A 'Crisis of Whiteness' in the 'Heart of Darkness': Racism and the Congo Reform Movement
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[transcript]

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"Mr MOREL has served the natives, but I must insist on this point: that he has served others as well. [...] He has appealed to the honour, to the soul of the white races, and the appeal has not been unanswered. He has restored to many of us those beliefs which we should desire to have; he has helped to reassure many of us to whom such words as progress, civilisation, and even Christianity had begun to lose all meaning".[1]
Arthur Conan Doyle

A fierce critique of the colonial and racist underpinning of the modern human rights movement once called it a "project for the redemption of the redeemers".[2] As the above excerpt from a speech of Arthur Conan Doyle suggests, the movement for 'Congo reform' is probably one of the most pronounced pieces of historical evidence to support such serious charges. The world-famous creator of Sherlock Holmes was one of the most prominent 'Congo reformers'. With this eulogy, he praised his friend and ally Edmund D. Morel, a journalist and former shipping clerk who played a vital part in turning an initially isolated criticism of the infamous Congo Free State, which had evolved in the 1890s, into mass movements on a national scale in Great Britain and the United States.

Today, the Congo reform movement is not only considered the "first great international" or even the "first global" human rights campaign of the 20th century, but it has also been praised as a form of modern "heroism" and as "one of the noblest manifestations of [...] liberal altruism". In particular, it is acclaimed for "the greatest human rights achievement" of its time, the exposure of the so-called 'Congo atrocities'. This murderous and notoriously violent system of ivory and rubber exploitation in the extensive Central African colony, proclaimed by the Belgian King Léopold II in 1885, terrorised the Congolese population through forced labour, hostage-taking, torture and iniquities such as the cutting off of hands, and it brought death, mutilation and trauma to millions of Africans. Nevertheless, led by activists of a "heroic nature", one is told, the

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1   Speech of Arthur Conan Doyle, reproduced in Lord Cromer [Evelyn Baring] et al., eds., *The Public Presentation to Mr. E. D. Morel*, Whitehall Rooms, Hotel Metropole, 29 May 1911. In the footnotes of this study, references are only made to shortened titles. For further information, please consult the bibliography.
2   Makau Mutua, *Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 14.

public protest in the imperial metropole eventually overcame this shocking episode of New Imperialism. This success made the Congo reformers simply "some of history's most underestimated heroes", as a TV documentary noted in 2007.[3]

However, as Doyle's speech at a public reception in honour of Morel in the London Hotel Metropole indicates, more interests than those of the down-trodden Congolese were served by this colonial reform movement. The other group of beneficiaries, the strong 'we' and 'us' evoked by the renowned author, apparently transcended the walls of the White Hall Rooms, where several hundred notable supporters of the reform movement assembled in May of 1911. Moreover, marked as 'white', 'civilised', 'progressive' and 'Christian', as Doyle's words imply, this collective was strictly demarcated from the 'natives' and defined by a whole range of racist ascriptions that accounted for an alleged natural superiority over others stigmatised as 'coloured', 'backward', 'savage' and 'heathen'. That these classifications started to become empty, 'meaningless' signifiers reveals a second crisis beyond and beneath the humanitarian disaster of the 'Congo atrocities'. Likewise, the fact that, after two decades of reform agitation and near its official end in 1913, 'heroic' activists such as Morel were publicly praised for restoring faith into these central ideological constituents of contemporary racist identities suggests that this pioneering campaign at the transition between Victorian humanitarianism and the modern human rights movement had indeed always aimed at the 'redemption of the redeemers', more precisely, of an imagined community of 'whiteness' and 'progressive, Christian civilisation'.

These suspicions led to the broad questions that have informed the study at hand. How could the political events in this far-off colony so severely unsettle the British and American societies? Was the more profound catalyst of the Congo reform movement indeed not African suffering but a far-reaching calamity of racist relations? How could this Congolese crisis shake the representational, political and social foundations of 'white' and European supremacy? What role did racism play in the ideology, strategy and success of this allegedly 'altruistic' and 'noble' human rights movement? In addition, and against the backdrop of the theoretical challenges of sociological racism studies, this study asks what the role of racism in the Congo reform movement reveals about the parameters and characteristics of racism at this specific historical conjuncture. Ultimately, a critical approach to this research problem leads to another vital question: Should we hold onto a narrative that transfigures those into 'heroes' who exploited human rights and humanitarian empathy to follow a racist and imperialist agenda?

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3   Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), subtitle ('heroism'), 2 ('first great'); Robert G. Weisbord, "The King, the Cardinal and the Pope," *Journal of Genocide Research* 5, no. 1 (2003): 35 ('global'); Neal Ascherson, *The King Incorporated* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), 260 ('noblest'); Angus Mitchell, *The Amazon Journal of Roger Casement* (London: Anaconda Editions, 1997), 24 ('greatest'); Ramona Austin, "An Extraordinary Generation," *Afrique & histoire (Paris)* 4, no. 2 (2005): 75 ('heroic'); Peter Bate, *Congo* (Chicago: Facets Video, 2006 [2004]), min. 70 ('history's').

'Congo reform' racism and the literature canon

That those committed to lionizing these apocryphal heroes are little inclined to focus on the shortcomings and 'dark sides' of the Congo reform movement is hardly surprising. How broadly the racism of this pioneering human rights movement has generally been ignored, trivialised, or denied in the broader academic discourse is, nonetheless, astonishing considering the deep marks this humanitarian racism left in the Western literature and theory canon. Together with sometimes vague, visual reminiscences of photographs of maimed African children and severed hands, fragments from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are, for many Westerners today, probably the first thought that crosses the mind when they think of the Congo atrocities. The famous last words of the ivory trader Kurtz, "The horror! The horror!", are engraved deeply in the collective cultural memory and have become a cultural metaphor for "Leopold's rape of the Congo" or even the genocidal violence of colonialism as such. As historians must admit, this fictional novel, which is only loosely based on its author's brief experience in the Free State, remains probably the "most famous account of Leopold's Congo".[4]

During his lifetime, the Anglo-Polish writer born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski had already become one of the most eminent contemporary authors. After the Second World War, leading British and American literary critics honoured him as a representative of 'The Great Tradition' of English novelists and acknowledged the "canonical place" of *Heart of Darkness* in modern literature. Until today, the short tale remains one of the most widely studied and certainly one of the most controversial works of English literature.[5]

First published as a serial in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1899 and reaching bookstores in 1902, *Heart of Darkness* certainly had the most lasting impact of all texts produced in the great Congo controversy. Primarily, however, it unfolded as a psychological parable. In this, the fateful voyage of the seaman Charles Marlow into the interior of an unnamed Africa colony, up the river but "deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness",[6] becomes the expression of an exploration of the powerful lusts and instincts that slumber beneath the thin veneer of 'civilised' behaviour and self-control. However, its setting in a specific geographic, socio-historic, and discursive context gave this psychological study an explicitly political dimension – and turned it into a profoundly racist piece of fiction.

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4   Joseph Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," in *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Paul. B. Armstrong, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 69 ('horror'); Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 146 ('rape'); Tim Zeal, "Belgium's Heart of Darkness," *History Today* 62, no. 10 (2012): 49 ('famous'). For the broader uses of the 'horror'-metaphor, see for instance Bartolomé Clavero, *Genocide or Ethnocide, 1933–2007* (Milano: Giuffrè, 2008), 227; Fabian Klose, *Human Rights in the Shadow of Colonial Violence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 92.

5   Frank R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979); Lionel Trilling, "On the Modern Element in Modern Literature," *Partisan Review* 28, no. 1 (1961): 25 ('canonical'). The most comprehensive entry in the controversy around Heart of Darkness remains the excellent Norton critical edition Paul. B. Armstrong, ed., *Heart of Darkness*, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), which has recently gone in its 5th edition. Also very valuable are the essays in Attie de Lange and Gail Fincham, eds., *Conrad in Africa* (Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 2002).

6   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 36.

Like in his first Congo short story,[7] Conrad painted a devastating image of the colony that contemporaries easily identified as the Congo Free State. A "chain-gang" of imprisoned Congolese, the "pain, abandonment, and despair" of dying West African workers, and the "glorious slaughter" that Europeans on Marlow's steamboat were happy to commit were hints of the brutality that lurked in this colony that Léopold II had presented to the world as a disinterested trustee of Europe's historic 'civilising mission'. In Conrad's Congo, though, any "philanthropic pretence" was debunked through "imbecile rapacity". The physical and moral erosion of the famous ivory trader Kurtz, whom Marlow was sent to rescue, and whom he found infested with fever and insanity, fraught with deadly fantasies of 'omnipotence, and committed to horrifying atrocities, becomes in this context the central symbol for the transformation of an allegedly benevolent colony into an oppressive regime. Once committed to 'civilising', the well-educated Kurtz eventually developed a genocidal programme: "Exterminate all the brutes", he demanded, as Marlow reads on a handwritten note.[8]

Conrad's Congo literature reached the public in a crucial period of the escalating reform debate. Based on eye-witness accounts of colonial agents, missionaries and merchants, the at first loosely bound circle of devoted British activists gathered around the veteran humanitarians Henry Fox Bourne and Charles Dilke from the Aborigines' Protection Society, soon supported by the journalist Morel and the evangelist Henry Grattan Guinness, had begun to protest against the breaking of Léopold's philanthropic promises in 1897. In this context, Conrad knew that his Congo novellas would be understood as a political commentary, and the reformers appreciated the intention. In May 1903, the British House of Commons dispatched Vice-Consul Roger Casement for a mission of inquiry that broadly confirmed the allegations and resulted in a broad stir in the international press. When Casement planned the formation of a new, specialised humanitarian organisation upon his return, he directly approached the famous writer with the request that he take a leading position.

Although Conrad could not see himself as a political activist, he assured Casement of his "warmest wishes for your success" and criticised the Congo State for its "ruthless, systematic cruelty towards the blacks" and its "bad faith" towards the commerce of other states.[9] Others took the lead of the 'Congo Reform Associations' that were formed in 1904: in Great Britain, Morel and the missionary couple Alice Seeley Harris and John H. Harris; in the United States, the journalist and future sociologist Robert E. Park, the Presbyterian missionary William M. Morrison and Thomas S. Barbour from the American Baptist Missionary Union. Both Morel and Park, however, would quote elaborately

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7   See Joseph Conrad, "An Outpost of Progress," in *Tales of Unrest*, 124–70 (London: Eveleigh Nash & Grayson, 1897), which was first published 1897 in the magazine *Cosmopolis*.

8   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 16 ('chain-gang'), 17 ('pain'), 23 ('rapacity'), 24 ('pretence'), 50 ('Exterminate'), 51 ('slaughter').

9   Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, quoted in Hunt Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad, Roger Casement and the Congo Reform Movement," *Journal of Modern Literature* 9, no. 1 (1981): 69–70, here 69 ('warmest'), 70 ('ruthless', 'bad'). Hawkins suggests a general depression, severe illness and ideological dissent as reasons for Conrad's refusal to join the Congo Reform Association; see ibid., 72–73.

from the "admirable sentences" of the "well-known author" Conrad, praised "the powerful picture of Congo life drawn [...] in the 'Heart of Darkness'", or recommended the novel to their supporters.[10]

Based on this embeddedness in the Congo controversy, literary critics focusing on the political dimension of the novel had, until the last quarter of the 20th century, generally agreed that *Heart of Darkness* should be read as "a vehement denunciation of imperialism and racism" and have even called it "the most horrifying description of imperialism ever written". However, since a now-seminal speech of the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe at the University of Michigan in 1975, a counter-narrative emerged that accused the same story of embracing racism and imperialism rather than challenging it.[11]

In his speech, Achebe called Conrad a "bloody racist" whose Liberal opposition to imperial violence "always managed to sidestep the ultimate question of equality between white people and black people". Indeed, Conrad had made sure that *Heart of Darkness* could not be read as a rejection of imperialism per se. The "red" on imperial maps was "good to see at any time", Marlow once noted, "because one knows that some real work is done". Like almost all Congo reformers, Conrad was convinced that a just and humane form of colonial rule was possible and had been realised in the British dependencies marked in this way.[12]

Moreover, Achebe rightfully attacked *Heart of Darkness* for its "image of Africa as 'the other world'". Undeniably, Conrad described the Congo as a prehistoric and natural space of mythical darkness where "vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings". The absence of human interference and signs of cultivation within the abundant and royal ruling forests that Conrad described serve as the backdrop for the dehumanisation of the Congolese characters in the novel. The occasional "roll of drums" and "burst of yells" proved that humans breathed in this 'other world'; however, their existence remained a "black and incomprehensible frenzy" for Conrad and his readers. Like the "cannibals" working on his steamer, the Africans on the riverbanks were almost speechless, simply howling, leaping and stamping, and they remain phantom- or ghost-like characters.[13]

The "wild and passionate uproar" of lusts that Marlow projects onto their dances and screams signifies that both the forests and inner human nature in the Congo remain uncontrolled and unmastered. The African inhabitant of the Upper Congo was

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10   Edmund D. Morel, *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (London: W. Heinemann, 1904), 174 [footnote] ('powerful'), 351 ('admirable', 'well-known'). A pamphlet issued by Robert Park reproduced the 'Statement of Joseph Conrad' over a whole page and referred to 'Heart of Darkness' for the experience of the author; see Robert E. Park and Edmund D. Morel, *The Treatment of Women and Children in the Congo State 1895–1904* (Boston: Congo Reform Association, 1904), 30.

11   Eloise K. Hay, *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), 112 ('vehement'); Arnold Kettle, *An Introduction to the English Novel*, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson, 1953), Vol. 2, 65 ('horrifying').

12   Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *The Massachusetts Review*, 18, no. 4 (1977): 787 ('always'), 788 ('bloody racist'); Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 10 ('red', 'real work').

13   Achebe, "Image of Africa", 783 ('image'); Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 33 ('vegetation', 'cannibals'), 35 ('frenzy').

"not inhuman", as Marlow emphasised, but on the lowest stage of evolution, a "pre-historic man" in a state of nature, neither master of himself nor of his surroundings. This undomesticated wilderness was described as a counter-image to 'civilised' Europe, where nature was subjugated but was at the same time a worrying reminder of Europe's own, 'savage' past. What really unsettles Marlow is the thought that there is actually an evolutionary affiliation between him, the 'civilised' European, and these 'savage' creatures.[14]

Hence, despite the exposure of imperial voracity and the humanitarian empathy that can be read into Conrad's depiction of exploited Africans, the mystification of the Congolese space and debasement of its inhabitants turn *Heart of Darkness* into an unvarnished "document of the racist European image on Africa", as Patrick Brantlinger has contended.[15] In particular, it can be read as a homage to the writings of Henry M. Stanley. Ever since the Welsh-American journalist descended the Congo River in the hey-day of Central African 'exploration', the region had become a sort of cultural obsession for the Victorian imagination. In his tremendously popular travelogues, integrated into geography curricula, lent by school libraries and reprinted in many anthologies, Stanley had described the Congo as 'Darkest Africa', the most radical expression of African alterity, inhabited by the most ferocious 'savages' and most primitive 'races'. Conrad's literature not only fully embraced the colonial myths that framed the contemporary European representation of 'the Congo'. In fact, further refined by a sophisticated novelist, it was *Heart of Darkness* that transported this racist narrative to the new century and culturally pinned a colonial imagery that powerfully resounds in literature, media and political representations of the Congo until today.[16]

At the same time, Conrad's mythical imagination of a 'dark' and 'savage' Congo and its subhuman inhabitants was intrinsically interwoven with the political dimension that gave his text its humanitarian character. In the moral and physical decay of Mr Kurtz, both layers of meaning inseparably converge. As much as it symbolised the greed and materialism that affected European 'civilisation', Kurtz's transformation from a philanthropist to a murderous ivory trader, and the conversion of an allegedly philanthropic colony to an atrocious robber economy that this transformation symbolised, directly pointed back to Africa itself. In describing how Kurtz took a "wild" woman as his wife and presided over 'savage' rituals, Kurtz' moral degeneration is described as a cultural regression to the state of subhuman Africans, an adaption to the rule of nature over reason.[17] As Achebe has pointed out, Conrad presented the decay of morality and the

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14   Ibid., 36. See chapter 3.2 for an analytical discussion of this motif.

15   Patrick Brantlinger, "Heart of Darkness," in *Heart of darkness*, ed. Ross C. Murfin, 2nd ed. (Boston: St Martin's Press, 1996), 277 ('document').

16   See Henry M. Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1878); Henry M. Stanley, *The Congo and the Founding of Its Free State*, 2 vols. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1885); Henry M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890). For the continuities from colonial to modern representations of the Congo, see the extensive studies of Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Johnny van Hove, *Congoism* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017); Frits Andersen, *The Dark Continent?* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2016); and my own essay, Felix Lösing, "Nachrichten aus dem 'Herz der Finsternis'," in *Sprache – Macht – Rassismus*, ed. Gudrun Hentges et al. (Berlin: Metropol, 2014).

17   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 49 ('unspeakable'), 60 ('wild', 'savage').

outburst of violence in the Congo as an "avenging recrudescence" of Europe's own for-gotten darkness and past, a past that is allegorically described as mirroring contempo-rary Africanness. Ultimately as, inter alia, Patrick Brantlinger and Frances Singh have clarified, this metaphor suggests that colonial excesses are a consequence of Europe 'going native': "Evil, in short, is African in Conrad's story; if it is also European, that is because some white men in the heart of darkness behave like Africans".[18]

Conrad's ghosts in the theory canon

One can still appreciate Achebe's astonishment that a novel that so clearly "celebrates [the] dehumanization" of Africans had reigned basically unchallenged in the Western Canon for decades. At the end of his lecture in 1975, Achebe provokingly turned to his academic audience. Apparently, he concluded, "white racism against Africa is such a normal way of thinking" among experts of English literature, its critics and its teachers, "that its manifestations go completely undetected".[19]

That this harsh criticism could also be extended to one of the most eminent political thinkers of the 20th century is clear the example of Hannah Arendt. In her first grand oeuvre *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, the icon of liberal philosophy set out to investigate the "subterranean stream of Western history" that had "finally come to surface" in the totalitarian regimes and the "absolute evil" of her century. In this monumental project, Arendt offered one of the first theoretical reflections on racism and the history of its genesis.[20]

She defines racism primarily as "[the ideology] that interprets history as a natural fight of races". The "invention of racism" (as a 'race-ideology'), she claims, took place during the so-called scramble for Africa in the 19th century. Afterwards, racism became the globally enhanced "powerful ideology" of New Imperialism and eventually achieved a "monopoly over the political life" of the involved European nations even in domestic politics – one of the "boomerang effects" of the imperial experience, as she famously argued.[21]

With this narrative, Arendt rightfully acknowledged that racism was "neither a new nor a secret weapon" of European fascism. At the same time, she less convincingly con-tended that there existed an "abyss between the men of brilliant and facile conceptions" that had speculated about race in the context of philosophy, philology and other science since the 18th century and the "men of brutal deeds and active bestiality" of later years "which no intellectual explanation is able to bridge". Much of this early race-thinking was still bound to a "humanistic tradition" and Enlightenment ideals of human brother-

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18   Achebe, "Image of Africa", 783–84 ('avenging'); Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 262 ('evil'); see Frances B. Singh, "The Colonialistic Bias of 'Heart of Dark-ness'," *Conradiana* 10, no. 1 (1978): 43. See chapter 3.1 for further discussion.

19   Achebe, "Image of Africa", 788.

20   Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd enl. ed. (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962 [1958/1951]), viii ('evil'), ix ('subterranean', 'surface'). All references here are from the second en-larged edition of 1958.

21   Ibid., 158 ('powerful'), 159 ('natural fight'), 183 ('monopoly'), 206 ('boomerang').

hood, Arendt claimed. Moreover, since European discourse on race lacked an ideological component, it could only count as 'race-thinking before racism'.[22]

Moreover, there was no "'immanent logic'" that led from race-thinking to its 'degeneration' into an ideology, Arendt argued. For the formation of ideologies, their "scientific aspect" was always only "secondary", one can read, since they emerge "in response to experiences or desires" and "not as a theoretical doctrine". Race-thinking, Arendt concluded, might have even disappeared "if the 'scramble for Africa' and the new era of imperialism had not exposed Western humanity to new and shocking experiences".[23]

This shocking experience, Arendt outrageously maintains, was the discovery of the revolting 'savagery' of African 'natural men'. In the middle of her chapter on imperialism and her reflections on the emergence of racism, Arendt deployed a vision of the 'The Phantom World of the Dark Continent' at the eve of its European conquest that is so full of dehumanising stereotypes that one is inevitably baffled to find such distortions within an otherwise highly sophisticated and critical study. Tellingly, Arendt does not substantiate this narrative through historical sources, as she abundantly does throughout the rest of her work, but rather with references to the fiction of Joseph Conrad, particularly through short quotes and long excerpts from *Heart of Darkness*, which she called "the most illuminating work on actual race experience in Africa", and whose racist imagery she uncritically accepts as displaying actual facts about pre-colonial Africa.[24]

In contrast to "almost empty" Australia and America, which had simply "fallen into the hands of Europeans", a shameless belittlement of Europe's genocidal expansionism, Africa had been "an overpopulated continent", Arendt writes. When greater numbers of Europeans poured "into the interior of the Dark Continent" in the later 19th century, they reached a space inhabited by "prehistoric tribes" that "do not know any history", but which were "numerous enough to constitute a world of their own".[25]

However, this creation is represented as "a world of folly". Like in *Heart of Darkness*, the radical otherness of Arendt's African phantom world is rooted in the incapability of its inhabitants to alienate and emancipate themselves from both external and internal wilderness: "What made them different from other human beings was not at all the color of their skin but the fact that they behaved like a part of nature, [...] compared to which they appeared to be phantoms, unreal and ghostlike".[26]

The first Europeans that were confronted with this "world of black savages", Arendt claims, had been the Boers on their Great Trek in the 1830s and 1840s. According to a troublingly sympathetic review of Boer history, the descendants of Dutch settlers from the 17th and 18th centuries that left the Cape Colony to escape the newly established British rule "were never able to forget their first horrible fright" before these 'natural men' they found in the South African inland. What "frightened and humiliated the immigrants" the most, as Arendt writes in a plain analogy to Conrad, was the "humanity"

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22   Ibid., 158 ('new', 'before racism' [title of chapter]), 160 [footnote] ('humanistic'), 183 ('abyss', 'brutal deeds', 'bridge').
23   Ibid., 159 ('scientific', 'secondary', 'response', 'doctrine'), 183 ('immanent', 'scramble').
24   Ibid., 185 [footnote] ('illuminating'), 186 ('Phantom World').
25   Ibid., 182 ('empty'), 186 ('fallen'), 191 ('overpopulated', 'Dark Continent', 'numerous'), 192 ('prehistoric', 'history').
26   Ibid., 191 ('folly'), 192 ('different').

of these 'savages' and the kinship between the Europeans and this African world of folly, which resulted in the same desire once expressed by Kurtz: "Exterminate all the brutes". The "emergency explanation" of the Boers to the frightening 'savages' and their own genocidal thoughts was the discovery of "race as a principle of the body politic" in the Boer Republics. The Boers thus 'invented' racism even "before imperialism exploited it as a major political idea".[27]

Eventually, according to Arendt's genealogy, Boer racism became the vantage point for the global triumph of the 'race ideology'. In the 1870s and 1880s, thousands of "adventurers, gamblers, criminals" arrived in South Africa to search for their fortune in the diamante fields and newly discovered gold mines. When these "superfluous men" of the 'civilised' societies, whom Arendt compared to Mr Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness*, "were confronted with human beings who [...] were as incomprehensible as the inmates of a madhouse", they looked to the Boers for answers. Quickly, these "won the consent of all other European elements" for their establishment of a racist society. From these European gold rushers, the desire to "push one's own people into the position of the master race" reached all African and Asian empires, until it became "the main ideological weapon of imperialistic politics",[28] resulting in "the most terrible massacres in recent history", like the "wild murdering" of a Carl Peters in German Southeast Africa, or the "decimation of the peaceful Congo population".

It is remarkable that Arendt's racist theorisation of racism has so long remained unchallenged. Even more astonishing is that *Origins* continues to be considered a pioneering contribution to a postcolonial tradition of radical Black intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois, Aimé Césaire or Frantz Fanon, who challenged the novelty of Nazi atrocities by emphasising their similarity to "colonialist procedures" and the long tradition of Europe's outrages "against colored folk in all parts of the world", but who at the same time vigorously attacked the "mystification" of Africa through the Western humanist and idealist philosophy that Arendt considered 'pre-racist'.[29]

The central purpose of Arendt's reflection on imperialism and racism, in contrast, seems to create a "buffer that separates the bulk of Western history from the Holocaust", as Robert Bernasconi has maintained. Indeed, on the basis of one of the most central texts produced within the Congo reform discourse, Arendt produced a stunning account in which racism emerged "isolated from the current of European history" and as an "answer to the overwhelming monstrosity of Africa". As such, she not merely ignored or belittled the colonial genocides in Australia and the Americas and the horrors of the

27   Ibid., 185 ('Exterminate', 'emergency', 'body politic'), 191 ('black savages'), 192 ('horrible fright'), 195 ('exploited').

28   Ibid., 160 ('weapon'), 188–189 ('adventurers'), 189 ('Kurtz'), 190 ('madhouse'), 199 ('consent'), 206 ('master race'). For the following, ibid., 185.

