4. Congo reform and the crisis of racist politics

> "Yet it must be confessed that fifteen years of Belgian rule have not resulted in anything approaching the ideal 'Congo Free State' imagined by some sentimental political-philanthropists in the earlier '80s".[1]
> Harry H. Johnston

Racism, it has been maintained, is a fundamentally "political phenomenon rather than a mere set of ideas". Hence, while the study of prejudices, stereotypes and theories remains its sine qua non, these can never comprise the full scope of racism analysis. Instead, critical research must also understand how racist 'ideas' are turned in programmes, projects and state practices.[2] *Chapter 4.1* shows that the formation of colonial rule over the Congo Basin is an exceptional example of the close relationship between discursive and political forms of colonial racism. As the Liberal British Congo reformer Herbert Samuel once noted in front of the British House of Commons, the "Congo Free State stood in a position unique in the history of the world" because it was "[not] created by gradual evolution or by right of conquest, nor by fission from some pre-existing State". Instead, its foundation was largely discursive, as is shown below. Successfully, King Léopold II appealed to the 'civilising mission' narrative and promised rival national and social fractions of the imperial community participation in his allegedly popular colonial movement and international colony. As a result, Léopold became entrusted as guardian of a universal hegemonic mission to open up the Congo Basin to civilisation and trade. Eventually, the Free State was applauded as the materialisation of a hegemonic historic structure of European colonialism in 'Darkest Africa'.[3]

However, as Harry Johnston's initially quoted remarks suggest, many of Léopold's supporters were soon shocked to realise that this 'ideal' Congo Free State never came into being. *Chapter 4.2* discusses how the Congo reform movement diagnosed a deep

1 Harry H. Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905 [1899]), 230.

2 Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination*, 1 ('political phenomenon'); see Wieviorka, *Arena of racism*, 40.

3 Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1298 ('unique').

and lasting crisis of colonial rule in Central Africa. This political and institutional crisis of racism within the Congo Scandal had three dimensions. While the 'African' or 'native' question concerned atrocities against the colonised population, the 'European' question consisted of broken pledges towards the imperial community through monopolisation and nationalisation. Finally, the 'white supremacy question' pointed to the dramatic corrosion of colonial hegemony in Central Africa identified by the reform movement.[4]

Ultimately, regional, continental and global European dominance was at stake. As *chapter 4.3* presents, the ideological foundation of the reform movement was the belief in the legitimacy of imperial rule in Africa. Its major concern was to stabilise the stumbling historic structure of European rule over the Congo through the implementation of a 'practical and humane' colonial reform policy based on the principles of the Berlin Congo Conference of 1885. While the movement was split into an assimilationist and segregationist stream, there was broad consensus that the scandalous Free State system should be replaced by a colonial rule based on commercial freedom and 'native' land tenure. At the same time, the appropriate institutional framework for a new colonial structure remained a controversial issue. While some reformers held on to an international scheme of governance of the Congo, others preferred its 'normalisation' through integration into a national empire. Eventually, the reform movement recognised the 'Belgian solution' as an acceptable resolution of the crisis of racist politics in the Congo.

4.1 'Boundaries occupied and guarded': Léopold's promise of colonial hegemony in Central Africa

According to the pioneering international relations theorist Robert Cox, two preconditions are necessary to establish the extraordinary stable order that he termed a 'hegemonic historic structure'. For one, an ideology has to be established that transcends social and material inequality. Hence, the leadership of the dominant has to be expressed in terms of a 'universal hegemonic mission' that is shared in principle by all factions of the powerful and also those without power. Moreover, no internal or external rivalling power structures should exist. In the resulting harmonic fit between material power, collective images and institutions, a historically specific and spatially limited hegemonic order could emerge in which open power relations tend to be eclipsed.[5]

The following chapter claims that the establishment of such a hegemonic colonial order in Central Africa was in the broader sense the essential political promise and discursive foundation of the Congo Free State. King Léopold II's early attempts to arouse the imperial fervour of Belgian's political elite had failed, although he had, as a young man and heir to the throne, enthusiastically propagated the positive effects of an overseas expansion. In consequence, the ambitious Belgian monarch reconsidered his political strategy and ideological perspective. By 1876, when he finally turned his imperial gaze to the rich interior of Central Africa that the English traveller Verney L. Cameron

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

5 See Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders," *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 137–39.

had described after his journey *Across Africa*,[6] the then-41-year-old Léopold still hoped to establish a Belgian colony in Central Africa in the long run. However, his adjusted plot now started with the creation of "a new State, as large as possible" to be run under his personal authority.[7]

Without the support of the Belgian state, Léopold lacked a political-military apparatus and the legitimising framework of national sovereignty and destiny, of course. On the other hand, he abundantly possessed money, royal prestige and a brilliant comprehension of contemporary international politics, including discourses on colonialism and 'racial' policy. He successfully invested these assets to disguise his particular colonial enterprise as a hegemonic and universal colonial structure.

First, Léopold appealed to the 'civilising mission'-narrative and the public fascination with Central African 'exploration' to present his private endeavour as a popular colonial movement of global scope. Moreover, by pledging to guarantee the rivalling Western nation-states equal access to the resources and market of the Congo Basin, the Belgian king created the image of an international colony. In addition, the prospect of creating a 'black republic' in the Congo aroused the interest of Americans who promoted repatriation schemes for African-Americans. As a result, different factions and spheres of the imperial societies defended Léopold's claim to the Congo Basin as a protector of their personal, political and material interests on the African continent. Moreover, by claiming that a stable and consensual form of symbolic domination was established in the heart of the 'Dark Continent', the Belgian king and his colony were presented as the trustees of a universally supported and internationally recognised imperial mission to open up the Congo Basin to 'civilisation and trade'. Subsequently, the racist conspiracy of the Berlin Congo Conference raised Léopold's promises and discursive foundations to the level of international law, directly followed by proclamation of the Congo Free State. Finally, military triumphs over a fiercely resisting African population were celebrated as a victory over rivalling power structures and proudly presented as the final step in the materialisation of a hegemonic structure of European colonialism in 'Darkest Africa'.

A 'popular' colonial movement

Léopold laid the foundation of his notorious Congolese empire in the late summer of 1876. Immediately after a private consultation with the recently returned Cameron in London, he publicly announced the holding of a 'Geographical Conference' in Belgium to coordinate the future exploration of Central Africa and discuss strategies for the suppression of the 'internal' African slave trade. Some of the most reputable travellers, scientists and philanthropists of their time accepted the invitation to the royal palaces in Brussels.[8]

In his opening speech on 12 September, the energetic monarch urged his notable audience to combine forces to "open up to civilisation the only part of our globe which

6 In public letters, Cameron had celebrated the interior of Central Africa as "country of unspeakable richness" ('Royal Geographic Society', *The Times*, 11 January 1876, 3). He later wrote about his travels in Cameron, *Across Africa*.

7 Strauch to Stanley, undated, in Maurice, *H.M. Stanley*, 22 ('new State').

8 See chapter 2.1.

it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness in which entire populations are enveloped". This endeavour was "a crusade worthy of this age of progress", he added.[9] Plans were already precise. For "purposes of relief, of science, and of pacification", of "abolishing slavery" and "establishing harmony among the chiefs", Léopold suggested, "bases of operation" should be established on the East and West coasts, followed by the laying down of a line of stations run by "an international and central committee" with national sections. Impressed by such colonial fervour and flattered by the royal attention and a luxurious reception, the assembled men approved Léopold's idea of founding an 'African International Association' and elected the Belgian king as its president.[10]

Thus, Léopold had successfully formed the first of three front organisations that preceded the Congo Free State. Nonetheless, the political legitimacy of the new colonial body was precarious. "No sort of public mandate" had been connected with the conference, as was frankly admitted by a close associate of Léopold, the Belgian diplomat and envoy to Britain Émile Banning. In this context, the support "by all the resources of popular sympathy" for the Association was "indispensable to its success", he emphasised.[11]

Hence, to establish a framework of political legitimacy, Léopold aimed at disguising his personal colonial ambitions as a popular movement. The Association's scientific, peace-making and abolitionist agenda, and the imagery oscillating around stereotypical oppositions of 'progressiveness and backwardness', 'civilisation and savagery', 'light and darkness', were part of a plan to ideologically tie the colonisation of the Congo to the increasingly popular motif of the 'civilising mission'. From the 18th century onward, all European empires claimed that their colonial possessions were part of a civilising project that would eventually bring the blessings of 'modernity' and 'progress' to the 'savage' and 'underdeveloped' people of the earth, who were deemed unfit to govern themselves. While these were declared culturally backward, the 'savage' stereotype conceded, in principle, the possibility that these 'historically immature' people could become 'civilised'. Through cultural assimilation to the standard of European-Christian and occidental 'civilisation', negative customs such as polygamy, cannibalism, human sacrifice or slavery would be overcome, it was argued, while technological and medical innovations would reduce poverty and misery.[12]

In the hey-day of New Imperialism in the second half of the 19th century, the notion of the 'civilising mission' became the principal form of self-legitimation in the European scramble for Africa. However, in the African context, colonial ideology antedated actual colonial rule. The idea of a European 'civilising mission' towards Africa was initially not instrumentally invented by political elites but culturally developed in the middle-class milieus of missionaries, merchants or travellers.[13] Eventually, bestselling authors such as the Scottish missionary-explorer David Livingstone awakened a deep enthusiasm in the European public for the undertaking to bring the material and moral "blessings" of progress and the "light" of civilisation to the 'benighted Dark Continent'. The huge

9 "Speech Delivered by the King", 152.
10 Ibid., 154; also see Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 39–46 and Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 93–101.
11 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, xv ('resources', 'indispensable'), 126 ('mandate').
12 See Mann, "'Path of Progress'", 4 and Hund, *Rassismus*, 63.
13 See chapter 1.

crowds at Livingstone's funeral at Westminster Abbey in April 1874 were a sound expression of the popular sympathy for this imperial agenda of spiritual conversion and cultural assimilation.[14]

Léopold intended to turn the public prominence of such narratives into political capital for his private colonial enterprise. "What feeling more natural than that of wishing to associate ourselves with their efforts, and to help on their achievements", Banning proclaimed in reference to the popularity of imperial pioneers like Livingstone: "These feelings […] are not peculiar to scientific men who follow the steps of explorers with an attentive and anxious eye they are entertained by all enlightened minds". At the Geographical Conference in 1876, Léopold announced his desire to make Brussels the "headquarters of this civilising movement".[15] The African International Association was an attempt to take hold of the "moral forces" behind the contemporary civilising narrative and "group them in a powerful organisation", as Banning put it: "As such, the Association "has been founded on a firm reality. Its work has not been built upon the sand […] because it is inspired with thoughts and addressed to feelings".[16]

The firm groundwork of Léopold's enterprise was primarily discursive, however, as such formulations reveal. It attempted to transform the racist set of ideas culturally interwoven into the motif of the civilising mission into a concrete colonial rule in Central Africa. Shortly after the conference, new expeditions by the French Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza and the Germans Paul Pogge and Hermann von Wissman were dedicated to its postulated scientific and abolitionist programme. In 1877, a first mission directly organised by the African International Association itself reached Lake Tanganyika, although with insufficient success. The courting of public sentiment had been highly effective, however. "[P]ublic opinion has vigorously seconded what the Association has begun", Banning enthusiastically described in the year after the Geographical Conference.

Even though its national committees outside Belgium never initiated any significant funding or activism, public sympathy towards the goals of the Association was high. An international network of associates had begun to promote the allegedly benevolent scheme of the Geographic Conference, and it was particularly successful in Great Britain. The Association became especially popular among the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the Baptist Missionary Society, who were flattered by the affinity with their free trade or evangelical agenda, respectively, and the prospective support and security for trade and mission posts in Central Africa.[17]

Moreover, as Edmund D. Morel would later remind with obvious discomfort, Léopold had captured "the philanthropic world of Great Britain – entire". Prestigious abolitionist and humanitarian organisations publicly expressed their sympathy. It

14 Livingstone about the aims of a lecture tour in 1857, quoted in Fidelis Nkomazana, "Livingstone's Ideas of Christianity, Commerce and Civilization," *Pula* 12, 1–2 (1998): 54 ('blessings', 'light'). On Livingstone's state funeral, see Andrew C. Ross, *David Livingstone* (Hambledon: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2002), 239–41. Also see chapter 2.1.

15 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 140 ('popular success', 'What feeling'); "Speech Delivered by the King", 153 ('head-quarters').

16 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 139.

17 See Reeves, *International Beginnings*, 17–26; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 42–46; Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 66; Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, 64. Also see chapter 2.1.

was "with the concurrence of the Antislavery Society and the Aborigines' Protection Society" that the Congo was "handed over to the King of the Belgians", as the Congo reformer Charles Dilke admitted. The latter, as the oldest pressure group for imperial humanitarianism in England, was a highly prestigious society, in which the Radical Liberal Dilke was a leading activist, and it even made Léopold an honorary member.[18]

Hence, Léopold relatively quickly secured the support of those associations that organised the colonial desire of the middle- and upper-classes. However, to be understood as a truly popular movement, the range of support had to be broader. In "works of this kind, it is the sympathy of the masses which it is necessary to invite and to succeed in obtaining", the Belgian king explained in his opening speech at the Geographic Conference. A few months later, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Belgian committee of the African International Association, he repeated his strategic approach: "Our first endeavour must be to reach the heart of the Masses".[19]

In the attempt to canvass mass-sympathy, philanthropic rhetoric was judged as only secondary. Instead, Léopold's advisers put the popular admiration for African explorers and adventurers at the centre of attention. "In fact, what undertaking fulfils to a higher degree all the conditions requisite for popular success", the former journalist with an expertise in foreign policy and geography Banning asked: "Have not the labours of travellers going forth for the discovery of distant lands, braving all dangers and all suffering, in order to open up new fields of civilisation, always possessed the gift of exciting the curiosity and the admiration of the masses? What story exceeds in interest the narrative of their heroic adventures?"[20]

Indeed, the 19th-century Central African 'explorers' had become the first Western celebrities of truly global fame and reputation.[21] Hence, when a man like Cameron, whom the *London Examiner* called "a hero of the true English type" and who was celebrated by the *New York Times* for his "daring, romantic, and successful exploits", asked his readers to "come forward and support the King of the Belgians in his noble scheme", the message was received ten thousand-fold in the imperial world.[22]

Cameron's position "in the foremost rank of African explorers" was only short-lived, of course. In August 1877, Henry M. Stanley finally reached the Portuguese settlement Boma after an almost 1,000-days-long trip across the continent that had begun in November 1874. His second African expedition following the search for David Livingstone had been sent to explore the East and Central African hydro-system. In its course, the Welsh-American journalist finally settled the dispute about the sources of the Nile,

18 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 13 ('entire'); Charles Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 42 ('concurrence'). Dilke himself had been actually in favour of a 'Portuguese solution'.

19 "Speech Delivered by the King", 153 ('works'); "Address Delivered by the King at the Meeting for Installing the Belgian Committee: Léopold II at the Palace at Brussels, 5 November 1876," reproduced in the appendix of Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 162–64, here 163 ('endeavour').

20 Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 140.

21 See Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 122–165. Also see chapters 2.1 and 3.1 of this study.

22 'Across Africa', *The Examiner*, 31 March 1877, 400–401, here 401 ('hero'); 'Cameron's Across Africa', *The New York Times*, 24 March 1877, 8 ('daring'); Cameron, *Across Africa*, Vol. 1, 337 ('come forward').

the largest geographical mystery of its age, which had fascinated the Victorian imagination for decades, and he became the first Westerner to descend the Congo River.[23]

However, the aim of Stanley's expedition had never exclusively or even principally been to extend geographical knowledge but to generate profit through the production of compelling stories about his 'discoveries' and quests. After all, his mission was not funded by a geographic or other scientific association but by two mass-oriented newspapers, the *New York Herald*, which had already sponsored the Livingstone-rescue operation, and the British *Daily Telegraph*.[24]

Hence, the textualisation of imperial exploration was suddenly no longer a secondary motif but its primary objective. In regular dispatches cabled to Europe and the United States, Stanley provided his sponsors with the dramatic battle accounts and adventure stories he expected would excite the readers, loaded with heroism, exoticism and racist stereotypes.[25] For proud and status-conscious Victorian academics, such a populistic and mundane style was irritating. "We don't want sensational stories, we want facts", the Vice-President of the Royal Geographic Society proclaimed after a lecture of Stanley about his search for Livingstone. The skilled American journalist, on the other hand, anticipated that such 'sensational stories' were exactly the key to broad success in the emerging modern media market, which he eventually considered more desirable than the recognition of Britain's snobby academic elite.[26]

Indeed, Stanley's African 'adventures' quickly catapulted him to the prime position among the admired African 'explorers' and turned him into a true international celebrity. When the journalist-turned-explorer combined his diaries and dispatches into long, abundantly illustrated travelogues, Stanley combined stylistic fragments of his sensational journalism, the adventure novel and Gothic fiction into a highly successful imperial spectacle. His major works were "translated into the languages of nearly every civilised country of the world", as an advertisement of publishers announced, and had "excited unusual, indeed, I may truly say extraordinary interest" the proud author noted. Above all, as Stanley had hoped, "the aggregate sales were prodigious".[27]

Notwithstanding some public opposition against the excessive use of military violence on his 'geographic expeditions', Léopold believed that Stanley was the right man

23 'Across Africa', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 January 1877, 12 ('foremost'). On Stanley's second journey see Stanley, *Dark Continent* and the discussion in the chapters 2.1 and 3.1.

24 The New York Herald had been among the pioneers of a radical change of American media structure in the first half of 19th century, which attempted to attract new customers beyond the classic middle- and upper-class reading milieus through human-interest stories about celebrities, high society gossip and sensational crime stories; see Anthony Fellow, *American Media History*, 2nd ed. (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2010), 85. The Daily Telegraph had since 1855 attempted to provide a similarly styled penny-paper in Britain.

25 See Andrew Griffiths, *The New Journalism, the New Imperialism and the Fiction of Empire, 1870–1900* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 14–15. For a critical approach to Stanley's Congo narrative, see chapter 3.1.

26 As recounted in Stanley, *Livingstone*, 684.

27 Advertising Announcement of George Newnes Limited, reproduced in the appendix of Goonetilleke, Devapriya C.R.A., ed., *Joseph Conrad*, 2nd ed. (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 206 ('translated'); Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, new ed. (London: George Newnes, 1899), xii [Preface to the new edition] ('excited').

to finally implement and represent the colonial scheme outlined at the Brussels Geographic Conference. In June 1878, the Belgian king convinced Stanley to lead a new expedition to the Congo Basin. About one year later, on 14 August 1879, Stanley arrived at the Congo River mouth to establish the outposts of European rule envisioned three years before. Officially, the ruthless pioneer of Europe's murderous 'new' imperialism worked under the flag of the philanthropic African International Association and the Comité d'Étude du Haut-Congo, a freshly founded private fund established to explore the future commercial potential of the lower Congo. Soon, the Comité was reorganised as the 'International Association of the Congo' by Léopold, who in November 1879 had become the trust's only remaining shareholder.[28]

For international observers, the difference between the three bodies was difficult to determine. At first, all three names were used in official communication; however, stations and treaties that laid the foundation for later claims to sovereignty were dedicated to the new private organisations fully controlled by the Belgian king. Léopold's in those days impeccable public reputation gave little impetus to question the official narrative. Moreover, in conciliation to his early critics, the 'conqueror' Stanley increasingly described himself as a 'civiliser', as well, to the satisfaction of Léopold's international supporters. His "novel mission" was to sow "civilised settlements" at the Congo River banks, Stanley assured his audience, so that "murder and lawlessness and the cruel barter of slaves shall for ever cease".[29] In a series of lectures in the United Kingdom in 1884, the empire-builder described the commitment of the International Association to "this restless, ardent, vivifying, and expansive sentiment", as he described it: "I call it Benevolence, Charity, Philanthropy […] Progress".[30]

Stanley continued to write about his African adventures, as well. The tone and style of his third monograph on the foundation of the Congo colony was somehow moderated by a more statesmanlike role as a leading representative of an allegedly philanthropic colonial enterprise, though. Hence, commercial interests became supplemented by political considerations. Léopold carefully read and edited the manuscript to avoid any diplomatic faux pas, for instance.[31]

However, 'The Congo' still contained enough 'exploration' romance and adventure to satisfy Stanley's readership. Like Léopold, Stanley had begun to see his literary works as a journalist, travel writer and lecturer as a "performative agency of their own", as has been stressed. Some of his most devoted officers had been motivated by his literature to come to the Congo, the veteran imperialist realised. "These volumes will tend to quicken rather than to allay" the imperial fever in Europe, Stanley assured in his preface, hoping that "the words of enterprise and of action", printed in eight languages, "will move many a man out of the 325,000,000 of Europe to be up and doing".[32]

Stanley's ever-rising global popularity turned the former journalist into an ideal advertising figure for the new Association. By the mid-1880s, the former journalist em-

28 See chapter 2.1.

29 Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 59–60.

30 Stanley's speech at the London Chamber of Commerce, 19 September 1884, quoted in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 312.

31 See Brian Murray, "Building Congo, Writing Empire," *English Studies in Africa* 59, no. 1 (2016): 11.

32 Ibid., 7 ('performative'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, vii–vii ('volumes', etc.).

bodied like no other living person both the 'heroic conquest' of the African continent and the commitment to a 'civilising mission' – the two strands of contemporary colonial discourse that Léopold and his associates had identified as their chance to arouse popular sympathy. The link with this global imperial hero and representative of 'Brightest Europe' was the key to the 'heart of the masses' and the support of civil society for a private colonial enterprise, successfully disguised as a popular colonial movement.

'An international colony'

In the concept of the civilising mission, schemes of forced cultural assimilation and desires for economic appropriation were always close-knit. On the one hand, Europeans believed that an integration of African societies into the global trading system was, next to Christian education, a central medium for 'up-lifting' these 'backward' people. Commerce was a prime vehicle for the colonial "renovation of the world" that Livingstone had envisioned, and in 1842, the British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston had prominently stressed the motto of the coming imperial expansion towards Africa: "Commerce is the best pioneer of civilization".[33]

On the other hand, 'opening up' the interior of Africa to European trade had, of course, the much more straightforward effect of gaining access for the national economies of the industrialised societies to what Stanley and other 'explorers' had described as a prospective market of enormous potential.[34] The European representation of Central Africa as a 'wilderness' and 'savagery' evoked the image of a 'dark' and 'hostile' space, but it also contained promises of abundant tropical nature. Since the African 'savages' inhabiting the region had been unwilling and unable to herd the richness of their land, its appropriation through the 'progressive' European societies was inevitable and legitimate, the colonial narrative implied. It was Stanley's personal imperial dream, the American Congo reformer Robert Park would later approvingly acknowledge, to implement Europe's historic mission and destiny to incorporate the treasure of Central Africa, hence to "[open] up a new continent, rich in virgin wealth, to the trade and civilization of the world".[35]

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33 Livingstone, quoted in Martin Lynn, "British Policy, Trade, and Informal Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," in *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 107 ('renovation'); Palmerston, quoted in ibid. In this logic, the desire for commodities from modern factories would be a strong incentive for Africans to gather the natural products that European merchants and industries desired in exchange. The resulting submission under a capitalist work ethic and continuous manual training would gradually suppress an alleged 'laziness' and 'ignorance'. Moreover, the control over the mode of production would allow Europeans to 'civilise', as they call it, hence to enforce their gender, family and sexuality norms upon the 'natural savages' they wanted to turn into obeying customers, workers and peasants fulfilling their (subordinate) role in the global division of labour. For an account of Livingstone's capitalist-religious 'civilising mission' in the Upper Zambezi region and its conflicting interpretation though local elites, see Walima T. Kalusa, "Elders, Young Men, and David Livingstone's 'Civilizing Mission'," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 472, no. 1 (2009): 55–80.

