for a few weeks before his return to Sweden between April and May 1897.[153]

The diaries of the recently deceased African traveller Edward J. Glave, a renowned former officer of Stanley's early expeditions, brought new evidence about 'Cruelty in the Congo Free State'. The emerging reform campaign would later frequently quote Glave's accounts, and they also presumably inspired Joseph Conrad's Congo novellas *An Outpost of Progress* and *The Heart of Darkness*, which described colonisation in the Free State as violent plunder.[154]

The Protection Society continued to condemn the Free State and distributed new evidence, including an account by the American Presbyterian missionaries William M. Morrison and William Sheppard from the Kasai district.[155] In 1899, Sheppard had investigated a massacre following a raid of state auxiliaries at the order of his new superior, Morrison. In his report, distributed by the Presbyterian mission via Reuters, he described how human hands had been smoked over open fires by the involved Zappo-Zapps, whom Sheppard accused of being notorious cannibals.[156]

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150 Aborigines' Protection Society, *The Annual Report of the Aborigines' Protection Society* (London: Broadway Chamber, 1897), 4.

151 'Affairs on the Upper Congo', *The Times*, 14 May 1897. For Weeks' new account, see Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 46.

152 See Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 124.

153 See Charles Dilke: Africa (European Powers), HC Deb 2 April 1897 vol 48 cc 425–50, here c 430. Also see Aborigines' Protection Society, *Annual Report 1897*, 4. On the reform image of Léopold's 'cannibal army', see chapters 3.2 and 3.3.

154 See Edward J. Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo Free State," *The Century Magazine* 54, no. 5 (1897); Conrad, "Outpost of Progress"; Conrad, "Heart of Darkness". For the motifs of Conrad's Congo literature and its influence on the reform discourse, see chapter 3.2 and 3.3.

155 See Nworah, "Aborigines' Protection Society", 81–83; Slade, "English Missionaries", 41.

156 Sheppard's report was reproduced under outraged headlines in the British press, see for instance 'Cannibalism in the Congo', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 22 February 1900, 6; 'Barbarities on the Congo', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 23 February 1900, 10; 'Terror on the Congo', *Daily Telegraph & Courier*, 23 February 1900, 10. It also received some attention in the House of Commons (see HC Deb 27 February 1900 Vol. 79 cc 1215–6), and was reproduced by Bourne in April's

Sheppard's report and further critical accounts by the recently returned 'Cape to Cairo' traveller Ewart S. Grogan[157] inspired a series of articles by the Liverpool shipping clerk Edmund D. Morel that were published between July and October 1900 in the *Speaker*. Through the insights of his work with Elder Dempster, one of the major shipping lines engaged in Congo trade, Morel realised that the Free State virtually only shipped weapons and ammunition in exchange for large rubber exports. Only a couple of years prior, he had asked for "a little generosity" towards the "occasional repression" in the Congo, but Morel now simply saw the Free State as a "secret society of murderers".[158]

Since Williams' open letters, Morel's *Speaker* articles offered the most comprehensive account of what he labelled the 'Congo Scandal'. He identified the inner Congo region directly owned by King Léopold as the pivotal scene and the concession societies as significant actors of abuses, and he focused on the systematic structure of the cruelties rather than individual wrongdoing. Additionally, Morel spotlighted maimed hands as the most drastic symbol of the Congo rubber atrocities for which he defined the term 'Red Rubber'.[159] Guided by the acquaintances of John Holt (an influential Liverpool tradesmen) and Mary Kingsley (a famous African traveller and ethnographic writer) to believe in free trade as the foremost civilising medium in Africa, it became for Morel "at once a manifest duty and a dominating passion" to fight against this "gigantic slave-farm reeking with cruelty", and in spring 1901, he left Elder Dempster to follow up on his struggle as assistant chief editor of the newly founded magazine *West Africa*.[160]

At this point, the political "remedy lied ready at hand", as Morel assured: The Congo should become a 'regular' colony organised along national lines. Morel, as well as Bourne and Dilke, vigorously urged the Belgian Senate to accept an option to annex the Free State that Léopold had granted in exchange for the extensive credits allotted by the Belgian parliament in the early years of the Free State. However, unwilling to discharge Léopold from his responsibility for the Congo, the Belgian parliament broadly rejected this option in summer 1901.[161]

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issue of the Aborigines Friend, see Slade, "English Missionaries", 41. For an account of Sheppard's investigation, see Pagan Kennedy, *Black Livingstone* (New York: Viking, 2002), 134–47.

157 Ewart S. Grogan and Arthur H. Sharp, *From the Cape to Cairo* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1900), 227.

158 'A Word for the Congo State', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 July 1897, 1–2, here 2 ('generosity' etc.); Morel quoted in Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 181 ('secret').

159 See [Morel], "Congo Scandal I", 463–464; [Edmund D. Morel], "The Congo Scandal II: The Rubber Taxes – How They Are Applied", *The Speaker*, 4 August 1900, 487–88 (Domain Privé); [Edmund D. Morel], "The Congo Scandal III: The Rubber 'Companies' on the Domaine Privé", *The Speaker*, 25 August 1900, 571–72 (concession societies); [Edmund D. Morel], "The Congo Scandal IV. The Alleged 'Development' and 'Prosperity' of the State", *The Speaker*, 1 September 1900, 595–96 (systematic structure); [Edmund D. Morel], "The Congo Scandal V: 'Red' Rubber'", *The Speaker*, 6 October 1900, 15–17 (maimed hands).

160 Edmund D. Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement," in *E.D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement*, ed. W. Roger Louis and Jean Stengers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 43 ('at once')

161 [Edmund D. Morel], "The Congo Scandal VI: Responsibility and Remedy", *The Speaker*, 1 December 1900, 228–29, here 229 ('remedy'); see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 272; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 29–39.

After this setback, significant publication activity by Morel, together with book-length works by Bourne and Guy Burrows, a former advocate and agent of the Free State who now harshly attacked his employer further sharpened the profile of British Congo criticism.[162] In *Affairs of West Africa*, Morel was the first to publish one of the iconic atrocity photographs as "a living illustration of the 'mains coupées' debates", as the caption informs. Nonetheless, he was still sceptical about the value of such photographic evidence, since it did "not prove" the responsibility for the injuries.[163]

Increasingly, however, concerns about "the free trade question", 'European victims' and 'European suffering' complemented, and at times supplanted, humanitarian indignation about "the native question" of colonial atrocities in the British Congo controversy.[164] Since 1902, the British Chambers of Commerce, alarmed by an extension of the concessionary system to the French Congo, became affiliated with the Congo opponents. Morel, for instance, soon established his journal *West African Mail* with the generous funding of Liverpool tradespeople.[165] A public meeting at the Mansion House on 15 May 1902 organised by the Aborigines' Protection Society was, for the first time, supported by prominent representatives of the liberal free trade sphere. These included John Holt, the Vice-Chairman of the African Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, and Francis Swanzy, an influential merchant who was active in the 'African Society' and Chairman of the African Section of the London Chamber of Commerce. Holt "strongly condemned" the concessionary system and Léopold's broken trading promises.[166]

Morel's first broader success was the revelation of the 'Rabinek Affair'. The young Austrian Gustav-Maria Rabinek, supported by merchants surrounding the Hamburger Ludwig Deuss, had started a lucrative rubber and ivory trade in the Katanga region. However, in 1901 he was arrested on a warrant of the Free State, his caravans were seized, and he was sentenced to one year of forced labour due to alleged breaches of the rubber trade law and gun-running. In contrast to Stokes, Rabinek was granted his right to an appeal but died not far from his destination, Boma, exhausted by the 2,000-mile transport as a prisoner with only basic sustenance.[167]

With the fate of Charles Stokes still present in public memory, the death of Rabinek became a "great sensation" and major public scandal.[168] In its aftermath, the London, Liverpool and Manchester chambers of commerce publicly supported a crucial public meeting once more initiated by the Aborigines' Protection Society on 5 May 1903. In the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, the assembled Congo opponents, including humanitarians, merchants, and missionaries, listened to a speech from Morrison, who

162 See Edmund D. Morel, "The Belgian Curse in Africa," *Contemporary Review* 81, (January/June) (1902); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*; Edmund D. Morel, *The Congo Slave State* (Liverpool: J. Richardson & Sons, Printers, 1903); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland* and Guy Burrows, *The Curse of Central Africa* (London: R. A. Everett & Co., 1903).

163 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 334 ('living'), 335 ('prove').

164 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 298 ('native question'), 300 ('free trade question').

165 Edmund D. Morel, *The British Case in French Congo* (London: W. Heinemann, 1903), 196–208.

166 John Holt, quoted in 'Treatment of Natives in the Congo', *The Standard*, 16 May 1902, 6.

167 The Rabinek affair was revealed by Morel in 1902 [see Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 344, 371]; and was for the first time described in detail in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 275–96.

168 Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 438 ('sensation').

was on his way back to the United States. The Protestant missionaries' attempt "to see just as little as they could and to speak just as little as they could about what they could not help seeing" had to stop, Morrison argued, and he urged a joint American and British protest movement against the atrocities in the Congo. At the same time, those aspects of the Congo question that concerned free trade and commerce were widely discussed by attendants such as Alfred Emmott, businessman, Liberal Party politician, and member of parliament for Odham, and Morel. The assembly drafted a resolution that would be discussed in the House of Commons in the following week.[169]

On 20 May 1903, led by the future leader of the Liberal Party Herbert Samuel, freshly elected member for Cleveland, the first broader British parliamentary debate about the Congo atrocities took place in the House of Commons. After Samuel's long opening speech, Dilke, Emmott, John Gorst of Cambridge University and the former Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs Edmund Fitzmaurice spoke in support of the resolution drafted at the Whitehall meeting. Lord Cranborne, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, expressed his "doubt" about whether the Free State was still following a responsible scheme of governance. Minor corrections to the text by Balfour were accepted, and the plenary unanimously accepted a resolution demanding that the British government confer with the signatory powers of Berlin "in order that measures may be adapted to abate the evils prevalent in that State".[170]

It was a dramatic turn in official British policy, for so far, any official recognition of wrong-doing in the Congo had been avoided. Moreover, in the debate, Prime Minister Balfour indicated that he saw the need for a "judicial inquiry" into the matter at hand. Immediately after the debate, the British Vice-Consul to the Free State Roger Casement was advised to prepare for a mission of investigation – a major decision for the emerging Congo reform movement.[171]

From 5 June to 15 September 1903, the Protestant from Northern Ireland travelled on a missionary steamboat to the Congo interior and pursued his survey. In numerous hearings and interrogations, Casement collected further testimonies of brutal punitive expeditions, kidnapping and massacres. The case and picture of the young boy Epondo, for instance, whose hand had been cut off, would become one the most prominent atrocity stories within the reform discourse.[172]

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169 William M. Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question, 5 May 1903. Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, London." Reproduced in the appendix of *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, by Morgan and Barbour, 41 ('see'); also see Alfred Emmott, quoted in ibid., 39; Morel, quoted in ibid., 46.

170 Lord Cranborne, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 c. 1322 ('doubt'); text of resolution: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1332 ('abate' measures').

171 Balfour: 'Congo Free State, HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 c. 1331 ('judicial').

172 Casement included in the appendix of his report several verbatim protocols of the interrogations he conducted; hence he disclosed African testimonies for the reform discourse, albeit mediated through translation by missionaries. See Roger Casement, "Report on My Recent Journey on the Upper Congo," in *Correspondence and Report from His Majesty`s Consul at Boma Respecting the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo*, ed. Foreign Office (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Harrison and Sons, 1904), 60–80. For the paragraph, also see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 156, 179–182, 196–200.

Although the impartiality of Casement's accounts has been questioned due to the heavy influence of Protestant missionaries on his journey and hearings,[173] the Vice-Consul's consternation about the evidence gathered also had a visible influence on the evangelicals themselves. Several decided to break their silence and supported the inquiry with testimonies and photographs of atrocities. Grenfell, the veteran missionary-explorer and member of the Protection Commission, for instance, publicly cut any affiliation with the Congo State.[174]

Casement returned to London in December 1903, but the publication of his report was postponed until February 1904. In the meantime, a growing number of atrocity stories by Congo missionaries appeared in British newspapers or were merged into pamphlets by Morel. Furthermore, in October 1903, the recently returned Congo Balolo missionary Daniel J. Danielsen, who had accompanied Casement on his journey of inquiry, launched a series of lectures on his Congolese experiences in Edinburgh. Danielsen had taken photographs of some of the victims of mutilations interviewed by Casement, which he presented during his speeches with so-called magic lantern projections. The immense public reaction increased the pressure on the headquarters of the evangelical missionary societies, and the Congo Balolo Mission finally began to officially publish information about abuses. Impressed by the success of Danielsen's public meetings, the secretary of the Congo Balolo mission, Guinness, organised a fresh series of magic lantern lectures about the 'The Reign of Terror on the Congo' in Scotland based on Danielsen's photographs. The shows attracted thousands of attendants and were a foretaste of the powerful means of atrocity photographs and the skills the experienced evangelical sphere had to offer the Congo opponents. After all, Bourne and Morel, who had no experience whatsoever in grassroots mobilisation, had so far only reached a small albeit influential strata of merchants, journalists and politicians.[175]

In the United States, the Congo controversy had also begun to reach broader public awareness. Morrison had returned immediately after the conference in May 1903 equipped with 1,000 copies of a Morel pamphlet that included a direct appeal to "the American public" and a reminder of the United States' "peculiar" responsibility as the first state that had recognised Léopold's colonial endeavours. With Thomas Barbour, foreign secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Morrison was able to secure the support of an influential and skilful evangelical ally. Together, the two missionaries sharpened the profile of the controversy about the 'Atrocities of the Congo' in the United States through journal articles and appealed to the President for official action against the Free State.[176]

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173 Kevin Grant has labelled Casement's report "missionary propaganda"; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 55.

174 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 193–203.

175 See Slade, "English Missionaries", 67–71; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 60–622. For a critical discussion of the atrocity lectures as a racist mass spectacle, see chapter 5.3.

176 Morel, *Congo Slave State*, subtitle ('American'); 10 ('peculiar'); see William McCutchan Morrison, "Personal Observations of Congo Misgovernment," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 28, no. 1 (1903); McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 227–28; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 275.