29   Du Bois, W.E. B[urghardt], *The World and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15 ('colored folk'); see Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 [1972/1955]), 28 ('mystification'), 36 ('colonialist'); also see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1986 [1967/1952]), 130–32. On the reception in postcolonial studies, see Patricia Owens, "Racism in the Theory Canon," *Millennium* 45, no. 3 (2017): 404–5.

transatlantic slavery but also tends to "blame the 'victims' rather than the 'offenders'" for racism and imperial massacres.[30]

King Léopold's ghosts

Hannah Arendt thus illustrated how uncritical acceptance of Conrad's imagined Congo inevitably reproduces its racist structure and arguments. Remarkably enough, even historians continue to suggest *Heart of Darkness* as a "Witness of History" and declare Conrad an accurate "Observer of Empire", as a recent teaching compendium reveals.[31]

Among those who claimed that the novel was the work of "an open-eyed observer" is Adam Hochschild. In his award-winning *King Leopold's Ghost*, the American journalist recommended that *Heart of Darkness* should not be read as a work of fiction but indeed as a representation of "'actual facts'" about Léopold's Congo. First published in 1998, Hochschild's study of the Congo reform movement was translated into eleven languages, went through several editions, and within the first decade sold over 400,000 copies. Praised by literary critics as a "superb" and "remarkably engaging" piece of popular history, and awarded by the American Historical Association "as a key text in the historiography of colonial Africa", it has had influence like no other text in the last 20 years in the public, political and academic debate about the reform campaign.[32]

Hochschild's bestselling 'Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa', as the subtitle announced, was pivotal for the "heroic spin" in the movement's modern representation. His narrative reduced complex political conflicts to a cut-and-dried collision of moral opposites personified by two radical antagonists. On one side, personifying 'greed' and 'terror', Hochschild put Léopold, "a man as filled with greed and cunning, duplicity and charm, as any of the more complex villains of Shakespeare". On the other side, as the incarnation of the 'heroism' of the story, stood the leader of the British reform association. "[I]mpassioned, eloquent, blessed with brilliant organizing skills and nearly superhuman energy", Morel was "[b]rought face to face with evil" – and did "not turn away".[33]

In this dichotomist confrontation between 'good' and 'evil', little analytical space is left for ambiguities such as stalwart racism on the side of the reformers. In his epi-

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30   Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 158 ('monstrosity'), 191 ('isolated'); Robert Bernasconi, "When the Real Crime Began," in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History*, ed. Richard H. King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 57 ('buffer'); Kathryn T. Gines, "Race Thinking and Racism in Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism," in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History*, ed. Richard H. King and Dan Stone (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 48 ('victims').

31   Mark D. Larabee, *The Historian's Heart of Darkness* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2018), 13 ('Witness').

32   Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 143 ('facts'), 149 ('open-eyed'); Jeremy Harding, New York Times Book Review ('superb'); Scott McLemee, Newsday ('remarkably'), both reproduced in Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, second page after front page; American Historical Association, "2008 Theodore Roosevelt-Woodrow Wilson Award Recipient," https://www.historians.org/awards-and-grants/past-recipients/theodore-roosevelt-woodrow-wilson-award-recipients/2008-theodore-roosevelt-woodrow-wilson-award-recipient, ('key text'). On sales numbers, see Hugo de Burgh, *Investigative Journalism*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 145.

33   Robert M. Burroughs, *African Testimony in the Movement for Congo Reform* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 161 ('spin'); Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 2 ('impassioned', 'evil', 'away'), 2 ('Shakespeare').

taph, Hochschild praised the reform movement as an upholder of a universalist and thus implicitly anti-racist perspective. The movement kept alive "a human capacity" for empathy that crossed geographic boundaries and those of "color", and upheld the belief that "basic freedoms […] are rights to which all human beings are entitled by birth", he argued. He believed that this tradition could be traced back to the French revolution, American slave revolts and the great abolitionist campaigns of the 18th and 19th century, and continued in the resistance that brought Nelson Mandel into power in South Africa and the work of modern organisations such as Amnesty International. During its time "on the world stage, the Congo reform movement was a vital link in that chain, and there is no tradition more honorable", he wrote in the last paragraph of his book.[34]

These grandiloquent words reveal that, for Hochschild, racism was reserved for the 'villains' of history. To declare racism to the exclusive ideological property of anti-Enlightenment reactionaries, slaveholders, proponents of Apartheid, or old and new Nazis and right-wing extremists, is a common misconception in popular, political and media discourses that dangerously underrates its political range and ideological versatility in the past and the present. However, a declaration of the Congo reform movement as a stronghold of 'colour-less' European morality and human empathy and its glorification as a contrast to the moral corrosion of New Imperialism was only sustainable through a wilful or at least negligent ignorance of the fact that racism and an imperial agenda actually provided an ideological common ground between the colonisers of the Congo and their critics in Great Britain and the United States.

Nothing makes this ignorance in Hochschild's case as obvious as the title of his study, which is drawn from Vachel Lindsay's poem 'The Congo', one of the most popular American verses in the early 20th century. The experimental sound poetry contains a lustful scene of vengeance in which the deceased Léopold got a taste of his own atrocious medicine. "Listen to the yell of Leopold's ghost / Burning in Hell for his hand-maimed host / Hear how the demons chuckle and yell / Cutting his hands off, down in Hell", one is advised. For Hochschild, the fact that the Belgian king was in a poem written in early 1914, only a few months after the closure of the reform campaign, no longer commemorated in "terms of the monuments and buildings he was so proud of but of severed hands" epitomised the discursive triumph of the Congo reform movement. Thus, it apparently seemed legitimate to inspire the title of his literary monument to this 'honourable' and 'heroic' human rights movement.[35]

This could have been a promising vantage point for a critical investigation into the racist underpinning of the reform discourse. After all, humanitarian satisfaction was only a small part of Lindsay's nine-page long poem. Designed as "A Study of the Negro Race", as the subtitle declared, it began with a section on the "basic savagery" of African-Americans. Once the scene changes to the Congo River banks, Léopold's loud 'yells' are heard clearly indeed. However, they were actually more than drowned out by what Lindsay called "the boom of the blood-lust song": strange and 'savage' performances of highly

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34   Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 305 ('color', 'freedom'), 306 ('world stage').

35   Vachel Lindsay, "The Congo," in *The Congo and Other Poems*, 3–11 (New York: The Macmillan company, 1919), 5 ('yell'); Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 266 ('monuments'). The four lines are reproduced in ibid., 266–267.

stereotypical African characters such as warriors, witch doctors and cannibals that di-
rectly emerged from the colonial imagination. Vividly, the author warned his audience
of the haunting character of this spectacle: "walk with care", he wrote, or "Mumbo-
Jumbo will hoo-doo you"! The poem ends with a celebration of the on-going imperial
intervention until the land is truly "transfigured", its inhabitants are "[r]edeemed" and
the threatening 'Gods of the Congo' subdued.[36]

Upon a closer examination of Lindsay's poetry, Hochschild could have also realised
that a direct path leads from this imagery to the ghosts of Conrad's racism. In a private
letter published in the 'Opinions' section of *The Crisis* in 1915, Lindsay named manifold
"implications, whispers, echoes" from the commodified spectacle of the late 19th-cen-
tury discourse on race and colonialism that had helped him to write his famous piece.
In particular, he recalled the lingering connotations that the term 'Congo' sparked in his
mind. "'Congo, Congo, Congo, Congo, Congo, Congo' I said to myself. The word began to
haunt. It echoed with the war drums and cannibal yells of Africa". The poet traced this
haunting 'yelling' and 'drumming' directly back to two foundational texts of the Euro-
pean Congo myth. With his new piece, he had attempted to reproduce the "same weird
thrill" recalled from browsing "through Stanley's 'Darkest Africa' when a boy", and he
had "hoped to imply Joseph Conrad's fatalistic atmosphere in his story *Heart of Darkness*",
including the "spiritual African fever he shows us there", Lindsay acknowledged.[37]

In fact, 'The Congo' not only reproduced the colonial imagery of Stanley and Conrad
but also subscribed to the latter's shameful political message. By framing the short ref-
erence to mutilations in Léopold's Free State with widespread hints to an alleged African
ferociousness, Lindsay's poem similarly suggested an African cultural responsibility for
colonial violence, as Rachel Du Plessis had convincingly argued. Atrocities such as the
"hand-cutting depredations by Leopold", Lindsay later wrote in a private letter, were "a
case of Mumbo Jumbo Hoodoing Civilization": a capitulation of European morality in
front of African 'savagery'.[38]

Contemporaries such as Joel E. Spingarn of the National Association for the Ad-
vancement of Colored People and the poet Marianne Moore condemned this "Aryan
doggerel" for its "strange" and segregationist image of African culture.[39] More recent
critics have continued to emphasise that 'The Congo' was full of "white mythology",
describes Black men in "racist types and tones" and promotes "messianic imperial-

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36   Lindsay, "The Congo," subtitle ('Study'), 3 ('Basic'), 4 ('boom'), 8 ('walk', 'Mumbo-Jumbo'), 11 ('trans-
      figured', 'redeemed').
37   Private letter of Lindsay, reproduced in 'A Poem on the Negro', *The Crisis*, 1915, 10, 1, 18–19, here 18.
38   Lindsay to Harriet Moore, quoted (and discussed) in Rachel B. DuPlessis, "'HOO, HOO, HOO'," *Amer-
      ican Literature* 67, no. 4 (1995), 677.
39   Marianne Moore, "An Eagle in the Ring," in *The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore*, ed. Patricia C.
      Willis and Marianne Moore (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986), 89 ('Aryan') [a reproduced review
      essay from 1923]; Spingarn to Lindsay, 6 November 1916, reproduced in 'A Letter and an Answer',
      The Crisis, 1917, 13, 3, 113–114, here 114. Lindsay had complained to Spingarn that his poem had
      "been denounced by the colored people for reasons that I can not fathom"; Lindsay to Spingarn, 2
      November 1916, reproduced in ibid., 114.

ism".[40] Nevertheless, this racist framing of humanitarian indignation symbolised by 'the yell of Leopold's ghost' was either overlooked or, more likely, deliberately ignored by Hochschild, who contented himself with a reproduction of the four above-quoted lines. Instead of following up on intruding questions about how much this poetry revealed about the ideological foundation and broader lines of argumentation in the reform movement, the potentially troubling parts in 'The Congo' were simply elided.

In this way, Hochschild could also deny how much Conrad's racism actually haunted this "extraordinary movement". In contrast to his short reception of Lindsay, he was well aware that *Heart of Darkness* "has come in for some justified pummeling in recent years because of its portrayal of black characters", as he called it. Nonetheless, he claimed that the political message of the novel could be separated from its racist imagery: "However laden it is with Victorian racism", *Heart of Darkness* remained "one of the most scathing indictments of imperialism in all literature".[41]

In this, the popular historian was in line with many writers who have vigorously defended Conrad against Achebe's allegations in recent decades. Among literary scientists and critics, the strong attack on one of England's great novelists – and those who had so long defended the canonical status of his best-known novel – initiated an exceptional fierce debate. There was (and still is) outspoken support for Achebe's charges, but there is also strong opposition. Cedric Watts, for instance, responded that the novel actually unfolds powerful "criticisms of racial prejudice", and debunks comforting "myths" of a superior civilisation instead of purveying them. The historian Henryk S. Zins similarly categorically asserted that charges of "alleged racism and antipathy towards blacks" simply "make no sense", if one considers the prevalent "sympathy and pity" towards the fate of the exploited Africans in the novel.[42] Many others have accepted that Conrad used derogatory stereotypes but attempted to excuse these as a rhetorical strategy of ironic, mimic or subversive criticism that therefore only "seems condescending".[43] Alternatively, they have defended the author, like Hochschild, as "a man of his time and place" who had simply not been "immune" to and had hence been "contaminated" by the racist zeitgeist. Either way, the "lasting political legacy" of the novel, as the poet Hunt Hawkins concluded, was "more than any confirmation of racism [...] its alarm over atrocity".[44]

40   Aldon L. Nielsen, *Reading Race* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 32 ('white mythology'); Tyler Hoffman, "The Congo," in *Encyclopedia of American Poetry*, ed. Eric L. Haralson (New York: Routledge, 2001), 396 ('types and tones'); DuPlessis, "'HOO, HOO, HOO'", 674 ('messianic').

41   Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 146 ('pummeling'), 147 ('However').

42   Cedric Watts, "'A Bloody Racist,'" *The Yearbook of English Studies* 13 (1983), 196 ('criticisms'), 197 ('myths'); Henryk S. Zins, *Joseph Conrad and Africa* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1982), 122 ('alleged', 'no sense', 'sympathy').

43   Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 78 ('condescending'); also see Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), 23; and Wilson Harris, "The Frontier on Which 'Heart of Darkness' Stands," *Research in African Literatures* 12, no. 1 (1981).

44   Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 146 ('time'); Charles P. Sarvan, "Racism and the Heart of Darkness," *The International Fiction Review* 7, no. 1 (1980), 9 ('immune'); Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 13 ('contaminated'); Hunt Hawkins, "Heart of Darkness and Racism," in *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Paul. B. Armstrong, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 375 ('legacy').

Hence, both Conrad's radical apologists and those with an intermediate position in the controversy seem to assume that the political message of *Heart of Darkness* and its setting in the Congo reform discourse stood in opposition to and attenuated charges of racism. Herewith, they failed to acknowledge how much Achebe's critique of this 'great piece of art' actually revealed about the racist foundation of this 'great human rights movement'. As much as it is wrong to assume that one could find the 'real Congo' in *Heart of Darkness*, it remains a crucial text for a critical investigation into the contemporary representation of Léopold's Free State and thus into the racist humanitarianism of the Congo reform movement. In his writing, Conrad sensed, handled and even anticipated central motifs and arguments that structured the public controversy about the Congo Scandal before and after his writing. In his creation of the Congo as a dark counter-world, its dehumanisation of Africans, its support of a 'just' imperialism or its reflection of European violence towards Africa, *Heart of Darkness* indeed was a work of visionary scope. Throughout its existence, the ghosts of Conrad's racism have haunted the Congo reform movement.

In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* already loomed the horrifying prospect of a 'crisis of whiteness' that was the vantage point for the reform movement fully unfurling in the following years. The suggestion that Kurtz had 'gone native', and thus eventually capitulated in front of the wilderness the proud Europeans had come to 'civilise', hints at a fundamental difference between Conrad's narrative and that of Stanley. In Conrad's Congo, written just a few years after Stanley's latest travelogue 'Darkest Africa', the European "pioneers of trade and progress" were no longer heroic 'conquerors' and 'civilisers', neither in power of nor distinguishable from the Congolese 'darkness' and its inhabitants. [45] The 'horror' that Kurtz expressed before his death was not the violence of the colonisers, but the victory of the 'wilderness' and the corroding boundaries between 'civilisation' and 'savagery'. As such, these racist identities, as Doyle called it years later, began to lose all meaning and thus challenged the sustainability of European supremacy. As this study shows, the political legacy of *Heart of Darkness* was neither its racism nor its humanitarianism, but rather the combination of both in a campaign that achieved the support of the overwhelming majority of the imperial public and eventually became a mass movement in Great Britain and the United States.

State of research

Considering the lasting mark that the racist imagination of a prominent Congo reformer left on the Western literature and theory canon, the fact that the relevance of racism for this celebrated first great human rights movement of the 20th century has been disregarded for so long and at times outright denied is staggering. After all, as a recent history of the British reform movement has admitted, "[e]vidence of racism is not hard to find among even [its] most stalwart fighters". [46] With this acknowledgement, Dean Pavlakis laudably set himself apart from the ignorance that had long dominated

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45   Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 158.
46   Dean Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 1896–1913* (London: Routledge, 2016), 128.

historiographic research. Even otherwise substantive studies like Paul McStallworth's dissertation on *The United States and the Congo Question* and Jules Marchal's two-volume *E.D. Morel contre Léopold II*, arguably still the standard work for anyone interested in the reform movement, have generally maintained silence upon the apparently evident racism of the campaign.[47]

Unfortunately, Pavlakis avoids further analytical reflection on this entanglement of humanitarianism and racism. In his account, which is rich in detail and sources like only Marchal's volumes before him, only a few lines follow his notable statement. After an assurance that the "position on race" in the British reform association generally accepted "common humanity", although it was "paternalistic at best and at times condescending", the case is closed. In this regard, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement*, like Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*, corresponds to the second central stream in the literature. When it is not merely ignored, the stridency of this humanitarian racism is relativised as less harmful than 'severe' forms of racist disdain or treated as a marginal phenomenon, as the following pages reveal.[48]

Fortunately, the new millennia and the years in which this study has been composed have also witnessed the rise of more (racism-)critical perspectives. Excellent research of the political scientist Kevin Dunn, the historian Kevin Grant and the literature scientists Susanne Gehrmann and Robert Burroughs, to name just four who have influenced this study in its formation phase, have revealed a new awareness of racism on the side of the Congo reformers.[49]

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47   See Paul McStallworth, "The United States and the Congo Question, 1884–1914" (PhD Thesis, Ohio State University, 1955); Jules Marchal, *E. D. Morel contre Léopold II* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996). For other major publications on the Congo reform movement without reference to racism on the side of the reformers, see F. Seymour Cocks, *E.D. Morel* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920); Ruth M. Slade, *King Leopold's Congo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); Ascherson, *King Incorporated*; S[ylvanus] J. S. Cookey, *Britain and the Congo Question, 1885–1913* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1968); Daniel Vangroenweghe, *Du Sang sur les Lianes* (Bruxelles: Didier Hatier, 1986); Martin Ewans, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe* (London: Routledge, 2002). The general literature on the Congo atrocities and the Congo reform movement is, more than a century after the closure of the latter, extensive, and it includes perspectives from, inter alia, colonial history, the history of human rights, social movement history, sociology, media-, literature-, communications- and postcolonial-studies, and numerous biographies. Valuable introductions into the historiography of the reform movement and the Congo atrocities can be found in Dean Pavlakis, "Historiography of Congo Reform," Research Network 'The Congo Free State Across Language, Culture, Media,' 2014, https://congofreestate.com/?p=161&lang=en; Aldwin Roes, "Towards a History of Mass Violence in the Etat Indépendant du Congo, 1885–1908," *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 4 (2010).

48   Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128.

49   See Dunn, *Imagining the Congo* [which reconstructs the changing transnational imaginations of the Congo throughout Western history]; Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery* (New York: Routledge, 2005) [in which he puts a special focus on evangelical Congo reform activists]; Susanne Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2003); Susanne Gehrmann, "Of Degenerated Heroes and Failed Romance: King Léopold's Congo in Popular European Literatures," *English Studies in Africa* 59, no. 1 (2016) [in which she examines the representation of the Congo (atrocities) in fictional European literature]; Robert M. Burroughs, *Travel Writing and Atrocities* (New York: Routledge, 2011) [in which he analyses the emerging eyewitness accounts from the Congo]. More recently, Burroughs has also conducted a long-overdue effort to revoke the "silencing" of African testimony in the reform movement and its historiography, Burroughs, *African Testimony*, 11 ('silencing').

However, already in the 1960s and 1970s, in a period when anti-colonial and anti-racist movements began to challenge not only the philosophical but also the institutional fundament of racism and colonialism, a number of authors had stumbled upon the derogatory views on Africans or Black men and women generally held by prominent reformers and their support for white supremacy and imperialism. While the impact of this critical awareness remained limited, such studies still defined several thematic clusters in which the aggregate of racism has been discussed in recent decades.

The historian Joseph O. Baylen, for instance, has addressed the exchange of letters between Morel and the United States Senator John T. Morgan, who was the parliamentarian spokesperson of the American Congo Reform Association. In the process, he emphasised Morgan's "unshakable belief in the superiority of the white race". Indeed, there was little ambiguity in the politics of the Democrat Morgan, who fought against Black suffrage and promoted racial segregation and imperial expansion. This alliance between Liberal humanitarians in Boston and Liverpool and a radical white supremacist from Alabama, who was one of the "white racist diehards" of his days, as even Hochschild admitted, appears certainly strange, at least at first glance. Nonetheless, it remained not much more than a curious side story within the general historiography of the Congo reform movement, if it was even acknowledged at all. For Hochschild, Morel's extensive correspondence with Morgan merely indicates that the leader of the British reformers "was willing to sup with the devil to help his cause"; hence, it even emphasises the reformers' humanitarian commitment.[50]

John E. Flint has pointedly reassessed the political ideas of Mary Kingsley. His conclusion that the famous West African explorer and ethnographic writer defended the legitimacy of European rule based on an alleged "essential inferiority" of Africans, whom she considered "not of the same species" as Europeans, was of great significance. Kingsley was not only the "strongest intellectual influence" in the life of Morel, as his biographer Catherine Cline has noted, but also the central inspiration for other reformers. However, for Cline, like many commentators, 'Kingsleyism' remained, ignorant of Flint's insights, the base of a "tolerant and respectful" cultural relativism. Although Paul B. Rich has more recently argued that the ideology of the British Congo reformers indeed reflected Kingsley's "polygenism", and authors like Kevin Grant and Nathan G. Alexander have emphasised the influence of her "racial essentialism", it is still held that an alleged attenuation of racist tendencies in the campaign "owed much" to Kingsley's influence.[51]

In his master's thesis on *The British Attitude toward the Congo Question*, the historian Myron Echenberg mentioned that the British Congo reformer Harry Johnston, a famous

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50   Joseph O. Baylen, "Senator John Tyler Morgan, E.D. Morel, and the Congo Reform Association," *The Alabama Review* 15, no. 2 (1962): 118 ('unshakable'); Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 152 ('diehards'), 242 ('devil').

51   John E. Flint, "Mary Kingsley," *The Journal of African History* 4, no. 1 (1963): 100 ('species'), 102 ('essential'); Catherine Ann Cline, *E.D. Morel, 1873–1924* (Dundonald: Blackstaff Press, 1980), 16 ('strongest'), 126 ('tolerant'); Paul B. Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 36 ('polygenism'); Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 34 ('essentialism'); Nathan G. Alexander, "E.D. Morel (1873–1924), the Congo Reform Association, and the History of Human Rights," *Britain and the World* 9, no. 2 (2016): 213–35 Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128 ('owed').

former African explorer and colonial administrator, dramatically warned that a conti-
nental or even global anti-'white' rebellion could be triggered by the Congo Scandal. This
"conflagration"-thesis, he has suggested, might be one explanation for the success of
the movement in "an essentially White Supremacist nation". A few years later, Bernard
Porter's influential study *Critics of Empire* discussed Johnston's role in the reform move-
ment, as well, and pointed to his belief that the land rights of an 'inferior race' and
'brutish savages' like the Congolese were necessarily limited. Unfortunately, Echenberg
and Porter, like most of later research, underestimated the significance of these ob-
servations for a broader assessment of the reform movement. Such "inconsistencies"
should "only slightly detract from what was a highly creditable moral campaign", the
former recommended instead.[52]

Louis Harlan, Booker T. Washington's biographer, noted early on that the famous
Black educator and social reformer, who was a vice-president of the American Congo
Reform Association, had "thoroughly subscribed" to stereotypes on the "African savage"
and to a legitimation of imperial rule as "the 'White Man's Burden'".[53] In recent years, a
number of well-grounded works have taken up this intriguing angle. *Alabama in Africa*,
for instance, not only discusses the involvement of Washington's Tuskegee Institute in
the colonisation of West Africa but is also highly valuable for revealing the attraction of
Tuskegee's program of industrial education and the segregationism of the New South
for Congo reformers such as Morel and Park.[54]

John G. Turner, Ira Dworkin and Johnny Van Hove's research, which targeted Black
Americans involved in the reform campaign, can be credited with pointing out the en-
tanglement of divergent streams of racist discourse in the Congo controversy. While
the "Black transnationalism" of Congo opponents such as Washington, the missionary
William S. Sheppard or the minister and historian George W. Williams supported the
colonisation of Africa and tended to subscribe to "various metaphors of darkness" in the
representation of Africans, the "American racial dynamics" of the Jim Crow-era heavily
affected the Black Congo reformers themselves.[55]

Moreover, the Belgian historian Jean Stengers, who together with his colleague W.
Roger Louis has conducted significant research on the reform movement, not only re-
vealed an early newspaper article written by Morel in 1897, in which he thoroughly

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52   Myron Echenberg, "The British Attitude toward the Congo Question with Particular Reference
      to E.D. Morel and the CRA, 1903–1913" (MA-Thesis, McGill University, 1964), 206 ('conflagration',
      'White Supremacist', 'inconsistencies', 'ulterior motive'); see Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire* (Lon-
      don: I. B. Tauris, 2008 [1968]), 277–79.
53   Louis R. Harlan, "Booker T. Washington and the White Man's Burden," *The American Historical Review*
      71, no. 2 (1966): 442.
54   See Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 176–88
      and 219–22.
55   Ira Dworkin, *Congo Love Song* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 17 ('Black
      transnationalism'); Ira Dworkin, "On the Borders of Race, Mission, and State," in *Borderlands and
      Frontiers in Africa*, ed. Steven van Wolpute (Münster: Lit, 2013), 185 ('dynamics'); Van Hove, *Congo-
      ism*, 237 ('metaphors', 'darkness'), who, on the other hand, seems to underestimate the centrality of
      "the Congo-as-Savage" motif in Morel's text and thoughts, see ibid., 162. Also see John G. Turner, "A
      'Black-White' Missionary on the Imperial Stage," *The Journal of Southern Religion* IX, (2006). http://
      jsr.fsu.edu/Volume9/Turner.htm.

defended the Free State against the emerging criticism, but has also exposed Morel's hatred of Léopold and Belgians in general, whom he described as almost "mythical figures".[56] More recently, Kevin Dunn and Jeff D. Bass have added their observation that reformers even tended to declare Belgians unworthy representatives of European 'civilisation', a charge that Pavlakis has attempted to counter with existing positive references.[57]

Robert Reinders has shed light on the often-ignored participation of Morel in the slur campaign against alleged instances of sexual violence committed by Black soldiers during the French occupation of the German Rhineland after World War I. In this context, the leading British Congo reformer produced texts that could have easily been penned by "an American racialist and had appeared in a Klan journal", Reinders argued.[58] Even Hochschild was willing to admit that the "belief that African men had a higher sexual drive than white men and could pose a danger to white women" was one of Morel's "quirks". However, although he sketched the political afterlife of his central protagonists at the end of the book, Hochschild does not mention Morel's involvement in the campaign against the 'horrors of the Rhine'. In the form of general absolution, Hochschild maintains that any such "blind spots" in Morel's ideas were easily outweighed by his accomplishments as the leader of the reform movement. "But whatever his faults", he concluded, "when it came to campaigning against injustice in the Congo, Morel had an unswerving, infectious sense of right and wrong".[59]

In fact, Reinders argued that the kind of 'racialism' he identified in Morel's Rhine polemics was not developed during his Congo activism. These conniving self-constrictions allowed authors such as A.J.P. Taylor and Cline, for instance, to claim that Morel's attitude as head of the reform movement can be conceptually separated from "embarrassing" earlier (as identified by Stengers) and later (as identified by Reinders) periods. In Cline's opinion, Morel's views "changed radically" to a "new-found respect for indigenous institution" due to the influence of Kingsleyism before they once more "became twisted in the European context into an ugly appeal to racial fears".[60] Iris Wigger, who has researched the racist conglomerate of the Black Scourge campaign, explicitly rejected Cline's thesis of two main ruptures in Morel's image of Africans. Rightfully, as this study shows, she has suggested that the stereotypes and discursive strategies that Morel deployed in the Congo and Rhine campaign were largely analogous.[61]

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56   Jean Stengers, "Morel and Belgium," in *E.D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement*, ed. W. Roger Louis and Jean Stengers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 242 ('mythical'). On Morel's article in the Pall Mall Gazette, see ibid., 238–9.

57   See Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 51–54; Jeff D. Bass, "Imperial Alterity and Identity Slippage," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13, no. 2 (2010): 301; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 182–83.