34 See chapter 3.1.

35 Park, "Terrible Story", 764 ('virgin wealth'); see Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 374.

Stanley's descriptions of uncultivated land with an unprecedented amount of resources, populated by millions of almost 'naked savages' waiting to be dressed in mass-produced European clothes, had turned the attention of merchants and manufacturers in every imperial society towards the so-far unclaimed Congo Basin. In the resulting scramble for Central Africa, the dominant European nations attempted to secure their part of the upcoming imperial plunder and trade. For Léopold and his colonial enterprise, the emerging gold-rush mood was a major danger. France, Germany and Great Britain approached territory that Léopold had hoped to see in his sphere of influence. The establishment of a French protectorate at the northern shores of the lake-like widening baptised 'Stanley Pool' following an expedition of de Brazza in 1883, as well as the suddenly re-awakened Portuguese interest in their old colonial possessions, were particularly problematic. When the British Gladstone government opened negotiations with Portugal to accept territorial claims to the mouth of the Congo River in exchange for free trade guarantees, the prospect was dramatic. As a result of the Anglo-Portuguese treaty, Stanley's newly established stations in the interior of the Congo Basin would effectively be cut off from their access to the sea.[36]

To repel these territorial claims and instead achieve international recognition of his rights, the brilliant strategist Léopold successfully played the rivalling imperialists against each other. From his palaces in Belgium, he rightfully anticipated that the major imperial players would rather support a weak but neutral entity in Central Africa than accept a disproportional territorial gain for their immediate rivals. Léopold began to advertise his colonial company as a truly international and collective colony. The founder of the International Association vigorously defined the establishment of free trade and free access as guiding principles of the organisation. He had no self-serving economic interest, Léopold emphasised, and neither had his emerging colony. In this, the International Association resembled "the Society of the Red Cross", a Belgian correspondent assured the London Times; it "does not seek to gain money, and does not beg for aid of any state".[37]

At the same time, the Association pledged to implement the 'natural right' of the civilised world to develop the 'African El Dorado'. The "noble aim" of the "wealthy philanthropists" organised in the Association was to render "disinterested services to the cause of progress" by opening the Congo Basin to commerce and industry. Hence, "all nations may profit by its success", it was suggested. This neutral character of the International Association was guaranteed in myriad letters to the imperial powers and repeated in front of parliamentary commissions, government representatives and chambers of commerce in a propagandistic and diplomatic offensive launched after the emergence of the French and Portuguese threats.[38]

Initially, the effort was particularly concentrated on the United States where Henry Sanford, former ambassador to Belgium, had become the executive representative of

36 See chapter 2.1.

37 'The International Congo Association', *The Times*, 28 March 1883, 3. For the 'race to Stanley Pool' and Léopold's diplomatic manoeuvres, see also chapter 2.1.

38 'The International Congo Association', *The Times*, 28 March 1883, 3 ('disinterested', etc.). Also see Jean Stengers, "King Leopold and Anglo-French Rivalry, 1882–1884," in *France and Britain in Africa*, ed. Prosser Gifford and W. Roger Louis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 144.

the African International Association. Sanford, a businessman with a major interest in the African trade, pleaded that the United States, which lacked a military presence in Central Africa, risked losing their part of the imperial booty in the case of European diplomatic and potentially armed conflicts.[39]

Parts of the American public still pointed out that Stanley's second African expedition between 1874 and 1876 was the operation of an American citizen who had carried the stars and stripes through the Congo Basin.[40] Although they never claimed any 'right of discovery', there was "no reason why the people of the United States should not come in for a large share of the wholesale trade which must be developed soon in this region", as the Secretary of State Frelinghuysen argued. Hence, the White House was particularly interested in an international and free trade solution for the Congo. The "importance of the rich prospective trade has led to the general conviction that it should be open to all nations on equal terms", as President Arthur later pointed out.[41]

These expectations were Léopold's opportunity. In April 1884, Sanford formally declared to the United States that the International Association had "resolved to levy no custom-house duties"; and guaranteed to foreigners "the right to purchase […] lands and buildings […], to establish commercial houses and to […] trade". The Association would establish a sort of 'international protectorate of the Congo river' it was argued, a concept developed by the British jurist Travers Swiss. As such, it would never "grant to the citizens of one nation any advantages without immediately extending the same to the citizens of all other nations".[42]

Such formulations display how important it was for Léopold to make the world believe that the term 'international' in the title of his colonial association was not merely symbolic but referred to a truly universal colonisation scheme. Indeed, "[i]nternationalism played a major role in the creation of King Leopold's Congo", as has recently been pointed out. This was linguistically expressed by Léopold's recourse to the language and ideas of humanitarian internationalism and stereotypes of a cultural racism that transcended a merely nationalistic imperial discourse. Practically, it was shown by Léopold's reliance on transnational networks of scientists, traders and evangelicals, the focus on international initiatives and conferences, and ultimately by what a contemporary political scientist called the "magnificent project of an International State" in Central Africa.[43]

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39 See Meyer, "Sanford and the Congo", 26.

40 See John A. Kasson, "The Congo Conference and the President's Message," *The North American Review* 142, no. 351 (1886): 122. Also see letter of Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, 13 March 1884, quoted in Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 10.

41 Frelinghuysen to Tisdel, 1884, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 14 ('reason'); Arthur, "Message to the Senate", 301 ('importance').

42 Declaration — Congo, 22 April 1884, in *The Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, ed. The Secretary of State (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885), 781 ('resolved', 'right', 'grant'); see Travers Swiss, *An International Protectorate of the Congo River*, reproduced in Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 16–22. For the pledges to British merchants, see "'King Leopold's Promises'. Manifesto of the International Association: Communicated by Stanley to the Members of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce at the Special Meeting Held at the Town Hall on 21 October 1884," reproduced in the appendix of Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 463–66.

43 Laqua, *Age of Internationalism*, 46 ('Internationalism', etc.); Reeves, *International Beginnings*, 90 ('magnificent').

For instance, the Belgian and Catholic King explicitly invited missionaries and merchants of all national and confessional backgrounds to his colony. Furthermore, civil and military service in the Congo was promoted globally, and the International Association guaranteed that the "functionaries for the different posts in Europe or in Africa" would be selected "without references to nationality, competency being the principal requirement".[44]

Stanley's "muster-roll" of Europeans enlisting for a three-year period under his command during the foundational period of the new colony between 1879 and 1884 contained 263 names and 13 different nationalities.[45] Moreover, after the chief of the expedition, Stanley, had left the Congo, the Belgian king convinced the recently knighted British artillery officer Sir Francis Walter de Winton to take over the highest peripheral office in the International Association in April 1884.[46]

Internationality defined the commercial sector of the colony, as well. "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz", Joseph Conrad noted about the ivory trader at the centre of his novel *Heart of Darkness*, a remark that well describes the multinational background of the ruthless men rushing to partake in the economic exploitation of the Congo Basin. Indeed, promises of commercial freedom and exceptional profits had lured entrepreneurs from all over the globe.[47]

The pioneering Christian conversion and spiritual 'salvation' efforts in the Congo were similarly "confined to no single country", as the leading Congo reformer John Harris, who with his wife Alice had run a mission post of the Congo Balolo Mission since 1898, noted. Missionary organisations from Great Britain, America, Germany, Sweden and France "have all found devoted men and women". In the spirit of religious liberality that defined the Free State in its early years, missionising in the Congo "was the monopoly of no single denomination" either: "Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Free Churchmen, and Lutherans, have all taken their share", Harris emphasised.[48]

In this way, the multinational and multi-confessional background of the European and American colonisers who established themselves in the Congo under the 'protection' of Stanley's mission and Léopold's International Association was probably the most convincing sign for contemporaries that the new colonial project was, as the reputable

44 "'King Leopold's Promises'", 465 ('functionaries'). Next to diplomatic strategy, this policy was also based on more practical considerations about Léopold's limited personal assets and the lack of colonial enthusiasm and general military experience in Belgium.

45 Stanley accounted for six American, five Austrian, 81 Belgian, six Danish, three Dutch, 80 English, six French, 32 German, three Italian, two Portuguese, 37 Swedish, one Swiss and one 'Arab' officer(s). See table in Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 306.

46 Stanley, who had expected to become governor-general as well, was no longer considered suitable to run the colony he had established. See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 88–96.

47 Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 49 ('Europe'). Of the 165 European merchants present in the Congo in 1884, 67 were Portuguese, 25 English, 24 Dutch and only 22 Belgian, while 12 were Swedish, eight French, six German and one Italian, see Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 91.

48 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 274. John and his wife Alice Harris ran stations of the Region Beyond Missionary Union at Ikau and at Baringa between 1898 and 1905. See also chapter 2.1 for more details on the early missionary presence in the Congo.

Belgian jurist and expert on international law Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns maintained in 1884, "an International Colony, sui generis".[49]

'A republican confederation of free negroes'

Moreover, to the American public, the International Association had a particularly remarkable offer. As has been mentioned above, the reinstatement of a 'legal' regime of white supremacy in the New South throughout the 1870s once more resulted in the rising popularity of emigration schemes for African-Americans in the days of the creation of Léopold's colonial movement, and among white supremacist and Black intellectuals alike.[50]

For some radical racists, the segregation implemented by the infamous Jim Crow laws was not sufficient to solve the American 'race conflict'. Sanford, Léopold's envoy in the United States, for instance, hoped that emigration, especially of the better educated Black Americans, would "draw the gathering electricity from that black cloud spreading over the Southern states".[51] His close ally was Morgan, the Senator from Alabama and future Congo opponent who was convinced that 'black and white' could never (peacefully) coexist. For the leading Democrat, the attempts of post-civil-war America to "elevate the negro race" had been a failure and had only increased 'racial' antagonism. "All that has been done", he argued, "has been to wage conflict with the white race upon a question of caste, and to stimulate individual negroes to demand a social equality which they are not prepared to enjoy".[52] Since an "amalgamation of the races" was not desirable for him, according to Morgan, the "irrepressible conflict" between the 'races' offered only two options for the Black Americans: "they must be repatriated", or they must face "virtual extermination".[53]

Still, even unshakable white supremacists like Morgan and Sanford knew that millions of American citizens could hardly be removed by force. They hoped instead that they would emigrate 'voluntarily' to newly established colonies, for instance to the Philippines or the Congo, 'gently pushed' by intensifying racist discrimination and pulled by overseas opportunities. When Sanford approached Léopold to consider the participation of African-Americans in his colonial enterprise to explore the potential of larger-scale emigration plans, the Belgian King sensed a great opportunity to expand his political support in the United States and announced his willingness to open the Congo to skilled African-American labour. Hence, in the official instructions to Stanley on his first mission in the service of Léopold, there suddenly appeared the rather surprising idea of the formation of a "republican confederation of free negroes" in the Congo. While Léopold would reserve his right to appoint its president, such a confederation could otherwise be "independent", the secretary-general of the African

49 Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 29 ('sui generis').

50 See chapter 2.1.

51 Sanford (1890), quoted in Meyer, "Sanford and the Congo", 28.

52 Morgan, "Future of the Negro", 82.

53 Morgan, quoted in Baylen, "John Tyler Morgan", 125 ('irrepressible', 'extermination').

International Association Colonel Maximilien Strauch suggested. "This project is not to create a Belgian colony, but to establish a powerful negro state", he proclaimed.[54]

While such designs were, of course, "fig leaves" to conceal the plan of a forceful submission of Central Africa, as has been convincingly maintained, they nonetheless "appealed to American sentiment" and had the desired effect of arousing interest among African-American pro-emigration activists. According to Booker T. Washington, himself an opponent of emigration, many contemporaries came to believe that Léopold represented a movement "to realize on a grander scale" what had resulted in the establishment of "the negro State of Liberia" through the American Colonization Society in 1822.[55] George W. Williams, at least, the Black Baptist who enthusiastically promoted a Black colonial movement to Africa, praised Léopold's enterprise "as the rising of the Star of Hope for the Dark Continent" and was eager to investigate the potential of permanent emigration to the colony.[56]

At the same time, Morgan and Sanford, pleased by Léopold's cooperation, began to focus exclusively on the Congo as the "natural theatre" for the repatriation programme they had in mind. All three men eventually became some of the most active supporters of the International Association in the United States.[57]

Hence, the colonisation of the Congo became firmly interwoven with contemporary discourses on colonialism and the American 'race' question. A wide range of geographers, missionaries, adventurers and merchants around the world, supplemented by the politically dissimilar advocates of African-American repatriation towards Central Africa, came to understand the International Association as a representation of their own political, material or personal interest. Overall, large parts of the interested imperial public came to view the International Association as the guardian of a universal hegemonic mission to 'open the Congo to civilisation and trade', apparently supported by all factions of an otherwise fragmented imagined community of the 'civilised world', as Léopold had always hoped.

The illusion of material power and symbolic dominance

In 1883, when France claimed sovereignty north of the Congo Basin and Great Britain started its bilateral negotiations with Portugal, Léopold's globally established network of clients and allies and the carefully cultivated image of a popular movement and international colony legitimised by the commitment to the historic mission to open the Congo Basin to European 'civilisation' and 'trade' proved its value.

54 'Instructions of Strauch to Stanley, quoted in Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 52–53 ('republican'), 54 ('powerful').

55 Gondola, *History of Congo*, 51 ('fig leaves'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 317 ('appealed'); Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 375 ('movement'). On the emigration schemes propagated by the Colonization Society, see Allan E. Yarema, *American Colonization Society* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006).

56 Williams, "Open Letter", 1 ('rising'). On the rising but short-lived interest on emigration to the Congo in the African-American community, see McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 191–204 and chapter 5.1.

57 Morgan, "Future of the Negro", 83 ('theatre').

Léopold's disparate American advocates initiated an intense agitation to arouse public sentiment against the British-Portuguese rapprochement. Sanford pressured the civil society and the press and convinced the New York Chamber of Commerce, the American Geographical Society and the American Colonization Society to come out as supporters of Léopold's colonial movement by pointing to its alleged commitment to philanthropy and free trade. He was supported by Williams, who published a series of articles in which he "combated Portugal's claim".[58] Senator Morgan, on the other hand, concentrated on the decision-makers in Congress and the government.[59]

Nonetheless, the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty was finalised in February 1884, and Léopold knew he had to increase his pace. By then, he instructed his agents to demand full diplomatic recognition of statehood for the International Association. In the same month, both chambers of Congress passed a favourable resolution Morgan introduced demanding "prompt action". Morgan, as chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, introduced an extensive report in which he applauded "this praiseworthy work, which is intended […] for the equal advantage of all foreign nations". At the same time, he expressed his hope that the new state would become a promising destination for "our African population […] to freely return to their fatherland". It is, he concluded, "our duty" to recognise the golden star on a blue ground, this "symbol of hope to a strong but ignorant people".[60] Williams similarly pledged the Senate in favour of recognition, and the Secretary of State eventually signalled his approval. In April 1884, after official declarations had guaranteed the aforementioned privileges for American citizens, the United States was the first to recognise the International Association as a friendly state.[61]

In Great Britain, where public opinion had been successfully "captivated" by Léopold, as Morel later described, the reaction against the Anglo-Portuguese negotiations was even more furious. William Mackinnon and James Hutton, intimate partners of Léopold and businessmen with major investments in the African trade, organised significant protests against the prospective settlement. Moreover, Léopold's most prominent figurehead, Stanley, played a central role in arousing British sentiment. The famous expedition leader had recently returned from the Congo, and he immediately wrote articles and gave interviews and lectures to denounce Portuguese maladministration and point out, as described above, the Association's vow to the 'civilising mission' and free trade.[62]

Immediately, as Stanley contentedly acknowledged, "men of all shades of politics combined to denounce" the Anglo-Portuguese treaty. Chambers of commerce rose their

58 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 5 ('combated'). For letters and resolutions of the New York Chamber of Commerce and the American Colonization Society, see Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 37–39. Also see Meyer, "Sanford and the Congo", 26–27.

59 See chapter 2.1.

60 Morgan, "In the Senate, 26 February 1884", n.p. ('prompt'); Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 2 ('praiseworthy'), 5 ('symbol', 'duty'), 7 ('African population').

61 See Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 5. Also see chapter 2.1 for further details.

62 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 13 ('captivated'). Further see Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 9; Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, 65–72.

voice due to the fear that a protectionist Portuguese administration would not safeguard the commercial rights of other nations, abolitionist organisations pointed to the persistence of slave work in Portuguese dependencies, and the Protestant missionary societies that had established their first outposts in cooperation with Stanley in the Congo protested against the prospect of working under a Catholic government. The climate in the British public turned strongly in favour of Léopold and prevented the British government from ratifying its treaty with Portugal.[63]

To achieve such favourable reactions, Léopold's advocates greatly exaggerated the actual advancement of the International Association in Africa. Between 1879 and 1884, Stanley's expedition forces had not managed to establish more than two dozen hastily constructed outposts concentrated between Matadi on the Congo River mouth and 'Stanley Pool'. Yet to the interested public in the Western metropolis, this ramshackle colonial enterprise was presented as a strong organisation that had assembled the means and power to enforce its promises to the 'civilised world'.[64] As a result, the United States wrongly assumed that Stanley's operation already constituted *de facto* sovereign statehood. The colonial presence in the Congo appeared "sufficient to justify and authorize" a recognition of the banner of the International Association as that of a "friendly" government, Frelinghuysen was convinced. Hence, when the United States officially recognised the sovereignty of the International Association over the Congo a month later, they referred to its isolated stations as "the free States there established".[65]

Although European governments, in contrast, generally understood that they dealt with a state *in futuro*,[66] the British public, for instance, had similar illusions about the scope of Léopold's African adventure, which was largely due to the reputation of the veteran 'explorer' commanding it. As has been previously described, the violent confrontation with the Congolese space and inhabitants was a fundamental theme of Stanley's Congo literature. Although there were, as mentioned before, some objections against the means Stanley employed, the vast majority of the British public, including many of the Congo reformers, was fascinated and almost obsessed with the 'heroic explorer' who claimed that he had single-handily forced 'nature' and 'men' in the Dark Continent into submission.[67]

In the public perception, the unbreakable physical power and moral strength ascribed to the lionised Stanley were transferred onto the colonial enterprise he represented. When he entered Léopold's service in 1878, Stanley broadened the strategic focus of his self-staging in public. The former adventurer and journalist now presented

63 Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 382 ('men'). For resolutions and letters of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, see Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 43–47. For an account of the British campaign against the treaty with Portugal, see Anstey, *Britain and the Congo*, 113–38. Also see chapter 2.1.

64 See for instance Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, particularly the letter of Sanford to Morgan, 24.03.1884, quoted in ibid., 11–12.

65 Letter of Frelinghuysen, 13 March 1884, quoted in ibid., 11 ('sufficient', 'friendly'); United States Senate, 22 April 1884, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (1904): Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 30 ('free States').

66 See Jesse S. Reeves, "The Origin of the Congo Free State, Considered from the Standpoint of International Law," *The American Journal of International Law* 3, no. 1 (1909): 111.

67 See chapter 3.1.

himself as a staid empire-builder whose dispatches, talks and travelogues were no longer only literature to excite the masses, but also mission reports that contained well-calculated messages about the success and power of the emerging colonial formation. Stanley's claim that his mission for Léopold and the Association in the Congo had effectively led to 'the founding of its Free State', as his new two-volume book in 1885 was titled, was broadly accepted. This "body called the International Association", Stanley praised in front of the London Chamber of Commerce after his return, no matter how "startling it may appear" in Europe, was "invulnerable and unassailable. All the armies in the world could not reach it".[68]

At the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, he presented a manifesto that promised that "the forces at the disposal of the Association were able to ensure order and tranquillity in the country" and had "the necessary means for the maintenance of public order" in the new colony. European imperialists were well aware that overseas factories and trading houses needed military protection. The commitment "to remould" Central Africa "in harmony with modern ideas into National States" and to install "justice and law and order" was, in the colonial context, a promise to enforce social reforms through a regime of foreign occupation that would provide the safety needed by investors, missionaries, traders and settlers to implement their colonial agenda against the rising objections of the Congolese population.[69]

At the same time, the agents of the International Association attached great importance to downplaying the necessity of physical violence for their 'philanthropic' endeavour. As chapter 3.1 has examined in more detail, Stanley had inscribed multiple aggregations of 'savagery' in his formation of a Congolese identity that implied different social relations between the 'civilised' colonisers and the alienated Africans. While the often-rebellious 'ferocious and cannibalistic warrior' only understood force and boldness, as Stanley suggested, the submissive 'childish' or 'docile savages' could be the objects of a more paternalistic colonial relation. The character of the powerful yet childish King Mtesa was a famous representative of this set of stereotypes. "'Stamlee'", it was put in the mouth of the Muslim Central African emperor in *Through the Dark Continent*, "say to the white people […] that I am like a man sitting in darkness, or born blind, and that all I ask is that I may be taught how to see'".[70]

The message of such episodes was that the colonised Africans internalised their ascribed 'backwardness' and 'inferiority' and voluntarily placed themselves under the foreign authority of a 'Christian', 'white' and 'European' civilisation. Colonialism was not presented as a relation of strong dominance but as a hegemonic form of 'symbolic domination' in which colonisers and colonised agreed upon the legitimacy of the established racist hierarchy.[71]

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68 Stanley at the London Chamber of Commerce, 19 September 1884, quoted in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa* ('startling', 'invulnerable').

69 "'King Leopold's Promises'", 463 ('forces'), 464 ('means'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 59–60 ('remould', 'harmony', 'justice'). For the need to police colonial trade, see Swiss, *International Protectorate*, 19.

70 Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 325 ('Stamlee'). For the savage-stereotypes established by Stanley see chapter 3.1.

71 Anja Weiß has termed the most stable and hegemonic form of racist power relations 'symbolic domination'. The concept defines a social situation in which both the racistly dominant and the

The strategists of the International Association described their presence in Africa initially as an institutionalised rule over such submissive Congolese 'savages'. Its dominance over the Congo Basin was not only in the interest of but also established with the explicit approval of the former inhabitants, it was argued, who had readily accepted the new organisation as a benevolent overlord and protective power. Stanley remained a European 'conqueror', but in contrast to his earlier, extremely violent journeys, he arrived in 1879 to explicitly "peacefully conquer and subdue" the region. The coastal area, the International Association claimed, "has given itself to us by unanimous acclamation of the natives, who hoisted our flag and refused our presents".[72]

The motif was later visually reproduced on the cover of Stanley's *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State* (Fig. 11). In front of a display of the Congo River mouth showing the first signs of European settlements under the shining star of the colonial flag, a topless Black woman armed with a spear deferentially places a laurel wreath upon a white marble bust of Léopold, which was adorned with his royal coat of arms and the Belgian national motto. African sovereignty, symbolised by the Pharaonic 'nemes' headdress of the obeisant woman, was voluntarily transferred to the 'white' king, it was suggested.[73]

The central evidence for the allegedly voluntary self-subjection of Africa under the new colonial state was the 400 treaties Stanley and his agents collected in between 1879 and 1884. In exchange for vague guarantees of protection by the Europeans, local nobles were tricked to accord, "freely, and of their own record", as was pointed out, "for themselves and their heirs and successors, do give up […] all sovereign and governing rights to all their territories".[74]

For Léopold's agents, these treaties legitimately established a *de jure* sovereignty. Moreover, they were presented as evidence of the consensual birth of the new colony that allegedly established a hegemonic character of colonial domination based on a universal hegemonic mission shared by colonisers and colonised. For Morgan, it "may be safely asserted that no barbarous people have ever so readily adopted the fostering care of benevolent enterprise as have the tribes of the Congo". It was not only Stanley who praised the "Spirit of Peace" that surrounded the new colony. The Council of London, for instance, hailed its formation as the "bloodless victory" of the "enlightened, philanthropic, and disinterested" efforts of Léopold, a triumph, they argued, that was "far grander than the greatest achievements of the sword".[75]

racistly discriminated sphere in a society accept the fundamental discursive framework beneath such racist formation. See Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 44.

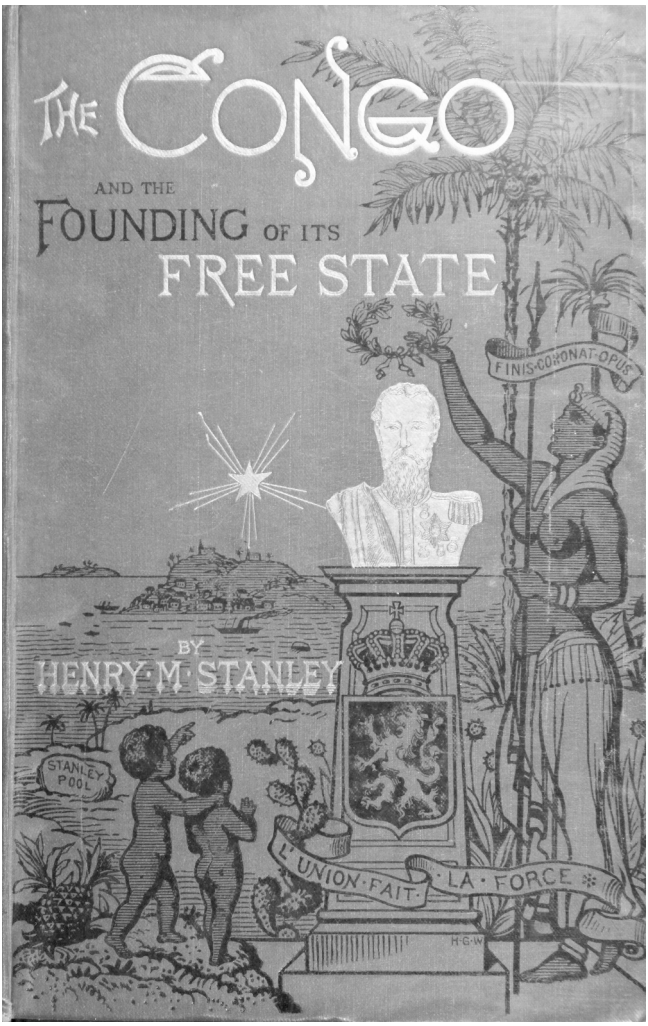
72 Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 59 ('peacefully'); Letter of an agent of the International Association, 25 February 1884, quoted in Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 9 ('unanimous').