Organising Congo activism: the public relations struggle

When the Foreign Office finally issued the results of Casement's inquiry as a white book on 10 February 1904, a "firestorm of publicity" hit the national and international press, as historians have asserted. For the first time, governmental authority supported the severe accusations against the Free State, and the carefully maintained image of Léopold as a benevolent philanthropist was failing. It was a major discursive event, and it largely relocated the discursive power in the Congo controversy towards the camp of the critics.[177]

Those critics were prepared to seize their chance. Immediately after his return to England, Casement promoted the idea of transforming the Congo agitation into an elaborate political campaign. Since an early attempt to organise a 'Congo Committee' under the lead of the anti-militaristic International Union of William T. Stead, pacifist and editor of the *Review of the Reviews*, had failed,[178] a special body solely concerned with the Congo Scandal should then integrate the fragmented evangelical, humanitarian and commercial voices and establish a powerful pressure group, Casement suggested. As has already been mentioned, Casement initially attempted to motivate Joseph Conrad to accept a leading position in such an organisation. However, although Conrad sent his best wishes and criticised the Free State in a widely quoted public letter, the famous novelist refused to become further involved. Casement could then convince his new friend Morel to take the lead. Despite a deep scepticism of Bourne and Dilke about a concurring organisation, the Aborigines' Protection Society decided to participate and send delegates to its Executive Committee. When Guinness agreed to join the executive circle and the merchant Holt offered his financial and political support, an organisational alliance between humanitarianism, evangelicalism and commercialism, linked and lead by the expert journalist Morel, was established. On 23 March 1904, the Congo Reform Association was ceremonially inaugurated in the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall in front of a crowd of 1,000 people, thus initiating the phase of the organised Congo reform movement.[179]

At the same time, on 23 and 24 March, American missionaries held a large, critical Congo conference in Washington. Given the influence of the Casement report and the deteriorating relations to the state administration, delegates of the American Baptist Missionary Union, the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and the Foreign Christian Missionary Society arranged a more concentrated agitation against the Free State. The conference formulated a long memorandum and demanded a "strict and impartial inquiry into the conditions" through an external tribunal.[180]

The missionary memorial was officially introduced into the Senate by John T. Morgan, together with Henry Sanford, who had passed away in 1891, the most active pro-

177 Dean Pavlakis, "The Development of British Overseas Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Campaign," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 11, no. 1 (2010), n.p. ('firestorm'); see Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel*, 79; Casement, "Report on Upper Congo".

178 On the failed 'Congo Committee', see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 49–51, 57–58.

179 On the foundation of the Congo Reform Association, see ibid., 58–65; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 42–44. On Casement's approach to Conrad, see Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 68–70.

180 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22.

ponent of Léopold's colonial enterprise 20 years before. Even though only a few Black missionaries had until then settled in the Congo, Morgan had continued to fight for his dream of a purely 'white' American nation. The ill-treatment of Africans in the Congo based on race discrimination completely jeopardised any schemes of voluntary emigration, Morgan was convinced. Hence, a radical white supremacist and Klan leader became the most active parliamentary spokesperson for American Congo reformers in the years to come.[181]

Soon after the missionary conference, a 'Congo Committee' was formed under the auspices of the 'Massachusetts Commission for International Justice' in Boston for further "directing public attention" towards the growing debate. Although religious influence remained strong, Barbour and Morrison were increasingly able to secure secular supporters, especially among peace activists and anti-imperialist liberals in New England.[182] Among the new supporters was Robert E. Park; the former journalist would become one of the principal activists of the emerging American reform campaign, soon fulfilling a role similar to that of Morel in Great Britain. Silently, Park had long since seriously considered going to South Africa to work for the 'empire builder' Cecil Rhodes to become affiliated with imperial grandeur.[183] His "desire for purpose" had not been gratified by his ten years of practice as a journalist nor by his doctoral studies in Germany. In 1904, just after finishing his dissertation, "sick and tired of the academic world", Park eagerly awaited the "luxury" and "privilege" of finally getting in touch with the "real business of life". Enthusiastically, he agreed to serve as a press agent and editorial secretary for the Committee and began to issue a fortnightly *Congo News Letter*.[184]

Back in Great Britain, Morel, now Honorary Secretary of the Congo Reform Association, was able to enlist the liberal William Lygon, Seventh Earl Beauchamp, a former Governor of New South Wales and "strongly Imperialist in the right sense", as Alfred Emmott assured, for its presidency. In a first manifesto, the new organisation attacked the "endemic form" of "cruelty and oppression" in the Congo, and it postulated immediate demands such as the installation of a full British consular sector in the Free State.[185]

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181 On Morgan's continuous pressure for the repatriation of African-Americans, see Baylen, "John Tyler Morgan", 121–25; Jones, *Brightest Africa*, 55–56.

182 Robert E. Park, "The Congo News-Letter," in *Congo News-Letter*, ed. Congo Committee (Boston: 1904), 1 ('directing').

183 See Ellsworth Faris, "Robert E. Park," *American Sociological Review* 9, no. 3 (1943): 323.

184 Fred H. Matthews, *Quest for an American Sociology* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977), 13 ('desire'); Robert E. Park, "An Autobiographical Note," in *Race and Culture*, ed. Everett C. Hughes, 3 vols. (New York: The Free Press, 1950), v ('sick'); Park, quoted in Winifred Raushenbush, *Robert E. Park* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979), 37 ('luxury', 'privilege', 'real business'). For the influence of Park's Congo activism on his essentialist and racist sociology of race relations, see my own work: Lösing, "Congo to Chicago".

185 Emmott to Morel, quoted in W. R[oger] Louis, "Morel and the Congo Reform Association 1904–1913," in *E.D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement*, ed. W. Roger Louis and Jean Stengers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 172 ('strongly'); 'First Manifesto Issued by the Congo Reform Association', March 1903, quoted in Edmund D. Morel, *Great Britain and the Congo* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1909), 9 ('endemic', 'cruelty'). The manifest was signed by eight peers, eleven parliamentarians and four bishops. Six months later, already 40 Members of Parliament would support the reform association publicly, see Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 44.

While the Aborigines' Protection Society continued to agitate under its name, the young reform association quite successfully widened its influence and prestige, despite persisting problems of securing sufficient funding. An increasing number of both liberal and conservative newspapers supported the association and Sir Harry Johnston, the former Central African explorer, British colonial administrator and widely published author on Africa, one of the most authoritative voices in British imperial discourse affiliated with the reform campaign. Additionally, the well-respected Irish historian and founder of the African Society, Alice Stopford Green, offered her wide networks in academic, liberal and literary circles, which proved crucial for spreading the Congo agitation in these influential spheres.[186] Moreover, Morel conducted significant activity in the first months of the new organisation. In a freshly formed monthly 'Special Congo Supplement' of the *West African Mail*, Morel issued further missionary testimonies about on-going murder and mutilation, while he further accentuated his claim that the suppression of free trade was at the core of the Congo issue.[187]

In another ample Congo debate on 8 June 1904, the Foreign Office was urged to "take stronger action than mere words in dispatches to deal with this horrible scandal". Nevertheless, although the British government defended the Casement report against all criticism, the demands to install a consular sector or even harsher actions were rejected in favour of an international inquiry into the Congo atrocities as part of a new international conference or The Hague tribunal.[188]

Limited as they were, the signs of diplomatic displeasure within the British government, together with the growing public controversy, urged the worried Congo state apparatus to intensify its counter activities. In 1903, the Free State established a 'Fédération Pour La Défense Des Intérêts Belges À L'Étranger', which published counter-reports to the critical British white books, benevolent press statements and reports about atrocities in other European colonies through the trilingual journal *La Verité Sur le Congo*.[189]

Nevertheless, and despite all prior propagandistic efforts, the Free State could hardly counter-balance the amount of criticism that emerged in the summer of 1904. Seriously worried about the perspective of international political intervention, Léopold decided to make concessions to the demands raised in the British parliament and the United States Senate. In July 1904, the Belgian sovereign announced the formation of

186 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 273; Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 171–74.

187 See Edmund D. Morel, "The 'Commercial' Aspect of the Congo Question," *Journal of the Royal African Society* 3, no. 12 (1904); Edmund D. Morel, "The Economic Development of West Africa," *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 20, no. 3 (1904): 134–43.

188 Dilke: 'Class II', in HC Deb 9 June 1904 Vol. 135 cc 1247 ('take'). Also see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 246–250.

189 See ibid., 215, 250–1. For apologist publications, see, for instance, A Belgian, *The Truth About the Civilization in Congoland* (Brussels: J. Lebègue and Co, 1903); Demetrius C. Boulger, *The Congo State Is NOT a Slave State* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1903); and, in the coming years: Fédération Pour la Défense des Intérêts Belges à l'Étranger, *Burrows Action in London* (Brussels: Lebègue); Fédération Pour la Défense des Intérêts Belges à l'Étranger, *L'Histoire d'un Crime Belge au Congo* (Brussels: Impr. des Travaux publics/Société anonyme, 1905); Federation for the Defence of Belgian Interests Abroad, *The Truth on the Congo State* (Brussels, 1905).

a 'Commission of Inquiry' that would investigate the state of affairs in the Congo and verify the accusations of Casement and Congo missionaries.[190]

The formation of the Commission was at once a major success and a serious challenge for the reformers. All political intervention was postponed, and the public debate was largely put on hold until the publication of the Commission's report. By and large, the British campaign had been losing ground since the latter half of 1904, both in public support and, even more threatening, in funding. At this moment, the British activists looked to the other side of the Atlantic for potential allies, and above all, new financial opportunities. Hence, when an invitation reached Morel from Barbour and the Massachusetts Congo Committee to speak at the XIII Universal Peace Congress in Boston, the British reformers were happy to accept.[191]

Morel's arrival in the United States on 28 September was framed by a series of critical Congo articles in journals and newspapers and calls from Park and Barbour to support the British reformers and help "to unite Europe" in its attempt to end the cruelties in the Congo.[192] Only one day later, Morel was granted an audience at the White House, and he presented a memorial signed by the elite of British philanthropic organisations, including the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, the Aborigines' Protection Society and the International Arbitration and Peace Association, and supported by the Free Churches of England and Wales. However, although Morel was received in a friendly way, he could not convince President Roosevelt and his Secretary of State John Hay to take a firmer stand in the Congo controversy.[193]

In contrast, the Peace Congress became a major success and brought together the future axis of the American reform campaign. The Congo Scandal was targeted in the panel on "The mutual relations of races, and the menace to the world's order through the exploitation of weaker peoples" on 7 October in Boston's Park Street Church. Speeches by Morel and Morrison pointed to the ill-treatment of Europeans and the exploitation of Africans in the Congo and ignited a chorus of outrage. Morel's appeals "to the American

190 The Commission consisted of Edmond Janssens, advocate general at the appellate court in Brussels; Giacomo Nisco, Italian president of the appellate court in Boma; and Edmond de Schumacher, a Swiss jurist. See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 111.

191 See Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, xvi–xvii; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*.

192 Robert E. Park, "The Real Issue in Re Congo Intervention," in *Congo News-Letter*, ed. Congo Committee (Boston: 1904), 1 ('unite'). For Barbour's numerous letters and articles, see the reproductions in Congo Committee, Massachusetts Commission for International Justice, "Congo News-Letter: September," (Boston: 1904), 1–4. For other articles, see A. E. Scrivener, "Instances of Belgian Cruelty in Africa," *The Missionary Review of the World* 27, September (1904); Edmund D. Morel, "Belgian Treatment of the Kongo Natives," *The Missionary Review of the World* 27, September (1904); Robert E. Park, "Recent Atrocities in the Congo State," *The World To-Day* 7, no. 4 (1904); Booker Taliaferro Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo Country," *The Outlook*, no. 78 (1904) [presumably ghostwritten by Park].

193 For the supporters of the petition, see Edmund D. Morel, "King Leopold's Defence," *Boston Transcript*, 24 October 1904, 2; McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 226; M. Patrick Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions of the American Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1899–1909," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 8, no. 4 (2010): 309; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 277–78. Marchal suggests that Morel's demands were unrealistic due to the on-going discrimination of Black citizens in the United States.

government and the American people", as "those who primarily, and of course unwittingly, riveted the chains about these Congo people's necks", was taken up by Morrison. "I call upon you to take off from" the neck of the Congolese "the heel which has been placed upon them by the civilized nations of the world", the Presbyterian missionary concluded. On the same evening, more than 500 guests assembled for the celebratory Peace Congress banquet given in Horticultural Hall, where they listened to a speech by the famous Black American educator Booker T. Washington. The president of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama first denounced the widespread act of lynching in the United States, and afterwards, he attacked the murderous regime in the Congo that allowed "a few" to "be enriched at the expense of the many".[194] Despite interventions of pro-Congo agents, the attendants unanimously submitted a resolution proposing, in line with the plan of the British government, either "a new conference of the powers concerned in the formation of the Congo Free State" or "a Commission of Enquiry as provided in the Hague Convention".[195]

Morel's remaining days in the United States were dedicated to pressing conversations and networking with potential allies, including the famous writer Samuel L. Clemens, alias Mark Twain. Immediately after his departure, and with the essential contributions of Park and Barbour, an American 'Congo Reform Association' was established to promote "international action with view of full disclosure of conditions in the Congo State".[196] Robert Park became an influential corresponding secretary, and he would soon play a similar role to that of Morel in Great Britain. The headquarters of the organisation was a church in Boston, and evangelical influence remained generally strong. Next to the established leaders Morrison and Barbour, the Revs. Everett D. Burr and Herbert S. Johnson would become important activists of the Local Committee in Boston.

While the organisation lacked its British counterpart's considerable involvement of merchants and manufacturers, the American reform association was strongly influenced in membership and style by two closely affiliated strongholds of New England liberalism: anti-imperialism and the peace movement. About half of the leading members of the reform association were members of the Anti-Imperialist League, founded in 1898 in opposition to an increasingly aggressive expansionist American foreign policy, culminating in the colonial occupation of the Philippines.[197]

G. Stanley Hall, a prominent anti-imperialist and leading academic, fulfilled the first presidency of the American reform association. The president of the well-respected Clark University was a prominent proponent of the eugenics movement and developed

194 'Address of Mr. E.D. Morel', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and William J. Rose, eds., *Official Report of the Thirteenth Universal Peace Congress* (Boston: The Peace Congress Committee, 1904), 232 ('American'); 'Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in ibid., 238 ('heel'); 'Address of Dr. Booker T. Washington', reproduced in ibid., 259 ('enriched').