58   Robert C. Reinders, "Racialism on the Left," *International Review of Social History* 13, no. 1 (1968): 1.

59   Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 210 ('flaws', 'quirks'), 210–1 ('whatever'), 213 ('blind spots').

60   See Reinders, "Racialism on the Left", 2; A[lan] J.P. Taylor, *The Troublemakers* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008 [1957]), 177; Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 25 ('changed', 'new-found'), 126 ('twisted'), 128 ('embarrassing').

61   See Iris Wigger, *Die 'Schwarze Schmach am Rhein'* (Münster: Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2007), 40–43; similarly Robert M. Burroughs, "'Savage Times Come Again," *English Studies in Africa* 59, no. 1 (2016): 40–51.

Moreover, in articles based on his PhD thesis, Kenneth D. Nworah has emphasised that the well-reputed Aborigines' Protection Society, which played a central role in the emergence of the British reform movement, "treated Africans with a spirit of patronizing condescension" and was "not a group of 'Little Englanders', but of imperialists". However, he has explicitly argued that the so-called 'Liverpool Sect' surrounding Morel and influenced by Kingsley constituted a "Third School" beyond the traditional missionary and philanthropic alliance and the "assertive racist school" of majority colonial discourse, which he celebrated as "the true colonial conscience" in the age of New Imperialism.[62]

The fiercest and most extensive debate was triggered by Achebe's criticism of racism in *Heart of Darkness*; however, it was mostly confined to literature theorists, critics and writers. Only a few authors like Susanne Gehrmann explicitly extended their focus to investigate the particular socio-political context in which the novel was created. Gehrmann understands *Heart of Darkness* as a "double *texte fondateur*". As such, it has heavily influenced other fictional configurations of the Congo atrocities, which equally relied upon "the racist and nationalist stereotyping embedded in colonial discourse". In addition, it has anticipated central arguments of non-fictional reform texts, she argued. T. Jack Thompson has similarly emphasised commonalities between Conrad's literature and the Casement-report, for instance. However, many researchers underestimated these cross-influences or maintained that activists such as Robert Park refused to add their "voice to the chorus of support for Joseph Conrad's imagery of Africa".[63]

Kevin Dunn, on the other hand, has asserted that the fierce battle over representation between the Congo Free State and the Congo reform movement left most contemporary stereotypes on Africans unaltered and that the colonial identity composed by Stanley and Conrad "remained authoritative". Burroughs has similarly noted that most of the eyewitness accounts quoted by reform activists such as Bourne and Morel intermingled "evidence of colonial misrule" with "lurid images of African's savagery and bloodlust". Moreover, the observation of Bass, whose postcolonial perspective on one of Morel's main books offers a valuable framework for a critical counter-reading of the reform discourse, that Morel was "not so much concerned with evoking reader pity for the plight of the Congolese as with inciting outrage over the subversion of imperialism by the Belgians' abandonment of their own imperial alterity", indicates that the crisis of white imperial identity Conrad evoked was reflected in non-fictional reform publications, as well. Jeanette E. Jones, on the other hand, while admitting that American Congo reformers subscribed to notions of 'savagery', still claims that Congo critiques served as "forums for [...] challenging the myth of Darkest Africa".[64]

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62   Kenneth D. Nworah, "The Liverpool 'Sect' and British West African Policy, 1895–1915," *African Affairs* 70, no. 281 (1971): 349 ('treated', 'Third School', 'true conscience'), 350 ('assertive'); Kenneth D. Nworah, "The Aborigines' Protection Society, 1889–1909," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines* 5, no. 1 (1971): 85 ('Little Englanders').

63   Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel*, 102 ('double', [translation F.L.]); Gehrmann, "Degenerated Heroes", 60 ('racist'); see T. J[ack] Thompson, *Light on Darkness?* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 200; S[tanford] M. Lyman, *Militarism, Imperialism, and Racial Accommodation* (University of Arkansas Press, 1992), 69 ('voice').

64   Jeanette E. Jones, *In Search of Brightest Africa* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 80.

Particularly in recent years, a number of authors have critically investigated the visual representation of the Congolese atrocities through photography as an "essential element" of the reform campaign. While these studies have revealed the power of the iconic photographs depicting, inter alia, maimed children, to arouse public sentiment, their hints that these images "emphasised the distance between the white viewer and the mutilated black body" as much as they created empathy and that their display in public demonstrations reduced the suffering of the Congolese to an "undifferentiated, exchangeable" object of a 'phantasmagoric' spectacle, highlight that any critical discussion of racism with the reform movement cannot be limited to its written statements.[65]

Finally, the success of the reform movement remains steeped in controversy. As early as 1953, the PhD thesis *The Idea of Economic Imperialism* pointed to the persistent oppression after the annexation of Léopold's private Congo Free State through Belgium in 1908, which was generally considered the largest political achievement of the campaign. After all, "none of the aims of the Congo Reform Association had been realised, neither free labor, free trade, nor recognition of native tribal and communal rights in the land", Robert Wuliger asserted. The Belgian colony that the reformers ultimately celebrated as liberation for the Congolese population remained "a tightly held, autocratically managed system", he argued.[66] Paul McStallworth noted more carefully that it was "debatable" whether the "ills of the Congo had ended" with the dissolution of the Congo Reform Association or were simply "dormant".[67] *King Leopold's Legacy* by Roger Anstey similarly concluded that "there was no major departure from the broad lines" of the Free State policy in the Belgian Congo.[68]

Louis and Stengers, on the other hand, pointed to a decline of the murderous rubber exploitation through the notorious concessionary companies as an indicator of the 'Triumph of the Congo Reform Movement'.[69] This evaluation is widely shared today, despite Robert Harms' insistence that 'The End of Red Rubber' was not the result of metropolitan activism but of extinguished wild caoutchouc reservoirs.[70] The Congolese historian Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, however, rejected all myths of a Belgian 'model colony', which were still perpetuated in the Universal Exhibition of 1958 in Brussels, for instance, as "imperialist propaganda". Even after the annexation through the Belgian

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65   Christina Twomey, "Severed Hands," in *Picturing Atrocity*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen and Jay Prosser (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 39 ('essential'); Christina Twomey, "Framing Atrocity," *History of Photography* 36, no. 3 (2012): 261 ('emphasised'); Sharon Sliwinski, "The Childhood of Human Rights," *Journal of Visual Culture* 5, no. 3 (2006): 353 ('undifferentiated').

66   Robert Wuliger, "The Idea of Economic Imperialism" (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1953), 287.

67   McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 335.

68   Roger Anstey, *King Leopold's Legacy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 261.

69   See W. R[oger] Louis, "E.D. Morel and the Triumph of the Congo Reform Movement, 1905–1908," *Boston University Papers on Africa* 2 (1966); Jean Stengers, "The Congo Free State and the Belgian Congo before 1914," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960*, ed. Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), Vol. 1, 261–92, here 270–71; Robert Harms, "The End of Red Rubber," *The Journal of African History* 16, no. 1 (1975), 77.

70   See Louis, "E. D. Morel"; Stengers, "Congo Free State", 270–71; Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 77.

state, he emphasised, the Congo was marked by "a system of economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression".[71]

With regard to this controversy, authors such as Hochschild and Pavlakis have added a question mark to their chapters on the "Victory" of the reform movement, at least. The latter nonetheless rejected more fundamental objections and argued that the reformers were "neither liars nor hypocrites when they proclaimed that the reform movement had largely succeeded in 1913". Because free trade flourished only for a few years and forced labour soon regained importance, it might be called a "flawed triumph or a partial success", Pavlakis admitted. In acknowledgement of the continuity of brutal forced labour and severe punishments such as flogging under Belgian rule, towards the end of his eulogy, Hochschild was inclined to see the lasting impact of the reform movement less in its material improvements for the Congolese than in its symbolic relevance as representative of an 'honourable' human rights tradition that upheld "the example of men and women who fought against enormous odds for their freedom".[72]

Such an argument is hardly convincing. While the Congolese population 'fought against enormous odds for their freedom' ever since the European plan to establish a permanent occupation became apparent, the Congo reformers have at no point in their long-lasting activism politically (not to mention practically) supported this anti-colonial struggle. Instead, it was the overwhelming consensus among American and British Congo reformers that the imperial rule of Africa was legitimate and should be sustained. Inevitably, any endorsement of the 'altruistic' Congo reform movement had to engage with the imperial attitude of its protagonists in one way or another. To avoid the moral dilemma of openly endorsing imperialism, some authors deny the imperialist foundation of the reform movement. Against all evidence, it is claimed, for instance, that the reformers shaped "an anti-imperialist mindset", that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was an "anti-colonial and anti-imperial" novel, or that Morel was the "great organizer" and "chief" of an 'anti-imperialist' movement.[73]

Those who have not been willing to engage in such misrepresentation have often ignored this aspect, and on other occasions have engaged in rather inept and problematic excuses. Hochschild, for instance, admits that Conrad was "an ardent imperialist where England was concerned" and that Morel similarly saw "nothing inherently wrong with colonialism" as long as it was "fair and just". While this was certainly one of its political "limitations", it was also a reason for the "success" of the reform movement, he argued. Had they challenged the legitimacy of imperialism as such, the reformers could have never achieved such broad public support for their campaign against the Free State atrocities. That the reformers' support of the European occupation of Africa

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71   Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila* (London: Zed Books, 2002), 26 ('oppression'), 27 ('propaganda').

72   Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 1 ('Victory'), 245 ('liars'); Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 275 ('Victory'), 306 ('example').

73   Henryk S. Zins, "Joseph Conrad and British Critics of Colonialism," *Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies* 1, 1&2 (1998): 58 ('anti-colonial'); Lewis S. Feuer, *Imperialism and the Anti-Imperialist Mind* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 151 ('great organizer'), 153 ('chief'); Anne Meisenzahl and Roger Peace, "Bellwether Fiction," *JAISA - The Journal for the Association of the Interdisciplinary Study of the Arts* 10, Special Issue. Gender, Sexuality, and Marginality (2010): 55 ('mindset').

profoundly contradicted his conclusion that the 'honourable' tradition of the reform movement promoted 'freedom' or "the idea of full human rights, political, social, and economic" was ignored.[74]

Nzongola-Ntalaja had already emphasised this weak point. Since the Congo reformers "did not call into question the colonial and imperialist base of exploitation", the Congolese historian responded to Hochschild, they could hardly count as radical and progressive human rights activists, since they still treated only symptoms, not causes. "Their triumph, the transformation of the Congo from Leopold's personal possession to a Belgian colony in 1908", the Congolese historian concluded, "did not represent a major advance for the Congolese people and their quest for freedom and self-determination".[75]

More recently, Nathan Alexander has rejected the label of a 'human rights movement' for the Congo reform campaign as "anachronistic and misleading" since the reformers did not possess "a coherent and comprehensive ideology of human rights". Despite his awareness for the racist and colonial mentality of Morel, for instance, Alexander still avoided a more fundamental reassessment, though. The Congo Reform Association's "work is no less laudable for not being a human rights organisation", he assured his readers.[76]

For Pavlakis, criticising the reform movement for its support of colonialism was "an inappropriate standard". If most "Congo reformers found colonialism acceptable and even desirable as long it was administered well", the persistence of colonialism could not be seen as a failure.[77] Hence, while the agenda of the reform movement was colonial, it was still radical since it believed in the right of a humanitarian intervention similar to modern notions of a 'responsibility to protect', he suggested. Moreover, even though Belgian Congo "was one of the more oppressive colonies in Africa", he concluded on the last page of his study, this "was nonetheless an improvement" compared to the horrors of the red rubber regime.[78]

In all, the above pages affirm that an in-depth analysis of the role of racism in the movement is both necessary and, by all accounts, worthwhile. Hints at the white supremacist agenda of John T. Morgan, Harry Johnston's conflagration thesis, Mary Kingsley's polygenism, the ambivalent position of African-American Congo reformers, anti-Belgian rhetoric, Morel's Rhine campaign, the paternalism of the Aborigines' Protection Society, the objectifying effect of atrocity photographs and racism in *Heart of Darkness* have been valuable vantage points for the study at hand. However, as has been shown above, these observations have been often ignored, their validity has been outright denied, and their relevance has been belittled. At times, the researchers who stumble over evident racism in this broadly glorified humanitarian campaign seem to be afraid of their courage, and quickly but often implausibly agree that their observations

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74   Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 146 ('ardent'), 210 ('wrong', 'fair'), 212 ('limitations', 'success'), 306 ('full human rights').

75   Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo*, 26.

76   Alexander, "E.D. Morel", 214 ('anachronistic', 'coherent'), 235 ('laudable').

77   Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 258.

78   Ibid., 259.

can only represent a curious exemption. Moreover, even those who explicitly reject such elusive conclusions often only cursorily discuss the subject.

A systematic, comprehensive analysis of the subject of racism and the Congo reform movement, the different shapes, dimensions, ambivalences and variances of this racism, its relevance for the overall discourse and policy of the campaign, and its relation to its humanitarian programme and commitment to human rights, which my historic-sociological study attempts to offer, remains lacking. I based this analysis on the hypothesis that racism is neither marginal nor negligible for this pioneering human rights movement, but one of its central ideological cornerstones.

The results of this project might also lead to a revaluation of the 'success' and 'triumph' of the reform movement. To determine the transition from one form of colonial oppression to a 'less oppressive' form of colonial oppression as the epochal success of the first great human rights campaign of the 20th century is unsatisfactory, at least. If one accepts that all forms of colonialism are intrinsically racist and based on violence, one should also conclude that the Congo reform movement was a racist campaign that promoted and possibly prolonged the violent subjugation of the Congolese and Africans in general. Without this consequence, one remains implicitly open to increasingly popular revisionist interpretations of colonial history which claim, as Peter Firchow did in his defence of *Heart of Darkness*, "that imperialism was not a universal bogeyman but could be both good or bad, depending on what nation was practicing it".[79]

In consideration of the on-going appraisal and at times open glorification of the reform movement, a critique of its imperial and racist ideology seems to be desperately needed, particularly if one accepts the widespread suggestion that this campaign served as a prelude to the modern human rights discourse in civil society or the United Nations. After all, contemporary critics continue to point to the persistence of the "colonial trappings and 'First World' hegemonic underpinnings" of human rights[80] and condemn political norms such as the 'responsibility to protect' as an instrument of neo-colonialism.[81] Regarding these challenges to the effectiveness and normativity of human rights, a full appreciation and critical evaluation of the racist and colonial foundation of this pioneering movement from the 'childhood of human rights' seems inevitable.[82]

Racism – and its crisis

The controversial discussion summarised above to a certain extent reflects the conceptual vagueness and analytical restrictiveness of racism's scientific designations. Theoretical definitions of racism have been formulated from a broad spectrum of methodological and epistemological approaches and "remain manifold" until today. They include characterisations as 'ideology' or 'prejudice', its location in 'structure' or 'institu-

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79   Peter E. Firchow, *Envisioning Africa* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 17 ('bogeyman').
80   Ratna Kapur, "Human Rights in the 21st Century," *Sydney Law Review* 28, no. 4 (2006): 684 ('trappings').
81   See Fidèle Ingiyimbere, *Domesticating Human Rights* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 97–114.
82   Sliwinski, "Childhood of Human Rights".

tion', or its understanding as 'ill-will' or 'construction'.[83] Moreover, while it is generally assumed that the modern formation of racism is closely related to the experience of colonisation, slavery and imperialism, analysts have identified racism as far back as Classical Antiquity and emphasised that it is "not limited" to the European relation with non-Europeans.[84]

At the same time, racism-theory has never fully emancipated itself from the reductionist association with the race-concept that once gave the former its name. In the aftermath of the Nazi terror and the shocking revelation of the concentration camps, the belief that people can be divided along the lines of natural 'races' was increasingly politically delegitimised and eventually scientifically refuted. However, while there is broad consensus by now that 'race' is a "social construct" and an 'invention', hence neither mere fiction nor a natural but a 'social fact', authors have continued to define racism as "discrimination based on essentialist categories of race".[85]

Such a restricted understanding has inevitably faced difficulties with accounting for the quick and easy predominance of a 'racism without races' after the delegitimation of the latter, as it was expressed in the anti-immigrant discourse emerging in last two decades of the 20th century, or anti-Muslim- and 'colour-blind'-racism of the 'New Right' until today.[86] Proclamations of a 'new' racism, defined as 'symbolic' and distinctively 'cultural' and 'differentialist', have attempted to transcend these conceptual limitations and still heavily influence the analysis of present racist formations.[87] However, these conceptions ignored not only, as Étienne Balibar had warned, that the "idea of hierarchy" remains a central feature of all so-called neo-racism focused on 'difference' but also that a 'culturalist' racism "has always existed", even before the emergence of the "pseudo-biological concept of race".[88] As this study confirms, even in the heyday of scientific racism and imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th century, racism was always also a form of cultural and 'differentialist' discrimination.

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83   See Wulf D. Hund, *Rassismus* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007), 27–28; Anja Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital," in *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital*, ed. Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler and David Roediger (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 38 38 ('manifold').

84   See Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2012 [1994]), Vol. 1, 29 ('limited').

85   Michael Banton, *Racial Theories*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 196 ('social construct'); Allen, *Invention of the White Race*; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "The Essential Social Fact of Race," *American Sociological Review* 64, no. 6 (1999); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 71 ('essentialist'); similarly see David T. Goldberg, *Racist Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 122.

86   On 'racism without races'; see Étienne Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?," in *Race, Nation, Class*, ed. Étienne Balibar and Immanuel M. Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991), particularly 23–28; on the low significance of race in German anti-Muslim discourses, see Yasemin Shooman, *'… Weil Ihre Kultur So Ist'* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014), particularly 80–81; on the colour-blind 'new right', see Amy E. Ansell, *New Right, New Racism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 106–8.

87   Martin Barker, *The New Racism* (London: Junction, 1982); David Sears, "Symbolic Racism," in *Eliminating Racism*, ed. Phyllis A. Katz and Dalmas A. Taylor (New York: Plenum, 1988); Pierre-André Taguieff, "The New Cultural Racism in France," *Telos* 83, Spring (1990): 109–22, where he also developed the notion of a 'differentialist racism'.

88   Balibar, "Is There a 'Neo-Racism'?," 23 ('always', 'pseudo-biological'), 24 ('idea').

Moreover, if racism is older than the concept of race, the latter – like other racist ascriptions – cannot be considered the foundation but only a "product" of the former. This conclusion also implies that racism does not describe a 'natural relation', as the essentialising sociology of 'race relations' suggested, nor is it "directed against someone of a different race", as the Oxford Dictionary claims even today. Neither can it be explained as a 'fear caused by strangers' and hence a "subtype of xenophobia", as sociology students are made to believe.[89]

On the contrary, racism describes the very creation of this alleged 'otherness' or 'difference', thus "the social construction of natural disparity". Racism is, consequently, a distinctively "social relation", created by and established between human beings. A sociological approach to racism should, it has been argued, be able to account for the different dimensions of the social – "structural, performative, material, ideological, and historical" and their interrelation, beyond dichotomies of 'interaction/macrosocial' or 'base/superstructure'.[90] Based on Pierre Bourdieu's reflections on masculine domination, the sociologist Anja Weiß has in this regard identified the interplay between "classifications" ('prejudice' or stereotypes), "institutions" (discourse, power) and "practices" (group formation) as three integral dimensions of the social relation of racism.[91]

"Historically, and systematically", racist classification had led to diverse forms of stereotypes, generally expressed in dichotomous opposites that have divided people as "either human or monstrous, cultivated or barbaric, valuable or worthless, pure or impure, chosen or cursed, civilised or savage, white or coloured". Although these binary oppositions describe different forms and epochs of racism, they are strictly distinguishable as ideal types only.[92] Indeed, the 19th-century 'myth of the dark continent' that so powerfully resounded in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and structured writing about Africa throughout the Congo reform movement serves as a prime example of a transcontinental and cross-temporal transformation and recreation of racist ascriptions that were combined, reinterpreted and adapted to new social and material conditions.

Adorno and Horkheimer once described 'myths' as allegedly common-sense belief systems, taken for granted explanations that obtain a grade of indisputable "natural" truths and a "[f]alse clarity". In this sense, the literary works of the pioneers of African 'exploration' like David Livingstone, Richard Burton, John Speke or Henry M. Stanley,

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89   John Solomos, "Making Sense of Racism," in *Konjunkturen des Rassismus*, ed. Alex Demirović and Manuela Bojadžijev (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2002), 160 ('product' [translation F.L.]); The Oxford English Dictionary, "Racism," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/racism ('antagonism'); Georg Ritzer, *Introduction to Sociology* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2013), 344 ('subtype'). On the race ontology of Robert E. Park, one of the pioneers of the study 'race relations', see my own essay Felix Lösing, "From the Congo to Chicago," in *Racism and Sociology*, ed. Wulf D. Hund and Alana Lentin (Wien: Lit, 2014), particularly 115–20.

90   Hund, *Rassismus*, subtitle ('disparity' [translation F.L.]); Wulf D. Hund, "Negative Societalisation," in *Wages of Whiteness & Racist Symbolic Capital*, ed. Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler and David Roediger (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 59 ('social relation', 'structural'). Also see Hund, *Rassismus*, 27–28 and Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 38.

91   Ibid., 50 ('classifications', etc.), also see 43–45.

92   Wulf D. Hund, "'It Must Come from Europe'," in *Racisms Made in Germany*, ed. Wulf D. Hund, Christian Koller and Moshe Zimmermann (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 71 ('Historically', 'monstrous'); Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 59.

which approached the interior of Central Africa starting in the mid-19th century, were indeed "large-scale operations in myth-making". Travel and exploration literature from the 1850s until the 1870s was generally enriched with fantastic and often fantasised descriptions of hostile tropical forests, drawings of wild animals and spectacular accounts of dramatic encounters with furious Africans and cruel 'Arabs'. Through these reports, larger spheres of the European metropoles were for the first time confronted with an image of Africa as a dark and dangerous space full of mystery and misery. As Patrick Brantlinger has argued, "Africa grew dark" exactly when explorers, missionaries and scientists "flooded it with light".[93]

In doing so, these writers firmly relied upon a well-established archive of knowledge from the long history of European racism. The travel reports that reached Europe in the second half of the 19th century integrated, as an analysis of Stanley's Congo writing later in this study shows, ancient 'wild' and 'monstrous' creatures and 'barbarians' that Europeans had imagined existing on the fringe of the known world since antiquity, patterns from medieval demonological and religious racism about 'heathens' and 'sinners',[94] and combined them with the ambivalent typecasts circling in the "Imaginative Geography" of Orientalist discourses.[95] Most significant, however, was the adaption of the 'savage' and the 'race' stereotype.

Initially developed in the course of westward colonial expansion starting in the 15th century and based on memories of Europe's own "domestic" 'wild men', the concept of the "extra-European" 'savage' was long exclusively applied to Native Americans. It was only in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries that it slowly transferred to Africa.[96] The antagonism between 'civilised' and 'savages' is as "complex" as it is "ambivalent". In its temporal dimension, it asserts an asynchronous status of historical time and cultural development, which declares the latter to be the "contemporary ancestors" of the former. "Thus in the beginning all the World was America", John Locke famously wrote in 1728, claiming that America's original inhabitants still dwelled in a 'state of nature' that was not simply 'backward' but 'pre-history'. Only Europeans, it is held, 'progressed' through a sequence of stadia of human development to a higher standard and finally achieved 'civilised' perfection.[97]

Different aggregations of the 'savage' stereotype allowed specific gazes from the 'civilised', however. The 'nobility' of the savage allowed the projection of desires for a non-alienated life and a form of utopian social criticism. His alleged 'laziness', on the other hand, asserted a lack of 'civilising' effort that incurred the wrath of Europeans

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93   Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, new ed. (London: Verso, 1997 [1972]), xiv ('clarity'), 24 ('natural'); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, Repr. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 64 ('large-scale'); Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 173 ('grew', 'flooded').

94   For the relevance of these racist stereotypes from antiquity to the Middle Ages, see Hund, *Rassismus*, 36–60; for the following,

95   Edward Said: Orientalism, 49 ('Imaginative')

96   Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1997), 43 ('domestic', 'extra-European'); also see Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 36–39.

97   Gustav Jahoda, *Images of Savages* (London: Routledge, 1999), 134 ('ancestors'); John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 5th ed. (London: A. Bettesworth, J. Pemberton, and E. Symon, 1728), 175 ('America'); Hund, *Rassismus*, 61 ('complex', 'ambivalent' [translation F.L.]). For the whole paragraph, also see ibid., 61–64.

frustrated about their own deprivation.[98] In its eastward transfer, the 'savage' would lose much of its former ambivalences, however. While it became a central motif in African travel writing produced between the 1850s and the 1870s, the emerging phantasmagorias of cannibalism, human sacrifice and polygamy emphasised almost exclusively the negative and 'dark' character of savagery. The 'African savage' was also understood as a 'child'; however, when the stereotype eventually became "common currency" in European discourses on Africa, his 'ignobility' became the dominant feature.[99]

The division between 'white and coloured', on the other hand, was a natural determinism that assumed that humans had different biologically defined moral and cultural capacities and had been marked by nature accordingly.[100] A racist social formation that had imagined 'white over black' and the first "color-coded" and "pseudoanthropological" uses of the formerly class-connoting race-category had already emerged over the course of the 17th century. However, the construction of race as a scientifically acceptable category to divide humanity was the intellectual endeavour of the European Enlightenment.[101] Naturalists such as Comte du Buffon and philosophers such as Lord Kames (Henry Home) or Immanuel Kant, some of the most pivotal thinkers of the modern era, theoretically developed race-schemata that were often bound to continents and marked by skin colour. In this regard, the claim that people were "white in Europe, black in Africa, yellow in Asia, and red in America" became probably the most widely accepted but never exclusive colour-pattern.[102] Despite the failure of scholars such as Pieter Camper and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach to prove these schemata empirically through investigations of skulls or bones, the race-concept was soon stipulated in academic, political and cultural elite discourses in Europe and the United States. By the early 19th century "the word 'race' [was] on every lip", it has been maintained.[103]

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98   See ibid., 64–65. For birth of the 'noble savage' in European thought, see Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), particularly 11–98. For the creation of its 'ignoble' counterpart through social scientists and philosophers in the 18th century, see Roland L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1976]).

99   Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 34 ('currency'). On the differences in the imagination of 'savage Americans' and 'savage Africans', also see Jahoda, *Images of Savages*, 15–35.