73 The two naked boys resembling Romulus and Remus, the laurel wreath and a banner with the Latin proverb 'the end crowns the work' elevate Léopold to the rank of Europe's classical Roman emperors. Moreover, a coconut palm and a pineapple in the front, both imports of Portuguese traders from other continents, and the steamboat and European houses in the background, connect the new state with the earliest colonial approaches to Central Africa.

74 Treaty with the 'chiefs of Nzungi', reproduced in ibid., Vol. 2, 196 ('freely'). Congo treaties are also reproduced in Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 49–52.

75 Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 99 ('safely'); Stanley at the London Chamber of Commerce, 19 September 1884, quoted in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 312 ('Spirit'); 'The Corporation Of London And The Sovereign Of The Congo', *The Times*, 5 May 1885, 5 ('bloodless', etc.). After all, the United

Fig. 11 Cover Picture



Stanley, *The Congo,* https://archive.org/details/congofoundingofi1885stan2/mode/2up.

The racist contract of Berlin

Following the sudden clash of imperial ambitions in the Congo Basin, the German Chancellor Bismarck had assembled the "civilized Powers" at the 'Congo Conference' in

States were similarly built upon the legitimacy of "independent chiefs of savage tribes [to] cede to private citizens (persons) the whole or part of their states", as Morgan reminded the Senate, for instance (see Morgan, *Occupation of the Congo*, 6). Morgan supported his argument, inter alia, with the expertise of the distinguished Belgian jurist Prof Arntz, see ibid., 30–36.

Berlin to address the thriving "African question". The main object of the conference, he outlined at the inaugural session on 15 November 1884, was to open up Central Africa to imperial influence and to prevent armed conflicts through a commitment to the "equality of the rights and the solidarity of the interests" between the imperial invaders. A politically neutral free trade zone, Bismarck was convinced, would reduce "national rivalries" and the dangers of war so that colonial exploitation could be accomplished in a "spirit of mutual good understanding".[76]

For several weeks, the imperial delegates, in the notable absence of any African participant, struggled to find a consensus that would assure the political and commercial neutrality of the vast, still-unclaimed region and free navigation on the rivers Congo and Niger. At the cordial final session on 26 February 1885, Bismarck disclosed a wide-ranging settlement that would guarantee "free access to the centre of the African Continent" for all imperial powers. At the same time, the assembled nations expressed their "solicitude for the moral and material well-being of the native populations" and the desire to "contribute to bestow on those populations the benefits of civilisation", as Bismarck announced.[77]

The Berlin Conference culminated in a 'General Act' that was signed by all delegates, although the United States' president would later refuse its ratification.[78] It stipulated the agreed-upon terms that would guide European rule over the Congo Basin and revealed the high-status diplomatic consultations as a shameless racist conspiracy. The General Act defined a set of imperial privileges and rights for all citizens of the imperial societies. Central African men and women, on the other hand, dehumanised by colonial discourse as 'savages', 'barbarians', 'devils' or inferior 'races', were not considered partners in this contract. With their signatures, the imperial delegates annihilated all independent rights of the existing African polities and asserted their cooperation to achieve and maintain European supremacy in Africa, legitimated by 'generous' commitments to "watch over the conservation of the indigenous population" and to strive for the destruction of slavery.[79]

In Berlin, the narrative of the 'civilising mission' had finally reached the sphere of official imperial politics. The philanthropic "spirit of Berlin" was, on the one hand, a concession to the popular sympathy for the movement to 'civilise' Central Africa and to abolish the East African slave trade. On the other hand, the ideological function of the rhetoric was now clearly dominant. The impulse of Berlin, it has been summarised, was "to implement colonial cooperation, hegemony, and African nonsubjectivity". In this sense, the General Act of Berlin was a rare, explicit staging of the often-implicit 'racist contract' beneath the global political system of European supremacy.[80]

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76 Otto von Bismarck, quoted in Wack, *Story of the Congo*, 22 ('African'), 24 ('equality'), 95 ('rivalries', etc.).

77 Ibid., 94 ('access'), 95 ('solicitude', 'contribute').

78 On the reasons for American non-ratification, see Kasson, "Congo Conference".

79 *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. 6 ('watch'). The General Act guaranteed freedom of trade and commerce (Art. 1 and 5), free access (Art. 2), religious freedom and the protection of missionaries (Art 6). See also chapter 2.1.

80 Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 254 ('spirit'); Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns, and Africans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 80 ('implement'); see Mills, *Racial*

Moreover, at one of the last sittings of the conference, a memorandum of Léopold announced that, in recent weeks, the International Association had concluded during treaties with all European powers present that "contain a provision recognising its flag as that of a friendly State".[81] Although the Association had not been part of official proceedings, Léopold's advocates (among them Sanford, Stanley, Banning and Strauch) had convinced the delegates in many backroom negotiations that an entity run by the monarch of a small European nation was the best option to establish the neutral free trade zone they envisioned.[82] The message was unanimously welcomed "as a happy event" by the audience, as the president of the sitting added. Hence, "by act of an assembly representing all the nations of the Western World", as the Congo opponent Thomas Barbour later wrote, international recognition of sovereign statehood for Léopold's private colony was finally accomplished.[83]

At the closing ceremonies, Léopold's "idealism" predominated over Bismarck's "Realpolitik". The German Chancellor honoured the noble determination of the International Association, and Baron de Courcel, the ambassador of France, praised the "generous aspirations and enlightened initiative" of the Belgian king and Sir Edward Malet, the British delegate emphasised, the "purely philanthropic idea" behind the new colony. "All Europe sat around a table" and acknowledged the humanitarian and abolitionist agenda of the new colonial entity, as the Congo reformer Dilke later described it.[84]

The General Act, with its obligation to freedom of trade, access and missionising and its commitment to the 'civilising' rhetoric, defined the conditions of this historic racist conspiracy. Missionaries, humanitarians and merchants celebrated the Berlin Act as the legal codification of their demands and Léopold's promises. Hence, when a new state was officially announced a few weeks after the final agreement of the Berlin Conference, a considerable part of the interested public was happy to believe that it "would play the part of a kindly guardian, govern its subjects with infinite kindness, guard them from the evils from which they had suffered, and lead them to the light of civilisation", as the

Contract, 19–31. Mills speaks of a 'racial contract'; however, as the absence of 'race' from the *General Act of Berlin* indicates, the concept should not be limited to instances of 'racial' oppression.

81 "'Protocol No. 5' of the Berlin Conference, 23 February 1885," reproduced in Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 415–419, here 415 ('contain').

82 A final settlement with France immediately followed recognition by the United States, and when Léopold had guaranteed Bismarck the same privileges as the United States, the German Reich had, in November 1884, just before the start of the Berlin Conference, officially recognised the International Association. Finally, Britain repudiated its treaty with Portugal, and 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. See Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 248–55. Official bilateral declarations and conventions between the International Association and the other Berlin powers were enclosed in the General Act; see the appendix of Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 419–34.

83 "'Protocol No. 5' of the Berlin Conference", 416 ('happy'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 1 ('act').

84 Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 254 ('idealism', 'Realpolitik'); "'Protocol No. 5' of the Berlin Conference", 416 ('generous', 'purely'); "'Protocol No. 10' of the Berlin Conference", here 436 ('homage'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 42 ('table').

Congo reformer Herbert Samuel later emphasised in the British Commons – and that it would organise the industrial exploitation of Africa's richness.[85]

Indeed, the warm applause following the declaration of the "accession of a Power whose exclusive mission is to introduce civilisation and commerce into the interior of the Africa", as was claimed by Léopold's Berlin memorandum, indicated the successful accomplishment of his strategy to establish his colonial project as guardian of a universal colonisation mission in Central Africa. Léopold had been "invested by the recognition and confidence of all the civilized States with the power and mission of governing, in the interest of civilization and of generous commerce, African territories", the Belgian jurist Gustave Rolin-Jaequemyns wrote. "In effect", the historian Thomas Pakenham put it, "the self-styled philanthropic King had been chosen to act in Africa as a trustee for the whole of Europe".[86]

'Affirming effective superiority'

On 1 August 1885, Léopold proclaimed to the world the establishment of the Congo Free State as the legal successor of the International Association. Nonetheless, despite grand words on the diplomatic stages and the quick establishment of a colonial bureaucracy in Brussels, the new state existed, at the time of its proclamation, largely on paper only. Colonial authority remained strictly limited to the direct surroundings of the 22 foundational posts and the additionally established missionary stations and trading houses, generally concentrated in the Lower Congo.[87]

The discrepancy between political phrasing and actual dominance was problematic. After all, the Berlin Act had codified the principle of 'effective occupation' in a renunciation of the old doctrine of the 'right of discovery', and thus any recognition of imperial territorial sovereignty in Central Africa was only 'effective' if an "authority sufficient to cause acquired rights to be respected" was established. Hence, to reach a *de facto* sovereignty, colonial power needed to be materially articulated. However, while the imperial community diplomatically recognised the Free State's sovereignty, its claim to being the supreme power in the Congo Basin was far from exclusive and was challenged both by the existing African polities and from concurring colonial powers.[88]

Attempts to consolidate foreign rule quickly increased the hostility even by those communities that had so far tended to tolerate the few pioneering Europeans as profitable trading partners. Once the plan to establish a permanent dominion became apparent, and demands for taxes and interference with local trade and traditions became known, scepticism increasingly turned into open confrontation. In consequence, the

85 Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1292 ('guardian').

86 "'Protocol No. 5' of the Berlin Conference", 415 ('accession'); Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 254 ('self-styled'); Rolin-Jaequemyns, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 29 ('invested')

87 See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 114. Three more remote stations had already been abandoned by late 1885.

88 *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. 35 ('authority'). The principle of 'effective occupation' originally only applied to African coastal regions, however.

colonial army and police corps 'Force Publique', established in 1886, launched an almost three-decade-long war against those existing African states and communities that attempted to resist the foreign invaders.[89] Léopold knew, of course, that this militaristic turn contradicted the earlier narrative of a 'peaceful conquest'. However, some results among "barbarous communities […] could not be attained by lengthy speeches", as he now claimed: "For that purpose we must be both firm and parental" the Belgian king added. "But if", he assured, "in view of this desirable spread of civilisation, we count upon the means of action […], it is not less true that our ultimate end is a work of peace".[90]

Soon after the formation of the Free State, the religious-popular 'Mahdi' rising against Anglo-Egyptian rule in Soudan gave Léopold a chance to prove that he was willing to safeguard European interests on the African continent. The insurgents successfully forced the colonial power out of the country, and with the fall of Khartoum in March 1885, a major outpost of European 'civilization' on the 'Dark Continent' was "blasted […] to ashes" by the "Mahdist hordes", as Stanley dramatically wrote. In the following popular outrage, a committee, chaired by Léopold's old ally William Mackinnon, was formed to organise assistance for Eduard Schnitzer, the governor of the southern Soudanese Equatoria province known as 'Emin Pasha' who held out with several thousand staff and troops in beleaguered Lado. Generously, Léopold agreed to let his veteran officer Stanley serve as the leader of a gigantic 'Emin Pasha Relief Expedition'.[91]

Although the course of the expedition was more or less disastrous, the public excitement about Stanley's latest and last African quest broke all records, as chapter 5.1 discusses in more detail. In the public mania that contemporaries have called the 'Stanley craze', observers easily overlooked the fragility of colonial power in the Congo. Due to its weak capital base, a lack of suitable recruits and complicated military operations, in its first decade of existence, the Free State could merely double its number of stations. Fifty posts, of which some were prosperous and fortified centres of commerce and small-scale industry, but many were nothing more than a few sheds with a blue flag that could hardly effectively control the vast region of Central and Upper Congo.[92]

Eventually, however, Léopold was able to announce actual advancements of his colonial warfare. In the following years, the Force Publique finally gained the upper hand against the fiercely fighting but disintegrating African polities in the Western and Central provinces of the Free State, which were unable to resist the superior firepower of the colonial army in the long run. The pro-imperial Belgian and international press enthusiastically reported the military triumphs over the 'savage' and 'cannibalistic' African Congolese, and Free State officers produced adventurous reports about their fierce but

89 See chapter 2.1.

90 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 286 ('barbarous', purpose').

91 Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 12 ('ashes'), 112 ('hordes'); see Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*, 218–38, 259–75. Also and chapter 2.1.

92 The term 'Stanley craze' was probably first used by the satirical newspaper Moonshine on 25 May 1890; see Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 315 [notes]. On the public excitement, see ibid., 122–65 and chapter 5.1; on the slow expansion of the colony, see Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 111–16.

ultimately successful adventures, which followed the literary path of the imperial Congo narrative.[93]

Moreover, a decisive victory over the Muslim rulers of Eastern Congo that Stanley's Congo literature had declared 'fanatic Arabs' followed. It had been prepared on the diplomatic stage in Brussels between 8 November 1889 and 2 July 1890, when Léopold hosted yet another large imperial conference. Under the pretext of "counteracting" the East African slave trade, and fuelled by the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the French abolitionist Cardinal Lavigerie,[94] international powers once more came together discuss the ongoing imperial scramble for Africa. In the concluding 'General Act of the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference', the assembled states pledged themselves to expand their military presence in Eastern and Central Africa and to intensify the repression against the Muslim slave traders. Most importantly, a large zone between the Indian and the Atlantic Ocean was defined in which the importation of modern firearms and ammunition was from now restricted to the provision of colonial forces and individual European traders and travellers.[95]

Hence, although the Berlin commitment to philanthropy and of course abolitionism was once more repeated, the Brussels General Act was a much more direct declaration of war. An attack of a son of Stanley's former ally Tippu Tip on the Free State station at Stanley Falls in November 1892 eventually initiated the two-year-long so-called 'Congo Arab War'. Although the Free State was at this point "utterly unprepared for war", as a British officer of the Force Publique later recalled, the Muslim resistance was ultimately broken, and "the Arab power in Central Africa [was] crushed out of existence", as the British Force Publique officer Sidney Hinde noted in his memoirs.[96]

In Belgium, the leader of the Free State campaign, Francis Dhanis, was celebrated as a national hero, and throughout the imperial metropoles, the 'successful' implementation of the abolitionist crusade through the 'philanthropic' Belgian king was applauded.[97] On the 1894 Exposition Internationale d'Anvers, the anti-slavery movement celebrated Léopold's triumph with the display of Arab booty and portraits of Belgian heroes. Three years later, from May to November 1897, the 'Exposition Internationale de Bruxelles' included an impressive exposition of colonial ethnography, imports, transportation and exports in the 'Palais de Colonies' in the royal compound of Tervuren. The

93 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 61–63; Ward, *Five Years*; Glave, *In Savage Africa*; Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*.

94 *General Act of Brussels 1890*, Art. I ('counteracting'); see chapter 2.1 for more details on Lavigerie's campaign.

95 See ibid., Art I. (military presence), Art. VIII (arms export). On the Brussels conference, also see Laqua, *Age of Internationalism*, 47–50; Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa*. See chapter 2.1 for the precise provisions of the act.

96 Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 22 ('utterly'), 25 ('crushed'); see Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 138–41; Ascherson, *King Incorporated*, 169–76; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 55–58; chapter 2.1.

97 See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 107. Even the activists of the Congo reform movement later generally praised Léopold's war against Muslim slave traders as a positive achievement, although flawed by the systematic forced labour in the Free State. See, for instance, Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 429; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 72–73; Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 196; Morrison, "Personal Observations", 39.

two world fairs hosted by Belgium heralded to millions of visitors that the implementation of Europe's historic 'civilizing mission' in the 'dark' and 'savage' heart of the African continent had begun.[98]

Proudly, Léopold praised the triumphs in the "noble" mission conducted by his agents in a public letter written during the Brussels exposition. "Penetration into virgin lands is accomplished", one could read. The foundation of the means of communication and a network of roads, railways and stations was announced, and peace was allegedly established. We "will soon introduce into the vast region of the Congo all the blessings of Christian civilisation", Léopold assured his philanthropic and evangelical supporters. To those interested in colonial trade, he enthusiastically assured that "trade and industry spring into vigorous life, […] economic conditions are improved […]. Private and public property […] is defended and respected".[99]

Moreover, now that the period of fighting was over and "effective superiority is affirmed" over those who had not voluntarily submitted to the new authority, a new phase of European rule over the Congo was initiated. With the military annihilation of the 'Arab Congolese', the Free State was rid of its last and most powerful economic, military and political competitor to contest its claim to a *de facto* sovereignty over the Congo Basin. There were no longer any internal or external rivals that challenged Léopold's supreme power.[100]

Hence, when the Belgian king promised that his agents would soon "feel profoundly reluctant to use force", he publicly announced the beginning of the hegemonic phase of colonial rule over Central Africa, in which the universally accepted mission to culturally assimilate and economically incorporate the Congo could be implemented in stability and harmony: "Geographically determined, the Congo is a state whose boundaries are occupied and guarded, a result nearly unequalled in the history of colonisation". Material power, collective images and colonial institutions were finally in harmony, and Léopold proclaimed to the world the establishment of a hegemonic historic structure of European rule in 'Darkest Africa'.[101]

4.2 'They will rise en masse': Colonial hegemony and white supremacy in crisis

The image of a stable and even hegemonic structure of European colonialism in Central Arica did not remain uncontested for long, however. In retrospect, the years from 1890 until 1897, in which the ostensible popularity of Léopold and Stanley reached its peak, can be identified as a transitional period in the public perception of the Congo Free State. Slowly, at first, a counter-narrative emerged that would eventually radically challenge the established representation of a 'popular' civilising-movement and an 'international' free trade colony. By the turn of the century, many enthusiastic supporters of Léopold's colonial civilising movement realised that the idealised Free State they had

98 See Matthew G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo* (Lincoln Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 36–38.
99 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 285 ('noble'), 287 ('Penetration', 'trade'), 288 ('introduce').
100 Ibid., 286 ('effective').
101 Ibid., 286 ('feel'), 287 'Geographically'), 288 ('introduce').

imagined had never come into being. The scheme had been "broadly philanthropic and entirely legitimate", the leading American Congo reformer Robert Park would later emphasise. However, between "Promise and Performance", the "whole dark tragedy" of the Congo Scandal evolved.[102]

The international Congo reform movement diagnosed a threefold crisis of racist politics in the Congo. First, in "the native question", as Bourne called it, shocking reports about horrendous atrocities in the allegedly philanthropic colony radically contradicted its commitment to the 'civilizing mission' narrative and led to a collapse of the broad popular support for Léopold's colonial movement. Second, the European or "free trade question" of the political scandal comprised the broken pledges of establishing an 'international colony'. Finally, the 'white supremacy question', often ignored today, pointed to a dramatic change in the image of the Free State from a guarantor of colonial hegemony to a portent of the fragility of 'white supremacy' itself and even to a potential vantage point for its corrosion on a global scale.[103]

The 'native' or African dimension

As has been mentioned above, in 1890, Léopold's early Black American advocate George W. Williams was the first to denounce a severe violation of philanthropic "promises and pledges".[104] More broadly, the scandal around the "judicial murder" of the Irish ivory merchant Charles Stokes through a Free State officer in 1895, which is discussed in more detail below, spread "a disagreeable impression in England and America that all was not well in the style of Congo administration". Lionel Decle, who led a fierce press campaign against the merchant's execution, additionally pointed out that the "murder […] of the unfortunate Stokes" was only "the climax of a series of atrocities". The journalist and former traveller hinted at severe mistreatment of the African population under "the pretext of introducing trade and civilisation, and repressing slavery" – the key 'philanthropic' promises of Léopold's colonial movement.[105]

Indeed, suddenly news about iniquities was "all over Europe", as the Governor-General of the Free State Théophile Wahis realised with anxiety. Protestant missionaries claimed that a "reign of terror" had been established in the Congo and reported "barbarities" and "horrors" committed by the stage administration, confirmed even by statements of former civil and military Free State officials.[106]

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102 Park, "Terrible Story", 764 ('broadly'), 765 ('promise', 'tragedy'). Also see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 58; Johnston, *History of Colonization [1905]*, 230.

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

104 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 21 ('promises'); see Williams, "Open Letter".

105 Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 438 ('judicial', 'disagreeable'); Decle, "Murder in Africa", 586 ('murder', 'climax'), 591 ('pretext'). For Stokes, see chapter 2.1 and 2.2.

106 Théophilis Wahis, quoted in 'The Congo Horrors', *London Daily News*, 14 May 1897, 7; John Weeks, quoted in 'A Reign of Terror in the Congo State', *The Standard*, 14 October 1895, 3 ('terror'); John Murphy, quoted in 'The Congo Free State', *The Times*, 18 November 1895, 6 ('barbarities'), Edvard V. Sjöblom, quoted in 'The Congo Horrors', *London Daily News*, 14 May 1897, 7 ('horrors'). For statements of former offices see Phillip Salusbury, "The Congo State," *United Service Magazine*, June (1896): 314–30; Alfred Parminter, quoted in 'The Belgian Advance on the Nile', *The Times*, 8 September 1896, 3; Hinde, *Congo Arabs*.

The accounts of "oppressive treatment of natives in the territories of the Congo Free State" attracted the attention of the well-respected British Aborigines' Protection Society, which began to raise public protest in December 1896. Just a few months later, Charles Dilke, Liberal politician and prominent activist of the Society, took the charges to the Commons and accused the Congo administration of gross breaches of "the general provisions of the Berlin agreement as to the preservation of the native populations and improvement of their condition".[107]

The king-sovereign of the Congo was greatly alarmed by the public accusations, which directly threatened the political legitimacy of his colonial enterprise. To assuage critical sentiment, Léopold installed a stricter penal code for abuses by state agents, supervised by a special 'Commission for the Protection of the Natives' formed by prominent missionaries. Rigorously, he reaffirmed his commitment to the philanthropic guidelines of the General Act of Berlin: "Our only programme, I am anxious to repeat, is the work of material and moral regeneration", he publicly assured.[108]

In the following years, however, a continuous stream of appalling dispatches reached the imperial metropoles; these were collected, substantiated, evaluated and publicised by the small but growing network of reform activists. These accounts pointed to the ineffectiveness of the announced measures and the dubiousness of Léopold's vows. "They talk of philanthropy and civilization. Where it is I do not know", one could read in the diaries of the deceased Glave, the former officer of Stanley and renowned traveller. Likewise, in Joseph Conrad's devastating and even now world-famous Congo novellas, the "high-flown language" of 'civilising' propaganda with its talk about "the sacredness of the civilising work" was merely a relic from a lost past.[109] Reports about massacres of state auxiliaries in the Kasai and about scandalous cruelties of trading agents of the Anversoise in the Mongalla region pointed to a complete "perversion of philanthropic intentions", as the outraged Aborigines' Protection Society remarked. In the *Speaker*, Morel summarised that the by-then "familiar charges" of atrocities were enough "to destroy for ever the claim of philanthropical purpose" that had so long been "paraded by the Congo State".[110]

Following fresh revelations about acts of violence by agents of a rubber trust, Morel added that whoever still believed in the "philanthropic claim" was "foolishly credulous", "guilty of gross deceit" or even "of conniving".[111] Moreover, Canisius and Burrows, the

107 Aborigines' Protection Society, *Annual Report 1897*, 4 ('oppressive'); Charles Dilke: 'Africa (European Powers')', HC Deb 2 April 1897 Vol. 48 cc 425–50, here c 429 ('general').

108 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 286–87.

109 Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo", 708 ('talk'); Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 136 ('high-flown'), 137 ('sacredness').

110 Aborigines' Protection Society, *The Aborigines' Protection Society* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1899), 52–53 ('perversion'); [Morel], "The Congo Scandal V", 15–17, here 16 ('familiar', 'destroy'). The 'Kasai massacres' by allegedly cannibalistic Zappo-Zapp units in order of the state were reported by Morrison and Sheppard from the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and 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. The 'Mongalla scandals' were revealed by former trading agents who described a brutal system of forced labour in the rubber exploitation; see [Morel], "The Congo Scandal V", 16.