195 See 'The Congo Free State', in ibid., 303.

196 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Congo News Letter: April," (Boston: 1906), 1 ('disclosure').

197 For the link between Congo reform and the Anti-Imperialist League, see Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 308–9. On the formation of the American reform association, see Lyman, *Militarism, Imperialism*, 61; Baylen, "John Tyler Morgan", 124.

an evolutionary psychology "shot through with Scientific Racism" to account for an alleged inequality of human 'races' and to promote segregated education.[198]

Other well-known anti-imperialists in the Congo Reform Association included the famous writer Mark Twain and David Starr Jordan, who both became vice-presidents. Twain had written in the years before a series of anti-imperialist articles concerning the Spanish-American War, the Boer War and the Boxer Rebellion, and he promised "to use his pen for the cause of the Congo natives". Jordan, the president of Stanford University, was, like Hall, a central figure of the eugenics movement and part of a stream of American anti-imperialism that opposed expansionism and war mostly due to the dangers of 'racial' and moral degeneration for the American nation.[199]

Prominent pacifists among the American Congo reformers, often actively engaged in the discourse surrounding the Hague Conference, included Benjamin F. Trueblood, central spokesperson of the American Peace Society, and Charles F. Dole, Chairman of the Association to Abolish the War, both of whom joined the Local Committee of Administration, and the vice-presidents Samuel B. Capen and Lyman Abbott. Moreover, with Washington, a well-respected conservative voice of Black America became a vice-president of the reform association, as well.[200]

Nonetheless, in its early existence, it was primarily Park who successfully stirred up public opinion through the publication of articles and pamphlets. With his organising efforts, Congo agitation was pushed towards a comparable level to that of in Great Britain and challenged the hegemonic perspective on the Free State as a philanthropic project in the United States, as well – to the growing concern of the Congo supporters.[201]

Still, while Morel's visit had a decisive effect on the American campaign, the journey could not entirely fulfil the British activist's expectations. Neither did the American government officially back up the reform agenda nor was Morel successful in securing any substantial financial support. Moreover, Park was eager to emphasise that the American reform association had arisen spontaneously and was an organisation independent of any British influence.[202]

198 Graham Richards, '*Race*', *Racism and Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 26. ('shot through'). In his magnum opus, Hall developed a deeply racist and social-Darwinistic evolutionary psychology in which he compared the mental development of 'savages' with adolescents and children; see G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Applleton, 1904). On Hall's eugenicism, see Ann G. Winfield, *Eugenics and Education in America* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), xix, 115–117.

199 Morel, quoted in Hunt Hawkins, "Mark Twain's Involvement with the Congo Reform Movement," *The New England Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1978): 155 ('pen'). For Jordan's eugenicism, see David S. Jordan, *Imperial Democracy* (New York: D. Applleton, 1899); David S. Jordan, *The Human Harvest* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1907); Alexandra M. Stern, *Eugenic Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 131–34.

200 See the listing in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Congo News Letter, April 1906", 1. For the history of the peace movement and the role of the mentioned actors, see C. Roland Marchand, *The American Peace Movement and Social Reform, 1889–1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 [1972]); for Booker T. Washington, see chapter 2.3.

201 See Lösing, "Congo to Chicago", 107–15; Fred H. Matthews, "Robert Park, Congo Reform and Tuskegee," *Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes d'histoire* 8, no. 1 (1973): 37–65.

202 See McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 227–28. As chapter 5.3 discusses in more detail, strong Anglophobe sentiments persisted among many American anti-imperialists. See Cullinane,

Towards the end of 1904, the lack of funding remained a paralysing problem for the British reform association, bringing Morel and the West African Mail close to bankruptcy.[203] In October, Morel's first book-length contribution to the Congo controversy reached British and American bookstores. Once more, Morel denounced the Free State system, writing that it was "as immoral in conception as it is barbarous in execution" and promoting his now-significant analytical thesis that the "wrong done to the Congo peoples originates from the substitution of commerce".[204]

Moreover, *King Léopold's Rule in Africa* was extensively illustrated, hinting at the growing importance of photographs for the campaign. The book contained two tripartite montages, one showing three "children mutilated", as the caption reads, and the other displaying three "natives shot and mutilated". Two of them suffer from deformed hands and arms; the three children hold limbs of their arms towards the camera. As in 1902, the mutilations are sharply contrasted with the white linen wrapped around the dark bodies. The fifth person, without the characteristic linen, lacks both hands.[205] These photographs were very likely part of Danielsen's above-mentioned series. Some of these images, the full montage or other pictures appearing to be part of the same series had been published throughout 1904 in missionary magazines, the *West African Mail*, and pamphlets and an article by Robert Park.[206] Moreover, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* also contained two photographs of Alice Harris, who worked with her husband John at the missionary post of the Congo Balolo Mission at Ikau and Baringa, in the influence sphere of the ABIR trust. In one picture, three African men, flanked by the missionaries John Harris and Edgar Stannard, present the hands of two countrymen "murdered by rubber sentries". In the other, a father watches the hand of his daughter supposedly dismembered at a "cannibal feast" by sentries.[207] Alice and John Harris emerged as the most outspoken voices of discontent from the Congo, and Alice's soon-iconic photographs would have a major impact on the Congo reform discourse.[208]

However, the public reputation of the reformers was seriously damaged when, in early December 1904, a Belgian newspaper revealed that Morel and Holt had been willing to pay for compromising information from the Italian Antoni Benedetti, a Free State officer. After the British press had scandalised the events, Morel's contact with

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"Transatlantic Dimensions", 308–9; Dean Clay, "Transatlantic Dimensions of the Congo Reform Movement, 1904–1908," *English Studies in Africa* 59, no. 1 (2016): 20–1.

203 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 273; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 47–48.

204 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, xii.

205 Ibid., page facing 112 ('children'), facing 128 ('natives).

206 The first three photographs of this series were published in Regions Beyond (January 1904) and the West African Mail (19 and 26 February 1904). Further examples were, for example, reproduced in 'The Congo Slave State', *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, April 1904; in the September issue of the Missionary Review of the World [Morel, "Belgian Treatment", 673, 677; Scrivener, "Belgian Cruelty", 679; by October in Park, "Recent Atrocities", 1331, 1332; in Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, inside cover, 33.

207 Morel, "King Leopold's Defence", page facing 49 ('murdered'), facing 145 ('feast'). The latter is falsely credited to John Harris. The photographs were originally forwarded to the Regions Beyond in summer 1904.

208 On Alice Harris, see for instance Thompson, *Light on Darkness?*, 165–206.

Benedetti, the Nigerian Hezakiah A. Shanu, committed suicide in Boma.[209] Moreover, an increasing number of advocates, sometimes directly briefed and paid off by Léopold, and often patronised by Morel's former employer Alfred Jones, attacked the integrity of the most prominent Congo reformers. They also financed new, private journeys of inquiry that attempted to counterbalance the reform's representation with positive accounts produced in close cooperation with and assistance of the Free State administration. Viscount Mountmorres, a special correspondent for *The Globe*, and Marcus R.P. Dorman, an author on imperial history, embarked for their tour in the Congo on 24 June 1904 and returned to England on 19 February 1905. While the report of Mountmorres remained ambivalent, since he praised the state while he sharply criticised the concessionary companies, Dorman "returned with a strong feeling" in favour of the Free State and produced a glorifying account dedicated to King Léopold personally. Particularly effective for the Free State apologists were the accounts of the American traveller and explorer May French Sheldon, who returned to Southampton on 17 December 1904 from a 14-month stay in the Congo. When asked about atrocities upon her arrival, the close friend of Stanley vigorously answered what she would repeat in a series of public receptions: "There are none. I have seen worse deed in the streets of London than I ever saw in the Congo".[210]

In this precarious situation, severe cracks emerged in the alliance of British Congo reformers. Due to both the diverging political strategies and a clash of personal style, tensions between Bourne and Morel escalated into a total alienation between the veteran of humanitarian politics and the younger, rising star of political journalism. Both, on the other hand, shared concerns that the movement could acquire a sectarian character due to the strong influence of evangelical missionaries and growing support of American and British Catholics for the Free State.[211]

Finally, at the beginning of March 1905, the Commission of Inquiry returned to Belgium. It had largely followed Casement's path and toured the Congo from 5 October until 21 February 1905, looked into reports of civilians and state agents, and conducted 370 auditions and verbal processes. The publication of its report, however, was postponed until November.[212] Meanwhile, conflicts between the various factions of the colonisers in the Congo were escalating. Given the ever-rising flow of accusatory reports, the critical evangelical missionaries were no longer regarded with distrust but with hostility by the state.[213] The existing isolated missionary posts, especially in the Equator District, were largely reliant on the support of the state agents for military assistance and food

209 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 296–300. See chapter 3.3 for more details.

210 See William G.B.M. de Mountmorres, *The Congo Independent State* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1906), 6; Marcus R.P Dorman, *A Journal of a Tour in the Congo Free State* (Brussels/London: J. Lebègue and Co/Kegan Paul, 1905), vii ('strong); 'The Congo Free State', *The Standard*, 19 December 1904, 3. ('none'). On Sheldon, see Tracey Jean Boisseau, *White Queen* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

211 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 62–63; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 293–296. On a smaller scale, conflicts between evangelicals and secular activists also persisted in the American association, see Clay, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 20.

212 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 114–122.

213 See Edmund D. Morel, *Red Rubber*, 2nd impress. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907 [1906]), 199.

supply, for example. While some missionaries became more focused on getting along than on the Congolese in their surroundings, others sharpened their opposition to the Free State in the increasingly tense atmosphere.[214]

In August 1905, after John's arrest in April, he and his wife Alice returned to London, eager to join the ranks of the Congo opponents, and Morel quickly integrated them into the reform association. Due to contributions of the Harrisses and other missionaries, the British reform association could increase the pressure on Léopold with a pamphlet that collected many of the testimonies stated in front of the Commission of Inquiry. Moreover, Morel was able to secure substantial funding and an undisclosed personal income from the chocolate manufacturer William Cadbury, once and for all ending the precarious financial situation of the organisation.[215]

In the United States, 1905 began with the presentation of a new, extensive memorial collecting fresh evidence about critical conditions in the Congo to the Senate; it was composed by Barbour and once more introduced by Senator Morgan.[216] Moreover, the increasingly popular Rev. Sheppard, renowned for his exploration of the Kuba kingdom and other 'adventures' in the Congo, once more began to publicly speak about "the horrors which are being perpetrated in the Dark Continent" conducted with "the encouragement of a so-called civilized nation". In September 1905, then, Mark Twain's sharp satirical attack on the Free State policy, written as a soliloquy of King Léopold examining the existing reports about atrocities, finally hit the bookshelves. Once more extensively illustrated, the piece became widely read and was a major propagandistic success for the American reformers.[217]

All in all, both the British and the American campaign gathered new energy in the second half of 1905. Finally, the publication of the report of the Commission of Inquiry in November 1905 ended the "period of doubt and wholesale denial" that defined the first half of the international Congo reform movement.[218]

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214 See Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 317, 331; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 65.

215 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 147–150; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 49–51. On Cadbury's involvement in colonial exploitation, see Catherine Higgs, *Chocolate Islands* (Athens: Ohio UP, 2012).

216 See John T. Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo State.* Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, 17 January 1905. *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* No. 4765 Session Vol. No. 3, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, S. Doc. 102. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905).

217 William H. Sheppard, "Light in Darkest Africa," *The Southern Workman* 34, no. 4 (1905): 218–27, here 220 ('horrors'); see Mark Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 2nd ed. (Boston: P.R. Warren, 1905). The latter included a number of caricatures, a famous table rearranging nine of the most popular mutilation photographs [page facing 41] and Alice Harris's photograph of a "dazed father" [page facing 19]. Twain lets Léopold complain about the power of atrocity photographs and "the incorruptible kodak" [40].

218 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *The Indictment Against the Congo Government* (Boston: Congo Reform Association, 1906), 5 ('period'). For the English version of the report, see Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo* (New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, 1906). For the paragraph, also see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 171–173.

Forming a mass movement

Still in the Congo, John Harris had viewed the members of the commission as "overwhelmed by the multitudinous horrors". Harris' expectation that the three men "must have arrived at conclusions which necessitate an entire revolution in the administration of the Congo" eventually proved to be accurate.[219] When the report was finally released in November 1905, it contained an almost ruinous judgment about Léopold's Congolese endeavour. Despite attempts to absorb the shock through an introductory eulogy on its 'civilising' efforts, the final statement had a devastating impact on the public reputation of the Free State.[220]

After the Casement report in February 1904, the publication of the account of the Commission of Inquiry was the second major discursive event in the Congo controversy. Once more, it changed the power structure massively in favour of the reformers. By and large, the report confirmed every charge from opponents of the Free State made in the previous years. Within the contested versions of truth about the colonial regime in the Congo, the critical perspective finally prevailed. Thus, the Commission report concluded the first half of the Congo reform campaign. Solemnly, the Congo opponents declared the "beginning of a new era in the movement". The activists no longer asked for an "impartial investigation" but instead called for immediate "international action" to abolish the Free State policy, or rather the Free State itself.[221]

A new conference of the governments that attended the Berlin conference in 1884/85 and a transformation of the Free State into a regular Belgian colony remained the practical demands of the international Congo reform movement. Concerning its organisational history, the second half of the movement would be defined by the advancement of a top-down pressure group into a mass movement in what was described as the "heyday" of Congo agitation.[222] On both sides of the Atlantic, Alice and John Harris crucially initiated this transformation. Following an invitation from Barbour, the two arrived in January 1906 in the United States to start a "campaign of education" throughout the country. At first together, but soon separately, Alice and John, who were accompanied by Johnson and Burr of the American reform association, conducted a remarkable amount of more than 150 Congo protest meetings until 8 March in the town halls and churches of 50 cities and smaller towns. Their dramatic lectures "everywhere" aroused "intense amazement and grief and indignation", the American reformers contentedly asserted, and they often led to the spontaneous establishment of local committees of

219 Harris interviewed in William T. Stead, "Ought King Leopold to Be Hanged?," *The Review of Reviews* 32, no. 189 (1905): 247 ('overwhelmed', 'must').