100 See Hund, *Rassismus*, 122.

101 Gary Taylor, *Buying Whiteness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 257 ('color-coded'), 308 ('pseudoanthropological'). Hund has distinguished the stages of "imagination, construction and constitution" in regard to the historical development of the race concept and modern racism: Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 60. The first stage comprised the experience of colonialism and transatlantic slavery in the 17th century; see ibid. 64. Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012 [1968]), particularly 44–98.

102 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Dublin: James Williams, 1779), Vol. 1, 14 ('white'). Kames adopts this nomenclature here from Buffon, who in turn heavily influenced Kant's colour schemata. On the contribution of the Scottish moral philosophers to the construction of race, see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 57–70; on Kant's race theory, see Hund, "'It must come from Europe'", 78–81 and Charles W. Mills, "Kant's Untermenschen," in *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy*, ed. Andrew Valls (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 172–83.

103 Léon Poliakov, "Racism in Europe," in *Caste and Race*, ed. Anthony V. S. de Reuck and Julie Knight (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1967), 229 ('lip'). On this phase of the scientific development of the idea

The view persists, as already Hannah Arendt has claimed, that these early uses of 'race' did "not necessarily imply ranking" or advocate "unequal treatment", and thus, as mere "racialism", must be distinguished from racism.[104] However, despite controversies about denomination, quantity and distinctive physical marks, or the sharp disputes between monogenists and polygenists, race was in all concurring typologies and facets a "hierarchising term", in which the 'white' or 'Caucasian' or 'Aryan' reigned over 'inferior' and primitive 'coloured races'. In this way, the emerging race nomenclatures were synchronised with and retroactively legitimated the violent relation of colonisation and slavery. Moreover, they integrated older culturalist stereotypes and theories of progress to claim that only the 'white race' was capable of full historical development.[105]

When G.W.F. Hegel declared in 1830, still before the 'unlocking' of Central Africa, that the "Negro represents natural man in all his wild and untamed nature", notions of 'savagery' and 'race' were fully entangled. From its philosophical origins, the 'race'-concept soon "became paradigmatic in anthropology and spread in the sciences and humanities".[106] The era-defining American (armed, political and cultural) battle over slavery, emancipation and reconstruction in the 1860s and 1870s, just as much as the emergence of (Social) Darwinism with its 'naturalisation' of political and academic discourses, greatly accelerated the triumph of 'race' in the second half of the 19th century. Hence, in the age of the great Central African 'explorations', 'race' had reached the phase of its constitution.[107]

Soon, as this study shows, classifications of Africans as 'savages' were increasingly supplemented, although never fully replaced, in travel writing by their interpellation as 'negroid' or 'black'. However, neither the 'savages' nor the 'negroes' lived, as Hannah Arendt seemed to believe, in Central Africa. On the contrary, the European already brought these concepts with them on their treks and caravans as part of their ideological baggage, which was formed by discriminatory practices over several centuries and systemised by key thinkers of the Enlightenment and subsequent scientists.

The activation of these stereotypes for a widely accepted classification of Africans through 'explorers', missionaries and other travellers was constitutive of the 'darkening' of Africa in the 19th century. This complex racist manoeuvre included the deculturalisation and dehistoricisation of African space, hence the active forgetting of what Europeans knew about its rich culture and past, and the defamiliarisation, inferiori-

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of race, also see Ivan Hannaford, *Race* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 187–234 and Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 45–48.

104   Brian Alleyne, "'Race' and Racism," in *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, ed. Austin Harrington et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 490.

105   Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 65 ('hierarchising'); also see Hund, *Rassismus*, 68–74; Hund, "'It must come from Europe'", 71–90.

106   Georg W. F. Hegel, quoted in Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 34 ('untamed'); Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 59 ('paradigmatic'), 60 ('constitution').

107   For the American debates about slavery and race, see George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 1–165; on Social Darwinism and race, see Hannaford, *Race*, 273.

sation and naturalisation of its inhabitants until Africans were recreated as subhuman beings.[108]

By the time the Congo reform movement appeared on the world stage, this mystification had coagulated into a truly commonplace myth about the 'savagery' of Africa. Eventually, this myth-making process implemented what Theodore Allen has described as the "hallmark" of racist oppression: "all members of the oppressed group" became "reduced to one undifferentiated social status, a status beneath that of any member of any social class". As such, they were solely defined as representatives of allocated racist group identities, were denied the social differentiation of the dominant group and overtaken by a "social death".[109]

Racism thus established a social relation in which the degradation of the oppressed allowed the upgrading of the oppressors. In fundamental contrast to those stigmatised and debased as 'savage' or 'negro', the powerful identities of the 'civilised' or 'whites' emerged. Following Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as a socially constructed and "imagined" community, collectives such as 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' have been characterised as *racist* "imagined communities" that allow people who never meet each other to recognise themselves as part of a superior group.[110]

Racism in general, and the 'myth of the dark continent' in particular, were never merely representational and discursive, nor an insulting fantasy about 'the other', however. These soon transformed into what has been described as 'political racism' and became ideologically structured into "projects and programmes" and state practice. The myths produced by explorers and missionaries were converted into influential legitimation discourses and institutionalised in the imperial formations of New Imperialism.[111]

That racism forms a "consubstantial" and "intrinsic" part of imperialism and colonialism is widely accepted. However, to categorically assume that "ideology did not precede racist practices" but "emerge and reproduce to justify practices of oppression" is not always historically evident. In the case of the 'scramble for Africa', ideological legitimation preceded its material realisation. After all, when 'explorers' and missionaries approached the interior of Central Africa between the 1850s and the 1870s, the European presence on the continent was still limited to the coastlines or offshore islands.[112]

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108   Hund, *Rassismus*, has described dehumanisation (83), defamilarisation (83–88), inferiorisation (96–99) and the deculturalisation of colonial space (106) as central 'methods' of racism.

109   Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1, 32 ('social death', 'hallmark'). Allen writes of 'racial oppression'. Nonetheless, as Hund has argued, the social death is a decisive characteristic of all racist discrimination (Hund, *Rassismus*, 31). Both Allen and Hund build their notion on Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

110   Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), 6 ('imagined'); Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 59 ('communities').

111   Michel Wieviorka, *The Arena of Racism* (London: Sage, 1995), 40 ('political racism', 'projects', 'acts').

112   Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Empire & Emancipation* (London: Pluto, 1990), 223 ('intrinsic'); Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Earthscan, 2010), 118 ('consubstantial'); David Camfield, "Elements of a Historical-Materialist Theory of Racism," *Historical Materialism* 24, no. 1 (2016): 43 ('ideology'); Fabian Georgi, "The Role of Racism in the European 'Migration Crisis'," in *Racism after Apartheid*, ed. Vishwas Satgar (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2001), 101 ('emerge').

From the start, these groups' writings opened up an imperial perspective, though. Identifications of raw material deposits indicated the profits of unlocking the undeveloped Central African markets, while geographic surveys and ethnographic observations facilitated future imperial infiltrations and the organisation of colonial governance. Furthermore, the evangelical and humanitarian zeal that pioneering missionaries and 'explorers' integrated into their writings and the anti-slavery agenda they promoted was pivotal for the emergence and popularisation of the so-called 'civilising mission' narrative. In this, a wretched African awaits its salvation both from Arab slavery and from his own moral 'darkness' through the introduction of 'Commerce and Christianity', a popular slogan among imperialists in the second half of the 19th century. In public discourse, "humanitarian aims" and "imperial encroachment" became from then on closely interlinked.[113]

The civilising mission narrative was conceptually bound to what has been called the tradition of "humanitarian racism". Induced by Enlightenment thinkers who upheld the unity of humankind as one species, this racist strand announced that the 'savages' and 'primitive races' were in principle able to be 'civilised' or 'up-lifted'. At the same time, the 'bloodlust' of the savages and the social Darwinist "mantra" that 'primitive races' were doomed to 'vanish' on their own emphasised that this 'civilising' programme could only be accomplished under foreign 'tutelage': the choice was submission and assimilation or extermination.[114]

Any attempts to trivialise this 'humanitarian' racism as less harmful than its 'exclusionary' forms necessarily belittle not least the essential role that the former played in the legitimation of murderous invasions of the Americas, Africa and Asia.[115] Through the initiation of a colonial 'civilising' project by the Belgian King Léopold II in 1876, the analogous rhetoric of the Berlin Congo Conference in 1884/85 and the subsequent formation of the Congo Free State as an allegedly philanthropic colony, the mission to civilise the 'Dark Continent' reached the sphere of high policy. Eventually, it became the central ideological self-legitimation of New Imperialism.[116]

Moreover, the racist 'myth of the Dark Continent' also deeply influenced the popular imagination. Imperial travel and exploration literature "took the Victorian reading public in storm". It thus became a crucial asset of a shift from an elitist "scientific racism" to a popular "commodity racism" in the second half of the 19th century, when colonial exhibitions and colonial advertisement further turned imperial relations "into mass-

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113   See Andrew Porter, "'Commerce and Christianity'," *The Historical Journal* 28, no. 3 (1985): 616; Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 181 ('humanitarianism', 'encroachment').

114   Neil MacMaster, *Racism in Europe 1870–2000* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001), 13 ('humanitarian racism'); Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 6 ('mantra'); see Hund, *Rassismus*, 63–64.

115   See Alana Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination* (New York: Rosen Publishing, 2011), 6.

116   See Michael Mann, "'Torchbearers upon the Path of Progress'," in *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission*, ed. Michael Mann and Harald Fischer-Tiné (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 1–26; Hund, *Rassismus*, 63. For more information see Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The 'Civilising Mission' of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870–1930* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). In German language, valuable contributions that allow a comparative understanding of the various European civilising missions are included in Boris Barth and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Zivilisierungsmissionen* (Konstanz: UVK-Verlagsgesellschaft, 2005).

produced consumer spectacles", as Anne McClintock has shown.[117] During these years, the emergence of new consumer culture, advanced through progress in capitalist production and communication technology; the rise of photography; and a 'new', mass-oriented journalism led to a period of "popular imperialism". This, in turn, also induced a "popularisation" of racist stereotypes and in particular the race concept. Through its inclusion in "popular culture", race was transformed from an "élite ideology" to a "property of many", as has been argued.[118]

Indeed, in the second half of the 19th century, the American and British working classes began to develop a widespread 'white consciousness'.[119] Traditionally, analysts have attempted to understand the emerging working-class racism as a form of 'false consciousness' that was contrary to labour interests and beneficial to capital, since it divided trade unions and therefore depressed the wage level.[120] Others, however, have challenged the claim that racist workers acted irrationally by emphasising, in contrast, that there was much to be gained from racist social relations even for lower societal strata.

David Roediger has discussed the material benefits of racist relations for 'white' workers, such as privileged access to better-reputed jobs and residential areas under the notion of 'wages of whiteness'.[121] In the course of his study, the historian also referred to a now often-quoted passage of the sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois. There, the latter noted how 'white' labourers in the late 19th century American South were "compensated" for their low wages "by a sort of public and psychological wage", which regulated their privileged admission to social spheres and had a great effect upon the "deference shown them". In the same context, Max Weber has written about the "ethnic honour" that the racist dominant but economic 'poor whites' develop through the debasement of Black labour.[122]

More recently, Anja Weiß has advanced the model of a 'racist symbolic capital' to illustrate the centrality of 'immaterial' benefits for a general sociological understanding

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117   Brantlinger, "Heart of Darkness: Anti-Imperialism, Racism", 180 ('reading public'); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 33 ('spectacles'), 34 ('scientific', 'commodity').

118   Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 77 ('popular'); Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 70 ('popularisation'); Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 116 ('popular culture', etc.).

119   For the role of 'whiteness' in the constitution of the American working class, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, new ed. (London: Verso, 2007 [1991]). For the slow transformation of the 'racial' status of British workers, see Alastair Bonnett, "How the British Working Class Became White," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 11, no. 3 (1998).

120   See Carter A. Wilson, *Racism* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 146, who refers for example to the 'false consciousness' argument of Michael Reich, *Racial Inequality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) and Robert D. Cherry, *Discrimination* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989).

121   See Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*. Conceptually transported to imperial relations, a broadened access to classical colonial commodities such as coffee, tea or ivory, but also bicycles, whose popular success was rendered possible through the exploitation of rubber in the colonies, could be understood as wages of (imperial) whiteness.

122   Du Bois, W.E. B[urghardt], *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 700 ('compensated', 'psychological wage'), 701 ('deference'); Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1964) ed. by Johannes Winckelmann., 303 and 309 ('ethnic'), quoted in Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 64.

of racism. Based on Bourdieu's theory of multiple social inequalities, the concept described a "collective resource" which can be accumulated and "utilized by individuals as representatives of a group" and whose asymmetrical distribution regulates the access to social interaction and society and thus has considerable influence on the "life chances of its owners".[123]

Based on Weber's observations, and recently further supported by Weiß's insights, it has been suggested that racism should be understood as a form of 'negative societalisation'. In societies that are hierarchised along the lines of, inter alia, class, gender or age, racism can create a form of cohesion since it allows subaltern spheres to subsume themselves under the same allegedly superior identity (like 'civilisation' or 'whiteness') as the dominant groups of society. While this process does not necessarily bring access to economic resources or political power, all those included into these imagined communities, irrespective of social status, are allocated a certain 'racist symbolic capital', an 'ethnic honour' arising from the right to despise those declared to be 'savages' or 'coloured'. As such, this process described a form of "negative social integration" since it was solely based on the "exclusion of others".[124]

The commodified spectacle organised around the exploration and conquest of the mythologised African continent and the Congo, in particular, greatly extended this potential for the process of racist group formation. For the first time, large spheres of the middle and lower classes, hence the 'masses' in the metropole, experienced their inclusion in the superior racist imagined communities and the related material and symbolic benefits. At the same time, the popularisation of the 'race' concept led to a new predominance of the opposition between 'white' and 'coloured' in racist discourse. Despite its connection to natural ascriptions, 'whiteness' always had a social and cultural core; it described "not really a color at all, but a set of power relations", as the philosopher Charles Mills has argued. Increasingly, this power relation obtained a geopolitical dimension, as well. In 1898, Rudyard Kipling rephrased the 'civilising mission' as the 'white man's burden', and the establishment of 'white men countries' around the world was legitimised by a "special right" of 'white men' to land in the temperate zone. The imperial subjugation of 'Darkest Africa' through Léopold's armies in the 1890s became, in this context, a powerful symbol of the inevitability of global 'white' supremacy.[125]

Surprisingly, perhaps, it was exactly when white racial chauvinism and European political and economic domination were at their peak that a lurking self-doubt captured political and cultural elites in Europe and the United States, and particularly Australia. This fear circled around what was interpreted as worrying signs of 'racial' and cultural decline, political and economic vulnerability, and the social and political fragmentation of 'whiteness', 'civilisation' or the European 'family of nations'. In this context, Alastair Bonnet has written about the multidimensional "crises of whiteness" that eventually

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123   Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 47.

124   Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 86 ('negative', 'exclusion'). For the model of negative societalisation, see ibid., 84–88.

125   Mills, *Racial Contract*, 127 ('power relations'); see Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *The Times*, 4 February 1899; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), 6.

became the subject of an "intellectually omnivorous debate" peaking after World War I but with roots at the turn of the 20th century.[126]

These crises were constituted by deep concussions of the three dimensions of racism discussed above and eventually endangered the stability of racist relations as such. "Chief among these prophets" of 'racial' and cultural pessimism, as the American sociologist Franklin H. Giddings noted in 1898, was the English-born Australian historian, politician and social reformer Charles F. Pearson. In his *National Life and Character*, first published in 1893, Pearson challenged the general assumption, as he called it, that "higher races of men" or those of the "highest forms of civilization, are everywhere triumphing over the lower". Instead, the high mortality of Europeans in tropical and semi-tropical climates and the worrying fact that "the lower races of men increase faster than the higher" pointed for him to the "unchangeable limits" of white and European superiority.[127]

In the United States, Pearson's theses heavily influenced Theodor Roosevelt, whose warning that the low reproduction rates of the middle- and working-class and Anglo-Saxon Americans were an act of 'race suicide', became a "forceful element" in his presidential ideology.[128] As reasons for both declining birth rates and the 'unfitness' of the 'white races', many contemporaries identified the negative influences of distinctively new social phenomena (such as the emancipation of women and modern city life) on social institutions (such as the family and masculinity).[129] In this regard, the 'racial' pessimism fundamentally described a cultural crisis. It tied in with a thriving conservative and romanticising critique of progress that emerged in the late 19th century and targeted the disintegrating forces of overly materialistic modernity and 'decadent' civilisation on traditional values and communality. To the obsession with racial 'decay' and cultural 'degeneration' that captured European artists and intellectuals at the 'fin-de-siècle',[130] Pearson's warnings about a rise of the 'coloured races' added a much more practical, political dimension. The "day will come, and perhaps is not far distant", the Australian writer predicted, when "black and yellow races", ever more powerful and better 'educated', would no longer accept the supremacy of the "Aryan race" and "Christian faith" in political, economic and social relations. Soon, "[w]e shall wake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down upon", he concluded.[131]

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126   Alastair Bonnett, "From the Crises of Whiteness to Western Supremacism," *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association Journal* 1 (2005): 9 ('crises'), 11 ('omnivorous').

127   Franklin H. Giddings, "Review of L'Avenir de la Race Blanche by J. Novicow," *Political Science Quarterly* 13, no. 3 (1898): 570 ('Chief'); Guy Burrows, *The Land of the Pigmies* (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1898), 31 ('limits'), 32 ('higher', 'highest'), 68 ('faster').

128   Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 150 ('forceful'). Roosevelt had adapted the term from the sociologist Edward A. Ross (see ibid., 15).

129   See Bonnett, "Crises of Whiteness", 11.

130   See William. M. Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and the essays on 'fears and fantasies of the late 19th century' (subtitle) in John Stokes, ed., *Fin De Siècle, Fin Du Globe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

131   Charles F. Pearson, *National Life and Character*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1894), 89 ('day', 'black'), 90 ('Aryan', 'Christian', 'elbowed').

Initially, most readers might have considered this pessimism hyperbolic. However, only a few years later, in 1897, the unexpected defeat of Italy in Ethiopia once and for all took "away the gloom of inevitability" from Europe's path to global domination. For some, the fact that a European army well equipped with modern weapons could be defeated on the field by Africans was a shock; for others, however, it was a beacon of hope. The 'battle of Adwa' gave rise again to 'Ethiopianism' among African-American intellectuals, and it fuelled anti-colonial desires in Africa and the emerging Pan-African movement.[132]

Nonetheless, this was only a small foretaste of the discursive shockwaves that the "spectacular naval victory" of Japan over Russia in 1905 at Tsushima sent around the globe. If Japan's astonishing economic and technological development in the years before already challenged the assumption that modernisation was only possible under European rule, the totally unexpected triumph of a 'coloured over a white people', of 'the East over the West', in the Russo-Japanese War 1904/05 was considered an event of exceptional historic significance, probably marking the end of 'white' expansion and pride. Indeed, correspondents from all over Africa and Asia reported the excitement the Japanese success aroused. Among the colonised people, it had ignited hopes for independence and racial equality. Suddenly, the motif of the 'white man under siege' that Pearson had created years earlier seemed no longer only a pessimistic fantasy, but an anti-colonial and anti-white revolt of a global scale that was probably imminent.[133]

Many 'white' contemporaries in Great Britain and the United States received the climatic, demographic, cultural and military challenges to racist predominance as a "call to arms". Popular 'defensive' measures proposed and implemented included the improvement of 'racial hygiene' through eugenics and restrictions of immigration, programmes of bodily fitness and armament suggested to increase military power, and the establishment segregationist regimes to replace the ill-fated project of 'multi-racial democracies'.[134]

At the same time, appeals to "transnational solidarities" within the imagined community of 'whiteness' were raised. However, as Bonnet has argued, the ideal of "white solidarity" in the early 20th century remained "doomed". He describes the apparent failure of racism to create a solid geopolitical identity together with challenges to its negative form of cohesion as the aspect that comprises the crisis-prone state of racist relations in a period marked by the increasing political and social fragmentation of universal racist imagined communities such as 'whiteness' or 'civilisation'. For instance, notions of 'race' and 'nation' became conceptually intermingled, which signified the rising

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132   Raymond Jonas, *The Battle of Adwa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6 ('gloom').

133   Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 2 ('spectacular'); also see ibid., 166–8.

134   Bonnett, "Crises of Whiteness", 13 ('call'); also see ibid. 9–10. On eugenics, see Steven Selden, *Inheriting Shame* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999) and Lindsay A. Farrall, *The Origins and Growth of the English Eugenics Movement, 1865–1925*, repr. ed. (New York: Garland, 1985). On fitness, see Jay M. Winte, "Military Fitness and Civilian Health in Britain during the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 2 (1980): 211–12, and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). On segregation, see Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 49–74.

importance of 'national identities' closely tied to a rise in national chauvinism. Nationalism and imperial rivalries had "left [their] mark" on international relations and increased the hostility and danger of military confrontation between 'white' and 'civilised' nation-states in the period before World War I.[135]

Moreover, both higher and lower social strata were torn between the "politics of white racial solidarity and class consciousness". Although significant parts of the British and American working classes fought vigorously and violently for their inclusion in the 'white' master group, 'proletarian internationalism' and 'class solidarity' remained powerful slogans propagated by a strengthening labour movement as well. Signs that these ideals were put into practice, even if only in spatially and temporally limited ways, such as the fraternisation of Black and 'white' workers on some picket lines in the United States or the formation of the Second International in 1886, were profound warnings that the cross-class alliance established by racism could always be revoked from those without economic power.[136] At the same time, traditional elites, worried by a weakening grasp on political power, pushed the kinds of 'self-referential racisms' (such as eugenic discourses) that increasingly targeted certain 'degenerated' elements of subaltern milieus or working classes, as well, declaring them harmful to society and 'unfit' for full membership in the imagined 'racial' community. Thus, the union between 'white' elites and the masses was also challenged 'from the top'.[137]

Therefore, when the Congo reform movement entered the world stage, racist relations were at a historic crossroad. The second half of the 19th century had culminated in, first, the consolidation of the 'myth of the dark continent' to a solid regime of representation; second, the rise of the 'civilising mission' narrative as the principle legitimation discourse and its institutionalisation in the allegedly philanthropic colonies of New Imperialism; and third, the emergence of a popular and commodified imperialism leading to a new universalness of racist societalisation. However, the early 20th century began with the shocking revelations of the limits of racial and cultural superiority, the limits of white and European supremacy, and the limits of geopolitical and social solidarity among the dominant spheres of racist and imperial relations. It was the discursive battlefield of the Congo Scandal where these two strands ultimately clashed.

Subjects and methods

Since Stuart Hall's assessment that racism is always "historically specific", and that therefore multiple "racisms" exist and existed, it has become widely accepted that racism is necessarily "historically situated" and "embedded in a particular historical

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135 Ibid., 23 ('transnational'); see ibid., 23–28, 128–134; Bonnett, "Crises of Whiteness", 11 ('doomed'); James Joll and Gordon Martel, *The Origins of the First World War*, 3rd ed. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 219.

136 Bonnett, "Crises of Whiteness", 10 ('consciousness'). For examples of cross-racial solidarity in strikes and trade unions, see, for instance, David Montgomery, "Strikes in Nineteenth-Century America," *Social Science History* 4, no. 1 (1980): particularly 95 and Alex Lichtenstein, "Racial Conflict and Racial Solidarity in the Alabama Coal Strike of 1894," *Labor History* 36, no. 1 (1995).

137 MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, 33 ('self-referential'); see Bonnett, "Crises of Whiteness", 13–14.

context, a particular social formation".[138] Nonetheless, much as postcolonial research often tended to "do history ahistorically", as Frederick Cooper has warned, sociological reflections continued to be restricted by "a lack of historical reflexivity", as Les Back and John Solomos have criticised.[139]

As such, this field of research reflected a broader "retreat of sociologists into the present" in a discipline that its 'founders' Durkheim, Marx or Weber had always explicitly understood as historical. There is, in fact, "much to be gained by reconstituting history and sociology as historical sociology", as critics of this process have maintained, particularly as applied to the analysis of the social relation of racism. The investigation of racism has to be both "sociologically well-founded" and "historically differentiated", and the research of a specific racist formation must be "rigorously contextualised", it has been demanded.[140]

Such a research agenda can, of course, not be implemented by solely using secondary literature or by a cursory overview over more 'background'. It requires that sociologists engage in a thorough primary analysis to investigate, as Hall has called it, "the concrete historical 'work' which racism accomplishes".[141] Hence, while my historic-sociological inquiry uses insights from a wide range of existing historiographic and other studies, it comprehensively examines primary sources to explore the conglomerate of racism within the Congo reform movement.

British and American criticism of the Congo Scandal has been formulated on several interrelated levels. First, former Free State agents and officers, missionaries, merchants, private travellers and diplomats who had spent some time in the Congo published books and articles, wrote open letters and (official) reports, gave interviews or publicly spoke about their personal experiences of wrongdoings in the Free State. Based on these accounts, reform activists produced extensive monographs and substantive series of articles in newspapers and magazines. These major accounts documented and discussed the available evidence; disclosed new eyewitness accounts in the form of letters, diaries or testimonies; integrated the insights of original research into official proceedings, laws and statistics of the Free State; and offered systematic analyses of the Congo Scandal and the history of its emergence. Additionally, reformers produced shorter, more pointed pamphlets, sold through bookstores or for little money in public meetings and distributed via mail order. Similarly, leading activists wrote numerous

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138   Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance," in *Sociological Theories*, ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), 336 ('historically', 'racisms'); MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, 2 ('embedded'); John Solomos and Les Back, "Conceptualising Racisms," *Sociology* 28, no. 1 (1994): 150 ('situated'); also see Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 90; Robert Miles and Malcolm Brown, *Racism*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 62–63.

139   Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 17 ('ahistorically'); John Solomos and Les Back, *Racism and Society* (London: Macmillan Education, 1996), 97 ('reflexivity').

140   Norbert Elias, "The Retreat of Sociologists into the Present," *Theory, Culture & Society* 4, 2–3 (1987): 223; Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), ix ('to be gained'); Hund, *Rassismus*, 35 ('well-founded', 'differentiated' [translation F.L.]); Solomos and Back, "Conceptualising Racisms", 156 ('rigorously').

141   Hall, "Race, Articulation and Societies", 338 ('concrete').

articles in newspapers, magazines and special publications such as the *Congo News Letter*. These short pieces summarised or highlighted specific aspects of the Congo Scandal and propagated concrete political demands for its redemption.

Congo reformers also petitioned decision-makers in parliaments and governmental offices; the debate thus became part of official political discourse. Through sympathetic senators, American Congo opponents were able to introduce several memorials to the United States Congress that were discussed in the plenary and the Foreign Relations Committee. Several influential British reformers were members of parliament and initiated smaller and larger debates in the House of Common and the House of Lords. Repeatedly, resolutions drafted by Congo opponents demanded the American or British government to take a stance on the Congo controversy, which led to consular investigations, diplomatic correspondence and official reports, which reformers once more turned into pamphlets.