111 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 322.

two former state and commercial agents who published disturbing 'insider' accounts about their experiences in the Congo were determined to "strip from it the deceitful trappings of religion and philanthropy", as the introduction to their book noted.[112]

After the official report of Consul Casement confirmed the existence of multifaceted carnage,[113] leading activists of the consolidating Congo reform movement such as Bourne, Morel and Barbour established extensive documentation of the evidence collected since 1890. The "catalogue of horrors" discussed as part of the now widely accounted 'Congo atrocities' included violations of contracts and forced recruiting of African workers and soldiers, an engagement of the state in the slave-trade, unprovoked attacks on native communities, flogging, excesses of the colonial army including murder, and mutilations such as the cutting off of hands – and, as the reformers claimed within the racist framework of the contemporary Congo discourse, acts of cannibalism.[114]

At the same time, some reformers stated that the concept of atrocities was too narrow an understanding. Most of the documented cruelties happened in the context of the rubber exploitation through the state and its concessionary companies, they noted. The economic basis of Congolese violence and repression was linguistically inscribed into terms such as "red rubber" and analytically integrated into the emphasis of a systematic character of the Free State's violence. "Talk about atrocities and cruelties in the cutting off of hands and mutilations and all those things", the American missionary Morrison asserted, "they must come as an absolute necessity from the system which is in operation out there".[115]

The foundation of the atrocities was the "rubber regime", whose "modus operandi" was revealed through the 'Kasai massacres' and the 'Mongalla scandals'. The collection of caoutchouc from the Landolphia vines in the extensive Congolese forests was particularly labour-intensive and dangerous work. To maximise profit in times of the exploding global demand of European and American industries since the 1890s, agents of

112 John G. Leigh, introduction to *The Curse of Central Africa*, by Guy Burrows (London: R. A. Everett & Co. 1903), xvii ('strip'); see Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, in which was (in a rather strange choice of editing that makes it difficult for some commentators until today to distinguish between the two authors) incorporated Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 63–178.

113 For the Casement report, see Casement, "Report on Upper Congo".

114 Leigh, *Introduction*, xvi ('catalogue'). For the allegations of cannibalism, see chapter 3.2. For large documentations of atrocities, see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, in particular 172–270; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, in particular, 127–258; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*. The memorial was composed by Thomas Barbour as chairman of the American conference of missionary societies present in the Congo. See also chapter 3. Protestant missionaries continued to provide the reform activists in Europe and the United States with new accounts of atrocities and violence. Among the influential testimonies were those of Dugald Campbell (Scotch Presbyterian Mission, published in 1904), John Weeks and A. E. Scrivener (both British Baptist Missionary Society, published in 1905), Edgar Stannard, John and Alice Harris (all Congo Balolo Mission, published between 1905 and 1906), Joseph Clark (American Baptist Missionary Union, published in 1906): see Morel, *Red Rubber*, 48–79.

115 'Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 237 ('Talk'). Morel introduced the term "red rubber" in his *Speaker* series in 1900, apparently in reference to a notion of Pierre Mile in *Au Congo Belge*, and used it as title of his most popular monograph, see [Morel], "The Congo Scandal V", 15–17, particularly 16; Morel, *Red Rubber*.

the state and monopolistic companies quickly established a system of forced labour. For this purpose, the '*impots de nature*' or *'corvée'*, as part of which locals were expected to assist state and companies in portage, paddling or public construction work, was basically transformed into a "rubber tax", as the reformers criticised. Nominally, the compulsory work was limited to 40 hours a month; however, in the high phase of the rubber boom, men, women and often children of the colonised population had to spend more than ten days in the forests to collect the ever-rising caoutchouc ratios demanded.[116]

Wherever the local population defied this dangerous and long-lasting rubber collection, the state and companies resorted to coercion. "Monstrous fines are inflicted for the slightest shortage in taxes", as Morel summarised, including the most scandalous Congolese atrocities. To force men into collecting rubber, women and children were imprisoned and taken hostage. Punishments for a deficit in rubber included beating and lashing, imprisonment and chaining, and the abuse and even murder of hostages. Whenever communities openly resisted the 'taxation', the Force Publique was dispatched on punitive expeditions. These "rubber raids", as the reformers called them, led to the slaughter and burning of whole villages, rape and mutilations.[117]

In the hey-day of the Congo controversy, the reform movement successfully developed its own dramatic symbolism, popularised through polemically written books by Mark Twain, Morel and Arthur Conan Doyle; canonically reproduced on hundreds of town meetings and public protests; and powerfully ingrained into public memory through the tremendously effective 'atrocity photographs'.[118] Motifs such as the 'diabolic King Léopold', his 'cannibal army', the 'hostage houses', the hippotamus whip 'chicotte' and above all the 'maimed hands' that have been discussed in previous chapters condensed the exposed violence into powerful symbols that became globally understood signifiers of the discursive aggregate of the 'Congo atrocities'.[119]

Thus exposed, the outrageous and systematic atrocities shattered the civilising narrative established by Léopold and Stanley into pieces, and they constituted a severe violation of the philanthropic and abolitionist provision of the General Acts of Berlin and Brussels, as the reformers decried.[120] In contrast to Stanley's assertions in 1884, Morel

116 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, subtitle ('regime); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 338 ('modus'). For more details on the establishment of the state-controlled and monopolistic economy, see below. On the rubber tax see, for instance, Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 36; Testimony of Rev. C. L. Whitman, reproduced in Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 29–30; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 189; Morel, *Great Britain*, 113; Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 23.

117 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 242 ('Monstrous'); ibid., 3; Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 38; Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 26; Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 22; Park, "Terrible Story", 771 ('rubber raids').

118 See Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*; Morel, *Red Rubber*; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*. For the atrocity photographs, see chapter 2.2 and 3.3; for the atrocity meetings, see chapter 5.3.

119 For a discussion of the motifs 'diabolic King Léopold' and 'cannibal army', see chapter 3.2; for a discussion of the motif 'maimed hands', see chapter 3.3. For the first descriptions of the chicotte, see Salusbury, "The Congo State", 322 and Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo", 703. So-called '*maisons des hotages*' at trading and state posts were described in Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 44–46, for instance, and pictured in sensory detail in Morel, *Red Rubber*, 95–99.

120 See Williams, "Open Letter", 11; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 307; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 122; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 116; Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 4.

summarised, the "leitmotif" of Léopold's endeavour had never been 'sentimental satisfaction', but "to recoup himself for his expenditure at the earliest possible moment".[121] The intents and purposes of abolishing slavery and bringing the benefits of peace and 'civilisation' to 'Darkest Africa' had been nothing more a "mask" and "pretence" flung aside by their revelations about the brutal rubber regime.[122] Léopold's affirmation of caring for the "moral and material regeneration"[123] of the Congolese population became the most frequently reproduced phrasing to indicate the shallowness and "hypocrisy"[124] of his generous pledges and avowal of the Berlin principles.

Furthermore, the whole concept of the 'civilising mission' had been turned upside down, the reformers asserted. As a consequence of the systematic existence of atrocities, "moral regeneration on the part of the State is non-existent", Burrows wrote. Instead of 'up-lifting' the Congolese, the people of the Congo were "as uncivilized as they were when Stanley made his famous descent of the Congo", it was claimed. In the Congo, the "predominating influences and achievements have been degrading, not elevating", Bourne noted, and he asserted a general "increase of savagery".[125]

Furthermore, the "material part of the programme" announced by Léopold was similarly a "euphemism". Like other imperial powers, the Free State legitimised its heavy taxation of the colonised population with its investment in the infrastructure of the Congo. In exchange for the labour (or 'rubber') tax, his movement introduced the cultural and material "blessings of Christian civilisation", Léopold asserted and pointed to the establishment of means of communication, roads, the railway, industry and trade.[126]

Most reformers, however, argued that Léopold's state had not stuck to its side of the bargain because the actual development of infrastructure in the Congo was extremely limited: "After thirteen years of occupation by the International Association and State of Congo; no map has been made of the Upper-Congo River; no school has been erected; no hospital founded and nothing contributed to science or geography", Williams complained in 1890. Conrad's Congo novellas similarly contained passages that indicated the disregard and incapability of the Free State to introduce technology into its realm.

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121 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 321. As chapter 3.2 has discussed, the reformers believed that the noble ideals that had defined the Congo movement were gradually displaced by greed and profit-seeking of Léopold and a small clique of shareholders.

122 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 21; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 20; Morel, *Great Britain*, 79; Park, "King in Business", 631 (all 'mask'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 117, 202, 221; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 329; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 126 (all 'pretence').

123 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 327; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 39; Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 43; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 4; Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 4; Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo*, 35 (all 'regeneration'):

124 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 202; Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 6; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 104; Morel, *Great Britain*, 151; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 3; Doyle, *Introduction*, xvi (all 'hypocrisy').

125 Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 43 ('non-existent'), 211 ('uncivilized'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 299. Also see Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo*, 11; Dugald Campbell, reproduced in, inter alia, Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 452.

126 Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 43 ('euphemism'); "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 288 ('blessings').

"There is nothing in the remotest degree approaching a genuine increase of prosperity in the Congo State", Morel stated later.[127]

Steamships, trains and telegraph lines did operate in the Congo, it was acknowledged.[128] Nonetheless, there was "no 'redeeming feature' in the public works constructed by King Leopold", as at least Morel was convinced: "On the Congo, every mile of railway, every mile of road, every new station, every fresh stern-wheeler launched upon the water-ways means a redoubling of the burden on the people of the land". For one, it was the Congolese population that constructed these projects, often via compulsory labour or in devastating working conditions. Second, the infrastructure projects were primarily planned to allow more intensive exploitation of rubber and other raw materials and thus facilitated the massive atrocities that occurred in this context. "[T]hese material evidences [sic] of 'civilisation' serve but one purpose", Morel summarised, "that of facilitating the enslavement of the inhabitants, of tightening the rivets in the fetters of steel within whose pitiless grip they groan and die".[129]

All in all, while Léopold had kept the promise to crusade against the 'Arab' slave trade, "old forms of slavery have been succeeded or supplemented by new". Through the almost limitless and arbitrary 'corvée', the allegedly abolitionist movement had itself established a 'slave state', as the reformers emphasised.[130] For those who had promoted a 'repatriation' of African-Americans towards the Congo, the devastating atrocities were disenchanting. "Needless to say, the one thing that has not been created in any shape or form in the Congo is freedom", Morel pointed out, "either for native States, or native institutions, or European trade". Booker T. Washington later similarly pointed to the mendacity of such notions: "instead of making the negro free and independent", Léopold had set up systematic slavery on African soil.[131] Black pro-emigration activists such as Williams soon began to turn their aspirations exclusively to Liberia again, as chapter 5.2 discusses in more detail. Sanford and Morgan also broke with Léopold. While the former had died in 1890, the latter became the most active parliamentarian supporter of the American reform campaign until his death in 1907, determined to remove the "obstacles" raised from the Congo Scandal to his dream of establishing a 'white' America.[132]

To those "sentimental political-philanthropists" that the former colonial administrator and British Congo opponent Harry Johnston mentioned with little sympathy in the quote reproduced at the beginning of this chapter, "the contrast between actual conditions and the professed aims and ideals that were proclaimed to the world when the

127 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 21 ('geography'); see Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 15; [Morel], "The Congo Scandal IV", 596 ('prosperity'). Some Congo opponents such as Glave, for instance, still praised the "satisfactory condition" of the colonial administration in the Congo, its "post-offices, law-courts", "transport, and communications by land and water" (Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo", 709).

128 See [Morel], "The Congo Scandal VI", 228; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 86; Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 4.

129 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 103. As already discussed in chapter 3.2 in more detail, the intrinsic destructive potential of material and technological progress was a dominant motif in the reform campaign.

130 On the reform motif of the 'slave state', see chapter 3.2.

131 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 317 ('Needless'); Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 376 ('instead').

132 'Congo for Our Negroes', *The New York Times*, 2 March 1907, 3 ('obstacles'); see chapters 3 and 5.2.

state was founded" came as a shock. Initially, many of the humanitarians and abolitionists, Protestant missionaries and liberal merchants that had applauded the formation of the Free State and the benevolent 'spirit' of the international colonial conferences in Berlin and Brussels reacted with "perplexed incredulity" to the early revelation of atrocities, as Robert Park noted. Nonetheless, more and more former supporters of Léopold's colonial 'civilising' movement realised the complete confutation of their political expectations and turned against it.[133] Instead of the 'head-quarters' of the civilising movement, as Léopold had envisioned at the Geographic Conference, Brussels had become the target of the first great international humanitarian campaign of the 20th century.[134]

The European dimension: nationalisation and monopolisation

However, the 'native' or African question, and thus the moral outrages of the rubber atrocities, was only one aspect of the 'Congo Scandal' that left contemporary observers and Léopold's former supporters baffled about the tremendous gap between political promises and actual performance in the Free State. There was also "a great practical question to consider", as Morel reminded in 1903. In the monopolisation of the Congolese economy and the nationalisation of the colony, the political crisis of racist relations in the Congo also had an explicit 'European' dimension.[135]

From the start, Morel, with his close political affiliation to the Liverpool trading milieu, had been one of the most outspoken critics of the on-going restrictions of free trade through Léopold's administration. It has already been claimed that the gradual substitution of a laissez-faire capitalism by a state-controlled monopoly economy in the Congo was one aspect of the decay of (politico-economic) culture that the reform movement opposed. Of course, there were also much more 'real-world' considerations, as Morel's above statement suggests.[136]

Even in his early denouncement of the Free State, Williams had not only focused on the ill-treatment of Africans but had also emphasised that the Free State "steadfastly refuses to give a clear title to land" to Europeans hoping to make a fortune on the colonial frontier, which was a clear violation of the pledges of the General Acts of Berlin and Brussels, and also of bilateral conventions with the United States and Great Britain.[137] Together with his impression that those independent merchants ("Englishmen, Frenchmen, Portuguese and Dutch") who had already "invested thousands of pounds" in Congolese ventures were "taxed to death" by the government, Williams came to a severe conclusion: It was the "determined purpose" of the Free State administration "to drive all other nations out of the Congo that are now represented by trade", he warned his readers.[138]

133 Johnston, *History of Colonization [1905]*, 2nd ed. 1905, 230 ('sentimental'); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 5 ('contrast'), 11 ('perplexed').
134 "Speech Delivered by the King", 153 ('head-quarters'); see chapter 4.1.
135 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('practical').
136 See ibid.; chapter 3.2.
137 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 19 ('steadfastly').
138 Ibid., 21.

This worrying news were read aloud in front of a "meeting of merchants interested in the commerce of the Congo River" at the London Chamber of Commerce in November 1890. British traders expressed great concern about new import duties (allowed under a revision of the Berlin Act that Léopold had achieved at the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference) and a freshly imposed license tax for private ivory traders.[139]

However, these taxes and duties were only a "forewarning", "a prelude and a stepping-stone to violation of all the free trade provisions of the Berlin Act no less flagrant and disastrous than has been the violation of its humanitarian professions", the reformers realised later. Concerned merchants reported interventions into the Free State's "political economy [that] tend to constitute a State monopoly of trade", which was in direct contradiction "to the text as to the spirit of the Berlin Conference"; a new set of legislation was even attacked with fervour by some of Léopold's most loyal associates.[140]

The aforementioned 'Stokes affair' directed broader international attention to the on-going economic transformations in the Congo. The well-known Charles Stokes had come to East Africa as a missionary but eventually established a flourishing ivory business that made him ultimately "obnoxious to the Congo authorities by his partnership with German traders", as Bourne suspected. His execution on charges of illegal trade was a worrying hint at the severe restrictions on independent trade through the colonial administration, as Dilke argued in in the Commons.[141]

Morel was the first to publish systematic studies of the sequence of modifications through which the state had begun to monopolise the ivory and rubber trade, starting with the appropriation of all allegedly 'vacant' and unclaimed land in 1885. Since October 1889, only the state was allowed to organise the cultivation and exploitation of rubber. Additionally, in a first clear violation of the Berlin obligations, as Morel asserted, Léopold instructed station chiefs throughout the Congo to collect ivory for the benefit of the state.[142] Two years later, the astonished European merchants learned that, by a decree of September 1891, kept secret so far, the Free State had established an exclusive hold on what was considered the '*fruits domaniaux*', the resources of the areas declared 'vacant'.[143] Hence, it was made virtually illegal for anyone not affiliated with the state, European or African, to exploit resources or trade in the Congo. Effectively, the state had created a monopoly on ivory and rubber trade, a radical "defiance of the Berlin General Act", as Bourne concluded.[144]

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139 'Congo Merchants and the Congo Free State', *London Daily News*, 5 November 1890, 2 ('meeting'); also see Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 318–20, where the meeting is wrongly dated to 1900.

140 Ibid., 323 ('forewarning'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 116 ('prelude'); 'The Congo Free State and Commerce', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 21 November 1892, 8 ('political economy').

141 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 200 ('obnoxious'); also see Charles Dilke: 'Africa (European Powers)', HC Deb 2 April 1897 Vol. 48 cc 425–50, here c 428.

142 See [Morel], "Congo Scandal I", 463; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 323. See chapter 2.1 for the decrees discussed.

143 See Circular of Lieutenant Le Marinel (1892), quoted in [Morel], "Congo Scandal I", 464; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 322–25.

144 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 139 ('defiance'). Also see Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 46; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 341; Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo*, 41; Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 21.

After the establishment of the so-called domain system in 1892, which restricted independent trade to a small 'Free Trade Zone' in the Kasai in Lower Congo, and the radical extension of trading concessions to major trusts, the new monopolistic corporations and an increasingly unfriendly state administration soon displaced independent traders and medium-scale companies from the so-called 'Domaine Privé'.[145] Even larger firms such as the Nieuwe Afrikaansche Handels-Vennootchap or the Sanford Exploring Expedition "were frozen out, or they were driven out by force", reformers noted, and had to remove their factories and outpost from most of the Upper Congo region.[146]

As the "first European victim" of an increasingly repressive Free State, Stokes remained a prominent subject in the now-emerging reform campaign. Morel, like Decle before, argued that the fate of Stokes was not the result of individual misconduct but the logical outcome of a systematically organised attack on free trade by the colonial administration in the Congo. Thus, Morel added essential arguments to the Congo controversy that had so far focused mainly on moral questions of violent excesses and atrocities, hence the 'native dimension' of the Congo Scandal. The 'vacant land'-policy established in 1892 and the related reforms were a blunt attack on European and American business interests, he wrote. Hence, with the entrance of the journalist Morel, who had still valuable contacts from his time as an office worker at a Liverpool shipping company, to the British debate, the 'free trade question' became increasingly prominent in the public perception of the crisis of racist politics in the Congo. In his first book on *Affairs of West Africa* and many pamphlets and articles that followed, Morel promoted his understanding that the economic aspect was the core of the Congo Scandal.[147]

In 1902, Morel succeeded with the first true public relations punch. He disclosed the case of the Austrian trader Gustav-Maria Rabinek, who had been arrested on a warrant of the Free State the year before – as it appeared, while he was on a steamer under the British flag.[148] Although fully licensed, the newly formed Comité Special du Katanga had refused to accept Rabinek's concessions. The young Austrian merchant was detained and his caravans seized. For Morel, it was obvious that the "one end and aim of the officials of the Congo Government was to eliminate Rabinek" who appeared "as a formidable competitor" to the economic interest of the state. "[W]ith truly devilish ingenuity, a charge of gun-running was concocted", Morel reported. Rabinek was sentenced to one year of forced labour due to alleged breaches of the rubber trade law and for having supplied rebels with arms. He was, in contrast to Stokes, granted his right to appeal at Boma; however, after a week-long exhaustive journey, he died of fever on a steamer only a few hours from his destination. In a shameless recourse to racist stereotypes about 'murderous' and 'ferocious' Africans organised in the Free State's 'cannibal army', Morel suggested that Rabinek's transport to Boma was organised "in such a way

145 See [Morel], "Congo Scandal I", 464 and Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 327–42. Also see chapter 2.1.

146 See 'Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 236; Park, "Terrible Story", 767 ('frozen out').

147 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 259 ('victim'); Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('practical'); see Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Economic Aspect*; Morel, "'Commercial' Aspect".

148 The 'Rabinek Affair' was revealed by Morel in the journal West Africa and in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 344 and 371[appendix]. It was described for the first time in detail in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 275–96.

that his removal from this world was a matter of moral certainty". State agents had handed Rabinek "over to the merciful treatment of King Leopold's cannibal soldiery, to be transported 2000 miles away; he a white man and unarmed", Morel indignantly complained.[149]

The revelation of the 'Rabinek affair' had a lasting impression on British public sentiment, especially since the memory of the execution of Stokes was still alive.[150] As a consequence, influential British merchants and manufacturers began to affiliate more closely with the emerging reform campaign, declaring that the Free State policy was "in direct opposition […] to the interests of traders in general". In the Commons, the fate of the "unfortunate man named Rabinek" was taken up by Samuel to draw further attention to "how completely the conditions were violated as regards Free Trade to all nations".[151]

By the early 20th century, one could assert, the "commercial aspect of the Kongo question" had become an integral part of the escalating Congo controversy that caused a scandal in all major Congo reform publications, as well as by missionaries and philanthropists.[152] Even in the United States, where the influence of commercial milieus on the reform movement was significantly smaller than in Britain, 'practical' and 'moral' aspects went hand in hand. Promises of trading benefits had been fundamental for the early support of the United States government and civil society for Léopold's colonial enterprise, it was reminded.[153] "If the government of the United States refuses to intervene in the affairs of the Congo in response to the demands of humanity and philanthropy", the former Massachusetts supreme court judge Edward Cahill and supporter of the American reform association would later suggest, "let it put its interference upon the ground that it has rights of trade in the Congo which are being interfered with".[154]

The European dimension of the Congo Scandal was not simply comprised of restrictions of free trade, ostensibly, but it also concerned the national bias that the reformers identified in this process. The state's legislative action did "not apply equally to all nationalities", Morel complained: "Three-fourths of the Congo State is the State's – that is, the king's – private property, and is closed to the trade of all nationalities, except the Belgian and 'Congo nationality'", he asserted. "Can an Englishman, or a German, or a Chinaman if you like, import European merchandise in the territory […] and barter that merchandise against the raw products of the soil, on a basis of a legitimate commercial transaction? Of course they may not".[155] Furiously, Morel asked the assembled Congo opponents at a protest meeting in 1903: "What right had the King of the Belgians,

149 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 279 ('eliminate', 'competitor'), 280 ('devilish'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 344 ('certainly', 'unarmed'). Also see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 268.

150 See Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 438.

151 'Associated Chambers of Commerce', *The Northern Whig*, 4 February 1903, 8 ('opposition'); Herbert Samuel, in 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1291 ('completely'); also see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, x.

152 Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39 ('commercial'). Also see Grant, "Christian Critics", 35.

153 See 'Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 237 and Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22.

154 Cahill, "Humanity", 8 ('government').

155 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 344.

or anyone else, to take a million square miles in Africa and close it to the trade of all nations"?[156]

At the same time, Belgian capital increasingly supplanted British and American investment in larger concessionary companies and trusts. The Sanford Exploring Expedition, for instance, merged with a Belgian firm and became the 'Société Anonyme Belge pour l'Industrie et Commerce du Haut Congo' by December 1889, and after Sanford's death in May 1891, his widow withdrew the last American stocks from the joint venture.[157] Although British investors had initially signed large shares of concessionary companies such as the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo or the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company, for instance, at the turn of the twentieth century, like most international investors, they had been replaced by a small circle of Belgian stock speculators, as the reformers criticised.[158]

While the reasons for these changes were not only the restrictive policy of Léopold but also the limited interest of American and British investors, the reformers suspected an attempt to betray the promises of a truly international scheme of colonisation. Even the International Association of the Congo, they realised in retrospect, had been "in no true sense international". At first, it had included "representatives of several European countries of prominence in the commercial and monetary world", but it soon came "exclusively under Belgian control".[159]

Soon after the formation of the Free State in 1885, Léopold's long-harboured and never abandoned plan to transform the Congo into a traditional-national Belgian dependency became fully apparent. As early as 1890, Williams had disappointedly observed the rapid disavowal of the Free State's international origins. "At first the Government was international in character", he conceded in his report to the United States president, but the colony endeavour had quickly "degenerated into a narrow Belgian Colony".[160] Moreover, through a series of fiscal and legal reforms implemented by the colonial councils, such as the accession of the Belgian King Léopold as its sovereign, growing financial support by the Belgian State and a right of annexation proposed to Belgium in exchange for credits granted, the Congo continuously developed into "a Belgian colony in all but name", it was asserted in 1894. In those days, rumours became omnipresent among Europeans in the Congo that a Belgian annexation would become official in the very "near future".[161]

In April 1886, the Belgian jurist Camille Jansen took over the title of Governor-General from de Winton, who remained the only non-Belgian at the top of the colonial administration. The new governor soon began to implement a policy of Belgian priority in recruitment the Free State that affected all levels of civil and military service, from

156 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46.

157 See White, "Sanford Exploring Expedition", 302; Harms, "The World", 131 and Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 165–66.

158 See Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 204; Morel, *British Case*, x; Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 6; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 62. For the critique targeting the 'vampire-like' exploitation through these stock speculators, see chapter 3.2.

159 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 2 ('representatives', 'exclusively').

160 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo": 21.