220 The report collected substantial criticism concerning the appropriation of soil and restrictions on the freedom of trade (ch. I.), the excessive labour taxation (ch. II), the brutality of military expeditions (ch. 3), especially harsh abuses in the concession areas (ch. IV), partial depopulation of the region (ch. V), the forced adoption of so-called orphans by the state (ch. VI.), irregularities in the contracts of African workers (ch. VII) and limitations in the judiciary system (ch. VII), see Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*.

221 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Indictment Against the Congo*, 2 ('impartial', 'international'), 5 ('beginning', 'period'). Also see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 171–173.

222 Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 171 ('hey-day).

the Congo Reform Association. The intense press coverage and myriad letters, resolutions and appeals towards national deputies that followed each meeting completed the political success of the lecture tour.[223]

The report of the Commission of Inquiry, which was quickly distributed by the American reform association, together with the success of the town meetings, largely boosted the American campaign.[224] In April 1906, "fifteen hundred members have been enrolled", the reformers reported, and "[m]any thousand other citizens are showing that their interest has been keenly aroused". Prominent figures of the educational, business and religious worlds pushed the agenda of the association through a national committee, and a "flood of petitions" from colleges and schools reached politicians.[225]

After a reluctant public statement from Secretary of State Elihu Root in February 1906, the American reformers wholeheartedly increased public pressure on the White House through pamphlets and, from April 1906 on, a new, extended version of the *Congo News Letter* that collected contributions from prominent spokesmen such as Washington and Barbour.[226] Although worries about a confessional polarisation of the Congo debate were present in the United States, as well, the influence of Protestants remained high. "Protestant Christianity in the United States" had "uttered its unanimous" support for the Congo campaign, the General Secretary of the National Federation of Churches, for instance, assured.[227]

However, experienced militants from the Anti-Imperialist League increased their activity throughout 1906, as well – although the most prominent anti-imperialist Congo activist, Twain, had already withdrawn his support in January. After a brief but intense commitment to Congo reform, the famous writer was personally disappointed with the limited progress. Additionally, he was also furious that his fellow activists had left him in the misbelief that the United States had actually ratified the Berlin Act (the basis for his appeals to the White House) and decided to resign from the reform movement.[228]

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223 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "A Campaign of Education," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 16 ('campaign', 'everywhere'). Here the reform association lists mass meetings in Boston, Lowell, Portland, Fitchburg, Providence, Springfield, Hartford, New Haven, Pittsfield, North Adams, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Butralo, Erle, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Trenton, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Cleveland, Toledo, Grand Rapids, Detroit, Lansing, Ann Arbor, Jackson, South Bend, Chicago, Joliet, Milwaukee, Madison, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Omaha, Lincoln, St. Louis, Springfield, Ill., Dayton, Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Indianapolis and New York. For an account of a typical meeting, see 'Atrocities in Congo', *New Haven Morning Journal and Courier*, 1 February 1906, 3. Also see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 263;

224 See Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Wrongs in the Congo State* (Boston: Congo Reform Association, 1906).

225 John R. Gow, "A Forward Look," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 2 ('fifteen', 'thousands'); McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 306 ('flood')

226 See Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Wrongs in the Congo*; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Congo News Letter, April 1906".

227 E[lias] B. Sanford, "Co-Operation of the Churches Etc.," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 15. On conflicts between secular and religious activists in the United States, see Clay, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 20.

228 For the increasing involvement of anti-imperialist activists, see Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 310; for the lasting influence of missionaries and fears of a sectarian split, see Marchal, *Morel*

The optimistic dynamic within the American reform association was not seriously damaged by Twain's withdrawal. In April, Morgan once more introduced a memorandum from Barbour into the Senate, arguing that the Brussels Act of 1889 offered sufficient "ground for action" by the American government. Although the Secretary of State dismissed the appeals of the April memorandum, Root was displeased with the way the Free State used his behaviour for its propaganda. Root decided to conciliate the reform lobby and send a clear message to Brussels at the same time: In July 1906, a first United States' consul was appointed to the Free State to observe its disputed policy on the spot.[229] Léopold was alarmed by these first cracks in the White House's non-involvement strategy and immediately increased his propagandistic efforts. More concretely, he opened the Free State to American capital, namely by the tycoons Thomas F. Ryan and Daniel Guggenheim. The American public, however, viewed this step suspiciously, suspecting an attempt to corrupt the White House's stance on the Congo controversy.[230]

In Great Britain, the political climate had also changed significantly in the months after the Commission's report reached the public. A Liberal triumph at the general elections of February 1906 brought political supporters of the reform association such as Samuel, Emmott, Beauchamp and Fitzmaurice to leading governmental positions. The new Foreign Secretary Edward Grey agreed with the reformers that the Free State system had to be abolished as soon as possible. He declared that Britain would not refuse a new international Congo conference, as long as other powers joined in, and was ready to establish a full British consular district in the Congo, as well.[231]

The British reformers were thus structurally in a more powerful position than ever before. Once more, the Harrisses found the right strategy to translate this potential into concrete popular success. Shortly after their return from their American journey, they suggested conducting a similar series of town meetings. From early 1906 on, activists launched a series of 'atrocity meetings' all over England and Scotland that attracted crowds of thousands. Most importantly, to tie in with the great success of Guinness' lectures, John and Alice also developed a standardised lantern lecture about the Congo atrocities, now based mainly on Alice's photographs from the Congo. The spectacle culminated in the projection of the by now widely published and famous 'atrocity photographs' on large screens, which had a dramatic effect on the assembled crowds. It was the force of the lantern lectures that allowed the British Congo reform campaign to transform into a movement with a national base, as has been emphasised.[232] Like

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contre Léopold II, Vol. 2, 201–2, 268; for Twain's activism and retreat, see Hawkins, "Mark Twain's Involvement", 159–75.

229 John T. Morgan, *Alleged Conditions in Kongo Free State*. Presented to Congress, 12 April 1906. *U.S. Congressional Serial Set* No. 4914 Session Vol. 6 No. 60, 59th Congress, 1st Session, S.Doc. 316. Washington: Government Printing Office 1906, 3 ('ground for action'). For the official action of the White House, see Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 310.

230 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 264–266; McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 233, 257–72.

231 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, 205–7; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 53; Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 189. For the position of the new government on the Congo, also see Foreign Office, ed., *Correspondence Respecting the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of the Independent State of the Congo* (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Harrison and Sons, 1906).

232 See Grant, "Christian Critics", 30.

in the United States, the series of 54 town meetings conducted between 1906 and 1908 often lead to the formation of local auxiliaries of the British reform association. Within months, the Congo campaign could finally establish a popular mass base and broadly extend its political influence.[233]

At the same time, the official town meetings in the provinces and hundreds of atrocity lectures significantly strengthened the religious character of the British campaign. Evangelical missionary societies had particular expertise in the use of the magic lantern since the abolitionist battles of the early 19th century. Hence, developed by the Congo Balolo missionaries Guinness and Alice and John Harris, most Congo lantern lectures were financed and narrated by evangelicals and staged in religious environments. Evangelical in style and tone, they were framed around Christian themes and missionary zeal. Thirty of these town meetings solely or in part featured speakers with a religious background, including missionaries, but also the highest Anglican dignitaries, such as the Bishops of Birmingham, of Exeter or Oxford. John and Alice Harris also took the lead of the newly founded and soon influential London branch of the reform association. From May 1906 to April 1907, the two organised about 300 lectures in and around London. By October 1906, the influential Baptist Missionary Union and the Baptist Union had officially joined the reform camp as well. Additionally, hundreds of religious Congo meetings were staged outside of the official reform association events. Towards the end of 1906, the British reform movement had been turned into a highly active "evangelical crusade".[234]

The more secular British reformers, especially Morel, on the other hand, were eager not to lose too much ground to the evangelicals. Morel attended as many town meetings as possible and remained the most active speaker farther away from London. Moreover, he continued to create scandals with new reports about atrocities from the realm of the Compagnie du Kasai, and the libel trial against the English missionary Edgar Stannard in the Congo.[235] Most importantly, Morel worked on his new book *Red Rubber*, published on 5 November 1906.[236]

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233 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 240–1; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 74–75. Between January 1906 and May 1908, town meetings that could attract several thousand visitors were held in Liverpool, Sheffield, Glasgow, Reading, Southport, Sunderland, Jarrow, Colchester, St. Helens, Swindon, Bath, Chesterfield, Bury, Accrington, Taunton, York, Newcastle, Oldham, Nottingham, Scarborough, Birmingham, Plymouth, Devonport, Ramsbottom, Barnsley, Ilford, Newport, Barrow, Stafford, Oxford, Huddersfield, Grantham, Ossett, Sandbach, Coventry, Yeovil, Bideford, Exeter, Norwich, Bradford, Hull, Bournemouth, Birkenhead, Woolwich, Northampton, Yarmouth, Berwick-on-Tweed, Torquay, Newton Abbot, Warrington, Stockton-on-Tees, Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Keighley and Derby, see Morel, *Great Britain*, 12–13.

234 Grant, "Christian Critics", 29 ('crusade'); see Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 67–75. For the resolution of the Baptist Union, see 'Baptist Union at Huddersfield', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 October 1906, 5; for the magic lantern, see Steve Humphries, *Victorian Britain through the Magic Lantern* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1989).

235 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 241 (town meetings), 211–5 (Stannard-trial), 222–6 (Compagnie du Kasai). See also Edmund D. Morel, *The Stannard Case* (Liverpool: John Richardson & Sons, 1906), issued by the Congo Reform Association [U.K.].

236 See Morel, *Red Rubber*. Through donations, the price was kept low, and it became Morel's most successful publication. Already until April 1907, 7,500 books would be sold. A new impression of

Rightfully labelled the "highest point of Morel's polemical form", the new book, to which Johnston contributed a much-quoted introduction, stands in noticeable contrast to his generally more clinical style of narration. Very likely in a concession to the rising evangelical influence, religious fervour now dripped from his writing, which he attempted to counterbalance with a secular but similarly dramatic appeal to the national consciousness.[237]

In sum, regarding organisation and scope, during 1906, the British movement became "truly a national movement". The vast majority of the British press, such as the *Daily News* editor Harold Spender, began to support the reformers' fight against "the forces of evil" in the Congo. Eventually, even the *London Times* altered its previous neutral position with an outraged editorial pointing to the system "of sheer force and violence" in the Congo. Finally, in an audience on 20 November, the Foreign Secretary Grey reassured a large audience of distinguished Congo reformers that his government was willing to increase pressure on Belgium to annex the Congo territory.[238]

At the same time, rumours emerged that President Roosevelt was finally willing to join Great Britain in a potential international intervention against the Free State. The American reformers were ready to swing the final punch. Robert Park launched a far-reaching series of articles in the muckraking press that portrayed the brutality in the Congo but also scandalously portrayed the political and personal life of Léopold.[239] New pamphlets urged the White House to "promote international action for the relief of conditions in the Congo State" and were presented to the Senate by the Boston Senator Henry C. Lodge, who was under constant pressure in the stronghold and headquarters of the American reform movement.[240]

On 10 December 1906, Lodge also introduced a new resolution to the Senate that condemned the Free State and asked for immediate action from the president. Léopold once more publicly denounced the charges of cruelties as "absurd"; however, the impact of the Lodge resolution was amplified by a major political scandal that reached the public at the same time.[241] The former prime agent of the Free State in the United States, the dubious Colonel Henry Kowalsky, had sold the *New York American* his journals

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10,000 copies reached the shops in May 1907, followed by more editions in 1909 and 1919. See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 250; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 58.

237 Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 59 ('highest'); see Morel, *Red Rubber*, particularly 200; Harry Johnston, introductory chapter to *Red Rubber*, by Edmund D. Morel (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1907 [1906]), vii–xvi.

238 Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 209 ('truly'); Harold Spender, "The Great Congo Iniquity," *Contemporary Review*, no. 90 (1906): 43 ('evil'); 'Among All the Enlightening Episodes', *The Times*, 28 September 1906, 7 ('sheer'). For the deputation from commercial, religious and philanthropic bodies at the Foreign Office and Grey's response, see 'The Congo Infamies', *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligence*, 21 November 1906, 7.

239 Robert E. Park, "The Terrible Story of the Congo," *Everybody's Magazine* 15, no. 6 (1906); Robert E. Park, "A King in Business," *Everybody's Magazine* 15, no. 5 (1906); Robert E. Park, "The Blood-Money of the Congo," *Everybody's Magazine* 16, no. 1 (1907).

240 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *The Duty of the US Government to Promote International Action for Relief of Conditions in the Congo State* (Boston: Congo Reform Association, 1906), title; see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, 273–276.

241 See 'Congo Question in Senate', *The New York Times*, 11 December 1906, 5; 'King Leopold Denies Charges against Him', *The New York Times*, 11 December 1906, 5 ('absurd').

after a rupture with his former employer. A series of articles from 10 to 14 December described Kowalsky's ruthless methods, including the bribery of John Garrett, the secretary of Senator John T. Morgan. The disclosure resulted in a disastrous loss of public reputation for the Free State and Léopold at a critical political juncture.[242] Hence, when on 12 December Roosevelt finally instructed his Secretary of State Root to announce his willingness to join Great Britain in a prospective international move against the Congo, Léopold quickly backed down. To prevent the worst, he began to focus on limiting damage, or rather on maximising his profit in times of defeat. Soon, he signalled his agreement with an annexation of the Free State through Belgium.[243]

It was a paramount accomplishment for the international reform movement. Nonetheless, the terms and conditions of the transfer of power still had to be negotiated, and a new Colonial Charter had to be developed by the Belgian parliament. Although the British Foreign Office was optimistic that annexation would be accomplished on terms corresponding to the Berlin Act, leading British activists remained sceptical. Morel published fresh evidence of on-going brutalities in the Congo collected by missionaries of the Congo Balolo Mission and the Baptist Missionary Society, and a new appeal to the British parliament was made to ensure radical reforms in the annexation process.[244]

Moreover, the reform association continued its strategy of using town meetings to arouse public opinion and establish further local auxiliaries, which issued a bombardment of resolutions and questions to their parliamentary representatives. On 19April 1907, the third anniversary of the British reform association was celebrated with an all-day celebration held in Liverpool, on which occasion a letter signed by 72 members of parliament expressed its "warm sympathy" with the issue of Congo reform.[245] Furthermore, a new impetus from religious organisations largely contributed to rising pressure. On 14 April, non-conformist churches all over England and Scotland celebrated a special 'Congo Sunday', preaching for the redemption of the Congolese people and demanding intervention by the British government.[246]

In the United States, the political establishment solidified its anti-Congo position. On 15 February 1907, the Lodge resolution passed the Senate, albeit in a softened version due to Catholic lobbying efforts. The Free State could no longer count on the United States' neutrality. For the American reformers, the Congo controversy was now at a crossroads. "Today the Congo Situation has reached its crisis", the *Congo News Letter* read, "it has developed to a point where reforms can either be assured, or rendered practically impossible".[247]

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242 See McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 275–85; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 267–274.