In the same vein, Congo reformers held speeches on related conferences, gathered for public meetings and lectured on hundreds of smaller and larger Congo demonstrations in towns halls, churches and assembly rooms throughout the United States and Great Britain. Moreover, Congo criticism was not only formulated in written and oral language but also visualised through cartoons, drawings and photographs. Particularly influential were the so-called atrocity photographs that were widely printed and also screened through limelight projectors in public protests.

These critical monographs, pamphlets, articles, memoranda and speeches represent various formats, genres and styles. Some of them were a rather clinical presentation of facts that were designed to convince an expert audience; others, however, were highly polemical works dedicated to arousing the sentiment of the public. Either way, these accounts were never objective but were instead highly interested.[142] Together, this cluster of written, oral or visual statements – which I subsume under the discourse-analytical notion of 'texts' – situated within the Congo reform movement as a specific field of social action and related to the Congo controversy as a binding macro topic, forms the American and British Congo reform discourse investigated throughout my study.

In addition, travel literature, mission reports and lectures by Henry M. Stanley and other pioneering Congo colonists; speeches and statements by the Belgian King Léopold and his advocates in Europe and the United States; official communication and laws by the Congo Free State and its predecessor organisations; the protocols and concluding acts of the Berlin Congo conference 1888 and the Brussels Anti-Slavery Conference 1890; and various bilateral agreements have been consolidated.

Of course, a debate in the public sphere embracing three continents and a period of 24 years always eludes clear-cut boundaries, and its containment as a specific discourse remains an analytical construct. Moreover, my study is restricted by the limitations in resources and my potential mistakes as an individual researcher, as well as the state of the source material. The sheer quantity precludes an all-embracing analysis of public meetings, valuable articles might still have been overlooked, and not every pamphlet has survived in libraries and archives. Nonetheless, I was able to compose a text corpus

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142   Both sides used sharp tone and style, worked with exaggeration and omission and sometimes bended the truth to serve their argument and cause.

that, to the best of my knowledge, satisfactorily represents the British and American Congo reform discourse from 1890 to 1913, without raising a claim of completeness or totality.

Although this study primarily handles (written, oral or visual) 'texts', its analytical interest is not limited to linguistic phenomena or a text-immanent critique. Instead, it is focused on the intertextual relations between the various subjects analysed as much as the interdiscursive influences and interferences. At the same time, non-linguistic social or sociological variables, situational frames, and the broader historical and socio-political context in which the analysed discursive practices are embedded form an intrinsic part of my entangled interpretation of different layers of (racist) meaning. In this context, my study is methodologically influenced by a discourse-historical approach that has been formulated within the broader field of critical discourse analysis, with its interdisciplinary orientation and commitment to the "principle of triangulation".[143]

Therefore, this study remains problem-focused and is not restricted to a fixed set of analytical categories or methodological tools; rather, it adapts its theoretical and methodical orientation primarily to enable an investigation of its specific research problem. Hence, while the text corpus established here is processed discourse-analytically, my study is equally bound to the long traditions of hermeneutic interpretation as a method in social science; hence "sociology as an 'understanding' activity" in search of 'hidden meaning', as Zygmunt Bauman has called it. At the same time, it is dedicated to the tradition of a critique of ideology, hence the "deconstruction-reconstruction process of dialectical analysis", which attempts to unmask allegedly natural truths as the myths that they are.[144]

Structure

In any case, this process of analysis, interpretation and critique implies a constant back and forth: between specific phenomena and their wider intertextual, historical and social contexts, and between theory and data. Thus, from the "particular to the universal and back", as the notion of the 'hermeneutic circle' suggests. In the course of this circular progress, a systematic order evolved that is both theoretically induced and grounded in the historical discourse itself.[145]

Since the study is primarily organised on a synchronic, analytical basis, a certain overlap of subjects is unavoidable. At times, specific topoi, arguments or controversies are examined from a further perspective or re-evaluated to reveal an additional layer of meaning. *Colonisation and 'reform' of the Congo* enables the reader to orientate herself historically throughout the study. In its course, the relevant individual and collective actors, central (discursive) events and contributions to the reform debate are introduced and contextualised to provide a general socio-historic conspectus.

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143   Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2009), 89.

144   Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science* (London: Routledge Revivals, 2010 [1978]), 160 ('understanding'); Lee Harvey, "Methodological Problems of Ideology Critique," Birmingham Polytechnic, 1983. *Research Unit Discussion Paper* 11, n.p. ('deconstruction').

145   Bauman, *Hermeneutics and Social Science*, 16.

The central analytical part of my study is divided into three chapters. *Chapter 3* focuses on the realm of *representation*, that is, the formation of racist classifications, stereotypes and ideas and the 'social construction of natural disparity'. Next, *chapter 4* concentrates on the level of *politics*, meaning the formulation of racist programmes and legitimation discourses, their materialisation in imperial formations and transformation into institutionalised state practice and power. Finally, *chapter 5* emphasises the aspect of *societalisation*, racist group formation processes through the creation of negative social cohesion and the allocation of racist symbolic capital and economic benefits.

Each of these main chapters is once more divided into three sections. Although these subdivisions generally follow a chronological order, they primarily reflect an analytical structuration of the Congo reform discourse.[146] Hence, the first subchapters investigate the grandiose *promises* that the Belgian King Léopold and his first officer Stanley made in the formational years of the Congo colony, and they discuss the resulting tremendous expectations that the international imperial community invested in the colonisation of the Congo. Only with this background is it possible to grasp the vehement reaction of the Congo reformers, almost all of whom had admired Stanley's quests and supported Léopold's colonial movement in its early years, when they realised the fundamental and overreaching *betrayal* of these promises and expectations. The multiple aspects of this crisis, entangled by the reformers in the motif of the Congo Scandal, are discussed in the second subchapters. Finally, the last sections focus on the various forms of *redemption* propagated and enacted by the Congo reformers. These included political changes, performative acts and discursive manoeuvres.

These main- and subdivisions are interlinked and create a sort of analytical matrix that, hopefully, allows a comprehensive understanding of racism in the context of the Congo reform movement and leads to a full disclosure of the fundamental '*Crisis of Whiteness*' emerging in the '*Heart of Darkness*'. With the so designed project, I intend to contribute to a more accurate historiographic perception of the Congo reform movement and to provide insights into the historical formation of racism at a crucial discursive crossroads. My choice to examine the commonalities and peculiarities of the British and America reform movement together, not merely comparatively but explicitly concerning cross-national influences, ties in with the pioneering role that social or cultural histories of various protest or reform movements have played in the implementation of transnational research agendas.[147] Moreover, the subject of a metropolitan-based colonial reform movement is well suited to investigate "metropolitan and colonial formations within the same analytical frame", as postcolonial scholarship has demanded.[148] Lastly, the unmasking of the colonial and racist foundations of this pioneering human rights movement might help to finally "set aside epic-like narratives" about humanitar-

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146 In this, I resort to the work of Kevin Grant, who has identified the sequences of "promise, betrayal and redemption" as a reoccurring dramaturgy in religious Congo demonstrations; see Kevin Grant, "Christian Critics of Empire," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 2 (2001): 37.

147 See for instance the works reviewed in Akira Iriye, "Transnational History," *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (2004).

148 See Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 10.

ian champions and colonising villains in the Congo and colonial history in general.[149] Indeed, it is time to end the constant (re-)creation of 'enlightened' heroes that embody an alleged moral pre-eminence of Europe – even in the face of its worst colonial crimes.

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149 As has been called for by Nancy R. Hunt, *A Nervous State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 12.

2. Colonisation and 'reform' of the Congo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The kingdom Kongo and Portugal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Capitalist globalisation and Central African 'exploration'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 See chapter 1.

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

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

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

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

Léopold's grab for the Congo Basin

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

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

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

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

22   See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 35.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stanley and the foundation of colonialism in the Congo

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

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

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30   See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 42–46.
31   Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 26.
32   See Stanley, *Darkest Africa*; Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 365 (lecture tour); also see ibid., 372–377.
33   Letter of Stanley to the Daily Telegraph, 12 December 1877, quoted in Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 54 ('highway').

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The diplomatic theatre and the formation of the Congo Free State

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The establishment of the colonial order in Brussels and the Congo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

War of occupation and primary resistance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

State monopoly capitalism and repression of Europeans

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The 'economics of coercion' and the Congo atrocities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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112 See Harp, *History of Rubber*, 10–16. For the export figures, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 122.
113 The conditions of work were nonetheless catastrophic, and contracts were frequently prolonged or otherwise broken. See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 119–25.
114 See Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 73.
115 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians', Léopold II, 16 June 1897," reproduced in the appendix of Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*, 285–88, here 285 ('primitive'), 286 (rest).
116 Robert Harms, "The World Abir Made," *African Economic History*, no. 12 (1983): 133–7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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117   See ibid., 132; Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 161.
118   Harms, "The World", 136 ('spiral'); see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 121–30.
119   See Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 163–64.
120   See Harms, "The World", 131–33.
121   See Roes, "Mass Violence", 640.

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

Rebellions, resistance and the escalation of violence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Early exposure: the emergence of Congo criticism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

148   Lagergren, *Mission and State*, 182.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

152 See Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 124.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Organising Congo activism: the public relations struggle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Forming a mass movement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

232 See Grant, "Christian Critics", 30.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Triumph and beginning dissolution

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

257   See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 66.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

265   See ibid., 414.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

272   See Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*.

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

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

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

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

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

Black Congo critics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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281   See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128. Recently, Robert Burroughs has focused on the long-overlooked testimonies of Africans about the Congo atrocities; see Burroughs, *African Testimony*.
282   Speech of Doyle, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22 ('set of people', 'beautiful').
283   See Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004); Mce-bisi Ndletyana, *African Intellectuals in 19th and Early 20th Century South Africa* (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press, 2008).
284   For monetary contributions of West Africans, see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128.
285   See Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 29–30.
286   See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 128.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

302   See chapter 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.

303   See chapter 5.1.

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

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

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

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

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

305   See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 18.

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

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

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

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

310   See chapter 2.2 for more details on the trial.

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

Female Congo critics

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

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

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

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

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

313   See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 113.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

318   See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 118.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Working-class Congo critics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Congo reform and the crisis of racist representation

> "In no part of the world can be found such painful differences between promise and performance, grandiloquent phrasing and sordid and imperfect achievement".[1]
> Edgar Canisius

Racism has been defined as the "social construction of natural disparity". In this sense, to denaturalise and historicise the set of stereotypes and pseudo-scientific classifications that racism uses to hierarchise humanity and create the 'otherness' and 'inferiority' that these categories claim to represent always has to be a key agenda of racism analysis and critique.[2] The imperial literature of the Welsh-American journalist and empire-builder Henry M. Stanley is a particularly rewarding object for researching the cultural production of racist 'knowledge' that eventually consolidated into a racist regime of representation that remains discursively potent today. As *chapter 3.1* reveals, Stanley's tremendously influential writing and lecturing about his four Central African expeditions between 1871 and 1890 composed and popularised the modern myth of 'the Congo' and 'the Congolese' as the most radical expression of African alterity. At the same time, the Congo narrative produced a similarly artificial yet potent pseudo-identity for an imagined community of 'civilised' and 'white' Europe through differentiation from "Darkest Africa" and the story of its confrontation and submission through the heroic, imperial explorer.

However, when the deplorable condition of the Congo Free State became notorious, more and more observers painfully realised the inconsistency between imperial promises and actual performance in Central Africa, as the above-reproduced words of the German-American Edgar Canisius, the former agent of the Free State and the Société Anversoise who turned into a fierce critic of Léopold's colony, suggest. As *chapter 3.2* claims, the international Congo reform movement perceived a broad sense of betrayal through the Congo Scandal. The allegation of a 'corrosion of alterity' through the brutalisation of the civilised colonial state, the realisation of civilisation's weakness

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1 Edgar Canisius, *A Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, incorporated in Guy Burrows, *The Curse of Central Africa*, 63–178 (London: R. A. Everett & Co.), here 63.

2 See Hund, *Rassismus*, subtitle ('disparity' [translation F.L]); see Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 51 (research agenda).

through the menace of a 'triumph of the wilderness', and the emergence of a 'civilised savagery' as a signifier of a profound aberration of Western modernity were interpreted as appalling signs of a crisis of racist representation and 'white' and 'civilised' culture.

Next, *chapter 3.3* shows that not the proposed remedy was not the actual 'liberation' of the oppressed population in Central Africa, which the reform movement never achieved nor aspired to, but the establishment of a humanitarian liberation narrative in which 'civilised white saviours' rescued 'helpless victims' from their 'savage perpetrators'. This racist dramatic triangle of the humanitarian imagination re-established the discursive boundaries between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' and restored the power of European 'light' over African 'darkness'. Finally, the self-declared victory of the saviours in the redemption of the Congolese symbolised the ultimate prevalence of idealism regarding the worrying tendencies of an overly materialistic modernity. Thus, the Congo reform movement successfully vanquished the crisis of racist representation beneath the Congo Scandal and achieved its deeper aim: the redemption of the redeemers.

3.1   'Darkest Africa', Brightest Europe: Stanley's imagined Congo and the promise of its submission

In contrast to the first generation of Central African explorers, who were medics, traders or military men, Stanley was a man of words. As a trained journalist who was treasured for his vivid reports from the 'Indian Wars', Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War, the most iconic representative of 19th-century 'heroic' African 'explorers' did not produce elaborated scientific tracts. Instead, he combined imageries of tropical landscape and exotic peoples with spectacular accounts of battles and adventures into dramatic and bestselling literature oscillating in form between travel report, adventure novel and Gothic fiction.[3]

Thus established, the Congo narrative contained two opposing poles. On the one side were the colonised 'space' and 'people'. Stanley indelibly inscribed into the European collective consciousness the idea that 'Darkest Africa' was a 'prehistoric' place of rich but remorseless 'nature' fraught with a horrifying spirit of 'evil' and inhabited by exceptionally 'savage' Africans and 'fanatic' Arabs. This discursively ascribed identity for the new territorial construction and the people attached to it defined the European image of 'the Congo' and the 'Congolese' for generations to come. Always at the centre of attention was, however, the character of the 'explorer' and 'empire-builder'. Stanley's 'heroic' confrontation with 'Darkest Africa' evoked a similarly powerful myth of 'Brightest Europe'. The sensational accounts of 'civilising' and 'conquering' the alienated Congolese other through a single heroic 'white man' contained the discursive promise of Europe's

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3   See Stanley, *Livingstone* [which described the search for the 'lost' Scottish missionary form 1871 to 1872]; Stanley, *Dark Continent* [which recounts the quest for the sources of the Nile and the descent of the Congo River between 1874 and 1877]; Stanley, *The Congo* [which reports on the establishment of the colonial stations, towns and roads that laid the material foundation for the Congo Free State between 1879 and 1884]; Stanley, *Darkest Africa* [which retells the fate of the relief operation for the besieged Soudanese governor Emin Pasha between 1886 and 1890]. For Stanley's reception in the media, see chapter 5.1.

cultural and 'racial' superiority and its entitlement to global imperial supremacy, and to the tremendous resources of Central Africa in particular.

The people of 'Darkest Africa'

The formation of stereotypes, prejudices and rumours about a specific group of people is a fundamental aspect of racist discourse. Stanley's imperial gaze on the Congolese resorts to traditional stereotypes from the long history of European racism that had been only recently concatenated in the myth of the 'Dark Continent'. His claim of encountering 'savages', 'monsters' and 'devils' on his 'discovery' expeditions relegated the inhabitants of the Congo Basin to the lowest scale and degree of humanity. Slightly above this image of radically subhuman beings, Stanley's racist depiction ordered the semi-cultured and orientalised 'Arabs'.

Both the 'African Congolese' and the 'Arab Congolese' were subsumed under the notion of "the coloured races of Inner Africa". The 'race stereotype' combines natural and cultural arguments and insinuates that nature had both capacitated humans differently and marked them accordingly. As a radical naturalist determinism based on the claim of the inherent and unchangeable inferiority of certain human groups, the race stereotype primordially separated these from allegedly superior types of the human species or even excluded them from humanity as such. In his last book, Stanley fully established an elaborate racial taxonomy of the people of Central Africa. The veteran traveller identified "five distinct types", hierarchically ordered from the lowest Pigmy, to Negro, Semi-Ethiopic, Ethiopic and Arabs, as well as another great "number modified by amalgamation of one with another".[4]

Stanley then explains the cultural history of Africa as a natural process of 'racial' expansionism and conflict. The first two groups were defined as the true "indigenous races" of Africa who had been, for 50 centuries, under the pressure of "waves of migration" by "barbarous multitudes", yet from "superior races". These superior "Semitic tribes" of a "Caucasian type" had "emigrated from Asia across the Red Sea and settled on the coast, and in the uplands of Abyssinia, once known as Ethiopia". On their way further to the South and East, these 'Ethiopians' allegedly formed superior 'tribes' and nations along their course from the Gulf of Aden to the Cape of Good Hope, to the "vast improvement" of the cultural standard of the "old primitive races of Africa". The remaining indigenous 'races' were forced to retreat into the jungles of Central Africa or were either "thoroughly extinguished" or "conquered".[5]

In the latter case, they were either integrated as an inferior caste or absorbed and assimilated, as in most of South and Central Africa. Afterwards, the physical distinctiveness of racial groups allegedly soon collapsed under the social reality of "miscegenation". The 'Semitic' became "tainted with negro blood", Stanley remarked, and "produced a mixture of races". As a result, in the Southern, Eastern and Northern fringes of the Congo, Stanley occasionally identified "Caucasian heads and faces" and even "graceful-

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4   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 398 [footnote]; see chapter 1.
5   Ibid., 385 ('emigrated', 'conquered'), 387 ('superior races', 'Caucasian'), 388 ('barbarous'), 389 ('indigenous', 'vast', 'primitive', 'extinguished'), 398 [footnote] ('waves').

looking herdsman with European features". This process of displacement and misce-
genation had allegedly much more recently been repeated by two 'waves' of migration
by Omani 'Arabs' to Zanzibar, who had pushed further into the interior of the African
continent starting in the 19th century to establish slave and ivory trading networks,
plantation systems, towns and conquest states.[6]

However, in the 'jungles' of the inner Congo, the last retreat of the 'primitive' African
'races', "pure negroes", or at least tribes "so nearly allied to the true negro type as to bear
classification as negroid", allegedly prevailed. It is there where "the negroid features"
defined as "the flat nose, the sunken ridge, and the projecting of the lower part of the
face" were allegedly still most perceivable.[7] On a strip of twelve-degree longitude "from
Equatorville on the Congo to Indesura on the Upper Ituri", and thus roughly embrac-
ing the entire Congo Basin, the people "do not show a difference of race" and are "all
purely negroid in character". Here, it is claimed, "we have hundreds of tribes bear-
ing a most close resemblance to one another", both in 'cultural' as in 'racial' status. A
traveller would not only marvel at "the similarity of dress and equipments, but also of
complexion". Small variations might occur, but "in the main, I see no difference what-
ever", Stanley asserted.[8] These were the true 'Congolese', he argued, visually the most
"degraded in feature and form" and inherently created as inferior human beings. "[W]e
must remember", Stanley argued, "that all the tribes of the forest are naturally the most
vicious and degraded of the human race on the face of the earth".[9]

Hence, Stanley ethnographically divided the Congo into a 'negroid', hence radically
inferior, interior and a borderland of 'mixed races' improved through 'Semitic' and 'Cau-
casian' influences. Thus, his late work exposed the overwhelming influence of the in-
creasingly popular racial thinking that had been imagined in the context of early Euro-
pean colonialism and the experience of transatlantic slavery, turned into a scientifically
accepted form by the philosophers of enlightenment, and evolved to a paradigm in sci-
ence and humanity towards the close of the 19th century.[10]

Initially, however, Stanley's work showed a certain restraint with such biological
determinism. In his early travelogues, he rejected recent speculations that the 'coloured
races' of Africa were "simply the 'link' between the simian and the European" or that "the
negro knows neither love nor affection" as the "absurd prejudices" and "selfdeception
of the civilized", for instance.[11] It was a "necessity", he emphasised, that the "white
stranger" admitted "that negroes are men, like himself, though of a different colour"
and that their "tastes and feelings" are "in common with all human nature".[12] Neither
"his colour, nor any physiognomy should debar him with me from any rights he could
fairly claim as a man", Stanley postulated.[13]

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6   Ibid., 385 ('miscegenation', 'tainted', 'produced'), 386 ('Caucasian'), 387 ('graceful-looking').
7   Ibid., 385 ('pure', 'allied'), 387 ('features', 'nose')
8   Ibid., 97 (›in the main‹), 98 (›Equatorville‹, ›do not show‹, ›purely‹, ›hundreds‹).
9   Ibid., 88 ('remember'), 387 ('feature and form').
10   See Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 59.
11   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 46 ('link', love'), 47 ('absurd').
12   Stanley, *Livingstone*, 9.
13   Ibid., 10.

Nonetheless, these were not anti-racist statements, but rather expressions of internal controversies within European racist discourses concerning different evaluations of the significance of cultural and biological influences in the hierarchical ordering of humanity. Stanley assured his readers that he was not "taking a too bright view of things" and was far from questioning the inferior status of the inhabitants of Central Africa. Still, he requested that such judgment should be "free from prejudices of caste, colour, or nationality".[14] Instead, Stanley's 'cultural' or 'historicist' racism established an identity for 'the Congolese' and the 'Arabs' that focused on the cultural incompleteness and historical immaturity of the alienated other. To define the image of 'the Congolese', the pioneer of European imperialism fundamentally relied on the 'savage' stereotype, one of the oldest patterns of racism, and in Stanley's case, it was used almost synonymously with notions of the 'barbarian' and the 'primitive'. "Civilisation, so often baffled, stands railing at the barbarism and savagery that presents such an impenetrable front to its efforts", Stanley once marvelled. "[A]t this late hour there still emerges into light the great heart of Africa with its countless millions without the lightest veneer of artificialism over man's natural state", he continued – the "African savages".[15]

Chapter 1 has introduced the multifaceted and ambivalent character of the savage stereotype. For one, this pattern of racist classification asserts an asynchronous historical time and cultural advancement. The 'late hour' of 'civilised' time that Stanley mentioned apparently had no validity in the 'heart of Africa'. For the millions of African 'savages', clocks run at a different pace, if they tick at all. These, it is claimed, had failed to move forward and upward on the unilinear timeline of history as quickly as the 'progressive' Europeans. In its temporal and historical dimension, the 'savage' stereotype is based on the idea that societies and cultures 'progress' over time through stadia of human development to 'civilised' perfection; just like individuals, who mature from child to adult. Even though they were not necessarily biological inferior, the full human disposition of Stanley's Congolese 'savages' had (still) not developed. The 'backward' people in the interior of the Congo had allegedly "just emerged the Iron Epoch" and had been "left behind by the improvements of over 4000 years". Stanley urged his readers to recall "the origin of his own race", the "Briton before St. Augustine", the "wild Caledonian", and compare the "circumstances and surroundings of Primitive Man" in Europe's past to the contemporary status of the Africans. The Africans of the 19th century, it was implied, were the European's 'contemporary ancestors'.[16]

Moreover, the further Stanley approached the Congolese forests, the further were his readers taken on a racist journey back in time. "[I]n the centre of Africa" the 'savage' stereotype finally became all-embracing. There were "savages before you, savages behind you, savages on either side of you", it is proclaimed.[17] Here, deep in the Congolese 'jungles', lived the "oldest types of primeval man, descended from the outcasts of the

14   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 48 ('free'), 49 ('too bright').
15   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 373. On the analytical distinction between accentuation of 'historicism' (with circles mainly around "claims of historical immaturity") and 'naturalism' (which focuses on "inherent racial inferiority") in racist discourses and state practices, see David T. Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 74–79, here particularly 74 ('claims', 'inherent').
16   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 48; see chapter 1.
17   Ibid., Vol. 2, 258.

earliest ages, the Ishmaels of the primitive race", Stanley stated, the so-called Congolese 'pigmies' or 'dwarfs'.[18]

This historical immaturity and incomplete humanity of the Congolese expressed itself in overlapping and at times contradictory aggregations of savagery. The 'natural savage' was believed to dwell in a 'state of nature', a philosophical model which had been conceptualised as "kind of a human degree zero" prior to the development of intellectual, moral or social consciousness. What has been established as a hypothetical state for Europeans, however, was considered a real condition for non-European, in this case, Congolese, 'savages'. The absence of any civilising 'veneer' over the human 'natural state' that Stanley assessed was expressed on the one hand in the constantly accentuated "shameless exposure" of nakedness, and on the other hand in a limited human interference with the surrounding nature. "Populous though the river banks are", Stanley once claimed, "they are but slightly disturbed by labour". This allegation of a lack of effort and ability to achieve emancipation and alienation from nature, and hence historical progress, characterises the second central dimension of the traditional 'savage' stereotype.[19]

In sharp contrast to older American and Pacific notions of savagery, however, the naked bodies of the Congolese were generally pictured without erotic desire. Occasionally, Stanley praised the appearance of an outstanding woman,[20] but mostly he asserted the lack of beauty (according to European standards) among the womankind of Central Africa. The bodies of the savages in the Congo were mostly "unlovable to look at", and some were even "intolerably ugly", Stanley announced. In 'Darkest Africa', the European writer located "the most degraded, unpresentable type it is possible to conceive".[21] Ostensibly, the 'savage' stereotype had lost much of its older ambivalence on the way across the Atlantic. Congolese 'savagery' was hardly suitable for romantic projections of an unalienated and happy 'Golden Age'. There was "no one feature about them that even extravagant charity could indicate as elevating them into the category of noble savages".[22]

Moreover, the Congolese "barbarian" was "almost stupefied with brutish ignorance" and possessed "beyond doubt all the vices of a people still fixed deeply in barbarism". The traditional vices that racist discourse applied to savages included polygamy, human sacrifice and especially anthropophagy. Although Stanley admitted that he saw only "circumstantial evidence", he accepted it as "indubitable proofs" of the persistence of cannibalism. While not every Congolese community might be anthropophagic, the

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18   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 40.

19   Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 33 ('zero'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 100 ('shameless'), 373 ('slightest'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 155–56 ('Populous'). Also see Hund, *Rassismus*, 62–67.

20   See for instance the account of Queen Gankabi in Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 425. However, Stanley was quick to declare her an exception: "Probably I have seen 200,000 African women during my many years of travel in the Dark Continent, and I cannot remember to have seen more than half-a-dozen such women".