161 Reeves, *International Beginnings*, 90 ('name'); Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo", 707 ('future').

the highest to the lowest ranks. In 1897, Léopold proudly announced that "nearly all" of the Free State recruits were now "volunteers from the ranks of Belgian army". Although this assertion was at this point still exaggerated, changing recruitment policies had indeed altered the social structure of the Congolese colonial master class, whose unique diversity had seemed to prove the wholeheartedness of Léopold's pledges to create a genuinely international and universal colony.[162]

Moreover, soon after the consolidation of the Free State, a Belgian branch of the 'White Fathers' of the French Cardinal Lavigerie was founded and placed in charge of the Vicariate of the Upper Congo by a pontifical order in 1886. In 1888, the newly created Vicariate Apostolic of the Belgian Congo was created by Pope Leo XIII and handed over to Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Mary from a congregation at Scheutveld. In 1891, the Belgian Jesuits sent missionaries to the Congo, and by 1892, Belgian Catholic missionaries were well established in the Free State and developed a close symbiosis with the state and its concessionary companies.[163]

At this point, the once-close alliance between British and American Protestants and Stanley's expeditions in the formational years of the colonial regime had already deteriorated. Initially, it was mainly a growing competition about the best spots for future outposts and concurrence between state-run and missionary-owned steamships that led to tensions.[164] The alienation escalated to "open hostility" once the first critical statements of the Rev. Weeks and Murphy of the American Baptist Missionary Union about the ill-treatment of the natives through the state reached the European press in 1895. Despite attempts to appease the Belgian King, the Free State rigorously refused any appeals of Protestant missionaries to grant or purchase land for desired new stations from 1898 on. In full "contravention" of the General Act of Berlin, the colonial administration was "blocking the way of Protestant missions while favouring the enterprises of Roman Catholics", Grenfell complained in 1903.[165]

In the same year, upon his return to the United States, the Presbyterian missionary Morrison was determined to raise public outrage about the "highest stage of boldness and effrontery" that the Free State has reached in "its systematic violation" of its international and bilateral treaties. These had stipulated "the rights of natives" as well as those of "foreigners", he emphasised – namely to enter the colony, "to buy, sell or lease land" and settle down.[166] At the Universal Peace Conference 1904 in Boston, which preceded the founding of the American branch of the Congo Reform Association, Morrison expressed his anger and consternation: "I say that there is not a single American citizen who can buy a single square inch of land in that territory", he complained. In conse-

162 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 286 ('nearly', volunteers'). See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82 and Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 63. For a more detailed discussion of this development, see chapter 5.2.

163 See Vermeersch, "Congo Independent State", 235–36; Slade, *English-Speaking Missions*, 141.

164 See chapter 2.1.

165 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 199 ('open'); Grenfell to Baynes, August 1903, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 46 ('contravention', 'blocking').

166 Morrison, "Personal Observations", 38.

quence, any attempts of the evangelists to "to start a new centre of life in the darkness there" were made impossible.[167]

No direct appeals to Léopold or offers of cooperation in the following years were able to achieve the revocation of this policy. The old colonial dream of a continuous line of missionary posts through the African continent was ultimately in danger – at least for Protestants because there were "indications that the Catholics are getting all they ask for along this line". Disappointed by Léopold's intransigence, all American and British Protestant missionary organisations eventually broke with the Free State and joined the reform campaign by 1906, a central aspect of its rising dynamic in the following years.[168]

Hence, the political betrayal the Congo reformers protested was not limited to mere humanitarian or economic considerations. For independent trade, and also Protestant missionary organisation, the 'fair' and 'equal' access to the promised lands of the Congo, guaranteed by the racist conspiracy of Berlin, was increasingly denied throughout the 1890s. The "open door guaranteed by international law has been closed and bolted in the face of the world", the journalist W.T. Stead summarised. Nothing was left, the reformers decried, of the project of creating an international and universal colony in 'Darkest Africa'.[169]

Colonial hegemony and the 'white supremacy' dimension

Both the 'African' and the 'European' dimension of the Congo Scandal exposed and opposed by the reform movement directly affected the foundation myth of the Free State as a popular and international colonial movement. Straightforwardly, the undeniable violations of the philanthropic and free trade-obligations of Berlin threatened the legal foundation of Léopold's sovereignty. The Free State snapped "its fingers in the face of Europe", Lionel Decle argued, although it "owes its existence to the goodwill of the Powers". After all, it was "by virtue" the General Act of Berlin that "the Congo Free State exists", the British parliament reminded readers.[170]

At the same time, the atrocities against the African population and the restrictions of access to Europeans undermined the basis of the hegemonic character of Congo colonialism. The Congolese outrages debunked the central promises of the 'civilising mission' as an illusion: instead of introducing freedom, peace, morality and prosperity to 'Darkest Africa', the Free State had brought slavery, war, immorality and destruction. Such a failure of Europe's once-celebrated outposts of progress and the collective guardian of the historic 'civilising mission' severely unsettled the primary self-legitimation of New imperialism. The abundance of those international humanitarian, commercial and religious milieus that had initially sustained Léopold's colonial movement

167 Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 237.

168 'Testimony of Rev. C. L. Whitman', reproduced in Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 29–30, here 30; see chapter 2.2.

169 Stead, "Emperor of the Congo", 38.

170 Decle, "Murder in Africa", 587 ('fingers', 'owes'); Unanimously resolved resolution: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c. 1322 ('virtue').

and their convention in the Congo Reform Associations revealed that the Free State was no longer perceived as the trustee of a universal mission to open up the Congo to civilisation and trade that had been able to unite various concurring fractions of the imperial community.

The hegemonic promises were not only contradicted by the corroding political support for the Free State, though. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Léopold's propaganda had significantly exaggerated the material foundation of his colonial enterprise so that it could be perceived as the mighty guardian of Europe's interest in Central Africa. Hence, when Williams visited the same colony that Stanley had portrayed as 'invulnerable', he was puzzled to find a thin cluster of often-ramshackle colonial outposts where he had expected a powerful confederation of 'free states'. "Your Majesty's Government is deficient in the moral, military and financial strength, necessary to govern a territory" as huge as the Congo, he publicly accused the Belgian king.[171]

Indeed, as was mentioned above, the colonial administration in the Congo had expanded quite slowly. While the European presence at Boma and flourishing Léopoldville was strong, the small armada of steamships available at Stanley Pool could hardly effectively control the vast region of Central and Upper Congo could. With isolated colonial officials "scattered over vast areas", any establishment of supreme colonial power was a mere illusion, the reformers realised.[172]

As suggested in the previous chapter, William's early open letters were still obscured by the public mania for the hero-explorer Stanley, who had just returned from his latest expedition in 'Darkest Africa', and the propagandistically exploited military victories against African 'savages' and Arab 'slave-traders'. Nonetheless, a few years later, interested observers began to have a premonition that these operations had been "by no means so successful as they were alleged to be", as Bourne of the Aborigines' Protection Society noted. Katanga, for instance, annexed after the death of the Yeke king Msiri, "had never been really conquered" and remained in a very "unsettled condition". Since 1893, the land in the South-East of the Free State "had been more or less in the hands of 'rebels'". Moreover, the Kivu and especially the Kasai region in the Central and Eastern Congo remained almost unpacified beyond the immediate surrounding of the isolated colonial posts, even after state troops ransacked the capital of the once-powerful Kuba kingdom, which had been able to resist European invasion until 1899.[173]

Even where the primary resistance of larger pre-colonial states and empires had been worn down by the reckless use of superior European military technology, the colonial regime faced widespread and systematic opposition. In their 1895 interviews, the missionaries Weeks and Murphy had drawn attention to a deterioration of public security as a result of the brutality of the Free State. The population of the Congo was "in a very unsettled condition and most unfriendly to the State", it was reported.[174] In rad-

171 Williams, "Open Letter", 8.

172 Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1299 ('scattered'). Even by the end of the 1890s, the state merely established around 50 posts expected to execute authority over an area larger than the Indian Subcontinent; see chapter 2.1.

173 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 240 ('successful'), 265 ('conquered', 'unsettled'); see chapter 2.1.

174 'The Congo Free State', *The Times*, 18 November 1895, 6 ('unsettled'); see 'A Reign of Terror in the Congo State', *The Standard*, 13 October 1895, 3.

ical contrast to the claim that Léopold had established a hegemonic form of symbolic domination, in which the colonial order was stabilised through a widespread voluntary submission of the local population, the Free State system provoked objection, and a "deep-rooted hatred of white rule which is now growing steadily throughout the population of the Congo", it was warned. "On the Congo itself, the very name of white man was made to stink in the nostrils of the native tribes for all time", the missionary John Harris feared. This rampant "anti-white feeling" in the Congo constituted the real "danger in this state of affairs", Johnston warned.[175]

Resistance radically increased after the implementation of the oppressive regime described above. Anti-colonial resistance against the economics of coercion, but also the cultural assimilation programmes of state, merchants and missionaries was multi-layered, and they included strikes, sabotage, escape through migration and subtle forms of cultural subversion. Moreover, members of the defeated pre-colonial armies resorted to guerrilla warfare, and time and again the oppressed population initiated armed revolts against the foreign regime, ranging from isolated skirmishes to large-scale, sustained rebellions and open warfare. Weeks and Murphy reported dozens of occasions in which Africans "took matters into their own hands", revolted against the colonial authority, and "met and defeated the State forces in more than one pitched engagement".[176]

Furthermore, reformers argued that the large 'native' army established by the Free State to suppress such anti-colonial resistance was not a solution but yet another danger to the stability of the colonial order. As previous chapters have discussed, reformers were aghast at the integration of thousands of Africans into the Force Publique whom, they attempted to convince the public, were 'savages' and largely 'cannibals'. Léopold's 'cannibal army' grew to one of the most frequently used propagandistic tools of the reform movement. It was meant to symbolise the corrosion of imperial alterity that was part of the discursive crisis of racist representation triggered by the Congo Scandal. At the same time, reformers used the image of a brutal soldiery instinctively driven to commit atrocities to reinterpret colonial violence in the Congo as an African crime.[177]

As the following pages show, the motif of the 'cannibal army' was essential in the representation of the political crisis of white supremacy in the Congo. Excesses of colonial security forces were identified as a major source of unrest in the Free State, which showed the "dangers incident to the employment of savage troops, insufficiently disciplined, and not converted from their savagery", as the Aborigines' Protection Society believed. Only "thinly veneered with discipline and training", thousands of 'savage'

175 'The Announcement This Morning of a Fresh', *The Times*, 25 January 1907, 7 ('deep-rooted'); Speech of Harry Johnston quoted in 'Congo Reform Meetings in Liverpool', *The Glasgow Herald*, 20 March 1907, 8 ('anti-white'); Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xvi–xvii ('danger'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 278 ('stink'). Also see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 223 and 230; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351; Morel, *Great Britain*, 189; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 219; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 209; Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo*, 22; Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 7.

176 'The Congo Free State', *The Times*, 18 November 1895, 6 ('hands'), see 'A Reign of Terror in the Congo State', *The Standard*, 14 October 1895, 3.

177 See chapters 3.2 and 3.3.

soldiers were "at best an edged tool to handle", Robert Park agreed.[178] For years, the Bakuba, for instance, refused to pay tribute in work and rubber to the Compagnie du Kasai. The state responded to such a response with ruthless punitive expeditions leading to ransacking and plunder. Against these raids, the Bakuba once more reacted with attacks on state institutions and also on missionary posts, trading houses and factories. Hence, everyday resistance and sometimes spontaneous, sometimes well-organised revolts triggered by the appalling brutality of Léopold's "cannibal troops" targeted missionaries, traders and state representatives alike, and they were only suppressed with the greatest difficulty by the colonisers, the reformers decried.[179]

Léopold's "army of savages" threatened Europeans, as well. According to Morel, any claim of the Congo State "that it controls its soldiers" was ridiculous concerning the small "number of white men" in the Congo. "Of the utter lawlessness of the Congo State soldiers and their brutality, not only towards the natives but also to white men", Morel wrote, "there is ample proof; as also that the Congo State officers have no control over their soldiers". In the remoter districts of the colony, "they are absolutely out of hand, and assault Europeans as soon as look at them".[180]

Reformers extensively discussed a series of major mutinies in the Force Publique, beginning with an uprising of the Luluabourg garrison in Kasai in 1895, which was used as a proof for their racist thesis that the massive conscription of Black men was an unbearable practice. By extending the military expertise of its soldiers and equipping them with modern weapons, hence "the training and arming of Congo savages for the shooting of other savages", the Free State had created an ultimately uncontrollable threat to the colonial order in the Congo, reformers claimed. This "great army of cannibal levies, […] perfected in the usage of modern weapons of destruction", was only waiting "to seize upon the first opportunity which presents itself of turning their weapons against their temporary masters", Morel was convinced. With the Force Publique, the Congo authorities "have raised a monster which is already outgrowing, and will one day entirely outgrow, their control", he was sure. After all, "the State has shown itself powerless to crush" already isolated Force Publique mutinies, reformers pointed out.[181]

Indeed, well-trained and equipped with modern European weapons, Force Publique mutineers constituted a serious military challenge for the state and at one point even threatened the colonial capital of Boma for a time. Some of the mutinied soldiers held "parts of the Congo territory into which no official dare set foot" for years, or even "had set up a State within that State", the public realised with astonishment. Barbour warned

178 Aborigines' Protection Society, *The Annual Report of the Aborigines' Protection Society* (London: Broadway Chamber, 1898), 10 ('dangers'); Park, "Terrible Story", 771 ('veneered').

179 Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c.1292; Dilke: 'Class II.', HC Deb 9 June 1904 Vol. 135 cc 1235–96, here 1265; Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 18, 97; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 104, 176–77, 219 (all 'cannibal troops').

180 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 4; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 11 ('army of savages'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 106 ('controls', 'number'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 39 ('ample'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 106 ('out of hand').

181 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 303 ('training'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351 ('levies', 'seize'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 74 ('monster'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 29 ('powerless'). Also see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 227–40.

that, by equipping African soldiers, the Free State "may yet work its own doom". Sooner or later, the "forces of savagery may turn upon it", the co-initiator of the American anti-Free State agitation wrote to the United States' Congress. [182] Bourne, in a similar phrasing, was even more explicit: Once a major uprising began, the Free State would have no chance to control the "forces of savagery" it had organised. With the 'arming of the cannibals', the "Congo State has created what will surely be its own Nemesis", the veteran of British imperial humanitarianism concluded in his major book on the Congo Scandal.[183]

All in all, the reformers were scandalised by what they interpreted as severe signs of the corrosion of colonial power in the Congo. Serious doubts were raised that the Free State possessed the promised means to protect the life and property of merchants and missionaries and thus allow them to implement their mission of cultural assimilation and economic exploitation. The colony that had been presented to the imperial world as a hegemonic historic structure of European colonialism in Central Africa was brought "almost toppling to the ground" by a constantly rebelling population. "Any moment", Morel hinted in his best-seller *Red Rubber*, "may bring forth another and graver revolt" in the Congo, when "the smouldering embers will burst into a flame, and the conflagration might well spread until every official of the King with his throat cut had been flung into the river".[184]

Moreover, for the reformers, the potential harm of the Congo Scandal was not geographically limited to the borders of Léopold's realm. Instead, the 'conflagration' in the Congo risked extending to a continental and even global crisis of white supremacy. The Congo Scandal, Morel emphasised early in the campaign, was a severe threat to Europe's historic colonial mission in Africa, which had been initiated by the pioneering effort of Stanley and other admired explorers. The Free State system was the "Curse of Africa", he asserted, and "has worked incalculable harm, materially and morally, to European progress in the Dark Continent". The "continuation and spread of this evil will bring with it, as inevitably as night follows day, ruin and disaster upon every legitimate European enterprise in Equatorial Africa; will undo the work of years of patient effort; will render valueless the sacrifice of many valuable lives laid down in the task of exploring and opening up those vast regions". Therefore, its abolishment was a question of humanitarian morality, but it was also in the "own material interests" of the imperial powers.[185]

In the first broader public outrage in the British press, the white supremacy dimension of the Congo Scandal had been fully carved out. If the Free State "had its territory in an island apart", the French-born English journalist Lionel Decle frankly admitted after the death of the merchant Stokes, its arbitrariness "would matter little". However,

182 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 209 ('foot'); Leif Jones: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here 1848 ('State'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('doom', 'turn').

183 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 303.

184 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 190; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 208 (both 'toppling'); 209 ('moment' etc.). Also see chapter 2.1.

185 Morel, "Belgian Curse", title ('Curse'); 'The Congo Scandal VI. Responsibility and Remedy, 1 December 1900, 228–229, here, 228 ('harm'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 7 ('continuation'); Morel, *British Case*, 10 ('own'). Also see Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 350–52.

since the Congo was surrounded by other imperial possessions, the ill-treatment of Europeans by the Free State administration had "the most serious and the widest consequences".[186] The "reason why we ought to take the Congo Government very seriously […] is, of course, much wider" than an individual death, he stated in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Stoke's execution was "the heaviest blow ever yet struck at the white man's authority in Africa".[187]

Even if all charges against Stokes were correct, the death sentence and execution would still have been "a crime against civilisation, and a monstrous blunder – a blunder sufficient to destroy altogether the prestige of the whites in the eyes of the natives". Millions of Africans were "held in check by a handful of whites", as Decle summarised the precarious European presence on the continent. Considering this weak material foundation, the imperialists' "power is wholly based upon prestige, and the moment this prestige disappears; white rule in Africa will be a thing of the past", the journalist indicated. Still under the impression of the long-lasting Mahdi uprising against the Anglo-Egyptian rule, Decle warned his readers of the severe consequences of the Free State policy: "What happened in the Soudan will happen elsewhere, if the natives once apprehend that white men – and especially white men of standing – can be killed with impunity. They will rise en masse".[188]

Decle's premonition reverberated in the reform discourse for years. That Force Publique soldiers dared to attack Europeans was "not to be wondered at", Morel claimed some years later, since Free State officials "have shown their soldiers […] the amount of respect with which Europeans" were treated by the state. The Congo State had established "a system as immoral in conception as it is barbarous in execution, and disastrous to European prestige in its ultimate effects", Morel agreed. Moreover, Canisius asserted that there were "unmistakable signs, in the Congo at any rate, that the prestige of the white man, as represented by the Belgians, is rapidly waning". Both feared that the wrongdoings in the 'international' and 'universal' Congo colony could rebound on the imagined communities of 'Europeans' or the 'white race'. As Canisius noted, the "awe with which the savage formerly regarded the white man […] has largely given way to a feeling of contempt". In this context, Morel was astonished at how "the White Powers can continue their supine contemplation" while "the shadow of a great crime" in the Congo filled "the breasts of the miserable people with an undying hatred of the accursed white man and all his ways" and branded "with indelible infamy the white race in the eyes of the black".[189]

The warning that contempt for the Congo regime could reveal itself in the form of 'racial' 'hatred' became a vital motif of the reform campaign. Activists pointed to the "ferment of hatred which is being created against the white race in general", "undying hatred of the white", "the gravest forces of hatred and antagonism to the white man", or "the growing hatred of the whites by the blacks". Booker T. Washington feared that

186 Decle, "Murder in Africa", 588.

187 'A Hanging Matter', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 September 1895, 1.

188 'A Crime in the Heart of Africa', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 August 1895, 3 ('crime'); Decle, "Murder in Africa", 588 ('handful', 'power'); 587–588 ('Soudan').

189 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, xii ('immoral'), 106 ('respect'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 210 ('White Powers', etc.); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 105 ('signs'), 105–06 ('awe').

the "heritage of misunderstanding, mutual distrust, and race hatred" left behind by the Congo policy "will render fruitless for many years to come" every 'civilising' effort in Africa. Others predicted that the hatred would "spread northwards and westwards from the Congo basin" and lead to a "menace to white administration of Africa" as a whole if it would "not be checked by better administration of the Congo regions".[190]

At base, opponents of the Free State feared that the same 'docile' and 'submissive savages' who had according to early imperial propaganda broadly accepted their inferiority and had voluntarily adopted the paternalistic guardianship of the Free State were, ten years after the alleged formation of a hegemonic colonial structure in Central Africa, on the brink of an anti-colonial revolt. Like Decle before, Congo opponents continued to warn of the serious geopolitical consequences of the Congo Scandal: "If the African will follow up on these kinds of thoughts", Canisius wrote, "the reign of the European is over, so far at least as tropical Africa is concerned", adding that he was "convinced that that day is not so distant as some enthusiastic 'colonisers' affect to believe".[191]

Deteriorating European prestige and rising hatred against the foreign invaders were understood as an explosive mixture that threatened the Free State as much as all African imperialism, such pessimistic forecasts reveal. In this situation, the well-armed Congolese 'cannibal army' could well ignite a continental conflagration that could threaten nearby colonies, as well, the reformers feared. The Congolese soldiers were so poorly controlled "that they raid the territories of their neighbours in search of loot", and mutineers "on several occasions invaded and committed havoc in the contiguous British possessions", Morel reported. "It has become evident" that the "presence of a lawless, marauding soldiery ever increasing in numbers, and only held in nominal discipline by the conferring of full freedom to loot and rape is a menace" for "every Power holding possessions in the neighbourhood". Even the sinister *Times* called the existence of the sizeable Congolese army a threat "which the white communities in Africa can watch with anything but grave foreboding".[192]

However, sporadic trans-border attacks by plundering soldiers or mutineers were the smallest of the reformers' concerns. The worst-case scenario was a successful anti-colonial revolt in the Congo. While this would be a "just retribution" for the crimes of the Congo State, Morel once noted, the geostrategic consequences would be severe, he warned. Like many reform activists, Morel's humanitarian 'heart' was easily silenced by his white supremacist and imperialist 'mind'. What "will remain behind for Europe, when the Congo State has passed away, to deal with", Morel asked: "A vast region, peopled by fierce Bantu races, with an undying hatred of the white implanted in their

190 Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xvi ('ferment'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351 ('undying'); The Lord Bishop of South-Wark [Edward Talbot]: 'The Congo Free State', HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–37, here c. 426 ('gravest'); Leif Jones: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc1839–83, here 1848 ('growing'); Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 376 ('heritage', 'fruitless'); Johnston quoted in 'Congo Reform Meetings in Liverpool', *The Glasgow Herald*, 20 March 1907, 8 ('checked', 'menace'). Also see 'The Congo. An Appeal to the Nation', *The Times*, 7 November 1907, 6.

191 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 105–6.

192 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 106 ('raid'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 208 ('evident'), 209 ('invaded'); 'The Announcement This Morning of a Fresh', *The Times*, 25 January 1907, 7 ('foreboding').

breasts […] savages whose one lesson learned from contact with European 'civilisation' has been improvement in the art of killing their neighbours; disciplined in the science of slaughter".[193]

What would happen when the "anarchical" Congolese soldiers "are deprived of their prey?" the *Times* similarly asked. Surely, they would turn against other Europeans, the article suggested. In this way, the spatially limited armed conflicts unsettling the Congo might evolve into a large-scale anti-colonial rising. African resistance could accumulate to a "great black wave – inscrutable, mysterious, enduring", Morel envisioned, which will "roll sullenly forward even unto the ocean, obliterating every trace" of civilisation in Africa. These "eloquent words" were quoted at length by Emmott in the House of Commons to illustrate the "interest of Europe" in the Congo question and the "danger" to the British Empire and other European Powers. As a reaction, Lord Cranborne, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs meaningfully expressed his "doubt whether the authorities of the Congo Free State realised their responsibilities as the white governors of these barbarous regions": to effectively control this vast part of Central Africa and not threaten the European interests on the continent.[194]

By late 1906, the 'white supremacy question' and the thesis of a potential global conflagration of the Congo Scandal reached its highest public impact through Morel's most polemical and far-reaching anti-Congolese publication, *Red Rubber*, and particularly through the much accounted introductory chapter by Harry Johnston. The former colonial administrator and widely published author had warned in 1902 that, if the state of affairs in Central Africa was allowed to continue, "'there will some day be such a rising against the white man […] as will surpass any revolt that has ever yet been made by the black and the yellow man against his white brother and overlord'", as Morel reminded.[195]

Such a rising came soon, although from a different side than the experienced colonial administrator might have had expected. Like most political observers, Johnston was probably deeply astonished to hear in May 1905 of the annihilation of the Russian Second Pacific Squadron by a Japanese fleet in the battle of Tsushima. As has been previously noted, the unexpected naval victory of an Eastern power over an old and mighty European empire that decided the Russo-Japanese War, which had broken out the year before over clashing imperial ambitions in the Pacific, was considered an exceptional historical event by contemporaries. The occurrence "has given an electric shock to the coloured peoples of the world", Johnston would note later. The triumph of the Japanese, which were "an Asiatic people of partly Mongolian race" over an empire of "a people as to whose 'whiteness' there could be no question" was "discussed in the sūqs of Morocco, the mosques of Egypt, and the coffee-houses of Turkey, in Indian Bazaars and African mudhouses", and it also affected the "relations between black and white North America", he noted. While hopes of self-governance and 'racial equality' seemed suddenly more

193 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 209 ('just'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351 ('remain', 'vast'). Also see Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 104.