243 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, 285; Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 193–96.

244 See Edmund D. Morel, *The Tragedy of the Congo* (London: John Richardson & Sons, 1907); Edmund D. Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Recent Evidence from the Congo* (Liverpool: J. Richardson & Sons, 1907).

245 'Congo Reform Association' *The Times*, 20 April 1907, 8 ('warm').

246 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 286–7 and 291–4.

247 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Present Status of the Congo Situation," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1907), 6 ('Today').

However, Roosevelt was unsettled by the unexpected reluctance of London and other European governments to initiate more radical steps, such as a new international conference, and he was unwilling to initiate any further steps on his own. Moreover, at this critical moment, the American reformers were weakened by the withdrawal of some of their central militants. In December 1906, Morrison and Sheppard had once more relocated to their mission post in the Congo. Moreover, Park continuously withdrew his support in early 1907 and focused on his new work as Booker T. Washington's assistant, instead.[248]

John Daniels from Boston, who had so far worked together with Park, became the new corresponding secretary. He emerged as the leading public activist of the American reform association in the next two years, when he attempted to fill the large gap left by Park and Morrison. Daniels continued to publish the *Congo News Letter* and engaged in a public struggle with Frederick Starr, a professor at the University of Chicago and anti-imperialist activist, who accused the Congo reformers of gross exaggerations about atrocities and argued against any form of intervention by the United States. During the summer, moreover, the famous American journalist Richard Harding Davis published three long, critical Congo articles in *Collier's Weekly*, and these were also merged into a book that brought new attention to the reform debate.[249] Later in the year, the missionary Joseph Clark, recently returned from the Congo, supported Daniels in the organisation of a series of public meetings against the Free State in Chicago, after Starr had organised several conferences across the country.[250]

On 5 December 1907, it was publicly declared that Belgium would annex the Free State. Although Barbour and Daniels warned that improvements were far from secure, an increasing number of American Congo activists saw their goals achieved. It became obvious that the American Congo controversy had passed its peak.[251] The dynamic in Britain was different, however. In the summer, Morel had similarly warned of a crisis and "the most critical [moment] in the whole history of the struggle against King Leopold's misrule on the Congo". However, while the leading circles of the British reform association would become increasingly alienated over personal and political disputes and strategic concurrence, the protest dynamic was thus far unaffected by these disputes.[252]

When, on 3 November 1907, the 'Congo Sunday' was repeated, this time supported by the Anglican Church, as well, appeals for Congo reform were heard in almost every Protestant church hall in Great Britain. The dynamic culminated in an unprecedented

248 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 275–276. On Park, see Matthews, "Robert Park", 40.

249 See Frederick Starr, *The Truth about the Congo* (Chicago: Forbes & Company, 1907); John Daniels, *Evidence in the Congo Case* (Boston: Congo Reform Association, 1907); Richard H. Davis, *The Congo and Coasts of Africa* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908).

250 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 336.

251 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *The Congo State* (Boston:: Congo Reform Association, 1908?), 1 ('slight'); see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Congo Situation Today: February," (Boston: 1908); Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 367.

252 Edmund D. Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis in the Campaign Against Congo Misrule* (Liverpool: John Richardson & Sons, 1907), 3 ('most'); see Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 65; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 298–9.

"Appeal to the Nation" published on 7November. It was drafted by the British reform association and signed by the archbishop of Canterbury, the president of the Free Church Council, parliamentarians from all sides, mayors of auxiliary cities and well-known public persons. The appeal urged against accepting any "administration of the Congo which leaves the essential claims and practices of the present system unchanged".[253]

Despite the official announcement of Léopold's withdrawal in December 1907, the British campaign acquired new momentum. On 21 January 1908, the reform association approved an exceptionally harsh resolution demanding the immediate and resolute intervention of the British government, with or without international support, if Belgian annexation did not imply a serious reform of the Free State system. A month later, on 21 February, thousands gathered in the London Queens Hall to support the demands, followed by sharp debates in both chambers of parliament. The Commons resolved a resolution asking the government "to do all in its power to secure that a fundamental alteration of the system shall be affected" and begin the necessary national or international measures to enforce these changes if not implemented after a "reasonable time".[254]

Foreign Secretary Grey finally relented and announced British intervention if the Belgian government would refuse serious reforms. Under the culminating international pressure, and weakened by heavy domestic criticism, Léopold consented to drop some of his excessive demands for compensation and agreed to render his personal Domaine de la Couronne to the new administration, as well. Finally, and after four additional months of negotiation, on 20 August 1908, the reform movement witnessed its largest impact so far: The Belgian parliament voted for the annexation. Léopold's realm came to an end, and the Congo Free State was officially transformed into the colony 'Belgian Congo'.[255]

Triumph and beginning dissolution

The establishment of a Belgian colony abolished, at least nominally, the Free State system. However, enthusiasm about the 'Belgian solution' was far from all-embracing; central demands, such as a restructuring of land ownership and an end of forced labour, were far from secure. Reinforced by the official announcement of the British Foreign Office and the United States' Secretary of State to postpone recognition of the new colony until genuine reforms were stipulated, the unconvinced fractions in the British reform association led by Morel prevailed, and the Executive Committee voted to maintain its campaign. In new memorials, Morel emphasised the centrality of native land rights and freedom of trade for an absolute end to the Congo Scandal.[256]

253 'The Congo. An Appeal to the Nation', *The Times*, 7 November 1907, 6 ('administration'); see Morel, *The Tragedy*.

254 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 338–352; Resolution: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1883 ('do all', etc.).

255 See Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 200; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 352.

256 See Edmund D. Morel and Congo Reform Association, *A Memorial on Native Rights in the Land and Its Fruits in the Congo Territories Annexed by Belgium (Subject to International Recognition) in August, 1908* (London: Edward Hughes & Co, 1908); Edmund D. Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.],

However, not all reformers followed. For many, especially among the religious and more conservative spheres, annexation marked the successful end of a year-long engagement. The new colonial administration swiftly ended Léopold's confrontational relation to the Protestant missionary societies and quickly offered new land titles. The Congo Balolo Mission of Guinness was willing to withdraw from the reform association in return and instructed its missionaries to refrain from reporting any further testimonies of atrocities.[257] It was not the only loss of important activists. In February 1909, Bourne passed away. The personal relation between Morel and Casement had seriously deteriorated, as had the relation between Morel and John Harris. In July 1909, after a year of ever-sharpening personal conflicts over the political leadership in the organisation, Morel forced John Harris to resign from the leading circles of the reform association.[258]

The situation was further complicated by a decisive rupture between the remaining leadership and the Foreign Office. Secretary Grey had energetically declined demands for a more drastic Anglo-American intervention against the wavering new colonial administration raised in new resolutions and the Commons in May 1909. Furiously, Morel began a veritable publicity war against the "irresolute, […] inconsistent and feeble" Foreign Office. However, few of his former allies, especially, of course, Liberal politicians such as Samuel or Emmott, or those in the editorial offices, were willing to engage in a confrontation with the British government. It became apparent that the organisation had lost much of its credit with the British public.[259]

In this problematic situation, more than ever before, the British reformers longed for support from their American compatriots. Immediately after the announcement of the Belgian reprise, the American reformers, now led by John Daniels, warned of a "threatening defeat" for the campaign so close to victory. Desperately, the American reform association urged its members and the public to "oppose with all the weight of its influence such a vacuous and unworthy end to the efforts of years as is offered by the proposed Belgian annexation". It called on every Christian citizen "to register with the Secretary of State his condemnation of the pending Congo annexation".[260]

Only a few American Congo opponents agreed with Daniels' objections against the Belgian annexation. Thomas Barbour had pulled out in August 1908 to resettle in Asia, and the void left by him, Morrison, Sheppard and Park was too large for the remaining activists. Although Daniels and the Rev. Clark continued to mobilise public pressure through anti-Congo rallies throughout late 1908 and early 1909, the two were unable to

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The Economic Aspect of the Congo Problem (Liverpool: John Richardson & Sons, 1908); Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 363–364.

257 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 66.

258 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 381. John and Alice Harris remained active reformers, though, and in April 1910 became joint secretaries of the merged Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society.

259 Morel, *Great Britain*, 119 ('irresolute'). On the conflict with the Harrisses, see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 374–379, 381.

260 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Postscript to News Letter," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1908), 5 ('threatening, etc.); see John Daniels, "The Congo Question and the 'Belgian Solution'," *The North American Review* 188, no. 637 (1908); Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 338.

stop the disintegration of the American reform movement. Moreover, Daniels lost the confidence of the State Department in early 1909 after he forwarded confidential information, although in April he was still received in the White House after the presidency of William H. Taft began. Hardly any activism was noticeable for the rest of the year, and it was evident that the political and public influence of the American reformers was now marginal.[261]

Hence, the American Congo reformers could hardly be expected to support the struggling movement in the United Kingdom. When more and more former allies disavowed Morel, he was lucky to gather a prominent new friend and supporter. From the summer of 1909 on, the celebrated author Arthur Conan Doyle entered the Congo debate with harsh rhetoric. The prominent inventor of Sherlock Holmes was a latecomer to the reform movement, but he tried to compensate with radicalism and energy. Within eight days in the summer of 1909, Doyle produced the 45,000-word pamphlet 'The Crime of the Congo', which became one of the most popular works on the Congo atrocities and was widely distributed throughout Europe.[262]

Between October and November 1909, Morel once more launched a series of mass meetings. With Doyle as the main speaker, the events attracted thousands and were a huge success.[263] The famous author was also engaged in the public defence of Morrison and Shepard, who had continued to file complaints and publish about cruelties and forced labour by state and trading agents. On 25 May 1909, the two Presbyterians were ordered to the court of justice in Boma for charges of libel submitted by the Compagnie du Kasai. The charges were based on an article of Sheppard about the ill-treatment of the Kuba through the concession trust, which had been published in the *Kasai Herald*, a non-regular bulletin of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission edited by Morrison. When the process could finally begin on 20 September, the American and British public were closely observing what became a legal victory for the accused missionaries.[264]

Finally, at the end of October 1909, the new Belgian Colonial Minister Renkin announced a three-level plan for major reforms, gradually implemented until 1912, including the abolition of rubber trade through state agents and the expansion of free trade regions. State ownership of 'vacant land' and the concessionary system would, however, largely prevail.[265]

On 19 November, a last, immense Congo demonstration of the British religious communities was held in London, mainly organised by John Harris. Presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, almost every Protestant organisation of England sent delegates to the crowded Royal Albert Hall, "the largest meeting place in the greatest city of the world", as the Archbishop proudly asserted. While the Protestant community

261 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, 368–373.

262 Arthur C. Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1909), 124 ('burden' etc.), 125 (partition). The author paid by himself for a French and German translation and promoted the book successfully around Europe; see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 407.

263 3,000 people gathered in Edinburgh, 5,000 in Liverpool, 3,000 in Plymouth, 2,500 in Newcastle and large audiences in Manchester, York, Hull and Hereford, see Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 78; see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 415.

264 For the trial against Morrison and Sheppard, see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 385–399.

265 See ibid., 414.

maintained its demands for further reforms, it also made clear that it would not follow the anti-Belgian campaign of Morel and the reform association. By and large, the Albert Hall meeting was as much a demonstration as a self-referential celebration of an allegedly successful religious campaign for the Congolese population.[266]

Major parts of the moderate British public approved the announced reform plans. The *Times* not merely complimented the "earnest of good intentions" in Belgium and "undoubted liberality" of Renkin's reform scheme but also directly attacked the remaining "anti-Congo demonstrations" in England. The "old Leopoldian system is gone forever", a special correspondent assured, and the British reformers "would do well to consider whether their zeal may not outrun their discretion".[267]

In the United States, the Congo reform movement soon collapsed. The missionary Clark, the last remaining evangelical American Congo opponent, was satisfied with the announced reforms. He withdrew from the campaign and returned to the Congo in spring 1910, where he immediately praised the new administration. Daniels was almost left alone and also stopped his agitation, and the American reform movement began to dissolve.[268] Despite this discouraging news, however, Morel was not willing to capitulate. He regarded Renkin's plan as insufficient and once more dramatically appealed to his English readers to realise "that there has been a change of name".[269]

Nonetheless, an unexpected event shattered the ambitions for new momentum in the campaign. On 17 December 1909, Léopold II died after a short illness. Considering Léopold's discursive prominence as the incarnation of the Congolese evil for many critics, his death greatly weakened the reform propaganda. His successor Albert was known for his repulsion of his uncle's colonial policy, and together with Renkin's reform plans on the horizon, the reform movement had, in the eyes of the majority, lost its basic necessity. The American Congo Reform Association gathered for the last meeting on 5 January 1910, and although Morel attempted to maintain the campaign in the first half of 1910, he began to accept that it had passed its peak. When he embarked on a five-month journey to Nigeria in October 1910, and both the Executive Committee and publication were suspended, the days of the British reform association were numbered, as well.[270]

After Morel's return from Nigeria, a large celebration, mentioned at the beginning of this study, was held in his honour in the London Metropole Hotel on 29 May 1911. It was the first of a series of public celebrations of the British reformers. In front of 170 distinguished and international guests, but with the noticeable absence of almost all of

266 See 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

267 'The Congo Reform Scheme', from a Special Correspondent, *The Times*, 29 November 1909, 5. A statement wholeheartedly rejected by Doyle a few days later, see Arthur C. Doyle, "The Congo Reforms," Letter to the Editor, *The Times*, 3 March 1909, 4

268 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 368.

269 Morel, *Great Britain*, 6 ('change'). Also see Edmund D. Morel, *The Future of the Congo* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1909), 18.