21   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 212, 74 ('unlovable', 'ugly'); also see ibid., Vol. 1, 308 and Stanley, *Livingstone*, 205.

22   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 308 ('noble'). On the ambivalences of the savage stereotype, see chapter 1.

Congo was still essentially presented as a murderous "cannibal world" to the European and American audience. "For the most part", Stanley claimed, the Congo Basin was "peopled by ferocious savages, devoted to abominable cannibalism and wanton murder of inoffensive people".[23]

This 'ferocious and cannibalistic savage' became the central character of the Congo narrative. On Stanley's epic journey down the descending Congo stream starting in November 1876, caricatures of blood-thirsty warriors, "hideously be-painted for war" and "launching spears and shooting arrows" allegedly "lined the banks, beat their drums, shouted their war-cries, and performed for our edification the gymnastics of a true aboriginal fight". In its 'simplicity' and 'backwardness', this was described as a fascinating exotic spectacle for the traveller, but also a deadly menace. In the middle of the continent, his travelogues essentially consisted only of reoccurring descriptions of "persistent attacks night and day" by the "furies of savageland".[24]

From the 'ferocious and cannibalistic warrior', it was only a small discursive step to the image of the 'wild and bestial savage', which finally called into question the humanness of the 'Congolese', notwithstanding that the younger Stanley had once explicitly rejected any 'missing link' speculations. Nowhere was this as explicit as in Stanley's crushing judgement of the so-called 'pigmies' or 'dwarfs'. All "aborigines" of the Congolese forests "are wild, utterly savage, and incorrigibly vindictive", Stanley argued; however, the "dwarfs [...] are worse still, far worse". The 'pigmies' had "eternally" lived "the life of human beasts in morass and fen and jungle wild", a life barely countable as human. Stanley also inscribed this social existence, little above the level of animal life of persons insulted as "human parasites", into their physiognomy through descriptions of a "fell over the body [that] was almost furry".[25] However, other 'savage' inhabitants of the Congo Basin beyond 'pigmies' were also described as "living the life of a beast" or labelled as "human beasts of prey in the midst of Primitive Africa". At times, when encountering some of the "most degraded" 'beings', even Stanley's commitment to monogenism risked breaking: "[A]nd though I knew quite well that some thousands of years ago the beginning of this wretched humanity and myself were one and the same, a sneaking disinclination to believe it possessed me strongly", he told his readers.[26]

This process of radical dehumanisation was also implied in recourses to categories of 'monsters' and 'devils', even older patterns of racist classification, that supplement the multi-layered 'savage' stereotype. Since antiquity, the borders of the known world had been populated in the European imagination by 'monstrous' and 'wild' creatures that existed on the fringes between human and animal life.[27] Stanley's conviction that

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23   Ibid., Vol. 1, 48 ('vices'), 80 ('stupefied'); ibid., Vol. 2, 274 ('circumstantial'), 282 ('cannibal world'); Stanley to Albert Jung, 7 January 1879, quoted in Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 29–32, here 29 ('ferocious').

24   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 159 ('launching'), 261 ('hideously'), 277 ('lined', 'persistent', 'furies').

25   Stanley to A.L. Bruce, 4 April 1888, reproduced in 'Letter from Mr Stanley, *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1889, 5 ('incorrigibly'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 40 ('fell'), 41 ('eternally', 'morass'), 103 ('parasites').

26   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 80 ('living'), ibid., Vol. 2, 72–73 ('degraded'), 73 (wretched humanity'), 466 ('human beasts').

27   See Wulf D. Hund, "Rassismus," in *Enzyklopädie Philosophie*, ed. Hans J. Sandkühler, vol. 3, 2nd ext. ed. (Hamburg: Meiner, 2010), 2192.

"something strange must surely lie" in the land of "mystery and fable", maybe "the anthropoids, the pigmies, and the blanket-eared men", noticeably recalled the mythical creatures established by antique authors like Herodotus or Pliny, the Elder and as expressions of medieval legends of Europe's own 'wild men' and 'dwarfs'. Stanley did not doubt that the contemporary 'Pigmies' in the Congo were representatives and direct descendants of the fabled creatures Greek and Carthaginian 'explorers' had described 26 or even 40 centuries before his encounter.[28]

Moreover, Stanley added motifs of the Gothic, a favourite genre of the Victorian neo-romantic literature, and patterns of a 'demonological racism', widespread in European thinking since medieval times, to his imagination of the Congolese. By deploying Christian dichotomies, this religious racism divided the world into 'good and evil', 'light and darkness', 'life and death'.[29] In its most drastic form, the demonological racism Stanley deployed declared the Congolese to be "screaming black demons" and armed "devils". Like the 'vampire', one of the most popular villains in gothic fiction, the threatening Congolese 'cannibals' feed on the living. In addition, descriptions of human skulls, bones or "necklaces of human teeth" "provoked morbid ideas" and pushed the Congolese towards the realm of the dead.[30]

However, between the totality of good and evil, demonological racism leaves room for 'sinners', 'pagans' and 'heathens'. Thus labelled were those Congolese who were covered in "deep stains of bloodred sin", but whose "moral darkness" was believed could eventually be overcome by the Christian missionary.[31] Likewise, 'historicist' racism conceded to the 'savages' the capacity of progress under the tutelage of the civilised master. Stanley explicitly rejected the idea "that the African savages are irreclaimable" on various occasions: "However incorrigibly fierce in temper, detestable in their disposition, and bestial in habits these wild tribes may be to-day, there is not one of them which does not contain germs, and by whose means at some future date civilisation may spread", he argued, given that, "once brought in contact with the European", the 'natural', 'ferocious', and 'bestial savage' allegedly "becomes docile enough", accepted his inferior status and was willing to learn. "[H]e is awed by a consciousness of his own immense inferiority, and imbued with a vague hope that he may also rise in time to the level of this superior being", Stanley assured his readers in Europe and the United States. In the short term, under fierce discipline and "judicious management" of a European, this 'docile savage' can "be made good, obedient servants". After being colonised, under training and as

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28   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 126–127 ('strange', 'mystery', 'anthropoids'); see Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 41 (Carthaginian).

29   Traditionally, demonological racism had targeted especially Jews and Muslims but was in the course of the colonial expansion also implied with respect to Native Americans or Africans, especially by Christian missionaries. See Hund, *Rassismus*, 53–54.

30   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 229 ('demons', 'devils'); ibid., Vol. 2, 288 ('necklaces'. 'morbid'). For the analogy between the gothic vampire and the savage cannibal, see chapter 3 in Howard L. Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 124–66.

31   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 332 ('deep'), Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 497 ('moral'). Also see Hund, *Rassismus*, 58.

"subjects of some enlightened power" they will be "as powerful for the good of the Dark Continent, as they threaten, under the present condition of things, to be for its evil".[32]

This alleged docility was closely related to the image of the 'childish savage'. Even a powerful Central African king displayed the "joyous moods [...] of youth" or a "child's unstudied ease of manner", Stanley noted after his encounter with the Emperor of Uganda. The "barbarous man [...] is like a child which has not yet acquired the faculty of articulation", it is claimed. He is "very superstitious, easily inclined to despair, and easily giving ear to vague, unreasonable fears", but also ready to accept the 'white man' as his fatherly master.[33]

Alongside and above the African 'savages', 'monsters', 'sinners and 'devils', a second group populated Stanley's Congo literature, the so-called 'Zanzibari Arabs'. As mentioned above, the category of the 'Arab Congolese' for Stanley described no clearly distinguishable 'ethnic' or 'racial' group in Eastern Africa. Instead, it was imposed of a variety of East African elites of the Muslim faith that controlled most of the Eastern region of the territory claimed by Léopold for the Congo Free State in 1885. Through widespread "miscegenation" with the local African population, the descendants of Zanzibari immigrants could "scarcely be distinguished from the aborigines" in Eastern Africa, Stanley had claimed in 1878.[34] What has prevailed, though, were essential 'Arab' customs and the Muslim religion. Culturally, the "Arab never changes", it is claimed. He is, Stanley wrote, "as much of an Arab" in Eastern Africa "as at Muscat or Bagdad"; "wherever he goes to live", he carries with him "his religion, his long robe, his shirt, his watta, and his dagger".[35]

This 'Oriental' culture elevated the 'Arabs' in Eastern Africa to an intermediate stage of cultural evolution between the 'savage Africans' and 'civilised Europeans'. Hence, mainly cultural factors such as naming, clothing, the Muslim faith, but also economic wealth, social status and technological developments such as superior weaponry, plantation systems and literacy distinguished the 'Arab Congolese' from the allegedly 'uncultured' 'African Congolese'. Since every East African of Muslim faith could, by this logic be classified as 'Arab', the stereotype was in thus a cultural ascription that discursively separated the existing pre-colonial, Muslim civilisation in the Eastern Congo from its African environment and defined it as relics of foreign, non-African influence.

In more detailed elaborations of the so-called 'Arab culture', Stanley revealed the ambiguousness of European Orientalism, which could disguise its inferiorisation of the Eastern behind acknowledgements of the "'greatness of Oriental civilizations", and combined warnings about the "terror" and "devastation" of Islam with "the escapism of sexual fantasy".[36] Likewise, Stanley's image of the 'Arab' tended between romantic admiration for the rich Eastern culture and hysterical fear of fanatical Muslims styled in recourse to traditional racist stereotypes of the 'barbarian' and the 'devil'. In the first

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32   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 47 ('servants'), 52 ('judicious'), 53 ('subjects'), 80 ('docile', 'awed').
33   Ibid., 195 ('joyous', 'ease'), 80 ('barbarous', 'superstitious').
34   Ibid., 44 ('miscegenation', 'scarcely').
35   Stanley, *Livingstone*, 5; also see Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 26 and 43.
36   Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003 [1978]), 40 ('greatness'), 59 ('terror', 'devastation'), 190 ('escapism').

dimension, Stanley marvelled that the "sensualism of the Mohammedans is as prominent here [in East Africa] as in the Orient" and that the "conduct of an Arab gentleman is perfect". Moreover, he described at length icons of exotic wealth, such as "Persian carpets, and most luxurious bedding, complete tea and coffee services, and magnificently carved dishes". The "essential feature of every Arab's household" in Eastern Africa "as in Persia, Afghanistan, and Turkey" was, of course, the "harem".[37]

At the same time, this romantic admiration was embittered by negative assessments about the many "moral blemishes" that are equally defined as essential 'Arab' features. This ambiguity was already inscribed into the myth of the harem, the central stereotype of the Orientalist imagination, which was a fascinating place of unrestrained sexuality for Europeans but was entangled with notions of despotism, slavery and polygamy. Moreover, Stanley excoriates the same aforementioned 'Arab gentlemen' as unreliable due to tropes of their "true Oriental spirit of exaggeration" and "uncontrollable desire to make more profit". They can be "fanatics" (although on Zanzibar less than in Arabia) and are committed to blood revenge; one is reminded.[38]

The fluctuating emphasis between these two poles of the 'Arab' stereotype in Stanley's Congo narrative closely followed the changing material relation between Europeans and Muslims in Eastern Africa. In the early days of strategic-political cooperation between European explorers and Muslim caravan leaders, Stanley's travelogues strongly inclined towards generous descriptions.[39] "Naturally, they have the vices of their education, blood, and race", Stanley penned about the 'Arab'. However, these vices are seldom present. Generally, they are "sociable, rank, good-natured" and, of the utmost importance, "hospitable" towards European guests.[40]

Stanley particularly praised, in a most cordial tone, the famous ivory and slave trader known as Tippu Tip, who had assisted him, like Cameron and Livingstone before, on his approach towards the interior of the Congo Basin. He was "a remarkable man" and "almost courtier-like in his manner", one can read, with "a fine intelligent face" and the impressive appearance and charisma of "an Arab gentleman in very comfortable circumstances". That Tip's comfortable circumstances were based on exploiting slave plantations and human trafficking was only marginalia in Stanley's second travelogue.[41]

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37   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 46 ('conduct'); Stanley, *Livingstone*, 265 ('sensualism', 'Persian carpets', etc.).

38   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 46 ('blemishes', 'fanatics'), 55 ('exaggeration'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 17 ('uncontrollable'). On the motif of the harem, see Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), here particularly 96.

39   The early European 'exploration' of Central Africa since the mid-19th century would have been impossible without the assistance of Muslim traders, who were willing to sell their geographical knowledge and the comforts and security of their caravans to the European travellers.

40   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 45.

41   Ibid., Vol. 2, 95 ('remarkable', 'courtier-like', 'fine'), 96 ('circumstances'). In 1887, Stanley even made Tip a Free State governor at Stanley Falls in an attempt to consolidate European interests with the Muslim regents in Eastern Congo. Additionally, the wealthy merchant and regional potentate once more assisted and partially accompanied Stanley on the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition. See chapter 2.1.

Nevertheless, the political-economic relation between European colonisers and Muslims in Africa had already begun to deteriorate radically. Insurrections in German East Africa, rising conflicts in Eastern Congo, and of course, the Mahdi rising in Soudan had evolved into hotspots of resistance against the consolidation of European power on African soil. In Stanley's last major book on the Congo, tropes of Oriental fanaticism and the motif of a Muslim threat to Christian civilisation came to the fore, embodied by characters like "fervid and fanatical warriors" or the "ferocious fanatics who had already eradicated every vestige of civilization from the Soudan". No longer hospitable and rich gentlemen, but the "Mahdist hordes advancing with frantic cries and thrilling enthusiasm crying out, 'Yallah, Yallah'" now haunted Stanley's imagination of the 'Arabs'.[42]

Moreover, the subject of the 'Arab' slave trade had shifted more to the centre of Stanley's narrative. As early as 1885, he had more severely criticised the "vast sacrifice of human life, of all this unspeakable misery" of the slave trade in the Congo, caused by "[n]othing, but the indulgence of an old Arab's 'wolfish, bloody, starved, and ravenous instincts'". Although Stanley distanced himself from the "crusader style" preached by the French Cardinal Lavigerie, the impetus of anti-Muslim rhetoric in the upcoming abolitionist debates in Europe still altered Stanley's representation of the 'Arabs' in Central Africa.[43]

Even the wealthy 'Arab gentlemen' he had once praised in the highest tones were now rejected as blood-lusty slavers. "Every tusk, piece and scrap in the possession of an Arab trader has been steeped and dyed in blood", Stanley remarked, and "if due justice were dealt to them, [they] should be made to sweat out the remainder of their piratical lives in the severest penal servitude".[44] In this group, Stanley now explicitly included his old ally Tip, whom he blamed for the disastrous fate of the 'Emin Pasha relief expedition' and accused of deliberately breaking his contract due to a 'typical' Arab lust for profit. The fragile alliance soon collapsed, and thus the fragile understanding between the Free State and the Muslim rulers of the Eastern Congo. Hence, by 1890, two years before the war between the Free State and the Congolese 'Arabs' broke out, the image of the fanatical Muslim warrior and brutal slaver had almost completely replaced the earlier admiration for a rich Oriental culture in the portrayal of the 'Arab Congolese'.[45]

In summary, Stanley's imperial literature reduced millions of people to undifferentiated representatives of stereotypes about the 'black', 'savage', 'devilish' and 'monstrous' Africans and 'semi-cultured' yet 'fanatical' 'Arabs'. As such, far from establishing a social identity for inhabitants of the Congo, Stanley's representation discursively stipulated their "social death", a process that has been defined as a "hallmark" of racist oppression. Denied any social and cultural differentiation, as mere representatives of racist stereotypes and classifications, the colonised multitude of Central Africa was relegated to a homogenous social status beneath any member of any social class of the dominant group, in this case, the imperial societies.[46]

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42   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 112 ('fervid', 'hordes'); ibid., Vol. 2, 459 ('fanatics').
43   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 150 ('indulgence'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 240 ('crusading').
44   Ibid.
45   Ibid., Vol. 2, 17; also see chapter 2.1.
46   Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1, 32 ('social death', 'hallmark'); also see chapter 1.

The space of 'Darkest Africa'

While racism is a fundamentally social phenomenon, the act of imagining, measuring, mapping and classifying the colonial space was a similarly essential aspect of colonial discourse. However, the spatial identity that Stanley's literature allocated to the new territorial invention of 'the Congo' always described a social space. It further obscured the region as 'Darkest Africa' as much as it mirrored, underpinned and reinforced the alienation of its inhabitants.

In its spatial dimension, the Congolese darkness had a 'physical', a 'metaphysical' and an 'epistemological' aspect. As a historic epistemological condition, it was the absence of the 'light' of Christian civilisation that obscured the "Dark Unknown" in the interior of the African continent. Like the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, who had claimed in 1830, at the eve of the new explorations, that Africa had been completely untouched by the "Light of Spirit", Stanley defined the Congo as wrapped in "night-black clouds of mystery and fable" that had thus far insulated the region from the enlightened and enlightening European gaze.[47]

Thus, the epistemological darkness of the Congo found its complementary expression in its creation as a "space occupied by total blankness on our [European] maps". Stanley's claim that the Congo was a "region justly marked with whiteness on the best maps" emphasised his conviction that the lack of European information about "the Unknown" was equivalent to the absence of reason and meaning per se.[48]

Stanley knew of course, that the "leagues upon leagues of unexplored lands, populous with scores of tribes, of whom not a whisper has reached the people of other continents" that he imagined on his path when he first crossed Central Africa were only 'unknown' for Europeans like him. After all, he frankly stated that his African and 'Arab' guides told him the names of countries, villages and peoples in front of them. However, these "uncouth" and "barren" names, as he snidely remarked, "conveyed no definite impression" to his understanding. The European 'explorer' did not accept African knowledge as constituting meaning. "They conveyed no idea, and signified no object", Stanley judged, but only referred to "darkness, savagery, ignorance, and fable".[49]

In its most radical occurrences, this epistemological obscurity of the Congo was compared to that of "the time of the Creation", since the space Stanley reached allegedly matched "perfectly the description that 'in the beginning the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep'". Prior to its imperial 'discovery', this biblical reference suggested, God had never redeemed the Congo from its eternal darkness; time and history had never actually begun.[50]

Presenting Africa as "out of place in the historical time of modernity" was an important pattern in the colonial imagination. Untouched by the 'light' of European 'spirit',

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47   Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 99 ('Light'); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 126 ('Dark'), 148 ('clouds').
48   Ibid., 148 ('blankness'), 197 ('Unknown');Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 111 ('whiteness'). At the same time, the blankness on European maps enabled "the subsequent processes of dispossession and annihilation", as has been emphasised. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson, introduction to *De-Scribing Empire (London: Taylor & Francis, 2002)*, 5.
49   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 126–127.
50   Stanley, *Livingstone*, 86 ('Creation'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 355 ('perfectly').

Hegel had decried, Africa formed "no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development". That the spatial approach towards the interior of the African continent was, in Stanley's narrative, "equated with temporal reversal" was not only suggested through the encounter with the 'natural savage' and 'primeval men', as discussed above, but also through the motif of 'savage' and 'primeval' nature.[51] "Nature" in the Congo was "so old, incredibly old", Stanley noted. Through the depiction of the "primeval" woods, the extensive Congolese forests with their "ancient trees", the Congo was formed as motionless and stuck in 'prehistory' or a 'state of nature', defined as what has been called the trope of "anachronistic space" by Ann McClintock. "The eternal woods", Stanley philosophised, "will stand in their far-away loneliness for ever. As in the past, so they will flourish and fall for countless ages in the future".[52]

In the all-embracing and wild tropical nature, especially in the "immense and gloomy extent" of its forests, the darkness of Stanley's Congo also became a 'physical' condition. Descriptions and drawings of the Congolese landscape, its stupendous grasslands and, above all, the 'endless' Central African 'jungles' were among the most recurring themes in Stanley's travelogues. They formed primary scenes of the 19th-century colonial imagination and framed how future generations of Europeans and Americans, and of course also the Congo reform activists, believed that 'the Congo' looked, sounded and smelled.[53]

The few types of grassland in the interior of the Congo Basin were exposed to the equatorial sun. However, the "black forests", despite an at-times detailed commingling of exotic "colors" and "queer noises", were still substantially described as a location of everlasting "cold blackness" and "silence". In the interior of the great Congolese 'jungles', "under the impenetrable shade" of "that black wall" of giant trees, Stanley physically located not merely darkest Africa but also "one of the darkest corners of the earth, shrouded by perpetual mist, brooding under the eternal stormclouds, surrounded by darkness and mystery".[54]

Stanley composed literature in sensory details with images of giant trees, through which small creeks and mighty rivers flowed, and beleaguered by an exuberant luxury of tropical vegetation and exotic animal life that became the archetype of a persistent 19th-century cliché of tropical jungles further popularised by authors such as Edgar Rice Burroughs. This effigy of the 'Great Congo Forest', "vast as a continent", as Stanley claimed, was so striking for the European imagination that it soon became a synonym

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51   McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 40 ('out of place'); Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 99 ('historical'); Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 32 ('equated');

52   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, ('primeval'), 155 ('incredibly'); ibid., Vol. 2, 478 ('eternal'); Stanley to A.L. Bruce, 4 September 1888, reproduced in 'Letter from Mr Stanley. The Explorer's Narrative of His Experiences', *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1889, 5 ('ancient'); McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 40 ('anachronistic').

53   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 5 ('immense').

54   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 126 ('cold'), 148 ('black forests'); Stanley to A.L. Bruce, 4 September 1888, reproduced in 'Letter from Mr Stanley', *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1889, 5 ('colors', 'noises', 'impenetrable'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 4 ('silence'), 111 ('wall'); ibid., Vol. 2, 325 ('darkest').

for Central Africa as such. The Congo, it was from then on believed, was a jungle, and the Congo was a natural space. [55]

Concurrently, the image of the abundant yet dark Congolese nature contained a discursive promise of tremendous tropical wealth. Immediately after his descent of the Congo River, Stanley proclaimed to the world that he had found the future "grand highway of commerce to West Central Africa". In a speaking tour through 50 larger cities in France and England, the imperial pioneer enthusiastically lectured about the economic potential of the Congo Basin.[56]

Especially to the textile mills of Manchester and New-England, Stanley praised the poorly dressed 'savages' as potential customers for fabricated wardrobes, if only one "could persuade the dark millions of the interior to cast off their fabrics of grass clothing.[57] In its possibilities as an outlet market, the Congo was presented as a new China, as British and American reformers would later repeat.[58] In exchange for their manufactured goods, merchants could expect an abundance of natural resources. Stanley inscribed into the European consciousness the image of a "fertile region unsurpassed for the variety of its natural productions", which "excels all other known lands for the number and rare variety of precious gifts with which nature has endowed it".

For the cautious European trader who "with one hand receives the raw produce from the native, in exchange for the finished product of the manufacturer's loom", the Congo Basin would become the "commercial El Dorado of Africa", Stanley guaranteed.[59] However, according to Stanley, this abundant natural wealth had thus far been wasted, untapped by its 'savage' inhabitants and mostly even unknown to them. The Congo was not only a space of fertile but also of "virgin" nature, "untouched and apparently unvisited by man", as the imperial community was assured.[60] Hence, the imperial narrative established the myth of a 'terra nullius' or 'no man's land' in the interior of the African

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55   Ibid., Vol. 1, 282 ('vast'). Burroughs stated that he composed Tarzan with the aid of "a 50-cent Sears dictionary and Stanley's In Darkest Africa". Quoted in Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 26.

56   Stanley to the Daily Telegraph, 12 December 1877, quoted in Ewans, *European Atrocity*, 54 ('highway'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 377 ('gospel'). On the speaking tour, see ibid., 365.

57   Ibid., Vol. 1, 130. Here, Stanley also mentioned the especially visionary idea of using Africa as a market for second-hand clothes: "See what a ready market lies here for old clothes!", he prompted. He had "seen many thousands of dark Africa's sons who would not feel it to be a derogation of their dignity to wear the cast-off costumes of the pale children of Europe, but would put themselves to some little trouble to gather enough raw produce to give in legitimate exchange for them" (ibid., 130–131).

58   See Edmund D. Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22 and Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo State* (Washington, D.C.: Judd & Detweiler, 1904), 14.

59   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 366 ('fertile'), 372 ('El Dorado'), 374 ('excels'), 376 ('one hand'). Long and detailed lists and tables of the quantity, quality and potential exchange values of the Congo's 'precious gifts' were offered and included products such as ivory, palm oil, palm kernels, groundnuts, gum-copal, orchilla weed, camwood, cola nuts, gum tragacanth, myrrh, frankincense, furs, skins, hides, feathers, copper, india rubber, fibres of grasses, beeswax, bark-cloth, nutmeg, ginger and castor oil nuts (see ibid., 368).

60   Stanley, *Livingstone*, 444; Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 374; Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 475, ibid., Vol. 2, 83 and 100 ('virgin'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 93 ('untouched').

continent. "All is nature", Stanley once noted while observing a region allegedly without any "human structure". The eastern grasslands of Eastern Africa are termed "as much a wilderness as the desert of Sahara" that shows "no traces of cultivation", and the vast woods of the interior as being "without a track or a path". Notwithstanding that millions (of potential customers) inhabited the Congo Basin, the constant emphasis on the absence of settlements, roads or agriculture still transfigured large parts of the "untrodden and apparently endless wilds" of Central Africa into a structurally 'empty land'.[61]

Even when the existence of human settlements was not simply denied, the colonial narration still emphasised the lack of economic utilisation of the 'savages' simply dwelling upon, but not truly occupying, the soil. Where the Congo was not presented as empty, it was still 'vacant' and waiting for its appropriation by European entrepreneurs. "What expansive wastes of rich productive land lie in this region unheeded by man", Stanley noted, emphasising the legitimacy of appropriating these Congolese *terres vacantes* through the Congo Free State. "Nature" only "bides her day" until "that appointed time when she shall awake to her duties" of serving the coming imperial master. The "dark virgin regions of Africa" are "her latest gift to mankind", Stanley cheered, immediately clarifying that humankind, in this case, meant the imperial races: "As a unit of that mankind for which nature reserved it, I rejoice that so large an area of the earth still lies to be developed by the coming races".[62]

In the imperial myth of virgin and empty lands, it has been held, patriarchal and imperial dispossessions were closely related. Metaphors of 'virginity' and 'fertility' established, at the same time, a distinctively gendered image of nature and space. As was ubiquitous in the European imagination of Africa, Stanley compared Congolese nature to a female body,[63] and ultimately termed the land itself a "virgin locked in innocent repose". Beyond economic potential, there was also "natural beauty" inscribed into the feminine spatial identity of the Congo. At times, Stanley praised the "beauty which belongs to this part of Africa" and allowed himself to marvel at a "picturesque and lovely" scene or a "magnificent view". Moreover, the abundant natural wonders and exotic wildlife that Stanley evoked in his books and lectures on the Congo stimulated the phantasies of Europeans dreaming of hunting expeditions and other tropical adventures in the Congo. The beauty of the Congo and the "fascination of its mystery", one could read, caused the traveller's "heart to yearn towards it".[64]

Still, Stanley consistently reminded his readers of the "hypocritical" state of these Congolese temptations. 'Darkest Africa' was, after all, not an exotic paradise, but a tropical hell. Despite its beauties, the Congo was a "hateful, murderous river", he reminded, and the forest a "remorseless and implacable" jungle. "Horrors upon horrors" emerged

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61   Stanley, *Livingstone*, 86 ('Sahara', 'traces'); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 480 ('untrodden'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 93 ('All', structure'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 112 ('track').