194 Morel, *British Case*, 11 ('wave'); Alfred Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1316; Lord Cranborne, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: ibid., here cc 1322–3 ('doubt').

195 Johnston, quoted in Morel, *Red Rubber*, 209–10 ('overlord').

viable for these excited 'coloured people', the dominant imperialist and 'white' milieus looked sorrowful on the 'rise of the natives' around the world.[196]

Hence, by 1906, the executive Congo reformer Johnston warned more drastically than ever before of the severe consequences of unrest in Léopold's Free State: "But unless some stop can be put to the misgovernment of the Congo regions I venture to warn those who are interested in African politics that a movement is already begun and is spreading fast, which will unite the Negroes against the White race, a movement which will prematurely stamp out the beginnings of the new civilisation we are trying to implant, and against which movement except so far as the actual coast-line is concerned the resources of men and money which Europe can put into the field will be powerless", Johnston warned in his introductory chapter to *Red Rubber*.[197]

The British public hysterically reacted to this account of an imminent anti-white rebellion by a well-respected expert on African imperialism, which at times dominated the reception of Morel's book. To the "new phase upon which the Congo question has now entered no stronger testimony could be given than that of Sir Harry Johnston" the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote about his "very remarkable introductory chapter", for instance. "Few men can speak with greater authority on Central African questions", the review concluded, "and no graver warning as to the far-reaching consequences of Congo misgovernment has been uttered than that with which Sir Harry concludes his survey".[198] In the House of Lords, the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury quoted at length from Johnston's "memorable" words to show the "urgency" and "significance of this matter beyond even the wide limits of the Congo State". In reference to Johnston, Morel similarly called out to the British nation: "All White rule in the African tropics suffers from the shame which King Leopold has cast upon it", he wrote. "[T]hroughout the African tropics a storm is slowly gathering which some day will burst, and shake White rule therein to its foundations".[199]

Two years later, Johnston renewed his warning "that the State policy in parts of the Congo Basin has come very near to being the transcendent element which is to fuse all internecine strife among negro tribes and unite them with a universal raging hatred against the Europeans". In the Commons, worrying signs were discussed that the "white man's treatment of the blacks was consolidating the blacks against the white man's rule", apparently confirming Johnston's warning of a unified Black movement, and the present condition was described as "a danger to all Powers who numbered Africans amongst their subjects, and a hindrance to the spread of civilisation". Seven to eight thousand well-armed revolting soldiers could "at any moment assume the offensive, and in this

196 Harry Johnston, "The Rise of the Native," in *Views and Reviews*, 243–283 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1912), 260 ('Asiatic people', 'whiteness', 'discussed'), 261 ('electric', 'relation'). On the global reaction to the Russian-Japanese War, see Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 166–68, who also pointed me to the reproduced essay of Johnston. Also see chapter 1.

197 Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xvi–xvii ('unless').

198 Mary V. Chirol, "Shorter Notice of Books," *The Times Literary Supplement*, 7 December 1906, 410.

199 The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson]: 'The Congo Free State', HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–37, here c 412; Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis*, 11 ('White Rule'). Also see The Lord Bishop of South-Wark (Edward Talbot): ibid., c 426 and the Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs Edmund Fitzmaurice: ibid., c. 427.

event a movement hitherto limited in its operations might become a source of positive danger" for the British territory, as well, it was warned. Morel agreed that "such a policy can only end sooner or later in a general conflagration and economic ruin".[200]

That Johnston's conflagration-proposition might be a reason for the success of the British reform movement in a white supremacist and imperial national had been suggested before.[201] However, as revealed above, the warning of a continental or even global anti-white rebellion emanating from the Congo was not limited to Johnston. Instead, it was a fundamental aspect of the crisis of white supremacy that the movement identified as an intrinsic part of Congo Scandal. In 1908, the *Times*, elaborating on a lengthy quote from Johnston's introductory chapter, clarified what the matter at stake was in the Congo reform debate: "It is on behalf of nothing less than the common cause of the white communities in the sub-continent that we are justified in protesting against a continuance of the present state of things". Foreign Secretary Grey expressed his concerns that the "misgovernment of the Congo, with the disrepute and loathing into which it brings white rule, and the armed but lawless black forces which it subsidizes, are a very real danger to the peace of the continent". Great Britain, but also France and Germany, should therefore have a serious interest in a solution of the Congo crisis.[202]

Just after the high phase of the campaign, the reformers had convinced the British government and public that there was indeed a threat for all European interests in Africa. Protesting against the Congo Scandal had become not only a 'moral' or 'national' but also a 'racial duty'. The reform activists organised their campaign against what they conceived as a scandalous crisis of the hegemonic colonial structure that Léopold's propaganda had claimed to establish. By triggering anti-colonial sentiments and rebellions that could become regional or even global anti-white revolts, the Congo Scandal evolved into a global crisis of 'white' and European supremacy. The Free State "pollutes the earth", as Morel noted. "Its speedy disappearance is imperative for Africa, and for the world".[203]

4.3 'A humane and practical government of Africa by white men': The humanitarian framework for a stable colonial structure

For the Congo reform activists, there was "no halfway house". With their response to the Congo Scandal, European statesmen were about to decide if "the structure which the

200 Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 464 [footnote] ('transcendent element'); Leif Jones: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c. 1848 ('consolidating', 'offensive'); John Kennaway: ibid., c 1852 ('disgrace'); Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Economic Aspect*, 8 ('ruin').

201 See Echenberg, *British Attitude*, 206 ('conflagrational', 'White Supremacist'); see chapter 1.

202 'The Announcement This Morning of a Fresh', *The Times*, 25 January 1907, 7 ('common cause'); Edward Grey, quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 187 ('misgovernment').

203 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 212–13 ('pollutes'). Also see Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 278. The decline of the Free State from a guarantor of colonial hegemony to a threat for European and 'white' supremacy in Central Africa was also expressed through a considerable incursion of a medical and eugenic metaphoric that was used to emphasise the detrimental character of its policy; see chapter 5.3.

white people are endeavouring once more to raise up in the land of the Negroes will remain" or if it would be obliterated.[204] Nothing less than 'white' and European supremacy was at stake, in Africa and beyond. The foremost task of their political pressure group and think tank, the reformers believed, was to form and promote the necessary strategies and policies that would allow those statesmen in charge to cope with the monumental task of preserving this 'white colonial structure' in Africa and (re-)establishing the colonial hegemony once promised in the Congo.

As the following chapter initially discusses, the imperialist humanitarians had no conception of a self-governing Africa and believed that the answer to the Congo crisis was a stabilisation of European supremacy and not its retreat. Furthermore, the reformers agreed that a stable colonial structure had to be more practical and humane, and based on the Berlin principles of free access for merchants and missionaries and a commitment to philanthropy. However, concerning the ideological focus of the civilising mission, religious and secular reformers disagreed. While the former defended the tradition evangelical agenda of religious conversion and cultural assimilation, the latter promoted an 'up-lifting' based on trade, industrial education and cultural segregation. There was broad consensus, though, that the establishment of free commercial relations, native land tenure and colonial 'human rights' were the keys to reducing the rubber atrocities. Finally, international and national solutions were promoted as an institutional framework for a reformed colonial structure until the reformers eventually applauded the formal abolishment of the Free State through the creation of 'Belgian Congo'.

'No conception of a self-governing, independent Black Africa'

The Congo reform movement was as much ideologically committed to as it was structurally involved in imperialism. Many prominent Congo opponents such as Edward Glave, Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement, Herbert Ward, Guy Burrows, John and Alice Harris, William Morrison and William Sheppard had played their part in the colonial subjugation of the Congo as missionaries, traders or officials.[205] Harry Johnston, one of the most prominent figureheads of the imperial scramble for Central Africa, was an executive member of the British reform association. Unsurprisingly, the celebrated former explorer and colonial administrator held that the military invasions of the Congo Basin had been "legitimate conquests over Arabs and cannibals". Moreover, the humanitarian, commercial and evangelical societies that formed the institutional backbone of the reform movement had been among the most outspoken supporters of the colonial enterprise inaugurated by Léopold in 1876.[206]

American and British Protestant missionary organisations, in particular, had been loyal allies of Stanley's early expeditions, but those Congo activists without personal experience as colonisers easily matched such imperialist fervour. The humanitarians of the Aborigines' Protection Society were mentors of a 'Greater Britain', as well, and

204 Morel, *British Case*, 11.
205 See chapter 5.1.
206 Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 462 ('legitimate'); see chapters 4.1 and 5.1.

considered themselves the moral conscience of imperial expansion. "It is in no spirit of opposition to colonies or colonisation, […] but with a desire to make that movement better than it has been" that they were animated, senior activists of the Society emphasised in 1897 while taking the lead of the emerging British Congo reform campaign.[207]

Liberal merchants and manufacturers such as Holt and Cadbury, who supported the reformers, were heavily engaged in what they considered 'legitimate' colonial trade with West and Central Africa.[208] Edmund D. Morel, tied to the Liverpool trading sphere, defended the "legitimate European enterprise in the African tropics" based on a racist hierarchy between the continents. The "European has come with his superior knowledge of arts and crafts" to Africa, which had invested "him with the natural attributes of over-lord", he held. The most influential British Congo reformer saw imperialism as a natural relation between realms of heterochronous (cultural and biological) evolution and different (but complementary) economic interest.[209] The imperial relation brought together a superior Europe inhabited by well-developed 'races' "ceaselessly increasing, seeking new out-lets for their manufactures and industries, where the struggle for existence is keen, and often bitter" and an inferior Tropical Africa "inhabited by races of relative low development, imbued naturally with a pronounced aptitude for bargaining, good traders; living in a land endowed with vegetable riches required by European industrialism", he argued.[210]

Park, whose similar influence on the American reform campaign was similar to that of Morel on the British, was likewise convinced that European expansionism was an "ineluctable historical process", as he would later formulate. The trained journalist was a romantic admirer of imperial whiteness and considered the establishment of foreign rule in the Congo "entirely legitimate". Booker T. Washington, the renowned director of the Tuskegee Institute, vice-president of the American reform association

207 Speech of Leonard Courtney as chair of the first public Society meeting with relation to the Congo controversy on 7 April 1897, quoted in Aborigines' Protection Society, *Aborigines' Protection Society*, 60 ('no spirit'); also see Nworah, "Aborigines' Protection Society", 85. Charles Dilke, leading activist of the Society, had at young age coined the phrase 'Greater Britain', which played a central role in pro-imperial discourses. See Charles W. Dilke, *Greater Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1868) and Douglas A. Lorimer, *Science, Race Relations and Resistance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 27.

208 On Holt's importance for the West African rubber trade, see Jelmer Vos, "Of Stocks and Barter," *Portuguese Studies Review* 19, 1–2 (2011); on Cadbury's cacao business and involvement in colonial slavery, see Higgs, *Chocolate Islands*.

209 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 201 ('enterprise'); Morel, "Economic Development", 136 ('crafts', 'overlord'). The notion of the 'over-lord' was a relic of the thought of Mary Kingsley. Central African societies had never developed any mature political sovereignty or "Oberhoheit", she maintained. No African possesses this, "even in the most highly developed native part". Hence, "in taking it we are not stealing it from him". Kingsley was a persuaded imperialist. "[W]ith those people who say we have no moral right to take over the whole of tropical Africa", she noted, "I have no sympathy. They are estimable people but narrow-minded"; Mary H. Kingsley, *West African Studies*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901), 436.

210 Morel, "'Commercial' Aspect", 432.

and Park's employer, was a similarly enthusiastic supporter of the imperial 'civilising mission' towards Africa.[211]

Morgan and Lodge, the two most active parliamentarian spokesmen of the American reform movement, were among the outstanding political campaigners for the United States' expansionist turn in the late 19th century.[212] At the same time, prominent figureheads of the Anti-Imperialist League had leading positions in the reform association, including the author Mark Twain and the influential academic and eugenicist David Starr Jordan. However, at least within the Congo reform discourse, anti-imperialist activists refrained from raising any demands for self-governance for the Congolese. For the leading anti-imperialist Jordan, for instance, it was clear that "free institutions cannot exist where free men cannot live". Due to the moral and social decay triggered by a hot tropical climate, the "advances of civilization are wholly repugnant to the children of the tropics", who prefer to live "without care, reckless and dirty" and lack "civic coherence", as he believed. The vice-president of the American reform association considered that republics of "self-governing men and women are practically confined to the temperate regions".[213]

In brief, the belief in a cultural or 'racial' hierarchy between Europeans and Africans that legitimated the implementation of colonial supremacy was a pivotal ideological bracket of the reform movement. As imperialist humanitarians, the reformers never seriously considered a withdrawal from Africa, not even as a reaction to the abdominal colonial crimes they opposed. Even in the high phase of New Imperialism, anti-colonial ideas were, of course, neither unthinkable nor unsayable. Outside or on the margins of the organised Congo reform campaign, calls to end the European occupation of the Congo were still raised. Williams, for instance, had indulged not only his hope of a quick abrogation of the Free State but proposed that "when a new Government shall rise upon the ruins of the old", it would be "local, not European".[214]

Nonetheless, Williams was perhaps the only prominent Free State opponent whose imperial mind-set had been seriously unsettled by his experience of colonial misrule in

211 Robert E. Park, "The Nature of Race Relations," in *Race and Culture*, ed. Everett C. Hughes (New York: The Free Press, 1950), Vol. 1, 104 ('ineluctable'); Park, "Terrible Story", 764 ('entirely'); see Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 376. On Park's imperial mind-set, see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago", 108–12; for an account of Tuskegee's colonial mission see Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 112–72.

212 See Rubin F. Weston, "Racism and the Imperialist Campaign," in *Race and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Ages of Territorial and Market Expansion, 1840 to 1900*, ed. Michael L. Krenn (New York: Garland, 1998), in particular 189–195 (Lodge) and 202 (Morgan).

213 Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 44 ('free institutions'), 45 ('advances', 'without care', 'civic coherence'); 97 ('self-governing'). American anti-imperialism was a deeply ambivalent political movement. In general, anti-imperialists agreed that imperial expansion was a contradiction of American ideals of liberty and democracy. However, while some activists pointed to the oppression and enslavement of the colonised, sympathised and occasionally even collaborated with independence movements seeking self-governance, others were more concerned about the negative implications of imperialism for the American nation. 'Coloured races' were incapable of practicing citizenship, they claimed, and their integration into the American demographic would lead to moral and 'racial' degeneration. See M. Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 51–72, 75–92.

214 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 23.

the Congo. Hence, not European or American humanitarians, but the terrorised Congolese population itself most loudly expressed the desire to overthrow the atrocious foreign regime through the multi-layered primary and secondary resistance described above. Although it was unable to destroy the foundation of the colonial state, the violent anti-colonial reaction of the African people powerfully rejected the objectification and dehumanisation of the colonial relation (as Frantz Fanon has described it his classical reflections on decolonisation and violence) and at times even established – temporally and spatially limited – safety zones from the violence of the colonisers.[215]

Even where the colonial order was comparatively stable, strikes, sabotage and subtle forms of cultural resistance attempted to subvert colonial authority, and dreams of its corrosion were omnipresent, as the imperialist Congo reformers realised with consternation. Grenfell, the pioneering Baptist missionary in the Congo and later a prominent Free State opponent, once noted in a private letter that the (obvious, as he believed) benefits of colonialism were "not so evident to the people themselves". Actually, "many of them think the black man when the white man leaves the country will manage things better". The Congolese that Grenfell had come to redeem through conversion never stop talking about "the time when they will be left to themselves again", he noted with consternation.[216]

As previously shown, the virulent hatred of the colonisers and colonial rule among the 'savages' of the Congo, and the never-expiring fervour of resistance, were prominent themes in the reform discourse. However, the imperialist humanitarians of the reform movement considered anti-colonial sentiment, rebellions triggered by atrocities, and the training and arming of Africans through military service part of the Congo Scandal and not its solution. Nonetheless, others made the demands of the Congolese people for independence heard in the imperial metropoles. In a remarkable call 'To the Nations of the World' drafted by W.E.B. Du Bois, the delegates of the First Pan African Conference, who gathered in 1900 in London, demanded not only an end to racist discrimination in Europe and the United States but that "the rights of responsible government" for the colonies of Africa and the West Indies should be fulfilled as soon as possible. In particular, the Black intellectuals from Europe, West Africa, the West Indies and America noted that the Free State should rapidly "become a great central Negro state of the world".[217]

Black leaders around the globe had apparently never forgotten one of the most remarkable expressions of Free State propaganda, the prospect of creating a 'powerful negro state' and a 'republican confederation of free negroes' in Central Africa. For the Congo reformers, on the other hand, such ideas had never been realistic and were discredited as "offering too high an ideal for early realization". Any calls for self-governance were, in this context, strictly enunciated as phantasms. Based on cultural and biological derogations, the entitlement and capability of the Congolese population to political freedom and self-determination were explicitly rejected for the time being. "The creation of a huge independent African State in the basin of the Congo is felt to be an

215 See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin Books, 2001 [1967]), 28; see chapter 4.2.

216 Letter of George Grenfell, 1903, quoted in the appendix of Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 482.

217 Du Bois [draft author], "Nations of the World", 259 ('government', 'become').

impossibility in the present state of Negro development in those regions", Johnston categorically claimed.[218] Of course, as promoters of the civilising narrative, the reformers accepted the prospect of African self-reliance as both possible in principle and morally rightful. However, as Johnston had already specified in his days as 'explorer', "civilization must come" to the Black man "not as a humble suppliant but as a monarch". Washington argued "that the first condition of the permanent advancement of the African is that he should be free". However, "until such a time as education and contact with western civilization has fitted him to take care of himself [the] task of preserving this freedom" must be undertaken by 'civilised' humanity. Hence, the reformers predominantly subscribed to the liberal principle of a 'trusteeship' imperialism, the "modern civilised conception of a tropical possession in which the European Power regards itself as over-lord, trustee for the people", as Morel called it. As a matter of course, only the imperialist humanitarians themselves felt entitled to decide when the Africans would reach political maturity through 'uplifting' and 'civilising'. As Morel emphasised even towards the end of the reform movement, he believed that this goal was in a future so remote that it was hardly imaginable. "[F]or as long a time as can be foreseen", the British activist wrote, "the African will require the protecting aegis of the European administration". This was a judgement made not out of contempt, he added, but "because I believe in the African, because I like him".[219]

Not all of Morel's contemporaries were willing to accept this paternalistic imperialism as true empathy. "Morel himself is no particular lover of Africans", the Pan-Africanist Du Bois noted in a review of the leading Congo reformer's latest book a few years after the end of the reform movement: "Indeed he suspects and rather dislikes the educated African and certainly has no faith in his independent future". The opposition to colonial atrocities and insistence on benevolence and philanthropy in the global relation between Africa and Europe that the famous humanitarian activist expressed were raised from a white supremacist and pro-colonial position, Du Bois criticised. Morel had "no conception of a self-governing, independent black Africa".[220]

'Collective, humane and practical': the Berlin principles as reform policy

Indeed, the aim of this imperialist humanitarianism was not to challenge the system of colonial rule but, as Du Bois concluded with a quote of Morel, "to lay down the fundamental principles of a humane and practical policy in the government of Africa by white men".[221]

With these words, the late Morel described the strategic focus of his Congo activism in previous years and of the whole reform movement that he shaped like no other. 'Prac-

218 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 3–4 ('offering'); Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, x ('creation'). The "black man, though he may make a willing subject, can never rule", Johnston was convinced: Harry H. Johnston, *The River Congo from Its Mouth to Bólobó*, 4th ed. (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1895 [1884]), 300.

219 Johnston, *River Congo*, 300 ('monarch'); Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9 ('first condition', 'until'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 200 ('modern'); Morel, "Future of Tropical Africa", 362 ('aegis').

220 Du Bois, "Books", 351.

221 Morel, *Black Man's Burden*, vii.

tical' in this context meant the assurance of free access of all imperial societies to the souls, markets and resources of Central Africa, while a 'humane' character of colonial policy would end the vicious circle of colonial atrocities and anti-colonial resistance. The colonial activists of the Congo reform movement believed in drawing the right conclusions from the free trade, native and white supremacy dimensions of the Congo Scandal. Moreover, overcoming rivalries between the different (national and confessional) factions of the colonisers would allow a return to the situation of colonial hegemony that Léopold had promised to the imperial community, the reformers hoped.

Across all political, social and personal factions, a broad consensus prevailed that the legal and ideological framework of such a colonial reform strategy was to be found in the spirit and regulations of the Berlin Conference of 1884/85. At Berlin, "all the powers of the civilized world [had] joined in a solemn compact", the American Presbyterian missionary William M. Morrison maintained, and his colleague, the Baptist Barbour once called the treaty of Berlin "in its spirit as benignant as any known to the history of Christian civilization". Hence, the demand to "re-establish the 'basis of principle' set forth in the Berlin Act" and thus return to corporate and philanthropic colonialism was the overall mission statement of the Congo reform movement.[222]

As the previous chapter has discussed, the 'racial' hatred and anti-colonial sentiment induced by the murderous atrocities of the Congo colonisers, and the resulting thriving danger of an escalating revolt of the Congolese that might even expand to a continental or global anti-white rebellion were at the centre of the crisis of racist politics identified by the Congo reformers. For the reform movement, the solution to this particular challenge to colonial hegemony and white supremacy was straightforward: A true commitment to the philanthropic and abolitionist agenda of the Berlin Act to "watch over the conservation of the indigenous populations and the amelioration of their moral and material conditions of existence" would restrain the excessive atrocities and violence of the Free State and stop the escalating circle of hatred and rebellion. A return to the 'civilising mission' agenda would even allow the disbarment of Léopold's 'cannibal army', which was a major concern of the Congo reformers and a warning of the immediate threats for the neighbouring colonies. Hence, a 'humane' reform policy based on the 'spirit' of Berlin was pivotal for stabilising the stumbling colonial state in 'Darkest Africa'.[223]

Moreover, the Berlin Act, as well as the General Act of the Brussels Conference and various bilateral treaties, had established not only a set of 'rights' for the "natives", but also for the "foreigners", the reformers emphasised. In particular, this concerned the "rights of equal freedom of trade to all, and especially the rights guaranteed to missions to found establishments and carry on their work", as the president of the American reform association, Hall, emphasised. Conducting "unhampered" trade and "unfettered"

222 Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 40 ('compact'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 18 ('spirit'); Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis*, 28 ('re-establish').

223 *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. 5 ('watch'). For appeals to the Congo Act, see Williams, "Open Letter", 11; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 307; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 122; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 116; Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 4; Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 40; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 18. Also see chapters 3.2 and 4.2.

missionising were "incontestable rights" of the imperial community, Morel similarly underlined.[224] In the face of the restrictions and arbitrary decisions against independent merchants and Protestant missionaries, religious and secular reform activists demanded their governments insist upon the "open door" in Central Africa guaranteed in Berlin and a return to a collective scheme of colonisation.[225]

For evangelical reform activists, this primarily meant that the blockade of Protestant missionary organisations and the privileged treatment of Catholics through the Free State administration had to stop. The demand for new land grants that would allow the Protestant organisations to extend their presence was loudly raised in pamphlets, memorials and the evangelically dominated public protests in Great Britain and the United States. The conference of Protestant Congo missions in the United States in March 1903, for instance, which initiated the organised phase of the American reform movement, forthrightly admitted that their "interest as missionary organizations" was also the advancement of "the special work in which we are engaged" in the Congo. "We are not political agents, and we care not a jot who rules the country", John Weeks of the American Baptist Missionary Union noted, "so long as we have freedom to do our religious work and the natives are treated fairly".[226]

For the commercial milieus, on the other hand, which were particularly dominant in the British reform movement, the request of an 'open door' mainly implied a desire to regain access for British merchants and manufacturers to the 'gift' of the rich Congolese resources and the promising markets so effusively described by Stanley as the 'African El-Dorado'. The request for 'freedom of trade and commerce' was the central demand of the former shipping clerk Edmund D. Morel, his sponsor John Holt and the British chambers of commerce. They demanded "that no arrangement to be concluded will be satisfactory which does not confirm the provisions of the Act of Berlin, and provides for the restoration of the rights of traders in general".[227]

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224 Morrison, "Personal Observations", 42 ('natives', 'foreigners'); G. Stanley Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 6 ('equal freedom'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 194 ('unhampered', 'unfettered'). For the free trade guarantees in international law, see chapters 2.1, 4.1 and 5.1.

225 Morrison, "Personal Observations", 42 ('natives', 'foreigners'); Morel, *British Case*, 186; Congo Reform Association to the Foreign Office, 5 December 1912, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Present State*, 53 and 54; Stead, "Emperor of the Congo", 38; Cahill, "Humanity", 7 (all 'open door').