270 See Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 81. For Morel, Nigeria became a prime example of a just and pleasant colonial state, see Edmund D. Morel, *Nigeria* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1911).

the religious Congo activists, a personal fund of 4,000 pounds was presented, which had been initiated by Casement and Doyle.[271]

The same month, Morel published the last evidence of atrocities, a report from a British Baptist missionary. Increasingly, he focused on European diplomacy as his field of publication, and the activity of the British reform association faded away. About a year later, a travel report by John Harris offered a largely glorious image of the new colonial reality.[272] In March 1912, Morel published a last pamphlet still arguing to withhold recognition since not all demands of the Association were fulfilled, nor was "a return to the old evil principles" impossible. However, he had little illusion about the state of the campaign. "The concluding phases of a great public movement, when the main object of its promoters has been attained, is perhaps, in a measure, the most trying", he admitted, and believed that "[t]he Congo Reform movement cannot hope to escape the general rule". A few weeks later, on 1 May 1912, the Executive Committee gathered for the last meeting, and two months later, Morel himself declared that the Free State system had finally been successfully abolished. When the Foreign Office promised the formal recognition of Belgian Congo in November 1912, Morel initiated the liquidation of the reform association.[273]

Finally, on 16 July 1913, "the curtain rings down" on the British campaign which would gather for the last meeting in the Westminster Palace Hotel in London. It was once more an impressive assembly, mostly defined by long eulogies and praises for Morel, but it remained familiar and lacked the presence of international delegates. Again, many of the prominent missionaries from the movement did not attend the celebration. The Association announced that "success […] has attended the long struggle waged by the Congo Reform Association on behalf of the natives of the Congo", and expressed "the belief that its main purposes have now been secured, and that its labours may be honourably brought to a conclusion". Morel himself ceremonially affirmed his personal victory and solemnly declared, "the native of the Congo is once more a free man".[274]

2.3 'The deep interest of all classes': Race, gender, class and the reform movement

The previous historiographic outline of the origins, evolution and deployment of the British and American Congo reform movement presented an international humanitarian campaign that was pioneering in its methods and extraordinary in its scope. However, regarding actors, it mostly complied with the 19th-century tradition of philanthropism and abolitionism prevalent within the aristocratic, political, economic and

271 See Cromer, *Public Presentation*; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 436–7.

272 See Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*.

273 Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Present State of the Congo Question* (London: Hughes, 1912), 4 ('concluding', 'escape'), 5 ('return').

274 Speech of Morel on the last meeting of the Congo Reform Association, reproduced in Edmund D. Morel, *Red Rubber*, new and rev. ed. (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1919), 224 ('curtain'); last resolution of the Congo Reform Association, quoted in ibid., 224 ('success', 'belief'); Morel quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 206 ('native'). Also see Grant, "Christian Critics", 52.

religious elites of Victorian Britain, as much as the 'progressive', evangelical and bourgeois intellectual circles of New England. Both the American and the British reform associations were, in 1904, fashioned as top-down political pressure groups that were initially more concerned with recruiting influence, prestige and money than acquiring a popular or mass base. Their political strategy focused on influencing public opinion and lobbying policy-makers in the Foreign and Colonial Office, or rather the White House, while their arena was an idealised, bourgeoisie public sphere.

Like this general public, then, Congo activism was organised as an elitist, gendered and racialised entity. The British reform association was led by parliamentarians, former and future government officials, influential merchants, senior humanitarian activists, leaders of evangelical missionary societies, journalists, editors and authors, and presided by Bishops and Lords. The board of the American reform association was formed by university presidents, notable academics, newspaper editors, authors, senior solicitors, influential politicians and reformist ministers. No women, no African, and only one Black American were listed as leading activists on a national level. As such, the leadership of the Congo reform movement on both sides of the Atlantic is commonly and rightfully described as a circle of well-off and well-born 'white' men.[275]

At times, it has been implied that evidence of racism (like of classist formulations and gender bias) within the reform discourse were a result of this social composition of the movement.[276] However, such an argument appears to approach racism as a, primarily, structural phenomenon, be it codified in 'discourse' or 'identity', separated from the social agency of the Congo reformers. Moreover, by suggesting that Congo reform was a 'white', male and bourgeoisie movement merely based on its administrative structure and historiographic (self-)representation, one runs the risk reproduce of reproducing exclusion of voices from the margins. In contrast, the following pages approach the social structure of the Congo reform movement beyond this view and understand the campaign as a structured social entity. The focus on the limited but present Black, female and working-class contributions to the Congo controversy acknowledge the ability of these marginalised groups to speak, as well as their difficulty in being heard in the debate. The dominant circles of Congo activists indeed contained and sanctioned these contributions, and henceforth actively shaped Congo reform as a white, male and elitist campaign.

Black Congo critics

When the Congo reform movement reached its peak, hundreds of thousands of Americans and Britons were able to meet some of the inhabitants of the notorious Free State face to face. Yet no one came to them to listen, and the Congolese visitors indeed were not there to speak. Instead, they were brought to the imperial metropole by American and British businessmen to be presented in human exhibitions and racist freak shows. At the St. Louis World Fair in 1904, nine men from the Congo were presented in two fenced compounds, where they were expected to live for about five months, in

275 See Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 211.
276 See ibid., 147; Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 7.

accordance with the racist conception of their 'savage' origin. One of them stayed in the United States, and during September 1906 in New York, vast crowds of spectators gathered day after day to laugh, marvel and enjoy themselves at a similar public humiliation. Ota Benga, the so-called 'pygmy in the cage', was staged behind bars and exhibited with orangutans in the Monkey House of the Bronx Zoo.[277] At the same time, between June 1905 and November 1907, a group of six 'pygmies', four men and two women from Eastern Congo, filled theatre and music halls throughout the United Kingdom, and they appeared at garden parties in London and even in the British parliament. They were also reduced to "objects of curiosity to amusement-seeking", presented in full arms in a zoo or in stage settings that allegedly represented their homes in the Congolese forests.[278]

Many American Congo activists might have sympathised with the sharp protest of the Black American community, which eventually brought an end to the dehumanising yet extremely successful human exposition of Ota Benga in New York. Likewise, the British reformers were probably equally repelled by the inglorious 'pygmy' spectacle. The Aborigines' Protection Society attempted to prevent the display of the six Africans, and Roger Casement and Edmund D. Morel were full of contempt for the "addlepated dwarf impresario" Colonel James J. Harrison, a big game hunter and traveller, who had brought the group to Great Britain in June 1905. However, their public outrage about the "aggressive controversialist" seemed more fuelled by the fact that Harrison publicly attacked Morel and defended Léopold's Congo "under cover of giving […] his experiences while collecting pygmies" in Eastern Congo than by the process of 'collecting' human beings in the first place.[279]

In fact, nothing suggests that the humanitarian activists, committed to "make the voice of the [Congolese] native peoples heard" around the world as they were, ever reached out to Ota Benga or Monganga and his group, who all soon spoke English and, in the latter case, also Swahili, to listen to their personal experience of slavery and occupation, or to empower them to speak through their organisation. For the reformers, the "voiceless millions of Central Africa" apparently simply lacked the ability to speak without a 'civilised', humanitarian or evangelical mediator. Being classified as "savage peoples", the Congolese were made distinct from the mature political subjects who could contribute to public discourse. Notwithstanding the multifaceted, thriving anti-colonial resistance of the Congolese population that has been presented above, the public sphere was a strictly segregated arena based on alleged cultural and intellectual maturity and closed for the de-culturalised and infantilised Congolese.[280]

Although the reports, speeches and pamphlets of the reform movement were of course largely based on the experiences of exactly these 'savages', their testimonies only

277 For Ota Benga, who had already been exhibited at the St. Louis World Fair in 1904 and lived in the United States until he committed suicide in 1916, see Pamela Newkirk, *Spectacle* (New York: Amistad, 2015). For the group of Africans that toured Great Britain between 1905 and 1907, see Jeffrey Green, "Edwardian Britain's Forest Pygmies," *History Today* 45, no. 8 (1995).

278 *The Era*, 10 June 1906, quoted in Green, "Britain's Forest Pygmies", 33.

279 Casement to Morel, quoted in ibid., 34 ('impresario'); Edmund D. Morel, "Congo Atrocities," Letter to the Editor, *Morning Post*, 17 July 1905, 6 ('aggressive', 'cover').

280 Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 1 ('make', etc.), 2 ('voiceless', 'savage'). See chapter 3.3 for a discussion of the image of the 'helpless' and 'voiceless' Congolese victims of oppression.

became meaningful and valuable through the multiple processes of translation, authorisation, interpretation and editing by the 'civilised' reformers. In 1904, Casement had suggested that Guinness should consider bringing Africans on his Congo lecture tour; however, neither the American nor the British reformers ever admitted a Congolese man or woman into their ranks, stages, or podiums. To invite a Congolese like Ota Benga, for instance, to communicate directly to an American audience was, in this context, apparently unfeasible.[281] "From one set of people concerned we have, however, never heard", Arthur Conan Doyle could hence remark towards the end of the campaign, "and it is from the Congo folk themselves". However, for the famous author, this was only "one of the odd, and as I think, beautiful features" of the reform movement.[282]

The inclusion of those Africans who had distinguished themselves, even in the accepted Western terms, through education and merit, was hardly better. At the turn of the 20th century, small but growing strata of intellectuals had emerged in South and West Africa, for instance. In close relation to diasporic Africans in Great Britain and the emancipated Black communities in the West Indies and, of course, the United States, they formed associations, published journals and books, and achieved academic merit. Thus, they increasingly contradicted the 'natural' existence of an exclusively 'white' public sphere.[283] An analysis of the donor base of the British reform association through the historian Dean Pavlakis has revealed that a small number of West Africans, primarily traders, government officials and medical doctors had indeed contributed donations to the organisation.[284] Moreover, on the occasion of the public presentation of Morel's testimonial fund, a few written tributes arrived from West Africa. These included a letter signed, among others, by C. Sapara Williams, Member of the Legislative Council on behalf of the Educated Christian Community from Nigeria, and by Edward W. Blyden and J.J. Thomas from Sierra Leone.[285]

On the occasion of a major meeting Casement organised on 7 June 1905 in London, Thomas, a lawyer, was apparently the only African ever invited to the podium of the British reform association.[286] Blyden, a former Liberian statesman with West Indian origins and then the director of Muslim education in Sierra Leone, was one of the most prominent advocates of the Pan-African movement, the "greatest living exponent of the true spirit of African nationality", as a contemporary admired. Although Blyden knew Morel "from the beginning" and became a member of the British reform association, his commitment to the campaign remained superficial. He only once publicly expressed a mild protest concerning the "melancholy rumours" about the mistreatment of the Congolese people. In fact, Blyden was a good friend of Léopold's leading apologist

281 See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128. Recently, Robert Burroughs has focused on the long-overlooked testimonies of Africans about the Congo atrocities; see Burroughs, *African Testimony*.

282 Speech of Doyle, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22 ('set of people', 'beautiful').

283 See Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004); Mcebisi Ndletyana, *African Intellectuals in 19th and Early 20th Century South Africa* (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press, 2008).

284 For monetary contributions of West Africans, see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128.

285 See Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 29–30.

286 See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128.

in England, Alfred Jones, and he never lost faith in the good intentions of the Congo colonisers.[287]

A third West African who was considered a valuable contributor to the reform discourse by British activists was the aforementioned Nigerian merchant Hezakiah A. Shanu. The British subject, who had resided in Boma, was, in fact, a frequent informant of Morel until he committed suicide in July 1905. As stated above, the once well-respected trader had collapsed under the severe public pressure after he was accused of fraud by an Italian Free State officer whom he had approached to gather documents on Morel's instruction.[288]

Moreover, with the exception of the Sierra Leone councillor Thomas in 1905, there is no sign of cooperation between the British humanitarian activists and the proliferating, albeit small in numbers, Black community of Great Britain – dockers and traders in the harbour towns, but also students and intellectuals from the West Indies and Africa – which had its centre in London.[289] "Africa joined in the demonstration", one journalist reported on the occasion of Morel's public reception, where "four or five ebony faces [had been] adding a picturesque touch of colour to the occasion". However, for the assembled Europeans, the African presence was, as this less-than-respectful formulation suggests, merely an exotic ornament.[290]

Although the American reform association was as ignorant towards Congolese or African perspectives as its British counterpart, a number of African-Americans had prominently raised their voice against Léopold's Congo, as the previous chapter has shown. This included the pioneering Congo opponent Williams, the Presbyterian missionary Sheppard and the Tuskegee principal Booker T. Washington.[291]

While the impact of William's reports in 1890 had only a limited public echo, Sheppard's and Washington's later critiques were not as easily dismissed. On home leave in 1893, the former quickly became a "star" among the Southern Presbyterian missionaries. His lectures with "thrilling" tales about cannibals, human sacrifice and personal engagements with 'savage' warriors made Sheppard "one of the most eminent black

287 Casely Hayford, introduction to *West Africa Before Europe, and Other Addresses, Delivered in England in 1901 and 1903*, by Edward W. Blyden (London: C. M. Phillips 1905), ii ('greatest'); Blyden, quoted in Hollis R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 208–9 ('melancholy rumours'). For Blyden's membership in the reform association, see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol I. 1, 253–4; for his friendship with Jones and his general approach towards the Congo atrocities, see Teshale Tibebu, *Edward Wilmot Blyden and the Racial Nationalist Imagination* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 133.

288 See Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 296–300, 330–1; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 46.

289 See Peter Fryer, *Staying Power* (London: Pluto Press, 1984).

290 'Honouring Mr. Morel', *Baptist Times*, 2 June 1911, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 46. The guest list mentions "Hon. and Mrs K. Ajasi of Lagos" and "Mr. and Mrs Benjami of West Africa", ibid., 2.