62   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 374 ('gift', 'unit'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 155 ('wastes', 'bides').

63   See McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 30; also see, for instance, the speech of Stanley at the reception tendered by the 'Emin relief committee' in London, reproduced in 'In the Depths', *The Saline Observer*, 18 September 1890, 2.

64   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 155 ('repose'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 401 ('natural beauty'); Stanley, *Livingstone*, 86 ('belongs', picturesque'); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 148 (magnificent', 'yearn'), 197 ('fascination').

from it, and "death" lurked "everywhere, and on every day, and in every shape".[65] It could befall the traveller in the form of starvation, of road accidents, attacks by wild and poisonous animals, or, perhaps even more disturbing, by an entirely invisible enemy, extreme temperatures and the humidity of the 'tropical climate'. "Malaria is in the air we breathe", Stanley desperately complained, and all sorts of diseases and infections, above all the ever-present fever and dysentery, thrived in the "impure air" and "impure atmosphere" of the Congolese 'jungles'.[66]

Fever also challenged the moral stamina and mental health of Europeans who constantly struggled under the 'outburst of passions' caused by 'tropical fancy', Stanley's narrative suggested. The delirium marked the fringe between physical and psychological threats in this "region of horrors". In the "fever-land" of the hallucinations that grasped the European mind, the "pall-black darkness" of the Congolese forest fully evolved into a mysterious land of death and despair, filled with "eerie shapes" and "whispers [...] of graves and worms".[67] However, the morbid horror of this 'metaphysical darkness' was not limited to delirium. It was provoked by the "forbidding aspect [of] the Dark Unknown", the "oppressive" and "evil" atmosphere of the jungles. This facet was "chilling to the poor, distressed heart" of Stanley's African porters, and he observed how "the horror grows darker in their fancies" the longer the expedition lasted in the endless forests, and it also haunted the European explorers. Even in times when there was no tangible threat, the "horror of the silence of the forest", the "soul wearying" feelings of isolation, loneliness, exasperation and despair "harrowed" their minds and hearts.[68]

For it was more than the lack of sunshine that obscured the Congo and made it a space of eternal darkness. Stanley sketched the Congolese 'jungles' as a space of constant physical and psychological peril, a fundamentally hostile realm, described, like its inhabitants, with Gothic themes such as 'mystery', 'horror', 'the unknown' and 'the supernatural', and combined with Christian motifs of 'evil' and 'darkness' to create a particularly morbid atmosphere. "This is all very uncanny if you think of it", Stanley remarked: "There is a supernatural diablerie operating which surpasses the conception and attainment of a mortal man". The Congo was thus located in the centre of a "pagan

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65   Ibid., 464 ('hypocritical', 'hateful'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 30 ('everywhere'), 282 ('remorseless').

66   Stanley to A.L. Bruce, 4 September 1888, reproduced in 'Letter from Mr Stanley', *The Scotsman*, 2 April 1889, 5 ('atmosphere'); Stanley, Darkest Africa, Vol. 1, 156 ('air'); Stanley, *Livingstone*, 648 ('Malaria'). "Were a bottleful of concentrated miasma, such as we inhale herein, collected, what a deadly poison, instantaneous in its action, undiscoverable in its properties, would it be! I think it would act quicker than chloroform, be as fatal as prussic acid", Stanley continued there. As other health issues in the forests, he named asthma, chest diseases, heart sickness, lung problems and rheumatism (see Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 114). Stanley's formulations reveal the still-existing misbelief that malaria was spread through the inhalation of infectious tropical air that gave the disease its French name '*mal aire*', see Joseph F. Conley, *Drumbeats That Changed the World* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000), 78.

67   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 138 ('region'); ibid., 70 ('fever-land, etc.).

68   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 126 ('forbidding'), 137 ('evil'), 148 ('oppressive'); Extract from the speech of Stanley at the reception tendered by the 'Emin relief committee' in London, reproduced in 'In the Depths', *The Saline Observer*, 18 September 1890, 2 ('chilling', 'fancies', 'silence', 'soul'). Also see Stanley, *Livingstone*, 44; Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 95.

continent" trapped in the "purgatory of heathendom" and reduced to a "forest hell" that resembled scenes of "Pandemonium", the capital of Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Stanley's narrative of exploration equated the spatial advancement towards the centre of Africa not only with a journey back in time but also with a metaphysical descent through a "gleaming portal to the Unknown" and into a "region of fable and darkness": A descent towards the borderlands of myth and reality, a space that was closer to "an unsubstantial dreamland than to a real earth", and a particularly nightmarish underworld.[69]

Gothic literature characteristically confronts its protagonists with a 'marginal or strange place', and once more, the image of the "dark, relentless woods" most noticeably revealed the gothic setting of Stanley's Congo narrative. Like the archetypical spooky old castle or mansion, the forest was covered in "mist" and "deluging rains", its trees were "shadowy as ghosts in the twilight", its gloom was only ruptured by "dazzling lightning", bursts of rolling "thunder" and the "howling of the wild winds". The 'jungle' was like a trap, a "prison and dungeon" from which escape became a matter of life or death.[70]

Until then, as in every decent gothic novel, scenes "of extreme threat and isolation [...] are always happening or about to happen". In its gothic perspective, the material struggle of the explorer with Congolese 'nature' became correlated to a no less deadly interior fight with its spiritual and metaphysical darkness. The "malignant influences" of the gloomy world ranged from "melancholy" to "depression" and even "suicidal thoughts", especially for a "diseased imagination" caused by the ever-present fever.[71] Ultimately, the Congolese darkness became more than a mere epistemological condition and physical setting. In Stanley's literature, Congolese space itself seemed to be enlivened by a mysterious agency. The "great forest", the founder of the Western Congo image once wrote, was like "a great beast, with monstrous fur thinly veiled by vaporous exhalations". A mysterious soul, a "dark power", enlivened 'Darkest Africa'. There was "a supernatural malignant influence or agency at work" in the Congo, the pioneering European traveller warned his readers.[72]

Civiliser and conqueror: the imperial hero and 'Brightest Europe'

Like all Victorian travel literature, Stanley's writing on the Congo and the Congolese was primarily a racist act of myth-making. The notion of 'Darkest Africa' became the central motif in Europe's imagination of Central Africa as a 'prehistorical', 'natural' and 'evil' space of darkness, inhabited by the cultural and 'racial' sediment of humanity. The

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69   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 197 ('gleaming', 'region'), 229 ('Pandemonium'), 282 ('hell'), 405 ('purgatory'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 95 ('dreamland'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 511 ('uncanny', 'diablerie').

70   ibid.,221 ('woods'), 282 ('prison'); ibid., Vol. 2, 478 ('shadowy'); Extract from the speech of Stanley at the reception tendered by the 'Emin relief committee' in London, reproduced in 'In the Depths', *The Saline Observer*, 18 September 1890, 2 ('mist', 'deluging', 'dazzling', 'howling'). Also see John Bowen, "Gothic Motifs," British Library, 2014. Discovering Literature: Romantics & Victorians, https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs.

71   Ibid., ('scenes'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 264 ('malignant', etc.).

72   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 282 ('beast'), 51 ('dark power').

imperial gaze of the traveller, who by guesswork and speculation classified the inhabitants of Central Africa as 'savages', 'monsters', 'devils' and 'coloured races', conveyed his belonging to an imagined community of the 'civilised', 'humans', the 'elected' and the 'white race'. By approaching the Congolese counter-world both as 'conqueror' and 'civiliser' embodied with the ability to subdue 'Darkest Africa', Stanley performatively codified the superiority of this collective one could term 'Brightest Europe'.[73]

In the role of the civiliser, Stanley's racist superiority was mainly defined by the collective cultural and scientific capital of a 'progressive European civilisation'. After all, "the muscles, tissues, and fibres of their bodies, and all the organs of sight, hearing, smell, or motion, are as well developed as in us", Stanley reminded his European readers in a description of the inhabitants of Central Africa. However, "in taste and judgment, based upon larger experience, in the power of expression, in morals and intellectual culture are we superior".[74] Through the commitment "to extend civilising influences among the dark races" of the Congo, this superior European and Christian culture also proved its righteousness. As chapter 4.1 shows, Stanley and the Belgian King Léopold successfully portrayed the Congo Free State as the institutional embodiment of a benevolent and charitable 'civilising' spirit.[75]

As an envoy of the promised 'salvation mission' in the Congo, the character of the imperial 'explorer' Stanley was equipped with the spiritual power "to brighten up with the glow of civilisation the dark places of sad-browed Africa" and, thus, to disperse the 'epistemological darkness' obscuring the Congo. Merely through his physical and spiritual presence, a single 'white man' allegedly redeemed the region from its prehistoric and stagnating state by opening it to the gaze of the 'civilised world'. Robert E. Park, by then leading American Congo activist, would state with open admiration three decades later that Stanley had "by one bold stroke tore aside the veil of mystery that had up to that time concealed the interior of the dark continent". With the arrival of the first European who came "to flash a torch of light across the western half of the Dark Continent", as Stanley wrote about himself, the Hegelian world spirit had finally reached Central Africa. His mere presence served as the "trumpet-call of civilization" to wake the region from its "immeasurably long ages of sleep". The 'civilised explorer' brought not only enlightenment but time, meaning and reason to the Congo. In filling the blankness on imperial maps with European names for African rivers, lakes, mountains, towns and people, the 'explorer' eradicated any existing culture and demonstrated civilisation's exclusive and totalitarian claim to the power of expression.[76]

In the story of the education and conversion of the Muslim Emperor of Uganda, the role of the 'civiliser' as a worldly and spiritual educator was most symbolically created. During his three months with Mtesa in 1878, Stanley became "a scientific encyclopaedia to him" and tried to "expound the secrets of nature and the works of Providence, the

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73   See Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 85–87.

74   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 73 ('muscles', 'taste').

75   Stanley's speech in front of the London Chamber of Commerce, 19 September 1884, quoted in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 312 ('extend', etc.).

76   Ibid. ('brighten up'); Park, "King in Business", 631 ('stroke'); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 127 ('torch'); Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 155 ('trumpet-call', 'immeasurably').

wonders of the heavens, the air and the earth".[77] The "great potentate of Equatorial Africa", whom Stanley portrayed as a stereotypical example of 'the childish' and 'docile savage', is discursively reduced to the role of an ignorant student. The "dread despot sat with wide-dilated eyes and an all-devouring attention" to listen to his omniscient teacher and priest and readily recognised the superiority of the foreigner, it is argued. Stanley let the character of Mtesa summarise the discursive message of this episode: "'the white men know everything'", the emperor supposedly proclaimed to his followers. Soon after, he allegedly concluded that, religiously, "'the white men are greatly superior to the Arabs. I think therefore that their book must be a better book than Mohammed's'", Mtesa announced and, so the story goes, he converted to Christian faith.[78]

Nonetheless, the 'civiliser' Stanley was always also a 'conqueror'. On his African expeditions, Stanley employed a "larger military force" than any previous 'explorer' before him, as his contemporaries realised. Wherever the superiority of European and Christian culture was not as easily accepted as it allegedly was in the Mtesa story, Stanley used, without hesitation, brute force and naked violence. As mentioned before, the transformation of scientific and philanthropic journeys into "geographical raid[s]" full of "bloodshed and slaughter" even led to objections in contemporary Britain.[79]

However, the racist representation of the Congolese inhabitants actually allowed Stanley to project this unparalleled ruthlessness onto those under attack. The announced willingness to accept the 'savages' as, in principle, able to become 'civilised', was, as in the earlier American context of the stereotype, flanked by the suspicion of cannibalism, one of the most persistent racist myths.[80] With 'cannibals' and also 'devils', there was no room for negotiation or cooperation. To surrender to or compromise with these would mean to offer one's "throats like lambs to the cannibal butchers" and end in the "horrid barbecue they intended to hold", Stanley argued in the racist figments of the imperial imagination.[81]

In the Congolese narrative, it was the cannibalistic fury of the African 'savage' that made it an "inevitable necessity of putting into practice the resolution which we had formed before setting out on the wild voyage – to conquer or die". The 'civiliser' accepted no objection or resistance. The choice of the Congolese was assimilation through colonisation or extermination. The "savage only respects force, power, boldness, and decision", it is claimed. Stanley portrays himself as an African version of the highly popular gunslingers of the American frontier he had once reported on as a journalist: "as soon as the first symptoms of manifestation of violence had been observed, I had sprung to my feet, each hand armed with a loaded self-cocking revolver, to kill and be killed".[82]

The ultimate success of these 'wild voyages' of conquest, it is argued, was based on individual bravery but also on the superior firepower Stanley was able to use. Stanley's 'scientific voyages' were equipped with hundreds of modern automatic rifles, ar-

77   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1, 320.
78   Ibid., 188 ('potentate'), 320 ('despot'), 321 ('everything'), 324–325 ('greatly superior').
79   'Letters of Henry Stanley from Equatorial Africa to the Daily Telegraph', *Edinburgh Contemporary Review*, no. 147 (1878): 167 ('private').
80   See Hund, *Rassismus*, 63 and chapter 1.
81   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 203 ('barbecue'), 278 ('butchers').
82   Ibid., Vol. 1, 230 ('to kill and be killed'), 276 ('decision'); ibid., Vol. 2, 221 ('to conquer or die').

tillery and machine guns, including, as has been mentioned, a prototype of the "terrible Maxim machine gun" for his last expedition. This automatic weapon had well "contributed", as Stanley called it, "a moral influence" on the attacked African population, who were mostly equipped with old rifles, spears or arrows.[83] When greatly outnumbered, or when confronted by too "powerful, well-equipped, and warlike tribes", Stanley ordered a retreat; however, whenever tactically useful, "the command to fire was given", and automatic rifles and machine-guns of Stanley's expeditions "were doing terrible execution". In this way, the European emissary of culture and civilisation "laboured strenuously through ranks upon ranks of savages", leaving behind him a traumatised people and wasted land. The apostle of 'light' and 'civilisation' bluntly accounted for his destructive expedition: "We have attacked and destroyed 28 large towns and three or four scores of villages, fought 32 battles on land or water", Stanley frankly summarised only a small part of his first journey of 'exploration'.[84]

The account of Stanley's skirmishes with the 'wild' and 'hostile' Congolese environment further specified his identity as the most iconic symbol of the power of imperial civilisation. "Like the waves beating on a rocky shore" had 'superior races', science, trade and 'civilisation' been defied "for ages" by the physical hostility of the "equatorial regions of Africa". However, as Stanley proudly noted in his second book, it was his "destiny to move on, whatever direction it may be that that narrow winding path […] takes us".[85] In "all that spirited narrative of heroic endeavour", the journalist, social reformer and future member of the British Congo reform Association William T. Stead once remarked, "nothing has so much impressed the imagination" than Stanley's desperate marches through the Congolese jungles. It was in the vast forests that most of the "marvellously narrow escapes from utter destruction" that Stanley strung together in his Congolese adventure stories took place. However, no matter what "nameless horrors awaited" them, no matter how dense the undergrowth was, Stanley's columns "entered the forest […] with confidence" and "cleared a path through the obstructions". Inexorably, they "pushed on and on, broke through the bush, trampled down the plants", challenging the resisting and hostile Congolese nature.[86]

In contrast to and confrontation with the motionless Congolese nature, Stanley's commitment to spatial advancement became a symbol of Europe's equation with historical progress. At the same time, historical progress and imperial expansion were defined as a masculine and manly virtue. "Step by step", Stanley claimed, "we gain our miles, and penetrate deeper and deeper into that strange conservatory of nature, the inner womb of a true tropical forest". Discursively, the imperial explorer had turned

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83   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 2, 366.

84   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 174 ('execution'), 277 ('powerful', laboured'); Stanley quoted in James L. Newman, *Imperial Footprints* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2004), 145 ('28 large towns').

85   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 372 ('waves', etc.); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 127 ('destiny').

86   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, 5 ('marvellously'), 230 ('nameless', 'pushed on'); William Booth and William T. Stead, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: International Headquarters of the Salvation Army, 1890), 9 ('spirited', 'impressed', 'impenetrable'); Stanley, quoted in ibid., 10 ('entered'). The book was ghostwritten by Stead but published under Booth's name.

himself into a phallic symbol desperate to be the first 'in utero', to "penetrate that cold, dark, still horizon before us": the fertile and virgin interior of the continent.[87]

Given the deadly image presented of this 'virgin land', this allegory could only evoke a violent subjection of feminine African nature through the 'white man', and the sexual and military penetration of the virgin African void assured both masculine and imperial patrimony. Intimidated, for instance, by how "the chaos of stones" around Vivi, the future capital of the Congo Free State, "breathed a grim defiance", Stanley was desperate "to temper this obstinacy; [...] to reduce that grim defiance to perfect submission".[88] It was for the "pulverization of rock", the power to form the landscape in Lower Congo according to the needs of the colonial power, that in October 1879 Stanley gained the nickname "Bula Matari – Breaker of Rocks", as he proudly told his readers. Stanley had come to finally break the 'rocky shore' that had so far defied alien civilisation, both metaphorically and literally.[89]

Thus established, the narrative assured the European readers that its protagonist would always return to "civilization, uninjured in life or health". As a true gothic and imperial hero, Stanley was able to defeat the 'horrors', keep his body, soul and mind strong, pass the test of his belief and return from the mythical underworld of the Congo. Stanley's "constitution of iron", his almost superhuman physical and moral strength, the tremendous recklessness, courage and volition to confront this 'hostile' African nature, its 'savage' inhabitants and the forces of 'darkness and evil' soon became legendary.[90]

Despite the controversies mentioned above, the majority of the British and American public admired Stanley's heroic adventures, and so did the most prominent Congo reformers. Morel and Park both asserted, "there is nothing grander in the history of exploration and geographical discovery" than Stanley's accomplishments in the Congo.[91] Harry Johnston, himself a famous African traveller involved in the exploration of the Congo River, ungrudgingly recognised that Stanley was at "top of the role of African explorers". Even the anti-imperialist American writer Mark Twain admitted that Stanley's achievements excelled even those of "the really great men who exist in history".[92]

The Victorian fascination with new 'heroic myths of empire' has been described as part of a romantic cultural response to the perceived mundane reality of an overly materialistic present. British literary discourse of the 19th century "experienced an 'eclipse' and numerous attempts at resurrection of the hero", a development that became particularly obvious in the context of New Imperialism. This process included a revived fascination with the mythical heroism of the past, and "classical and medieval heroic cults

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87   Extract from the speech of Stanley at the reception tendered by the 'Emin relief committee' in London, reproduced in 'In the Depths', *The Saline Observer*, 18 September 1890, 2 ('womb'); Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 127 ('penetrate').

88   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 140.

89   Ibid., 147–48.

90   Stanley, *Darkest Africa*, Vol. 1, p 2. ('civilization'); Joel T. Headley and Willis F. Johnson, *Stanley's Wonderful Adventures in Africa* ([Philadelphia]: Edgewood Publishing, 1889), 21 ('iron').

91   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 15 [footnote]. Similarly see Park, "Terrible Story": 764.

92   Harry Johnston and Mark Twain quoted in Newman, *Imperial Footprints*, xvii.

were recreated, modified, and adapted for a new age".[93] Indeed, for Stead, Stanley's acts contained "as much material for poetic or romantic treatment as the wanderings of Ulysses, the labours of Hercules, or the quest of the Holy Grail". Stanley's adventures proved that "in the heart of this plain, prosaic nineteenth century, from which materialism and steam are supposed to have exorcised the Ideal", idealistic altruism and "chivalric romance" were still alive.[94]

However, the public worshipped both the 'civiliser' and the 'conqueror'. It was not so much the rescue of Emin Pasha that was admired, the *London Times* noted upon Stanley's triumphal return to England in 1890. What the masses loved was "the magnificent display of all those qualities which men recognise as truly heroic whether they are seen on the field of battle or in the longer and more deadly conflict which these men have waged with the relentless forces of nature and barbarism".[95] Stanley's power to subdue the Congolese nature and its inhabitants raised him to the level of an almost superhuman creature in the imagination of Morel, as his later description of "the breaker of stones and of hearts, the man of elemental forces" revealed. Before his "sledge-hammer blows and will of steel the forest rolled back, the river's impetuosity was curbed, the rapids were conquered, and primitive communities were alternately charmed into acquiescence and pulverised into submission". However threatening the Congolese 'darkness' was, Stanley's Congo narrative claimed that a single heroic 'white man' was stronger. The Congolese explorer became the most radiant icon of 'imperial masculinity'. It reassured a whole generation of Westerners about the right and power of European civilisation to conquer, subdue and exploit even the darkest space of the globe, the Congo. Not simply in demarcating this 'savage Africa' but in narrating its submission and conquest, Stanley created his version of 'Brightest Europe'.[96]

3.2   'Ugly': Racist classification and 'white' culture in crisis

For about two decades following his first passage through Central Africa, Stanley's imperial Congo narrative remained essentially unchallenged. The numerous publications of the travellers, traders, missionaries and colonial agents pouring into the region over the course of its colonial subjugation generally conformed with the established tone and content set by the imperial and literary pioneer. They anchored the myth of the Congo ever deeper in Western minds as a space of radical otherness and spread the exaltation of Europe's on-going accomplishment to conquer and open up to 'civilisation' and trade what had been described as the most 'savage' and 'backward' part of the planet.[97]

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93   Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*, 36 ('experienced'); John MacKenzie, "Heroic Myths of Empire," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850–1950*, ed. John MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), (title), and 110 ('classical').

94   William T. Stead, "Mr. H. M. Stanley," *Review of Reviews* 1, no. 1 (1890): 20 ('Holy Grail').

95   'London, Monday, April 28, 1890', *The Times*, 28 April 1890, 9.

96   Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 17.

97   See for instance publications such as: Joseph Tritton and Baptist Missionary Society, *Rise and Progress of the Work on the Congo River*, 2nd ed. (London: Alexander and Shepheard, 1885); Herbert

Nevertheless, the two Congo novellas of the British-Polish author Joseph Conrad published at the turn of the 19th century, while the international Congo reform movement slowly took shape, brilliantly conveyed that the exposure of what Edmund D. Morel called the 'Congo Scandal' was synonymous with a fundamental rupture in the Western Congo discourse.[98] Since the early 1890s, slowly but steadily emerging reports about systematic breaches of laws and international treaties by the Free State administration, its arbitrariness against Europeans and atrocious brutality against Africans had reached the imperial metropoles. More and more observers of imperial policy and active colonialists became aware of the tremendous gap between colonial discourse and its scandalous political enactment in the Congo.[99]

This discursive rupture did not imply an alteration of the stereotypical representation of the alienated Congolese other. Far from it, Conrad's two stories *An Outpost of Progress* and *Heart of Darkness* continued to confront their readers "with pure unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive man", thus a vision of Central Africa that firmly relied upon well-established racist patterns. In their natural décor of the river and the forest, their highly stereotypical depiction of 'cannibalistic' and 'savage' Africans and their gothic atmosphere of horror, Conrad's novellas were a literary homage to Stanley's Congo literature.[100] Nonetheless, in the way that Conrad related 'civilisation' and his 'civilised' protagonists to the mythical Congolese darkness, he effectively shattered the idea of an imagined community of 'Brightest Europe' that achieved its superior identity by demarcating and subjugating 'Darkest Africa'. At no point in Conrad's alternative draft of the Congo narrative did Europe or its pioneering envoys show the ability to conquer the tropical nature and its 'savage' inhabitants or to disperse the metaphysical 'dark power' that Stanley had located in the Congolese jungles. Additionally, profit-seeking and extermination phantasies had long suppressed all moral commitments to the 'civilising mission' in Conrad's Congo.

As has been mentioned earlier, prominent Congo reformers highly esteemed Conrad's novellas. The spearhead of the British reform campaign Morel publicly praised Conrad's picture of the Congo and, in a personal letter to Arthur Conan Doyle, even called *Heart of Darkness* "the most powerful thing ever written on the subject". Robert Park similarly recommended the novel in a pamphlet, and the British liberal politician, journalist and executive Congo reformer Harold Spender termed Conrad's first Congo

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Ward, *Five Years with the Congo Cannibals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1891); Edward J. Glave, *In Savage Africa* (New York: R.H. Russel & Son, 1892); Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*. All of these authors would eventually become outspoken critics of the Free State.

98   See Conrad, "Outpost of Progress" [originally published in the magazine Cosmopolis in 1897]; Conrad, "Heart of Darkness" [originally published in Blackwood's Magazine in 1899] and Morel's (unsigned) series of articles titled 'The Congo Scandal', published in *The Speaker* between 28 February 1900 and 6 October 1900.

99   See Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 63 ('no part'). Also see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 39 and Park, "Terrible Story", 765 for further references on the gap between "Promise and Performance".

100 Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 129 ('pure'). Conrad's work actually leveraged this imagery to a new discursive impact through the linguistic skills of a grand literate of world format. Nowadays, it is generally through Conrad that readers and students of literature approach Stanley's vision of 'Darkest Africa'.

tale, *Outpost of Progress*, "a story of genius" in which "Joseph Conrad has shown us how the thing happens" in Léopold's colony.[101]

Since scenes of actual atrocities, as they were discussed later in the Congo controversy, were rare in these texts, the reformers hardly applauded Conrad's novels as a source of documentary evidence. What made Conrad's fictional literature so valuable was its brilliant literary exposure of the crisis of racist representation, identity and culture beyond the Congo Scandal. With the allegation of a 'corrosion of alterity' through the brutalisation of civilisation, the realisation of civilisation's weakness through the menace of a 'triumph of the wilderness', and the emergence of a 'civilised savagery' as a signifier of a profound calamity of Western modernity, this crisis had three entangled dimensions that were all conjured by Conrad's Congo literature, and they were widely reproduced and refined through the American and British humanitarian activism.