226 Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo*, 16 ('interest'); Testimony of Rev. John Weeks of the British Baptist missionary society, reproduced in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Evidence Laid Before the Congo Commission of Inquiry at Bwembu, Bolobo, Lulanga, Baringa, Bongandanga, Ikau, Bonginda, and Monsembe* (London: John Richardson & Sons, Printers, 1905), 61 ('political agents'). Also see Morrison, "Personal Observations", 42 and the testimonies of Edwin A. Layton (Foreign Christian Missionary Society), Revs. A. Billington, and C. L. Whitman (American Baptist Missionary Union), reproduced in Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 28–31.

227 'Traders and the Congo', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 12 November 1907, 6 ('arrangement'). Also see 'Associated Chambers of Commerce', *The Northern Whig*, 4 March 1903, 8 as well as, inter alia, Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 and Morel, "'Commercial' Aspect"; chapters 3.1 and 5.1.

Assimilation or segregation: two 'civilising' agendas

All camps of the organised reform campaign raised calls for freedom of trade and free missionising, which was an expression of the fragile compromise between religious and secular activists that had allowed the formation of the large, unifying organisations Congo Reform Associations. However, there were also severe ideological disagreements within the reform movement. While all reformers were adherents of Europe's historic 'civilising mission', the best strategy to implement this allegedly philanthropic colonial agenda was under serious debate.

In Livingstone's age, as has been mentioned above, 'Christianity and commerce' had been considered coherent and equivalent means to 'uplift' the 'savages' of Central Africa. However, the case of the Congo reform movement in the early 20th century reveals rising tensions and growing alienation between secular and religious civilising subjects. In their contrasting juxtaposition, this debate points to the general breadth of racist politics oscillating between assimilation and segregation.[228] In particular, these two discursive strands provided the conceptual framework for a modern Victorian discourse on 'race' and 'race relations'.[229]

As previous chapters have described, Protestant milieus formed a focal part of the reform movement in Great Britain and the United States. Predominantly, religious Congo reformers were ideologically committed to evangelical philanthropy, and they were organisationally tied to those missionary societies that had been pioneers in the colonisation of Central Africa. The Christian version of the 'civilising mission' was the most important assimilationist ideology in the context of New Imperialism. Both as early public supporters of Léopold's colonial movement and later as its outspoken critics, the colonial policy of evangelical missionary societies concentrated on the 'moral salvation' of the Congolese, who were declared to be 'heathens' and 'savages' saved through Christian conversion and European education. Through cultural assimilation, the evangelical colonisers targeted the destruction of a distinct African cultural identity represented as 'sinful' and 'primitive' through the absorption or incorporation into a Western culture that claimed universal validity.[230]

The interference of the Free State in this religious agenda concerned with an "uplifting of the people" through preaching the gospel was pivotal for Protestant missionaries' gradual change of allegiance. In their reaction to the Congo Scandal, most religious reform activists could agree that "[t]here is one ray of hope for the Congo, and that is in the character of the Christian Missions", as the Baptist Williams wrote in 1890. "One thing is certain", Edgar Stannard likewise asserted: "never was the Gospel message of love, peace, and good will more needed than it is at the present time in this land of oppression and darkness".[231]

228 See Hund, *Rassismus*, 109.

229 See Lorimer, *Race Relations and Resistance*, 27.

230 See chapters 1, 2.2, 3.1 and 4.1.

231 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('uplifting'); Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 22 ('ray'); letter from Rev. Edgar Stannard, Congo Balolo Mission, 26 May 1904, quoted in Morgan, *Conditions in the Kongo*, 22–24, here 24 ('certain').

The strong influence of evangelical style, tone and ideas on the reform movement led to serious objections among secular activists, however. Bourne and Morel vehemently asked that religious campaigners draw a clear line between their Congo activism and religious motives. On strategic grounds, they feared that a sectarian character of the movement would repel relevant Catholic sympathy in Great Britain, the United States and Belgium.[232]

At the same time, deep scepticism about the actual benefits of traditional missionary activity and its assimilationist agenda prevailed. Casement demanded that the "degrading and paralyzing effort" of creating a "sham likeness" through Europeanisation had to be stopped. The president of the American reform association, Hall, was convinced that the outcome of such a policy could only be "a hybrid class, neither one nor the other, with originality destroyed, self-reliance weakened".[233] Morel similarly contended that "to be petted and veneered with an outward culture altogether foreign to his ideas, leaping over twelve centuries in a few years" was just as harmful to the African 'savages' as what he called the "'damned nigger' school". The "denationalizing school" of the missionary produced similar "unhappiness and unrest" among the colonised population, he was convinced. Christianity remained, Morel argued, for "all West Africa, an alien religion taught by aliens who cannot assimilate themselves to the life of the people". The "bestowal upon" the African of "European culture, law, religion and dress" inevitably led to a loss of "his racial identity" and "unmade him as an African".[234]

Such formulations are easily misinterpreted as an expression of solidarity with the colonised peoples of Africa struggling with the traumatic psychological effects of forced cultural assimilation. However, instead of a respectful recognition of cultural differences, the interest in the cultural purity of the 'Other' expressed the pseudo-empathic care of a racist strategy based on the 'principle of non-interaction', a fundamental law of segregationist racism.[235] Morel, for example, accepted the existence of certain (inferior) cultural institutions among Africans. In contrast to the Western culture, these institutions had their origin in the Black 'race' and African soil, he was convinced. Islam had since long become a truly "African religion", for instance: "It is imparted by Africans. It is disseminated by Africans. It has its roots in the soil". Moreover, the "whole social structure" of the Congo was as much the outcome of custom as of "racial necessities", Morel claimed. Polygamy, for instance, which was treated by missionaries as a sin, was instead called "a necessary institution on physical grounds for the Negro in Africa".[236]

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232 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 62; Slade, "English Missionaries", 71; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 36.

233 Casement to Morel, quoted in Porter, "Sir Roger Casement", 65 ('degrading', 'sham'); Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 706 ('hybrid').

234 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 204–5 ('petted'); Morel, *Nigeria*, xi ('bestowal', 'European', 'unmade'), xii ('unhappiness'), xiii ('damned', 'denationalizing'), 214 ('all West Africa'). As chapter 3.2 has already discussed, warnings about the corrosion of alterity by cultural miscegenation within the reform discourse had targeted both the 'contamination' of European colonisers through the African environment and the attempts of colonisers to 'Europeanise' the African.

235 See Hund, *Rassismus*, 113.

236 Morel, *Nigeria*, 214 ('imparted'), 218 and 262 ('African religion'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 88 ('social structure', 'necessities'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 226 ('physical'). On the one hand, Morel casually reminded readers of "the generally admitted theory that the sexual side of man's nature becomes more pronounced as the tropical zone is approached" (ibid.); on the other hand, he suggested that,

Hall likewise argued that the missionary's desire to "Europeanize" the native forgets that the two are divided "by a Chinese wall" of cultural evolution and 'racial' difference.[237] For Morel, the Europeanisation school was fundamentally wrong in promising, at least in theory, the potential of acquiring equality through cultural adoption; the missionaries' goal of "claiming for all men equality before God" could not be fulfilled. Its preachers are from an "alien race […], the conquering, controlling, governing race". The European colonisers, "being an Imperial race", cannot reach "equality of racial status" with the Africans whom they subjugate: "Between the race of the converter and that of the would-be convert there gapes an abyss of racial and social inequality which does not lessen, but, if anything, widens with conversion – the colour line".[238]

Such arguments bluntly rejected the universal concepts of culture underneath the Christian civilising mission. The promoted 'racial' essentialism and geographic determinism of culture was unconvincingly camouflaged as respectful cultural relativism. Differential racism "does not parallelise, but organises hierarchically", it has been rightfully maintained. Instead, it attempts to reproduce "the biologism of the polygenists' at the level of culture".[239] Moreover, the proclaimed intrinsic relation between 'culture, space and race' points to fragments of regressive romantic racism within the reform discourse that have been identified especially in the thought of Robert Park and Joseph Conrad.[240]

Consequently, the foundation of the 'third path' that Morel and others promoted – between violent exploitation and Christian assimilation – was based on the primacy of cultural segregation. Mary Kingsley, who provided intellectual guidance for Morel, had straightforwardly demanded that the evils of a "Clash of Cultures" be avoided at all cost. Instead of subjecting (centuries behind) Africans to a (progressive) European culture, secular reformers argued for the preservation of African cultural and racial otherness in a non-invasive 'civilising' programme. Morel even suggested that Islam (which "preserves racial identity") could, under this primacy, be the "half-way house"

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considering hardships of a life in tropical climate like a high child mortality rate, polygamy was a mere response to "the instinctive and mysterious call of racial necessity", (Morel, *Nigeria*, 214), hence, the "racial need" of the "reproduction of the species" (215). With the concept of a 'racial temperament', Robert Park would later develop a scientific model for a racial ontology of culture; see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago", 116–17.

237 Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 706.

238 Morel, *Nigeria*, 216.

239 Hund, *Rassismus*, 97 (translation F.L.). This can be paradigmatically seen in Mary Kingsley's 'difference theory', which tended to blunt biological polygenism. "I feel certain that a black man is no more an undeveloped white man than a rabbit is an undeveloped hare", she stated (Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, 659). Moreover, she was convinced of the "superiority" of her "race". Only in some weak "philosophic moments" she tended to "call superiority difference" (Kingsley, *West African Studies [1901]*, 330). African 'races' live in "a different and inferior culture state", she noted (329).

240 See Lösing, "Congo to Chicago", 108; Achebe, "Image of Africa", 785. The notion that every 'race' was suited in 'body' and 'mind' to a particular 'space' is at the core of a regressive, romantic and '*völkisch*' nationalism rising towards the end of the 19th century, which declares the bond between 'blood and soil' to be the determinants of culture and nation.

through which the African 'pagans' should pass "to receive in course of time the nobler ideals of the Christian faith".[241]

Nonetheless, the promotion of a civilising mission based on Islam was an affront to the Christian Congo reformers. In addition, it was unlikely to attract a majority even in the liberal and secular business milieus closely allied with Morel. What these could agree on was an 'up-lifting' based on capitalist trade and labour, as had been suggested in the early days of African imperialism. For Morel, commercialism, and not Christianity or Western culture, was the standard "which unites all societies, the link which binds together in a practical sense the various branches of the human family", even in their different contemporary scale of social and 'racial' evolution. Thus, the desire for industrialised commodities was also "the only incentive to the widening in the horizon of the African, the only incentive to acquire new ideas, to develop arts and crafts", Morel was convinced, because it led the African to submit voluntarily to European controlled labour.[242]

Hence, instead of preaching of "a White God" and teaching Western-style higher education unsuitable for the African mind, the colonisers should concentrate solely on the slow, cautious practical and manual instruction of the colonised population. Once modern commerce "will have taken a place in the black man's mind and the black man's life", it will be "for his good". The requirements of agricultural labour would naturally lead to the 'up-lifting' of the 'savages' and the submission to European discipline and work ethic would gradually result in a moral enhancement of the Africans, as well, without the harmful effects of European education. Trade was simply the "best method of civilising natives" of tropical Africa, as the reformer Emmott held in the Commons in May 1903, just as the British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston had asserted more than 60 years before.[243]

In this call for an 'up-lifting' scheme particularly focused on the 'racial' and cultural needs of Africans, colonial and domestic 'racial' policy finally became intertwined. Washington had already developed a similar programme of 'industrial education'. According his Tuskegee Institute, African-American education should focus on manual (agricultural and industrial) training, instead of on academic, so-called 'higher' education. Washington's aim was not to produce Black teachers, politician or preachers, but self-reliant peasants and artisans.[244]

This educational focus was loudly opposed by more radical Black American activists such as Du Bois, who demanded an "education of youth according to ability"[245] and pinned the hope for the true emancipation of Black Americans on the intellectual and

241 See Chapter 16 on 'The Clash of Cultures' in Kingsley, *West African Studies [1901]*, 310–34, particularly 330–31; Morel, *Nigeria*, 219 ('preserves', 'half-way', 'receive').

242 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 205 ('unites'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 35–36 ('incentive').

243 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36 ('taken a place', 'good'); Morel, *Nigeria*, 27 ('White God'); Alfred Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1311 ('best'). Also see chapter 4.1.

244 See Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Education for the Negro," in *The Negro Problem*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: James Pott & Company, 1903), 9–29. For a critical discussion, also see Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 20–60.

245 Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 53.

political leadership of the "[t]alented tenth" instead.[246] However, Washington's scheme of industrial education was highly popular among many Congo reformers. Hall, for instance, was appreciative of Du Bois' pleas for an "opportunity for all the higher cultural elements of education to every negro who can take it". Nevertheless, the psychologist and president of Clark University supported Washington's attempt to work against the "chief desire of all bright young negroes […] to hold office and to study Latin". Park, who worked as a fund-raiser and publicity expert at Tuskegee and was ghost-writer and personal assistant for Washington, was similarly convinced of the benefits of distinct 'Education by Cultural Groups'. The "Tuskegee spirit", he asserted, fuelled a "great and wide uplifting movement" that would eventually "change conditions among the masses of the Negro people" for the better. Likewise, the vice-president of the American reform association, Starr Jordan, believed that only "industrial education and industrial pride" could 'uplift' and slowly "make a man of the Negro".[247]

In particular, Congo activists hoped that the Tuskegee programme would become the foundation of an alternative colonial policy. Indeed, Washington himself was interested in the transfer of his model to Africa and was willing to cooperate with European colonisers, particularly the German Empire. In 1901, a Tuskegee expedition sponsored by the Colonial Economic Committee arrived in Tove, Togo to assist the German Colonial State in establishing a cotton export industry and forming a New South 'negro identity' for the colonised Africans. Hall and Park were optimistic that Washington might not only solve "our negro problem but that of the Dark Continent" and the Congo.[248] In the United Kingdom, Morel was similarly interested in the African projects of Tuskegee. The establishment of "centres of instruction" and "model farms", as well as bringing over "Negro farmers from the States", might actually "serve us as a model to imitate" for a solution of the Congo problem, he suggested.[249]

Of course, in commonly accepted terms of progress, educating Africans in the means of producing raw materials. whether cotton or rubber, for the global market was actually an imperial enforced programme of deindustrialisation, of limiting education and personal capacity. It was, as Andrew Zimmermann has called it, a "decivilizing mission". The same societies that have organised continental trading networks from

246 Du Bois, W.E. B[urghardt], "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: James Pott & Company, 1903), title.

247 G. Stanley Hall, "A Few Results of Recent Scientific Study of the Negro in America," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 19, February meeting (1905), 105 ('chief'), 106 ('opportunity'); Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 677 ('future'); Robert E. Park, "Education by Cultural Groups," *The Southern Workman* 41, June (1912): 375 ('spirit'), 376 ('great', 'change'); Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 32 ('pride', 'make'). On Washington's general reception in the United States, see Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 292–93.

248 Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 677 ('our'); also see Park, "Cultural Groups", 377. Starr Jordan, on the other hand, was sceptical due to his conviction that true cultural progress was impossible in tropical climate; see Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 32. On the arrival of the Tuskegee expedition in Togo, see Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 133–34.

249 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 199. In fact, the Free State government lured Tuskegee for the potential of African American help to establish a Congolese cotton industry in 1903. However, Washington, by 1904 associated with the Congo reform movement, rejected further cooperation with Léopold; see Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 179.

East to West Africa were now expected to fulfil their instinctual trade by simply handing over ivory, rubber or cotton to a European merchant. The same peoples who had cultivated large districts of forest and plantations, run cloth and iron and pottery industry for centuries, were expected to become small-scale farmers attached to piece of land, no matter their personal capacity or needs. Moreover, industrial education and cultural segregation were, just like Christian conversion and assimilation, oppressive forms of colonial control that reached into the sphere of production as well as into family life, gender roles and sexuality.[250]

Eventually, the aim of the segregated education promoted by Congo reformers was the institutional entrenchment of 'racial' inequality. While the cultural relativism and racial essentialism of the Congo reformers claimed to recognise 'difference' and care for preserving the cultural and racial 'purity' of the other, it also attempted to preserve their own position of power through the a priori exclusion of Africans from a dominant culture redefined as 'white' only. This was the logic of segregationist racism, which allocates those stigmatised as 'other' to restricted (territorial and social) spaces which are at the same time within but outside of the dominant society.[251]

Commercial freedom, 'native' land tenure and colonial human rights

However, beyond the ideological confrontations, there was also common ground and room for strategic compromises between the different milieus organised in the Congo reform movement. In particular, there was broad consensus among the activists that the colonial mode of production was the central cause of the systematic atrocities in the Congo and that its transformation was the "key" to its solution. As the previous chapter has discussed, the gradual implementation of a monopolised, state-controlled economy through the Free State since the 1890s was understood as a blunt attack on the rights and privileges guaranteed to the imperial community and as the systematic foundation of the enslavement and abuses of the 'native' population. In this context, economic liberalisation was the answer not only to the 'free trade' but to the 'native' question, as well. Morel even believed that freedom of trade for all European merchants and the establishment of free commercial relations between these merchants, the colonial state and the African population was the "sole modus operandi through which Europe can ever hope to rationally develop tropical Western in a manner profitable to her peoples and to the peoples of Africa". Hence, 'free trade' was the ideological cornerstone of the desired 'practical', 'humane' colonial policy.[252]

Like the pioneers of the dual 'civilising mission' in the mid-19th century, the commercial milieu and free traders Morel represented believed that Africans would eventually voluntarily accept the position of a global peasantry organised along 'racial' lines and gather the desired natural resources for the colonisers to be able to purchase the commodities of industrialised Europe. Moreover, in Morel's colonial philosophy, the

250 Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 153.

251 See Hund, *Rassismus*, 113–18.

252 Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Economic Aspect*, subtitle ('Kernel'), 7 ('key'); Morel, *British Case*, 4 ('sole').

demand for "freedom of commerce" was "inseparably intertwined" with the recognition that even a 'savage' population deserved certain "human liberties" and "economic rights".[253] In particular, this concerned questions of native land tenure. Here, the "whole question of the development of equatorial Africa lay in a nutshell", as Morel was convinced.[254]

As described above, the Free State had declared all soil not directly cultivated or built upon to be ownerless and 'vacant' land, which was, together with its produce, legally appropriated by the state. In this 'Domain Privé', independent European merchants and the indigenous population were prohibited from collecting resources such as ivory and rubber on their own account. Instead, the latter were violently forced to provide these desired goods as part of a 'natural tax' to state agents and concessionary companies. A central thesis the reform movement promoted was that this policy had caused the extreme Free State atrocities and that the vicious circle of colonial repression and anti-colonial resistance destabilised white supremacy and beyond. Plainly, Morel stated at one point that there was "no such thing as 'vacant', 'uninhabited', or 'unappropriated' land" in Tropical Africa. [255] Instead, the inhabitants of Central Africa had been cultivating the region for centuries, reformers asserted. Using arguments similar to those of classical labour theories of property, the activists maintained that this custom had established "immemorial", "ancient", "ancestral" or "hereditary" rights.[256] Hence, the pre-colonial Africans had been legitimate proprietors of the Congolese soil, although the collective organisation of agricultural labour in Central Africa led not necessarily to individual but to "communal" ownership.[257] In this context, the appropriation through the Free State decrees was described as an invasion, denial and violation of "natural"[258] and "human rights"[259] of the Congolese.

It was Morel's innermost conviction that a solution to the political crisis of Congo colonialism had to recognise the 'native' of West and Central Africa as the "owner of the land and of the products of the land". Under this primacy, the economic exploitation of Congolese resources could be organised not based on coercion and 'slavery' but on 'free' labour. The centrality of native land rights for Morel's colonial reform strategy was due to the "passionate insistence with which the late Mary Kingsley urged the conservation

253 Morel, *Great Britain*, 187.
254 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46.
255 Morel, "Economic Development", 136 ('no such thing').
256 Morel, *Great Britain*, 84 and 218; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 71; 'The Congo Question', *The Times*, 23 December 1908, 8 (all 'immemorial'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 12 ('ancient', 'ancestral'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 132 and 134 ('hereditary').
257 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 70–71 and Morel, *Great Britain*, 88 ('communal').
258 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 133; public protest of, inter alia, Albert Thys in 1892, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 31, 98, 301, 328 and Morel, *Great Britain*, 79 (all 'natural').
259 Morel, *Great Britain*, 22, 64, 172; Morel, *Future of the Congo*, 17, 60; Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis*, 16; Morel and Congo Reform Association, *Memorial on Native Rights*, 28; Monkswell and Morel, *Reply to Belgian Manifestos*, 6; Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "A General Reply to Congo Apologists," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1907), 17; George Roberts: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1865 (all 'human').

of native land-tenure", as he admitted.[260] Indeed, although Kingsley had vigorously defended the 'moral right' of a culturally advanced and 'racially' superior Europe to take over the supreme governing power in Central Africa, she strongly denounced efforts to "steal the native's land" for settlers, companies or colonial sates states. This was, for Kingsley, neither ethically right nor materially reasonable.[261]

Kingsley's influence among liberal and secular Congo activists was high; not least due to Morel's impact on the organisation and the ideological formation of the reform movement at large, the demand for native land rights was even taken up by religious activists who were generally committed to traditional concepts of evangelical philanthropy. The conference of Protestant Congo missionaries in the United States, for instance, argued that the appropriation of native soil was the "one wholesale wrong, the parent of all lesser acts of injustice" in the Free State. At the greatest Congo demonstration of British Protestant, 1909 in the Royal Albert Hall, the Bishop of London similarly assured that the assembled 'Protestant world' "would not stand any reform which did not restore the land to the people who owned it".[262]

The renunciation of the 'empty land'-myth propagated by Stanley and Léopold was one of the rare and the most significant departures of Congo reformers from the contemporary colonial discourse. The call to recognise pre-colonial 'native' land ownership challenged a central motif of the European Congo narrative and a primary pattern of self-legitimation of 19th-century imperial discourse. Moreover, the postulation of 'black' and 'savage' Africans as rights-bearing persons and their integration into an allegedly universal realm of 'human rights' defines, for commentators, the Congo reform movement's contribution to the philosophical development of traditional humanitarianism towards a modern discourse on human rights.[263] To restore the Congolese's "rights as men" was an integral part of the Congo reform policy. American reformers declared the "desire to reinstate the Congo natives in their just rights as human beings" as the "animus of the Congo reform movement", and Morel repeatedly emphasised his conviction that the African was "before all, a man, and he must be treated as a man, and not as a brute". For, "as a man", the African possessed "the rights of a Man", as well.[264]

260 Morel, *Great Britain*, 187 ('owner'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 92 ('passionate').

261 Kingsley, *West African Studies [1901]*, 436 ('steal'). She claimed it was not possible (climate prevents settler colonialism), not necessary (for economical exploitation) and not good for the African (since it was culturally intrusive to enforce agriculture).

262 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 12 ('wholesale'); The Bishop of London [Arthur Winnington-Ingram], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8 ('not stand'). Also see the insistence on land rights in a letter from Harris to Morel, 30 December 1911; reproduced in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Present State*, 11–16, here particularly 12; and the 'National manifesto' issued by the reform movement in December of 1908, which was signed by many political and civic authorities, as well as Anglican, non-conformist and missionary leaders, reproduced in 'The Congo Question', *The Times*, 22 December 1908, 8.

263 See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 12 and 36.

264 John Daniels to John T. Morgan, 5 April 1907, reproduced in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Association Expresses Gratitude", 10 ('rights as men'); Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "General Reply", 17 ('desire', 'animus'); Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('before all'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 204–5 ('as a man', 'the rights').

Such appeals to "common humanity" between (›white and civilised‹) Europeans and (›savage and black‹) Africans or the understanding of the Congo atrocities as "crimes against humanity" reveal an honest objection to forms of 'exclusionary racism' that challenge the human status of those discriminated against by relegating Africans to the animal realm, for instance. However, to read such expressions as proof of a progressive or anti-racist agenda misses the point. Instead, they once more point to symbolic struggles among different patterns of racist classification. As demonstrated before, the stereotypes used for Stanley's composition of the 'African' and 'Arab' Congolese identity and Léopold's 'civilising' ideology generally refrained from plain-spoken dehumanisation and upheld the Enlightenment commitment to monogenesis. Instead of pushing the objects of the colonial imagination and subjugation beyond the boundaries of humanity, the stereotypes of 'savages' and 'coloured races' that formed the European representation of the Congolese focused on the creation of different hierarchical scales of humanness.[265]

Predominantly, the reform activists subscribed to the traditional Congo narrative, and this 'inclusionary' specification of racist thought that had been called "humanitarian racism".[266] Hence, while emphasising that the African "was a man", Morel, for instance, felt obliged to add that he was of course "more highly developed in some places than in others". This differentiation of the human family through the creation of 'lesser' or 'sub'-humans allowed the reformers to synchronise their universal and egalitarian rhetoric with their own racist beliefs and colonial agenda. The postulation of different grades of humanity led to the creation of particular (human) rights for Africans that were differentiated in concept, scope and value from those of Europeans.[267]

While the existence of pre-colonial ('natural' and 'customary') rights was recognised, the reformers denied that the 'savage' inhabitants of the Congo had been able to translate this 'natural' law into positive law. Hence, the "fundamental" or "inalienable" rights of the natives beyond normative and moral entitlements were only "guaranties according to law" formed by the colonisers, in particular through Stanley's treaties with indigenous authorities in which the future colonial state had "pledged itself to protect the people from oppression" and the conventions of Brussels and Berlin. Even the much-acclaimed right "to their land and the produce thereof" was often not described as originating in the 'humanness' of the African but as "created" and "established" by the guarantees of the General Act of Berlin. Thus, these colonial 'human' rights the Congo reformers evoked were not primordial or absolute rights, but rather privileges generously granted by colonial powers to a native population robbed of all political sovereignty.[268]

265 Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 29; Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter", 6 ('common humanity'); George W. Williams to James G. Blaine, 15 September 1890, quoted in Bontinck, *Aux Origines*, 449 ('crimes'). Also see chapters 3.1 and 4.1.