291 See chapter 2.2. With the Rev. Hall, educated at the Calabar College, Kingston, Jamaica, and in service of the American Baptist Missionary Society, a West Indian missionary also contributed to the reform debate. Hall was in the service of the American Baptist Missionary Society at Irebu between 1889 and 1897, and for several years in the Lower Congo. In 1903, on the personal recommendation of Blyden, he visited Morel in the United Kingdom to report about his experience of ill-treatment of the Congolese through state agents. See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 18–19; Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 85.

men in the United States", celebrated for his explorations of the Kuba Kingdom as the "Black Livingstone".[292]

Washington, whose prominence was probably only paralleled by the fame of the boxer Jack Johnson, was arguably the most reputable African-American of his time.[293] Convinced that an 'up-lifting' scheme through industrial education as pursued by his agriculturally and manually orientated Tuskegee Institute was the only way to achieve a lasting emancipation of the former American slaves, Washington rejected immediate demands for full political and social equality as premature and counterproductive. In a speech at the 'Atlanta Cotton and International Exposition' in September 1895, he famously maintained that in "all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress".[294]

The so-called 'Atlanta Compromise' was widely interpreted as a temporary acceptance of racial segregation in the New South. Black Conservatives and 'white' Liberal alike endorsed Washington's 'accommodationism';[295] however, civil rights activists such as the sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois furiously opposed any postponement of civil and political rights. Such a 'compromise' "practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races", Du Bois asserted, and supports the dangerous conclusion "that the South is justified in its present attitude toward the Negro because of the Negro's degradation".[296]

The relation of more radical African-American intellectuals to the Congo reform movement remained distant. In his literary magazine *The Voice of the Negro*, the editor Jesse M. Barber, together with Du Bois, organised in the civil rights-oriented 'Niagara Movement' and encouraged his readers to support the Congo Reform Association with donations – however, for at least partially "selfish" reasons, as he admitted: a blunt international action against outrages in the Free State could "pave the way for meetings of protest in great European centres of population against American atrocities", the journalist and teacher hoped. After all, there "are Congos […] right here at home", as he noted in references to widespread lynching and 'race' riots.[297] In later years, Du Bois also held that the murderous Jim Crow regime could legitimately be called the "American Congo". Moreover, in his draft resolution for the first Pan-African Conference held in London in July 1900, Du Bois had demanded an independent future for the Congo

292 'Thrilling Tale of Missionary Work', *The Times Dispatch*, 22 January 1906, 5 ('thrilling'); Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 108 ('eminent'), 159–160 ('Black Livingstone').

293 See Clair St. Drake, "The Tuskegee Connection," *Society* 20, no. 4 (1983): 82.

294 Booker T. Washington: The Atlanta Exposition Address, reproduced in Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (New York: Doubleday, 1907), 221–22 ('separate').

295 Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 292–93.

296 Du Bois, W.E. B[urghardt], *The Souls of Black Folk*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1903), 50 ('practically'), 57 ('degradation').

297 'More About the Congo', *The Voice of the Negro* IV, no. 1 (1907), 15 ('right here'), Title of a speech of Du Bois on the annual meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in New York City, see 'American Congo to Be Subject at This Gathering', *Cleveland Advocate*, 27 December 1919, 1 ('American Congo'). This analogy was similarly used two years later by the Black freedom fighter William Pickens, see Nan E. Woodruff, *American Congo* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003), 250.

and other African and West Indian colonies. [298] However, as later chapters discuss, the British and American reform activists showed little intent to widen their public protest to a criticism of racism or colonialism as such. When Washington accepted the request of the Baptist missionary Barbour to become a vice-president of the American reform association in 1904, Du Bois left the field of Congo activism to his conservative antagonist.

The 'white' majority of the Congo reform movement was more ready to accept the support of two figureheads of Black conservatism such as Sheppard and Washington. The two prominent men could guarantee public attention and offer valuable contacts with the White House and President Roosevelt. Most importantly, however, they shared some of the racist disdain and imperial agenda of their 'white' fellow campaigners. Like Williams before them, and in contrast to Du Bois, Sheppard and Washington were convinced that the African 'savages' needed foreign tutelage and that African-Americans could valuably contribute to an imperial 'civilising mission'. Sheppard had been one of the first to follow Williams's demand that the "American Negro" should become "the educated and enlightened leader and civilizer in Africa", and Washington deliberately cooperated with the German colonial authorities to install cotton farms led by Tuskegee-trained instructors in the Cameroons "to bring the great mass of the natives under the better and higher influences of our Christian civilization", as he called it.[299]

Under these premises, Sheppard and Washington were accepted and appreciated as legitimate contributors to an otherwise 'white' public debate. The *Boston Herald* at one point proudly praised the former as the "American Negro Hero" for his opposition to the Congo atrocities,[300] and Morel hailed the latter, in a similar tone to that of other prominent reformers, as "the distinguished Negro scholar and manager of the Tuskegee Institute".[301]

Nonetheless, as later chapters reveal, the example of these African-American Congo opponents made the ambivalences and ruptures of racist representation and political practices at the turn of the 20th century particularly tangible. This period, as has been discussed earlier, was marked by discursive shifts from cultural to biological stereotypes and the installation of racially segregated 'white man's countries' around the globe.[302] While on his mission post in the Kasai, the Black missionary Sheppard, for example, was accepted as a member of the 'white' colonial master class,[303] he could never escape the strict racial boundaries that dominated his Virginian home. In fact, Sheppard had been long reluctant to join the public protest against Léopold's Congo colony after the

298 W.E. [B]urghardt Du Bois [draft author], "'To the Nations of the World'," in Alexander Walters, *My Life and Work* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1917), 257–60, here 259.

299 George W. Williams, quoted in Dworkin, *Congo Love Song*, 20 ('I want'); Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 376 ('bring', 'heritage'). For Tuskegee's colonial endeavours, see Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 133–72; Zine Magubane, "Science, Reform, and the 'Science of Reform'," *Current Sociology* 62, no. 4 (2014). Also see chapters 4.1 and 5.1 for more details.

300 'American Negro Hero of Congo', *Boston Herald*, 17 October 1909, quoted in William E. Phipps, *William Sheppard* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2002), 171.

301 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 199 ('distinguished'). As chapter 4.3 takes up, Morel and other reformers were greatly impressed by Washington's accommodationism and segregated education schemes.

302 See chapter 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.

303 See chapter 5.1.

stir caused by his report in 1899. "Being a colored man", he had feared, "I would not be understood criticizing a white government before white people". The Hampton-trained missionary was no revolutionary and was reluctant to jeopardise the few privileges he could achieve as a well-educated, prominent middle-class Black man by challenging the all-dominant 'colour-line'. With brutally open satisfaction, one of his white contemporaries noted that he "was such a good darky. When he returned from Africa, he remembered his place and always came to the back door".[304]

Even within the Congo reform movement, African-American Congo critics remained marginalised, were affected by racist discrimination and prejudices, and saw their reputation and credibility challenged – and not only by their political opponents.[305] The leading British Congo activist Harry Johnston, for instance, generally had an antipathy towards the 'Westernised' "American type of Negroes", as Booker T. Washington was warned. Likewise, Morel seemed to believe that the Westernised African was morally "deteriorated by his education", as the Gold Coast journalist W.F. Hutchison furiously asserted. The "educated native is getting tired of being girded at as a degenerate", he responded to the leading British reform activist in *The African Times and Orient Review* in 1912.[306]

Du Bois suggested that Morel "suspects and rather dislikes the educated African" a few years later, as well.[307] Tellingly, while Morel generally described Washington and also Blyden with respect,[308] British reformers either refrained from indicating that the pioneering Congo critics Williams and Sheppard were Black or failed to mention them at all. None of the three would ever have their photograph on the cover of the *West African Mail,* which featured every month a prominent 'white' Congo activist. [309]

Moreover, the letters of solidarity published by Arthur Conan Doyle in the *London Times* in 1909, after the notorious Compagnie du Kasai had charged Sheppard and Morrison with libel following a critical article in a local bulletin, only mention the 'white' defendant, despite the broad international media attention to Sheppard's fate, as well.[310] Together with the absence of Sheppard in Morel's unfinished historiography of the Congo reform movement, these instances have been rightfully interpreted as hinting

304 Sheppard quoted in Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 161 ('colored man'); Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p. ('darky'); see Shaloff, *Reform in Leopold's Congo*, 47–51.

305 See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 18.

306 Ernest Lyon to Booker T. Washington, 19 September 1908, quoted in *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 14 vols., ed. Louis R. Harlan (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1972–1989), Vol. 9, 626 ('American Type'); W. F. Hutchison, "Mr. E. D. Morel and the Land Question in West Africa," *The African Times and Orient Review* 1, no. 4 (1912): 144. ('educated') I owe that find to Andrew Zimmerman.

307 Du Bois, W.E. B[urghardt], "Books," *The Nation* 111, no. 2882 (1920): 351 ('suspects'). Du Bois here reviewed Morel's latest book, Edmund D. Morel, *The Black Man's Burden* (Manchester: National Labour Press, 1920).

308 On Washington, see Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 199; on Blyden, see Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 85.

309 For remarks on Sheppard, see Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 327; Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 79; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 195; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 259. For remarks on Williams, see Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 445; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 320, where Morel even identifies Williams as British. The only Black person presented on the cover of the *West African Mail* was Shanu, after his death in 1905. See Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 212.

310 See chapter 2.2 for more details on the trial.

at the desire to actively frame the reform movement as a 'white" campaign and make Black actors, no matter how 'civilised' they were, invisible.[311]

Female Congo critics

In fact, some comparable dynamics can be observed in the relation of female agents and the male majority of the reform movement. Like Africans and Black Americans, women on both sides of the Atlantic did not simply refrain from participation in the reform discourse, as the notion of a 'male' campaign suggests. However, women faced a generally unfriendly reception and were largely excluded from the executive level of the reform associations, and their contributions often remained uncredited and unrecognised in the movement's self-representation.

The early 20th century was marked by sharp conflicts about the social and political rights of women, and also about gender hierarchies in the family, work and everyday relations. Both bourgeois and working-class women organisations in Great Britain and the United States pursued an increasingly militant fight for female suffrage, which was fiercely opposed by adherents of the patriarchal status quo. The implementation of full political rights was hardly achieved anywhere until the end of World War I. Nonetheless, already, the increasing self-organisation of women and participation in non-parliamentarian politics was radically changing their access to and influence in the public arena. In particular, women increasingly shaped the numerous religious and philanthropic organisations and campaigns of the late Victorian age.[312]

The Congo reform movement in Great Britain, in contrast, initially had stronger ties to the spheres of free trade and imperial humanitarianism, which were, at the turn of the century, still considered fields of 'gentlemen policy'. Initially, the leading circles of the reform association were almost exclusively male.[313] Nonetheless, with Mary Kingsley, who had merged her experiences as a Victorian 'Lady traveller' in West Africa into two long books, one of the most influential intellectuals behind the secular Congo activists was a woman, although her death in 1900 prevented her from contributing directly to the emerging campaign. Morel in particular, but also Bourne and American Congo critics such as the political scientist Paul S. Reinsch, referred to Kingsley's work positively, as did many other politicians, administrators and scientists.[314] In a personal epitaph, Morel elaborately honoured the "good woman with a gigantic intellect", albeit not without assuring his belief that this intellectual leadership of a woman was 'of

311 See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 18; Austin, "Extraordinary Generation", 86.

312 For Great Britain, see Sarah Richardson, "Politics and Gender," in *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Chris Williams (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 174–88. For the New England context, see John T. Cumbler, "The Politics of Charity," *Journal of Social History* 14, no. 1 (1980): 99–111.

313 See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 113.

314 See, for instance, Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 1; Morel, "Economic Development", 135; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 92; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 90; Henry R. F. Bourne, *Blacks and Whites in Africa* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1901), 11; Paul S. Reinsch, *Colonial Administration* (New York: The Macmillan company, 1905), 64; Clara C. Park, "Native Women in Africa," reprinted by the Congo Committee, Massachusetts Commission for International Justice from the Boston Transcript, 4 November 1904, 1, 3.

course' exceptional. She was "such a womanly woman in every sense of the word that it appeared almost incredible she should have grasped the essentialities of West African politics with such comprehensiveness and scientific perception", Morel noted.[315]

Kingsley and Roger Casement's mentor, Alice Stopford Green, an Irish historian who had founded the African Society in honour of Kingsley, played an important role in the formation of the British reform association. Well-known in academic and literary circles that were engaged in liberal African policy, she successfully established contacts and friendships between many of the Congo reformers-to-be, and she remained an active member of the association throughout its existence.[316]

However, on both sides of the Atlantic, the most influential woman within the reform movement, as described above, was doubtless Alice Seeley Harris. Together with her husband John, Alice Harris ran the missionary posts Ikau and later Baringa for the Congo Balolo Mission from 1898 until 1905. As mentioned before, she was a talented photographer and recorded evidence of mutilations in the region controlled by the Abir trust. Her photographs were widely used in pamphlets, books and articles to illustrate the terror of the Congo regime. After returning to the United Kingdom in 1905, Alice and John joined the reform association and crucially partook in the transformation of Congo reform into a modern, popular and international campaign. They revolutionised its propaganda efforts through the establishment of magic lantern lectures, which were based on projections of Alice's photographs. As one of the most successful speakers of the reform campaign, Alice delivered hundreds of lectures in Great Britain and the United States.[317]

Together with her husband John, Alice became 'Joint Secretary' of what soon became the most active auxiliary of the reform association in London. In this position, she closely worked together with Violet Simpson, a writer of historical novels and short stories, who was Assistant Honorary Secretary of the reform association in London between 1904 and 1907. Edith G. Harrington, the lead clerk in the London office, was a woman as well, who ran the business of the reform association during Morel's trip to Nigeria from 1910 to 1911 basically alone.[318] Moreover, since church organisations were an important women's domain beyond the radical feminist organisations, the growing non-conformist affiliation with the British reform movement since 1906 significantly increased the fraction of women as activists and supporters, as well – as indicated by a rising percentage of donations from women, for instance.[319]

315 Foreword to Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, xiii ('intellect'), xiv ('womanly'). For Kingsley's travels, see Mary H. Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897); Mary H. Kingsley, *West African Studies* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1899); for Kingsley's influence on the reform movement, see Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 16–18; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 115.

316 See Angus Mitchell, "Alice Stopford Green and the Origins of the African Society," *History Ireland* 14, no. 4 (2006): 22; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 115–17.

317 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 67–74.

318 See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 118.

319 See ibid., 114; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 74–76. For the role of women in evangelical missionary organisations, see, for instance, Kimberly Hill, "Careers across Color Lines" (PhD Thesis, University of North Carolina, 2008). The wife of the missionary leader Guinness published a pamphlet as well; see Mrs. Henry Grattan Guinness, *Congo Slavery* (London: Regions Beyond Missionary Union, 1904).