266 MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, 13 ('humanitarian racism'). Like Stanley, the reformers did not shrink from the occasional use of animal metaphors, in particular in the description of the African soldiers as actual perpetrators of the Congolese crimes, however; see chapter 3.3.

267 Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('a man', 'more highly').

268 Morrison, in ibid., 41 ('fundamental', 'inalienable', 'guarantees'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 12 ('pledged'), 19 ('established'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 300 ('to their land', 'created'). In this conceptualisation of African rights, the discursive structures of 20th-cen-

Moreover, it was the coloniser who defined what exactly counted as a 'human' right for the colonised: "Probably what I may consider an infringement upon the rights of natives another man may not consider an infringement at all", the American missionary Morrison knew.[269] In practice, the African human rights granted by the reformers were strictly limited to the disposal of land, produce and labour.[270] From today's perspective, it is perhaps surprising that the well-remembered cruelties of the Congo atrocities were not discussed as human right violations but as a contradiction to the provisions and spirit of colonial treaties and law. Instead, the reformers used proprietary rights and human rights almost the same way, and have never developed a clear concept of the latter.[271]

Hence, when Morel demanded that the African "has the rights of a man", he immediately specified that these are the rights to "property" and "freedom". The idea of African 'freedom', then, was completely absorbed by economic liberties. "Trade spells freedom for the inhabitant of the African tropics", Morel asserted, while freedom of commerce was "synonymous with the freedom of the native".[272] Thus, the African 'human rights' the reform movement advanced were exclusively economic rights that were deliberately separated from political, civil or social rights. Indeed, the corollary of a plea for non-intervention, as raised by the segregationist Congo reformers, was a plea for political, civic and social segregation wherever territorial and cultural segregation was impossible to maintain entirely – as in a colonial situation or the multi-racial societies of the United States or South Africa, the two states were racial segregation would evolve into fully developed system of apartheid.

Ideologically, segregationist Congo reformers were closely tied to the New South. For Hall, Washington's 'Atlanta Compromise', with its affirmation of political and social separation but industrial unity, was one of the "masterly pieces of statecraft" in the 19th century. For the president of the American reform association, Washington's accommodationism and schemes of segregated education, which have been discussed above, were the main reason for a more hopeful "future of the entire black race".[273]

Moreover, through Senator Morgan, the reform movement was allied with one of the main political architects of 'racial' segregation. Although he primarily campaigned for

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tury imperial humanitarianism and 19th-century colonisation were alike, see Grovogui, *Sovereigns, Quasi Sovereigns*, 80.

269 Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41.

270 See Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis*, 16; Morel, *Great Britain*, 22, 64, 172; Morel and Congo Reform Association, *Memorial on Native Rights*, 28; Morel, *Future of the Congo*, 17, 60; Monkswell and Morel, *Reply to Belgian Manifestos*, 6; Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "General Reply", 17; George Roberts: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1865. On the very rare occasion that the rights to freedom of movement, of residence and home, or over bodies were mentioned, these are always bound to, and second-tier to, property rights and not liberties constituted on their own, see Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41; Morel, *Great Britain*, 219.

271 Morel, *British Case*, 11; also see Alexander, "E.D. Morel", 213–15.

272 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 204 ('spells'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 14 ('synonymous'). Also see Roberts: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1865.

273 Hall, "A Few Results", 105 ('masterly'). For Washington's Atlanta Compromise, see Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 221–222 ('fingers'). Also see chapter 2.3 for more details.

repatriation, the Alabama senator actively fought for restrictions on the enfranchisement of the emancipated slaves and their descendants. Black Americans were simply "not prepared to enjoy" the right to vote or "social equality", he argued.[274]

The alliance between the white supremacist Morgan and the allegedly tolerant and respectful humanitarians has led to confusion. However, it is less surprising than apologists of the reform movement often suggested.[275] After all, Herbert Samuel, the initiator of the important British Congo debate in May 1903, assured the House of Commons, for example, that only "certain rights […] must be common to humanity", precisely "liberty and just treatment". The liberal member and the reformers he represented were not "those short-sighted philanthropists who thought that the natives must be treated in all respects on equal terms with white men". Samuel "had never put forward such excessive claims", he guaranteed, "on behalf of the negro population of Africa".[276]

Morel, as has been explained above, tended to perceive "racial and social inequality" as an ontological given. On the same occasion, he emphasised that the impossibility of extending enfranchisement to Africans was beyond doubt. A central principle of his alternative plan was that "in no period of time which can be forecast, will the condition of West African society permit of the supreme governing power being shared by both races", Morel declared. Although the consolidation of 'native' authority in the local and social sphere as the foundation of indirect rule was considered an advisable policy, this explicitly excluded "the casting vote".[277] In this maxim, Morel once more followed Kingsleyan traditions. His mentor had made very clear that she thought Africans could not participate in a Western parliamentary democracy, "this vote, this jury system and vestrymanism" which was only "suitable for us", the 'white race'. The franchise was a right, Kingsley was sure, "you cannot let them use". To grant the "right to vote to the black population", she wrote, was a danger for any 'civilised' state, be it South Africa or the United States.[278]

It is of course not a new insight that even the initial imagination of universal human rights of privileged 'white' men in the 18th century deliberately excluded non-Europeans or non-whites on biological and cultural grounds to synchronise the universal and egalitarian imagination of human rights with the reality of racist discrimination, slavery and colonialism, just as the social contracts of modern enlightenment philosophers were implicitly formulated as 'racial contracts'. In the foundational phase of human rights, savages, blacks and slaves (like women, children, those without property or the insane) had already been denied the moral autonomy and the necessary capacity for reason to live as self-governed individuals in a civilised society.[279]

274 Morgan, "Future of the Negro", 82 ('prepared', 'social equality').

275 See Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 152, 242.

276 Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1297–8.

277 Morel, *Nigeria*, xii ('in no period', 'casting vote'), 216 ('inequality').

278 Kingsley, *West African Studies [1901]*, 445.

279 See Wulf D. Hund, "Ungleichheit und Untermenschen," Paper Presented at the Congress 'Ungleichheit als Programm', Frankfurt, 24 November 2006, 11; Wulf D. Hund, "Der Rassenvertrag," in *Hegemoniale Weltpolitik und Krise des Staates*, ed. Lars Lambrecht, Bettina Lösch and Norman Paech (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), 95–104; Mills, *Racial Contract*, 3; Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 28 and 181–194.

Despite the integration of Africans into the realm of human rights through the Congo reformers, the inner segregation of the same realm allowed the old racist and colonial underpinnings of human rights to persist. A plain-speaking white supremacist such as Harry Johnston frankly admitted that he did "not think the territorial rights of all the peoples on the Congo worth such generous consideration as that of a settled European peasantry". Others distinguished the value of "primitive rights" from 'civilised rights' through different levels of cultural maturity.[280] For Hall, the "new colonial policy" the reformers propagated should treat "the world's wards more as its children and less its slaves". Every 'race', "however crude and underdeveloped", should be "like childhood, an object of respect and study", he appealed.[281] 'Savages', Hall asserted, "need the same careful and painstaking study, lavish care and adjustment to their nature and needs" as children or juveniles. Hence, "[p]rimitive peoples have the same right to linger in the paradise of childhood".[282] This comparison of 'savage' rights to those of children allowed the subordination of the former under the 'mature' rights of 'the civilised' while maintaining the empathic veneer of the 'humanitarian' racist.

Finally, the imperialist human rights activists granted even the limited 'economic' human rights only with reservations. The exact geographic and moral validity of native land titles, for instance, was deeply contested among reformers, as is shown, for example, by the continuous controversy between Harry Johnston and Edmund D. Morel. While Johnston agreed that the appropriation of the Free State was excessive, he emphasised in the introduction to Morel's bestseller *Red Rubber* that he considered the redistribution of vacant African land to European settlers, corporations or colonial authorities just and fair, as long as the land was 'truly' No Man's land: "Where the land is absolutely waste land, without indigenous human inhabitants, I have counted it no sin that such a wilderness should be allotted to foreign settlers", as had happened in the Congo and other colonies. For the former colonial administrator, Morel's emphasis on native land rights went far out of proportion: "I do not go to the lengths of some theorists in Great Britain who would endow the actual natives of the Congo with all the soil of the Congo and all its products", he publicly confessed.[283]

Nonetheless, the official position of the British reform association had been established along similar lines, as Morel emphasised, in attenuation of his earlier claims. The "Association has never attempted to deny that it is legitimate for a civilised Administration in tropical Africa to claim, in the exercise of its trusteeship on behalf of the native communities owning allegiance to its flag, such lands as are 'vacant' in the true sense of the term; and it has never denied that such lands may be found to exist in the Congo",

280 Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 459 ('peasantry'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 18 ('primitive rights').

281 Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter", 6 ('new colonial policy', 'wards').

282 Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 649. Passage also reproduced in Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 3. As chapters 3.1 and 3.3 have shown, a relegation of Africans to a status of historical and cultural immaturity through the discursive tool of infantilisation was as common in Stanley's Congo literature as in the thought of the reformers.

283 Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xvi ('waste land'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 458 ('lengths').

Morel pointed out after Johnston's public criticism.[284] Personally, he agreed that native land tenure should not prevent imperial expansionism. While European Powers should preserve "sufficient land to satisfy the requirements" of a growing population for the Africans, this should "not, of course", lead "to the exclusion of European enterprise. That would be at once foolish and impossible".[285]

In the end, the boundaries of the European pursuit of imperial possession were, for many reformers, not morally or legally but merely materially established through environmental determinism. After all, the European had proven physically and psychologically incapable of a permanent settlement or hard labour under such fierce climatic conditions as in the Congo, the reformers admitted.[286]

Hence, the notion of 'native' or 'human' rights raised in the Congo reform discourse was not a tool of emancipation, but the base for a more stable colonial reform policy segregated along 'cultural' and particular 'racial' lines. The human rights promoted by the reformers were neither "natural (inherent in human beings)", "equal (the same for everyone)", nor "universal (applicable everywhere)", the distinct qualities defined for modern notions of human rights.[287] As such, the Congo reform discourse does not, as has been maintained,[288] stand outside of the history of human rights. However, it points more to the exclusionary and colonial foundation of human rights of the 18th and 19th century than to progressive human rights activism.

International governance or national solution

The Congo activists were once more at odds concerning the adequate institutional framework to implement their reform strategy. In the first years of the controversy, many critics still hoped that the Free State system could be reformed within the state structures established in 1885. Protestant missionaries, in particular, initially refrained from public criticism and instead directly appealed to courts and administrators in Boma or Brussels. Even after protest reached the public sphere, the implementation of thorough reforms by Leopold himself remained the first line of attack for the growing reform movement.[289] However, despite the reassurances of the Belgian king about his commitment to the Berlin principles in 1897, disillusioned Congo opponents noted that the abuses of the native population and restrictions for Europeans actually escalated

284 Morel, *Future of the Congo*, 18–19 ('Association'). Morel had already admitted earlier that colonial appropriation of foreign soil was legitimate if it was "really and truly uninhabited"; Morel, "Economic Development", 136.

285 Morel, "Future of Tropical Africa", 360.

286 See private letter of George Grenfell, 1903, quoted in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 482–4, here 482; Morel to Johnston, quoted in Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 65; Morel, *Great Britain*, 28; Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 20; Rev. A.E. Scrivener, quoted in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 51; Davis, *The Congo*, 115; Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1310–1311; Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36; Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals*, 83; Booker T. Washington, ed., *The Negro Problem* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1903), 9.

287 Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 20.

288 Alexander, "E.D. Morel", 214.

289 See Daniels, "Congo Question", 895; Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis*, 28.

in the following years. Eventually, even the loyal Protestant missionaries accepted that the "indisposition" in the administration "to remedy these wrongs" was apparent, and they considered the possibility of petitioning the Congo executive as "exhausted".[290]

With increasing vehemence, Congo opponents turned to the international community, instead. Reformers declared that the Berlin Act had created general rights of intervention for "each of the signatory Powers to ensure that the principles of the Berlin Act were not violated by any one" and claimed that the Free State had never acquired full political sovereignty. The Belgian King was only the "trustee" of European powers "to execute" the rules conferred in Berlin, it was argued: "The great treaty powers have continuing rights as supervisors and directors in the enterprise conducted by the King".[291] British and American activists pressured their respective governments to call for a new international conference on the Congo "in order that measures may be adopted to abate the evils prevalent in that State", as a resolution of the House of Commons declared in May 1903.[292] Moreover, peace activists such as William T. Stead, Edward D. Mead and Mark Twain suggested that the "violation of international treaties" by the Congolese government was a case for the next Hague Conference or its newly established Court of Arbitration.[293]

At the same time, more radical and far-reaching plans were discussed among the furious reformers, including military interventions or the annexation of the Free State through another European power or the Belgian State. In return for the extensive credits allotted by the Belgian parliament in the early years of the colony, Belgium had obtained the right to annex Léopold's enterprise. However, after extensive debates in the summer of 1901, Catholics, Liberals and Socialists in the Belgian parliament alike dismissed this option, despite support by Morel and petitions of Bourne and Dilke on behalf of the Aborigines' Protection Society.[294]

Afterwards, texts from Burrows and Morel even suggested that a new international conference should focus to the "Disruption of the Congo Free State" and its "Partition […] among the Powers", since "there will be no amelioration" until the government of the Congo Basin was "placed in those of Powers who have the means and the will to conduct

290 Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 17. Such appeals were nothing more than a waste of "time, paper, and stamps": Weeks, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Evidence Laid*, 61 and Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 27.

291 Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 300 ('each'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 19 ('trustee', 'execute', 'supervisors'). Since the United States had not ratified the General Act of Berlin, American reformers were more inclined to point to similar provisions of the Brussels Act; see Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 3 and chapters 2.2 and 4.1. Apologists of the Free State countered the idea that the Berlin Conference "founded and organized" the Free State an "entire misapprehension". The "Congo was a sovereign state […] long before", they argued, and rejected any foreign intervention into its interior policy: 'King Leopold and the Congo', *Baltimore American*, 8 April 1904, 12.

292 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc1289–1332, here c1332 ('in order'); also see Charles Dilke: 'Africa (European Powers)', HC Deb 2 April 1897 Vol. 48 cc 425–50, here c 425.

293 See Stead, "Emperor of the Congo", 38; Edwin D. Mead, "England's Lead-Action at the Hague," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 7; [supplementary to] Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 46.

294 See [Morel], "The Congo Scandal VI", 228–229, here 229 ('ready'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 272. Also see chapter 2.2.

it on civilized lines".[295] However, such a notion proved to be strategically obstructive. For the apologists of the Free State, it was easy to dismiss the emerging international criticism by arguing that the British reformers and government used "the interests of humanity as a pretext and concealing the real object" of territorial covetousness. As a result, the Foreign Office was forced into a defensive position, and reformers pointed to the importance of repudiating "any idea of aggression or 'grab' in the matter".[296]

Nevertheless, considering Léopold's reluctance to alter his colonial policy, many reformers had reached the conclusion that a radical abolishment of the notorious Free State system required the abolishment of the Free State, as well. A new organisation should replace Léopold's colonial enterprise, the reformers agreed. One potential remedy the reform movement promoted was the return to or even an extension of international colonial governance. As the previous chapter has shown, the gradual transformation of the international Congo colony into a Belgian dependency and rising restrictions for non-Belgian merchants, investors, missionaries and state employers had greatly repelled many of Léopold's former allies. To those reform activists who had believed in the potential of international cooperation (not only in imperial policy), the fragmentation of the universal hegemonic mission represented by the Congo along the lines of nationality and confession had been traumatic, and they hoped that the future of Congo colonialism would once more be "international, not national".[297]

The calls for peaceful arbitration and international conferences with a right for humanitarian intervention that transcended national sovereignty (at least that of a dubious entity such as the Congo Free State) were strong reverberations of the internationalist origins of Congo colonisation and the spirit of cooperation evoked by the Berlin and Brussels conferences. American pacifists particularly appealed to "the sisterhood of civilized nations" and "authoritative" international institutions to deal with the present situation in the Congo. The leader of the British reformers, Morel, had become convinced that the atrocities committed in the imperial conquest of Africa were to a large extent "the outcome of international jealousies" and "the spell of an insensate rivalry" between the European nations engaged in the imperial race for Central Africa.[298]

Morel, like Kingsley, believed that an international, indirect and commercial form of imperialism, without an extensive settlement, would allow the re-establishment of a cooperative framework of colonisation and at the same time reduce the 'dangerous' exposure of European agents to African culture and climate to a minimum.[299] Hence,

295 Morel, *British Case*, 187 ('Disruption', 'Partition'); Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 274 ('amelioration', 'placed'). Also see Dilke: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1307.

296 "Note from Congo Government in Answer to Despatch of 8th August to Powers Parties to the Act of Berlin," 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), 10 ('pretext'); Emmott: 'Class II', HC Deb 9 June 1904 Vol. 135 cc 1235–96, here 1252.

297 Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 23 ('international').

298 Supplementary to Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 46 ('sisterhood'); Mead, "England's Lead-Action", 7 ('authoritative'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 251 ('jealousies', 'rivalry); also see Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 6.

299 For Kingsley, see Marie L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 211.

in his main political pamphlet *Red Rubber*, Morel demanded a "wider and closer international control of the Congo" as a response to the Congo Scandal. This international control could be established under the International River Commission for the Congo, an institution formally created by the 'Act of navigation of the Congo' and incorporated into the General Act of the Berlin Conference in 1885 to regulate free traffic on the Congo River. Although it had never come into being, Morel advanced the opinion that this 'Navigation Commission' could provide all the necessary "elements of a machinery of Government", while the "provisions of the Navigation Act amounted virtually to a scheme of international control over the river, its affluent and its normal trade".[300]

However, the weakness of idealistic internationalism as a political movement at the beginning of the 20th century was also expressed in the ideological formation of the Congo reform movement. Both on the level of national culture and in the sphere of international politics, nationalist ideas had become dominant. Particularly in imperial policy, an evolution towards the nationalisation of imperial economies and the implementation of direct, dominant colonialism was undeniable. Political scientists even identified the "anomalous character in international law" of the Free State as a cause for the political Congo Scandal. For many religious and secular reformers, ending this special status through the Congo State's transformation into a 'normal', nationally controlled empire became a prime interest. For Johnston, the lack of a "national conscience to appeal to" had made the atrocities against the native population possible in the first place. "Whatever its fate may be", he wrote in 1906 about the future of the Free State, "let us hope that it will not be an International enterprise! There is as yet no International Conscience", he stated.[301] Doyle agreed that international governance and morality was a chimaera. Without a strong nation, imperialism in the Congo would fail, since the "trouble is that what belongs to all nations belongs to no nation". Eventually, a colonial rule backed by a European nation-state was materially unavoidable. When, as can be expected, "native risings and general turmoil" follow "the withdrawal of Belgian pressure, something stronger and richer than an International Riverine Board will be needed to meet them".[302]

The suspiciousness towards international solutions among Congo reformers was, of course, also a direct consequence of the hesitant reactions from the international community. For years, the governments in Washington, London and other European capitals showed as much reluctance to increase the diplomatic pressure on Léopold as the latter had shown towards implementing free trade and more humane treatment of his colonial subjects. Despite persistent scepticism, especially from Morel, British reformers returned to the 'Belgian solution' as the primary political demand for institutional reform, particularly due to the pressure from the missionary milieu and Johnston. To turn that country "into a Belgian domain" was propagated as the "best solution" for

300 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 211 ('wider'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 183 ('elements', 'provisions'). Also see Flint, "Mary Kingsley", 102–3. The Congo Commission was modelled on the Commissions of the Danube River inaugurated after the Crimean War in 1856: see Bob Reinalda, *Routledge History of International Organizations* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2009), 110.

301 Reeves, "Origin of the Congo", 118 ('anomalous'); Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xi ('Whatever').

302 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 125.

the Congo Scandal by the well-respected authority on imperial policy. Thus, a "constitutionally governed" colony would be created, governed by a country "which has a definite national conscience and a strong sense of national honour".[303]

For Léopold, the prospect of a Belgian annexation was generally acceptable. After all, his long-lasting plan always had been to transfer the Congo to the Belgian nation at some point. Hence, after the devastating public impact of the Commission of Inquiry's report in 1905, an escalating international reform campaign, and slowly rising diplomatic pressure, Léopold publicly announced his willingness to transfer his private colony to the Belgian state. On 15 November 1908, after month-long negotiations, the Belgian parliament ultimately approved, and the new colony 'Belgian Congo' was officially created.[304]

On paper, the formal liquidation of the Congo Free State was a major success for the Congo reformers and the highpoint of more than ten years of intense campaigning against the Congo Scandal. However, as some British and American reformers warned, "the provisions of annexation […] will amount to little more than a raising of the Belgian flag over the Congo". The new corresponding secretary of the American reform association, John Daniels, for instance, had only "slight hope of radical improvement".[305] Likewise, in Great Britain, Morel and Doyle fought actively against the 'Belgian solution'. Both men questioned the capability of the small and young Belgian nation to govern the Congo, and Morel soon became convinced that accepting Belgian annexation as a remedy was "utterly impossible" for him.[306]

Morel and Daniels continued to promote an international solution, while the latter brought "as a remedy of last resort" also the "partition among the Powers holding contiguous territory in Africa" back into the game.[307] Doyle also revitalised the idea of a partition. However, in reconciliation to earlier concerns, Great Britain should be modest and "play the most self-denying part", he argued. Instead, France, and especially Germany should incorporate the largest sections of Belgian Congo. John Harris would later similarly suggest that a 'German solution' "would give a ray of light and hope to the darkest regions of the 'Dark Continent'".[308]

The support of the majority of the Congo reformers and the broader public for those far-reaching demands was minimal, though; in particular, after the new Belgian Colo-

303 Johnston, *History of Colonization [1905]*, 314 ('best', 'constitutionally', 'national conscience'); see the Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8. Also see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 1, 239, 263–264, 325–326; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 51–52.

304 See chapters 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1.

305 Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "To the Supporters of the Congo Reform Movement," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1908), 5 ('provisions'); Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *The Congo State*, 1 ('slight'). Also see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Congo Situation, February 1908"; Daniels, "Congo Question", 901.

306 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 173 ('utterly'); also see ibid., 164; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 123.

307 Daniels, "Congo Question", 902 ('last resort'). The famous author Richard H. Davis explicitly wished "to see the English take over and administrate the Congo": Davis, *The Congo*, 39.

308 Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 124 ('self-denying'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 304 ('ray of light'). In 1912, even Morel privately endorsed a transfer of the Congo to Germany, see Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa*, 178.

nial Minister Renkin announced a plan for reforms to be implemented until 1912 that included central demands of the reform movement for a more 'practical' colonial rule. The rubber trade through state agents was abolished, free trade regions were expanded, and new land was granted to Protestant missionary societies. State ownership of 'vacant land' and the concessionary system, on the other hand, largely prevailed. Moreover, the new Belgian colony could hardly count as 'humane'. Most companies had already shut down the notorious rubber exploitation due to exhausted wild rubber reservoirs. However, forced labour, political and cultural oppression prevailed, as did the whipping with the chicotte, although on a different scale than before.

Nonetheless, most international Congo reform activists were ready to accept the new Belgian rule as a remedy for the crisis of white supremacy in the Congo. Protestant missionaries were particularly fast to withdraw from the campaign, and on 5 January 1910, the American Congo Reform Association gathered for its last meeting. Although Morel initially warned that "the old game of plunder" continued and attempted to maintain the campaign in the first half of 1910, he began to accept that the days of the British reform campaign were numbered, as well. Proudly, the Congo reform movement eventually heralded the accomplishment of its mission to stabilise the colonial structure of European rule over the Congo Basin, and they contentedly announced a *Dawn in Darkest Africa*.[309]

309 Morel, *Great Britain*, 6 ('plunder'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, title; see Morel, *Future of the Congo*, 18