Alice Harris attempted to further strengthen the increasing female perspectives in the Congo controversy by explicitly collecting photographic evidence made by the wives of Congo missionaries and by issuing a pamphlet on the violence of (both 'white' and Black) men against Congolese women.[320] Notably, Harris initiated the formation of a women's branch of the reform association in April 1909 to segregate future audiences of lantern lectures based on gender. She hoped that female-only audiences would allow more explicit depiction of sexual assaults that "could scarcely be dealt with in a mixed audience". The radical suffragist Jane Cobden Unwin, who was a committeewoman at the London auxiliary, took over the presidency of the women's auxiliary. The new branch, like Harris' other projects, was soon impeded by the increasing rupture of her husband John with Morel, however, which eventually forced both to resign from the leadership of the reform association.[321]

The religious influence was initially even more significant in the American movement than in the United Kingdom. However, although female American missionaries spoke out, as well, the American reformers lacked an outstanding female voice like Alice Harris. Lucia A. Mead, a leading women's rights and peace activist, was a member of the American reform association. However, her published work shows only minor references to the "Congo horror".[322] Similarly, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, one of the most significant national women and social reform organisations, petitioned the American president and Léopold on behalf of the Congolese people. Still, their pledges for a moral (and sober) empire only marginally included Congolese topics.[323]

A 1904 article by Clara Cahill Park, wife of Robert Park, hints at the complexity of the empowerment and marginalisation of women in the reform campaign. In pointing to the "great mother spirit" of women, Clara attempts to motivate other women to join the agitation. However, her call was charged with conservative gender expectations. Due to their "superior gift of sympathy", women are always the "last resort of the helpless and the forsaken", the text argued, while the same gift "unfits us [women] for the stern business of politics". Hence, Park concluded, in "the grand division of labor between the sexes it is right that we should know the role which our limitations have assigned to us. Let us, at any rate, not fail in the part that nature and tradition have given us". In a similar reproduction of traditional gender roles in expectation of a mythical 'mother spirit',

320 See Alice Seeley Harris, *Enslaved Womanhood of the Congo* (London: Congo Reform Association [U.K.], 1908).

321 Alice Harris, quoted in Kevin Grant, "The Limits of Exposure," in *Humanitarian Photography*, ed. Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno, Human Rights in History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 83 ('scarcely). For the women's branch; see ibid., 83–85; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 117.

322 Lucia T.A. Mead, *Patriotism and the New Internationalism* (Boston: Ginn & Company [Published for the International Union], 1906), 46 ('horror'). For an American female missionary writing against the Congo atrocities, see chapter five in Ellen C. Parsons, *Christus Liberator* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906), 202–37.

323 See Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 58.

a special "Appeal to the Women of the United States" by Morel and Robert Park focused mainly on emotional descriptions of the fate of Congolese women and children.[324]

Clearly, such appeals explicitly did not target women who battled this gendered exclusion from the political sphere. Except for Jane Cobden and perhaps Alice Harris, the more significant women in the Congo reform discourse were not advocates of women rights. Alice Stopford Green's influence was significant, yet her role was limited mainly to that of the classical female *salonnière* culture. Although she was a politically active woman, in contrast to Unwin, she was no supporter of women's suffrage. Neither was Kingsley, who was even explicitly anti-feminist and believed that cultural hierarchies between the sexes were centred in biology, as were hierarchies between races.[325] Hence, the conservativism of women such as Clara Park, Green or Kingsley concerning gender relations, without doubt, limited their influence on the patriarchal structure of Congo reform.

Moreover, the influence of women in the Congo reform movement was actively constricted by the agency of their male fellow campaigners and the dominant mechanism of a broader, established patriarchal discourse. Efforts of the male leaders of the American and British reform associations to increase support from women were more motivated by hopes of raising donations from well-to-do women in periods of a threatening shortage of funding than by the earnest desire to increase women's participation in the leading circles of the campaign. Although Violet Simpson, for instance, saw herself as a leading Congo reformer, her capability was continuously challenged by Morel, Casement and John Harris, who treated the unmarried women like a barely competent office assistant. If women still managed to have a lasting influence on Congo reform despite the restrictions of gender customs and practices, their work often still remained obscured. The immense contributions of Mary Morel, for instance, who supported her husband as a personal assistant and secretary, remained almost unnoticed.[326]

While the Victorian custom of merging the names of married women with their husband's already obscured female agency, the deliberate choices or carelessness of male activists intensified this oppressive custom. Alice Harris' photographs were often initially credited to her husband John or published without authorship at all. She was hardly ever used as a primary source for the reform movement's atrocity reports; authentication almost exclusively needed the seal of the "masculine gaze".[327]

Working-class Congo critics

Some years after the dissolution of the British reform association, Morel regretfully reflected on the limited political focus of the past campaign: "I should not have limited

324 Clara C. Park, "Native Women", 1 ('mother spirit' etc.); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*.

325 See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 117. "The mental difference between the two races [black and white] is very similar to that between men and women among ourselves", Kingsley once noted. "A great woman, either mentally or physically, will excel an indifferent man, but no woman ever equals a really great man". Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, 659).

326 Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 119–20.

327 See for instance Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, page facing 49; Grant, "Limits of Exposure", 74 ('gaze').

myself […] to approaching the statesman, the administrator, the heads of the churches, and the man in the street", he argued, "I should have gone direct to the leaders of the Labour movement".[328]

In its early days, British Congo agitation almost exclusively aimed to "get at the hearts of the wealthy".[329] The reformers lacked any prominent support from Labour leaders, while Conservative and, with steadily growing proportion, Liberal politicians supported the British campaign. Likewise, early funding of the British reform association was composed almost entirely of large and medium grants. The contributions of the aristocracy remained limited, but wealthy manufacturers, such as the chocolate mogul Cadbury and merchants such as Holt, contributed the majority of donations to the British reform association. Small amounts hinting at working-class supporters remained almost non-existent.[330]

Only after 1906 did the rising concern for popular support imply an opening to different political milieus. With the non-conformist spheres as a new popular backbone, middle-class influence in the British reform association significantly increased, as is indicated by the rising quantity of small- and medium-scale donations at this time. While working-class backing remained marginal at the base, Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the British Independent Labour Party and freshly elected Member of Parliament, joined the Executive Committee of the British reform association in 1906 at the specific demand of the Belgian Socialists.[331]

Since the acrimonious debates surrounding the Second Boer War (1899–1902), the British socialist movement, until then almost exclusively concerned with domestic policy and social reform, had developed an increasingly imperial ambition. Despite internal disputes, the Fabian Society, for instance, publicly supported the war in Transvaal to secure the goldfields of Southern Africa for "civilization as a whole". If, moreover, it could be ensured that "the British flag [would] carry with it wherever it flies" social reforms, imperialism would be beneficial for international socialism, after all, Bernard Shaw held.[332]

Although he had opposed the Fabian's pro-war policy, by the time of his affiliation with Congo reform, the future Prime Minister MacDonald similarly promoted a conciliation of the socialist movement with imperial policy. Instead of "debating whether we should break the Empire to pieces", he advised its "democratisation" guided by the "politics of the industrious classes". The Free State was, for MacDonald, an example of the capitalist and exploitative foundations of Empire he pledged to overcome.[333]

Internationally, at the beginning of the 20th century, the labour movement was deeply divided over questions of imperialism. After three years of preparation, the In-

328 Morel, *Black Man's Burden*, 153. In 1918, Morel became a member of the Independent Labour Party and in 1922, he won a seat in the House of Commons.

329 Holt to Morel, quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 172 ('wealthy').

330 See Grant, "Christian Critics", 40; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 127.

331 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 75; Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 241; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 100.

332 Bernard Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire* (London: Grant Richards, 1900), 23 ('civilization'), 54 ('flag').

333 James R. MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire* (London: George Allen, 1907), 108 ('debating', 'politics'), 102 ('democratization'). For comments on the Free State, see ibid., 23–24.

ternational Socialist Congress of 1907 maintained its fundamental opposition against colonialism as such by only a marginal majority. The "opportunist" position of MacDonald, the Fabians and also large parts of the German Social Democracy that argued for a "socialist colonial policy" that could fulfil the essential tasks of the 'civilising mission' without slipping into the capitalistic mechanism of plunder and exploitation became increasingly strong.[334]

In the American context, socialist debates about imperialism focused almost exclusively on the United States' expansionism since 1898. Samuel Gompers, president of the more reformist American Federation of Labor, was a vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League. The Federation had opposed the "new and far-reaching policy, commonly known as 'imperialism' or 'expansion'" for causing militarism and the potential immigration of foreign workers. However, by 1904, when the American reform association was formed with the large support of anti-imperialists, as described above, Gompers had left the League, and the Federation of Labor abandoned its critical position towards imperialism.[335]

The more radical parts of the American labour movement surrounding the Industrial Workers of the World and the Socialist Party under Eugene V. Debs upheld their strict hostility towards the increasingly aggressive foreign policy. However, in contrast to Gompers, Debs refused any entanglement in bourgeoisie colonial reform policy. "The capitalists may have the tariff, finance, imperialism and other dust-covered and moth-eaten issues entirely to themselves", Debs argued a month before the first great American Congo debates in 1904. The working people "know by experience and observation that […] imperialism and anti-imperialism all mean capitalist rule and wage-slavery". Under a strict primacy of class conflict and domestic policy, a decidedly anti-colonial programme seemed redundant – as did an explicit anti-racism: "There is no 'Negro problem', apart from the general labor problem", Debs had argued earlier.[336]

Consequently, American working-class newspapers such as the *International Socialist Review* seemed to have little interest in Congo reform. When the Congo atrocities were (briefly) mentioned, they were used as one example of many of the capitalist class's "secret […] to slay in order to live in idleness, luxury and ease". The limited reforms after annexation in 1908 were sarcastically dismissed as displaying "the beauties of bourgeois government" at its best.[337] Hence, although President Roosevelt conveyed amazement about the "deep interest shown by all classes" for the Congo controversy, the American

334 Vladimir I. Lenin, "The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart," in *V. I. Lenin*, ed. Clemens Dutt, Vol. 13, 82–93 (Moscow: Progress Publisher, 1978), 86 ('opportunist'), 87 ('socialist'); see E. Belfort Bax, "The International Congress and Colonial Policy," *Justice*, 14 September 1907, 3.

335 'American Federation of Labor Proceedings in 1898', quoted in David Montgomery, "Workers' Movements in the United States Confront Imperialism," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 1 (2008): 10 ('far-reaching'). Also see ibid., 17.

336 Eugene V. Debs, "The Socialist Party and the Working Class," *The International Socialist Review* 5, no. 3 (1904): 130 ('capitalists'); 'Debs on the Color Question', *Appeal to Reason*, 4 July 1904 [Excerpt from an article in *Indianapolis World*, 20 June 1903], 2 ('Negro problem').

337 Robin E. Dunbar, "Major Barbara and Petit Bourgeois Philosophy," *The International Socialist Review* 8, no. 6 (1907): 417 ('secret'); 'International Notes', *International Socialist Review* IX, no. 4 (1909): 299 ('beauties). The International Socialist Review, for instance, did not report any Congo-related articles between July 1904 and July 1907, the heyday of the American reform campaign.

Congo campaign was supported by Republicans and Democrats, but not by Socialists. Working-class support even fell short of the already marginal British Labour affiliation and remained almost untraceable.[338]

Thus, to describe the Congo activists in Great Britain and the United States as predominantly 'white', male and upper-to-middle-class is certainly not wrong. However, Black, female and working-class contemporaries spoke out against the Congo atrocities, as well. Although they were inhibited by a discriminative environment, some marginalised voices were admitted as valuable contributors to the reform debate. Strikingly, however, most of those Black and female activists who were accepted into the inner circles of the reform movement generally complied with or at least did not openly challenge the racist and gender hierarchies informing and structuring the Congo reform discourse. Theirs was, additionally, an inclusion based on the fundamental exclusion of others. Black, female and working-class supporters of the reform movement shared the belief in the evolutionary backwardness and cultural inferiority of the Congolese population. The humanitarian programme to 'speak on behalf' of the natives of the Congo more or less allusively implied the exclusion of African speakers and discursively reproduced in the metropolis the material colonial hierarchies in the periphery. The shared faith in the legitimacy of the imperial subjugation of Africa and Africans bound together Congo reformers across 'race', class or gender.

Moreover, and despite this consensus, the inclusion of speakers from the social margins of the imperial societies itself remained peripheral. Women remained totally excluded, while working-class and Black activists with but one exception were excluded from the national executive level of the associations in Great Britain and the United States. Moreover, Black and female contributions were downplayed or veiled by the dominant activists with different mechanisms and were excluded from the authorised self-representation of the discourse. In this context, it is hardly surprising that radical anti-racist Black, feminist female or anti-imperialist working-class individuals and organisations with few exceptions refrained from affiliating themselves with a campaign that mainly contradicted their claims. To conclude these preliminary observations, Congo reform did not merely become a 'white', male and middle-to-upper-class movement by the addition of its particular identities, but as an effect of its discriminative structure as an organisation and the racist agency of its leading members. It was not racist because it was 'white' but 'white' because it was racist.

Hence, the social structure of the reform movement cannot be the end, but only the starting point for a critical analysis of racist dynamics within the Congo reform discourse. The following pages extend these preliminary observations through an in-depth analysis of the textual outcomes of this humanitarian movement. In unscrambling the evident, encoded and hidden narratives of racist stereotyping, racist politics and racist

338 Roosevelt to Grey, quoted in Meisenzahl and Peace, "Bellwether Fiction", 64 ('deep'). Also see Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 75. The Belgian socialists exuberantly set themselves apart from the problematic positions of both reductionist American and imperial British Labour. Under the leadership of Emil Vandervelde, they vigorously led the Belgian opposition against the atrocious Congo policy and developed a close affiliation to the reform movement. Still, they adhered to their principles that "any colonial policy is unsocialistic" ('International Notes', *International Socialist Review* VIII, no. 12 (1908): 787) and fiercely opposed Belgian annexation of the Congo until the end.

societalisation, this analysis shows that the racism of the Congo reform movement is neither flaw nor blind spot, nor merely owed to the zeitgeist, the identity or unrelated prejudice of its speakers. Instead, racism is revealed as the basic foundation of this pioneering 'human rights' movement.