'The horror': a corrosion of alterity

"If the administration of the Congo Free State was civilisation", the Liberal politician and prominent British Congo reform Herbert Samuel once asked in the House of Commons, "what was barbarism"?[102] This often-reproduced probing question articulately hinted at the first dimension of the crisis of racist representation triggered by the Congo Scandal. The international Congo reform movement exposed to the European and American public the systematic forced labour, hostage-taking, torture, mutilation and murder committed by the agents of Free State and monopoly companies. Given these cruel practices of colonial governance, a significant part of the humanitarian Free State opponents developed profound doubts about what essentially distinguished their imagined community of the 'civilised' from the 'savage', 'devilish' and 'monstrous' Africans and the 'fanatic' and 'despotic' Arab slave-traders that occupied their imperial imagination. Stanley's 'Darkest Africa', as the previous chapter has shown, had been created as a nightmarish counter-world of absolute and condensed otherness. The suggestion that the Congo Scandal signified corrosion of this imperial alterity and thus of the phantasm of a negative civilised identity created in opposition to the Congo was a radical allegation against the policy of the Free State.

The recognition of a worrying essential equivalence between the allegedly binary oppositions of the 'civilised' and the 'savage' was a central theme of Conrad's Congo literature. As Stanley had until his latest work in 1890, Conrad assertively rejected radical naturalist segregation between Africans and Europeans, but he heavily relied upon the 'savage' stereotype to describe the contemporary superiority of civilisation as a historical expression of European progress and African stagnation. Moreover, even more directly than Stanley had done before him, Conrad equated the strenuous spatial advance of Captain Marlow and his steamboat towards the interior of Central Africa, the subject of his second Congo novella, with a journey through time. "Going up that river was like

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101   Morel to Doyle, 7 October 1909, quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 205 ('most'); Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 46 ('genius'); also see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 174 [footnote] ('picture'); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 30.

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

traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world", Marlow noted. There, he saw himself confronted not only by "prehistoric earth" but by "prehistoric man". Conrad's Congolese characters, like Stanley's 'natural savages', "still belonged to the beginnings of time", one could read.[103]

However, the confirmation of an evolutionary affinity of the human race that the representation of Congolese 'savages' as Europeans' contemporary ancestors Conrad's narrative implied was not described as a noble humanitarian commitment but instead discussed as a harrowing concussion of 'civilised' identity. The "thought of your remote kinship" with these 'savages' was deeply unsettling. It "was the worst of it – this suspicion of their not being inhuman [...]. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity – like yours. Ugly".[104]

Marlow soon had to admit "that there was in you [...] a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you – you so remote from the night of first ages – could comprehend". For the romantic novelist, in sharp contrast to Stanley's narrative, the 'dark and anachronistic thing' outside, the Congo's 'primeval' nature and its 'savage' inhabitants, was always an analogy for the 'dark and anachronistic thing' inside, the forgotten instincts and relics of the European's 'savage' past. 'Darkest Africa' was not the "negation of the habitual, which is safe", as Conrad wrote, but stood in a "dangerous" relation to the European self, "vague", but closer than was commonly suggested. The disruption of the thin veneer that separated 'civilisation' from 'savagery' was the true "horror" realised by Mr Kurtz, the legendary ivory trader who fell sick at the remote Inner Station in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* at the moment of his death, until today a fundamental metaphorical equation with the Congo Scandal.[105]

This Conradian leitmotif, a horrifying corrosion of cultural distance between European self and Congolese other, was mediated through varying images reformers evoked that worked on different levels of political agitation. The most frequently reproduced symbol of a rapprochement between 'European civilisation' and 'African savagery' was the image of the Congo's 'cannibal army'. The army and police corps of the Free State, the so-called Force Publique, was established in 1886 and constantly strengthened until it became the largest colonial army in Central Africa. Even in 1895, a few dozen European and American officers commanded a force of 6,000 African soldiers, largely recruited or forcibly conscripted from the Congo region, but also from other West African countries and Zanzibar, and additional thousands of local auxiliaries. These forces provided the human resources to the provisional military victory over the rebelling Central Congolese polities and the Muslim regimes in Eastern Congo. In 1890, the American traveller George Washington Williams was the first to combine humanitarian criticism and colonial myths into a motif that would become widespread within the Congo reform discourse. Outraged, he claimed that "bloodthirsty cannibalistic" Congolese soldiers were

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103   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 35 ('earth', 'man'), 40 ('time').
104   Ibid., 36.
105   Ibid., 35 ('frenzy'), 36 ('response'), 69 ('horror'); Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 129 ('negation', 'dangerous', 'vague').

eating "the bodies of slain children".[106] A few years later, an English journalist claimed that the Congo "has been overrun by armed hordes of savages". In 1897, two publications claimed that 'The Fall of the Congo Arabs', widely celebrated as a successful abolitionist crusade in Europe, had heavily relied on the use of 'cannibalistic' auxiliaries by the Free State. "During the campaign against the Arabs by the soldiers of the Congo Free State many cannibals were to be seen—so officers tell me—provisioning themselves from the killed", the recently deceased traveller and journalist Edward J. Glave noted in his diaries. Moreover, the English officer Sidney L. Hinde, who had participated in the Congolese-Arab War, remarked that "cannibals [...] proved a great element in our success" and claimed that the Force Publique had actually tolerated, even encouraged them to follow their "disgusting custom" instead of providing sufficient food.[107]

Such dubious allegations were enough for Charles Dilke of the Aborigines' Protection Society to contend, on the occasion of the first major Congo debate in the British Commons after the Stokes affair, that it was proved "beyond all conceivable doubt" that the Free State administration was "habitually raiding" its territory with its "25000 cannibal allies" and actively provided those with "smoked human flesh"; thus, the myth of Léopold's 'cannibal army' was born.[108]

Now and then, new stories about the excesses of armed forces in the Free State gave the trope of the 'cannibal army' a fresh impetus. The diaries and letters of the Rev. Joseph Clark of the American Baptist Missionary Union, the report of the American Presbyterian William S. Sheppard about a murderous raid of state auxiliaries or the accounts of the Cape-to-Cairo traveller Ewart S. Grogan all included more or less casual remarks about the 'cannibalistic' and 'savage' character of the Congo soldiery. In 1904, even the official report of Roger Casement for the British Foreign Office included a testimony recalling that "cannibal soldiers" had been provided an old woman to eat by a white superior of the colonial administration.[109] That the Free State formed its colonial army of "cannibal tribes" and its auxiliaries of "various barbarous tribes, many of them cannibals"; that the typical capita and sentry placed in the village to enforce the demands of the State and concessionary companies like the Abir was "a cannibal and a ruffian", as Doyle proclaimed to his readers, grew into one of the most enduring and widely distributed themes of the reform discourse.[110] Reproduced in all sorts of pamphlets, books and articles, raised in parliamentary speeches, memorials and official government publications, the trope of a "cannibal army" (or "cannibal troops", an "army of savages" or

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106   Williams, "Open Letter", 12.

107   Decle, "Murder in Africa", 86 ('hordes'); Edward J. Glave, "New Conditions in Central Africa," *The Century Magazine* 53, 4–5 (1897): 913 ('during'); Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 69 ('wolves', 'disgusting'), 124 ('success').

108   Charles Dilke: 'Africa (European Powers)', HC Deb 2 April 1897 Vol. 48 cc 425–50, here c. 430 ('25000').

109   Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 74 ('troops'); see Grogan and Sharp, *From the Cape to Cairo*, 265. For Sheppard's report, see 'Cannibalism in the Congo', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 22 February 1900, 6; for Clark's diaries, see Morel, *Red Rubber*, 48–79, particularly 53.

110   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 10 ('cannibal tribes'), 12 ('various'), 25 ('ruffian').

other varieties) under European control became, next to the 'severed hand', perhaps the most powerful symbol the reform movement established.[111]

Of course, through the propagandistic exploitation of the 'cannibalistic savage' stereotype, the humanitarian activists deeply engaged in racist myth-making. None of the aforementioned and often reproduced 'testimonies' could prove systematic acts of anthropophagy. In general, they were no less circumstantial than the evidence once offered in the exploration narrative and consisted of hearsay and dubious interpretations of local customs and myths through imperial eyes and ears. Not African actions or customs, but Stanley's racist creation of the Congo as a "cannibal world" gave the reform image of a 'cannibal army' its credibility and propagandistic power. When a brilliant writer like Doyle, for instance, requested that his readers "[i]magine the nightmare which lay upon each village while this barbarian squatted in the midst of it", or prominent reformers evoked images of "orgies of cannibals" in which European officers "allowed [the soldiers] to gratify their own cannibalistic and other savage tastes", they actively appealed to the stock of racist knowledge and beliefs that their audience had aggregated about the horrors of 'Darkest Africa'.[112]

Morel himself acknowledged that the image of the 'cannibal army' was itself a propagandistic tool and was not based on widely shared anthropophagic practices. "The term 'cannibal troops'", he once argued, was "perhaps, open to misconstruction. It is not suggested that the Congo soldiers are all active cannibals at present, and feed upon recalcitrant rubber-collectors, as well as mutilate them, or indulge in the same cannibal orgies". Nonetheless, Morel defended his use of the term with a non-specific reference to the general existence of cannibalism in the Congo: "But a considerable portion of them are recruited from tribes which are still notably cannibalistic", he noted. "Cannibalism clings"; hence, "if you stick a rifle into a cannibal's hand, and put a uniform on his back, you don't thereby convert him into a vegetarian". Thus, to "speak of the 'cannibal' troops of the Congo State does not appear", he concluded, "to lend itself to the epithet 'exaggerated'".[113] Herewith, Morel had already established the set of stereotypes he would shamelessly reproduce in his later protest against the so-called "reign

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111   Morel, "Belgian Curse", 364; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 321, 350, 368, 376; Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 18, 27, 97; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 104, 176–77, 219; Morrison, "Personal Observations", 39; Alfred Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c. 1312 (all 'cannibal army'); 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; (all 'cannibal troops'); Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 4; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 11 ('army of savages'). The latter memorial, introduced to the United States Senate, also referred to the "marauding band of cannibal savages" (7) and the "barbaric hordes" (11). For further variations of the image, also see Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 238; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 175; John Daniels, "The Wretchedness of the Congo Natives," *The Voice of the Negro* IV, no. 1 (1907): 23 and Lord Monkswell: 'The Congo Free State', HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–437, here c. 404.

112   Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 2, 282 ('cannibal world'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23 ('nightmare'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 6; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 120; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 242 (all 'orgies'); ibid., 258 ('gratify').

113   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 120.

of terror" that African soldiers had allegedly established in the German Rhineland after World War I.[114]

The 'cannibal army' was a powerful means to create specifically gruesome images of bloodshed and murder, but it also emphasised the deliberate loss of cultural distance, the corrosion of alterity that the Congo Scandal implied. The army of African 'savages' in the Free State was "led by no less savage Europeans", Congo opponents stated, for instance. A "great source of weakness" in the Congolese methods was that European officers were "too familiar" to African soldiers, it was argued. A disastrous habit, since "it is indispensable to emphasize the distinction between black and white" in the colonial relation.[115]

All in all, the declaration that a 'civilised' European government was actively allying itself with the "forces of savagery",[116] even though for the allegedly greater good of defeating the East African slave trade, was a scandalous accusation. Of course, Doyle remarked in his bestselling account on the *Crime of the Congo*, the "suppression of the slave trade is a good cause, but the means by which it was effected", which were "the use of Barbarians who ate in the evening those whom they had slain during the day, are as bad as the evil itself".[117]

An actual political alliance with the 'Arab Congolese', on the other hand, was not among the accusations of the Congo reform movement. After all, as mentioned above, the successful military realisation of the abolitionist crusade against the Arab slave-trading empires that had been demanded by Europe's revitalised anti-slavery movement towards the end of the 19th century was among the most admired accomplishments of Léopold in humanitarian spheres. Nonetheless, the reform movement still accused the Free State of transcending the cultural distance that should separate European civilisation from the despotic Orient present in the Eastern Congo. This argument was evoked mainly through the motifs of the 'slave state' and a 'barbarous despotism'.

Williams had already reported about violations of the contracts of conscripted African labourers and soldiers and had accused the colonial state of "being engaged in the slave trade". Later, reformers would rightfully assert that the defeat of the 'Arabs' had not been tantamount to the abolition of slavery and the liberation of the Congolese, as had been promised. The "bondsmen of black slave owners may have been taken from them", Bourne admitted, "but only, or often, to fall into worse bondage under white masters". In general, "people are enslaved instead of being freed from slavery", the secretary of the Aborigines' Protection Society asserted in the first book-length contribution to the Congo controversy.[118]

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114   Edmund D. Morel, *The Horror on the Rhine*, 8th ed. (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1921 [1920]), 7

115   Decle, "Murder in Africa", 586 ('led'); Grogan and Sharp, *From the Cape to Cairo*, 266 ('source', 'familiar' 'indispensable').

116   Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 303; Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 376; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('forces').

117   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 10 ('suppression', 'Barbarians').

118   Williams, "Open Letter", 13; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 72–73 ('bondsmen'), 223 ('instead').

To be clear, the Congo reformers did not fundamentally oppose the idea that a colonial administration had to rely on forced labour.[119] However, the year-long servitude for former slaves and so-called orphans, the almost limitless and arbitrary labour tax and the forced recruitment of soldiers were seen not merely as disproportional compulsory labour, but as point-blank, systematic slavery. Hence, a civilised government had established a "slave state", the Congo reformers maintained. Such "an avowed Slave State", Herbert Samuel added, was "an anomaly and scandal in the modern world".[120] The pre-existence of 'white' or 'civilised' slavery scandalously obliterated one of the central markers of cultural difference between 'civilised Europe' and 'barbarous Orient' and of the central discursive legitimations of the imperial invasion of Central Africa. Instead of abolishing 'Arab slavery', the Free State had established similar or even worse bondage in the Congo, the reformers furiously criticised.[121]

Furthermore, in the course of exposing the centralised administration of the Free State and the almost unlimited legislative and executive power of the *Roi-Souverain* Léopold, criticism of the Congo system as an absolute and pure "despotism" became prevalent.[122] On the one hand, the allegation of 'despotism' implied a regress from modern liberal democratic institutions and control towards Europe's monarchist past. However, through the close connotation of the term with an anti-democratic Orient and Islam from its Aristotelian origins to modern notions of Montesquieu and Hegel, the assessment of a "barbarous" despotism in governance also contained the accusation of a convergence between this outpost of European 'civilisation' and the Oriental other it had intended to overcome.[123]

The temporal and cultural dimensions of this argument were concurrently evoked through the association of Léopold's atrocities and his absolute political power to the ancient tyranny of the Egyptian Pharaoh.[124] A political cartoon by F. Carruthers Gould for

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119   Forced labour "is good, for when once broken in, the natives continue to work", Edward J. Glave claimed, for instance: "It is no crime, but a kindness, to make them work" (Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo", 702).

120   Morel, *Congo Slave State* [title]; William T. Stead, "Leopold, Emperor of the Congo," *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 28, no. 1 (1903): 38; Resolution voted by the Executive Committee of the Congo Reform Association, 7 July 1909, reproduced in the appendix of Morel, *Great Britain*, 282–84, here 284; Herbert Samuel, "The Congo State and the Commission of Inquiry," *Contemporary Review* 88, December (1905), 881 (all 'slave state'); ibid. ('anomaly').

121   See for instance Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 196; Morrison, "Personal Observations", 39.

122   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 313; Morel, "Belgian Curse", 358; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 59; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 179; Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 270; Morrison, "Personal Observations", 38; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Duty of the US*, 8; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *The Congo State*, 3; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 96. Morel directly credited the assessment of an "absolute despotism" in Leopold's rule to the Belgian jurist Félicien Cattier, although the referred book Félicien Cattier, *Droit et Administration de l'État Indépendant Du Congo* (Bruxelles: Vve F. Larcier, 1898) only contains the notion "régime de centralisation et de despotisme" (202).

123   Edward Cahill, "Humanity and the Open Door," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 7–8, here 8; Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Present State*, 40 ('barbarous'). For a history of the concept of Oriental despotism, see Robert Minuti, "Oriental Despotism," European History Online: Leibniz Institute of European History, 2012. http://www.ieg-ego.eu/minutir-2012-en.

124   See Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 170; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 137, 200; Davis, *The Congo*, 32.

the *Westminster Gazette*, reproduced as the frontispiece of Morel's most popular Congo book, *Red Rubber*, visualised such Oriental allegories (Fig. 1). Sketched in the style of ancient Egyptian mythology, the cartoon showed an adaption of the *Book of the Dead*. In this case, Anubis with his canine head did not weigh the soul of a recently deceased before his entrance to the underworld; instead, this was represented with a single black hand, a symbol of the Congolese atrocities, and a figure of Léopold outfitted with the insignias of a Pharaoh. A caricature in the satirical magazine *The Punch* similarly stridently appealed to this Oriental metaphor (Fig. 2). It presented King Léopold and the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II lounging intimately on what appears to be the divan of an Ottoman palace and sharing a water pipe. While Léopold, holding a newspaper with the headline 'Congo atrocities' in his hand, complains about "the fuss they're making about these so-called atrocities", the Sultan Hamid, responsible for the massacres of hundreds of thousands of Armenians between 1892 and 1896, advises him to sit the criticism out: "Only talk, my dear boy. They won't do anything. They never touched me!".

Fig. 1 "The Weighing of the Soul in the Scales. Adopted from 'The Book of the Dead'."; Fig. 2 "Expert Opinion."; Fig. 3 "A memorial for the perpetuation of my name."
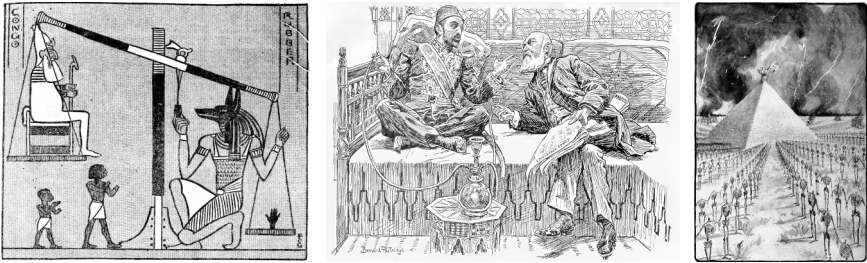
'The Congo Scales', *The Westminster Gazette*, 12 October 1905, 3. Newspaper image © The British Library Board. All rights reserved. With thanks to The British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk); Cartoon by Bernard Partridge, *The Punch*, 31 May 1905, 381. https://archive.org/details/punchvol128a129lemouoft; Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 2.

Moreover, Mark Twain's reform pamphlet incorporated the Pharaonic symbolism both textually and visually in the idea of a hypothetical monument that could be erected to the imperial violence in the Congo (Fig. 3).[125] "Out of the skulls" of the millions of victims of Léopold's regime should be erected an exact "duplicate the Great Pyramid of Cheops [...] in the centre of a depopulated tract", he suggested. On the top stands Léopold with his "'pirate flag' in one hand and a butcher-knife and pendant handcuffs in the other". Moreover, "[r]adiating from the pyramid, like the spokes of a wheel, there are to be forty grand avenues [...] fenced on both sides by skulless skeletons".[126]

Thus, the skilled author Twain pushed Léopold and the 'slavery' of the Free State to the Oriental margins (and hence casually relegated the long European and American involvement in the slave trade to the historical background). He equally resorted to

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125   Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, page after 2.

126   Ibid., 27–28. The idea of Léopold's "pyramid of Congolese skulls" was also reproduced in Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 43. Also see Decle, "Murder in Africa", 586 ('a line of skeletons').

the gothic motifs and patterns of demonological racism that had been a fundamental aspect of the alienation of the Congo. Allegations from an evangelical missionary that "the devil's work is in full swing" in the Congo, a connotation of the Congo Scandal to a general rise of "the forces of evil", an assessment of the state's "diabolicism" and "devilish" methods, or the description of the Free State as "Inferno" or "hell" linguistically related the violence of colonialism to the satanic counter- or under-world of the Congo, corroding the racist binary opposition between 'good/evil' and 'light/darkness'.[127]

Reformers frequently resorted, as Stanley had before, to horror fiction and popular themes of the gothic in their depiction of the Congo colony. Twain, for instance, imagined the Free State as "The Land of Graves". While Stanley had resorted to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Morel referred to the *Divine Comedy* and Mary Shelley in remarks about "a cannibal orgie [sic] which rivals Dante's inferno" and the allegation that the European Powers had with the Free State, "like Frankenstein", raised a "monster". The notion of 'horror' itself is omnipresent within the reform discourse, and its centrality as a motif in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* turned "the horror" into a popular cultural reference to the Congo atrocities.[128]

The gothic allegories culminated in Robert Park's taunts of the Belgian king as a "Vampire", this most popular villain of gothic fiction, who was "sucking the lifeblood of the victim that has slowly ceased to struggle". Léopold was denounced as a "diabolic" character, as "Apollyon in the dark", as a "monster of cruelty" who had "offered up tens of thousands of human lives on the altars of his greed and his lust for gold". Even "Death [...], with his scythe and hour-glass" would beg Léopold to "to marry his daughter". To the "uppermost" of their "totem of demonology", the historian W. Roger Louis once rightfully formulated, the reformers sat the character of Léopold as the personification of the fundamental immorality of the Free State.[129]

Instead of eradicating the powers of 'darkness' with 'civilised light', as Stanley had promised, the reformers accused Léopold and the Free State he symbolised of an alliance with the 'African savagery', 'oriental despotism' and 'spiritual evilness' it was supposed to subdue. The colonial state had, in the logic of the argument, finally become part of the African other. Léopold had, as Mr Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, "taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land". The central character of Conrad's second Congo novella eventually "forgot himself amongst these people", became an "initiated wraith" and lost his 'civilised' identity. Kurtz even chose "to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which [...] were offered up to him", a formulation widely thought to suggest cannibalism. For the Congo reformers, any civilised identity in the Congo had likewise been annihilated. The reformers accused Léopold and the Free State

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127   Edgar Stannard to Morel, 7 April 1905, reproduced in Morel, *Red Rubber*, 78 ('devil's'); Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 43 ('evil'), 54 ('Inferno'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 88 ('diabolicism'); Davis, *The Congo*, 43 ('devilish'); Park, "Terrible Story", 763; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 94 (both 'hell').

128   Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 40 ('graves'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 120 ('Dante'), 295 ('Frankenstein'); Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 69 ('horror'). For the use of 'the horror' as metaphor, see chapter 1.

129   Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 217 ('totem'); Park, "Terrible Story", 763 ('monster' [editorial prefix], 'altars'), 772 ('Vampire', 'sucking'); Park, "Blood-Money", 60 ('diabolic'), 61 ('Vampire'); Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 46 ('Apollyon'); Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 26 ('Death'), 36 ('monster').

of what had been termed 'the sin of becoming the other', of obliterating the cultural boundaries between Europe and Africa and 'going native'.[130]

The result was a murderous colonial regime and the creation of 'monstrous' cultural crossbred, the "Africanised civilisation of modern Europe", as Morel once formulated. When the reformers denounced Léopold, as mentioned above and the Free State in general as a "monster" or a "political monster", they not only appealed to notions of fear and abnormality but to the objectionable hybridisation that was evoked in the concept of the metaphor. This hybridisation took place not as in Stanley's racist stereotypes of the pigmies defined by a mixture of animal and human life, nor in the realms of life and death as with Frankenstein's creature, but through the amalgamation of 'civilisation' and 'savagery', of Europe and Africa. This monstrosity was visualised, for instance, in pointed form by political cartoons that showed Léopold as an almost naked and black-skinned man, eating away at what appears to be a human bone (Fig. 4), or via a composite of Léopold's head put on the body of a serpentine rubber vine strangling a terrorised victim (Fig.5).[131]

Fig. 4 "A Lesson in Philanthropy."; Fig. 5 "In the Rubber Coils."; Fig. 6 "Mulunba Chief of Cannibal Tribe Near Luebo, Congo State."
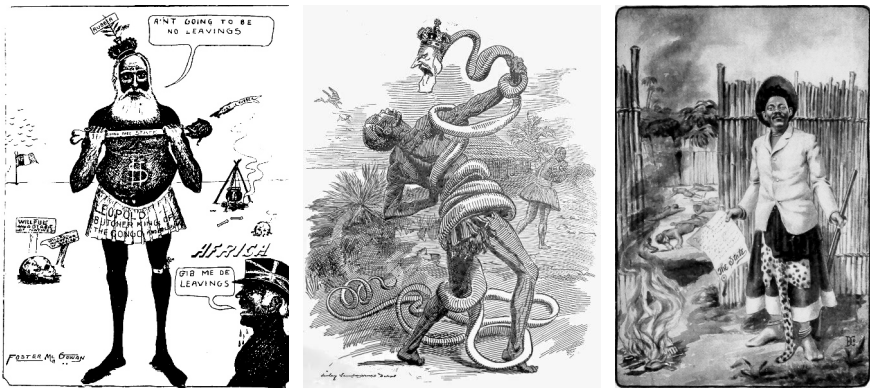
'More about the Congo', *The Voice of the Negro* IV, no. 1 (1907), 15. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd. 32044051702538; Cartoon by Edward L. Sambourne, *The Punch*, 28 November 1906, 389. https:// archive.org/details/punchvol130a131lemouoft/page/388/mode/2up; Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, page after 24.

Such images of the "roi-sauvage"[132] suggest that the Congo Scandal was understood as a corrosion of alterity, the collapse of the absolute counter-world that established the negative identity of the imagined community of 'Brightest Europe'. As a later chapter discusses in more detail, some secular Congo reformers such as Morel and G. Stanley

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130   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 49 ('seat', 'wraith'), 56 ('forgot'); Bass, "Imperial Alterity", subtitle ('sin').

131   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351 ('Africanised'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 213; Morel, *Great Britain*, 246; Robert E. Park, "Is the Congo State an International Outlaw?," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 14 (all 'monster').

132   Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel*, 303. Gehrmann has identified cartoons with a similar visual setting from an Italian, a Dutch and a Belgian newspaper, see ibid., 303–07.

Hall saw this particular 'sin' of the Free State reinforced by a broader false premise of contemporary colonial policy, precisely through the misguided programs of Christian and Western education.[133]

In this, the reformers heavily relied upon the intellectual influence of Mary Kingsley, who had once declared the "missionary-made man" to be "the curse" of West Africa.[134] The confounded and cursing in-between status of the Westernised African found particular expression in his ridiculed 'failed' attempt to imitate a European appearance, a hint at his only thin "'veneer of civilisation'", as Morel suggested. "His adoption of European clothes causes him to be looked upon partly with suspicion, partly with ridicule", and "[h]is unfortunate habit of adopting the latest vagaries of European fashions [...] is the butt of constant sarcasm".[135] In its journal, the Aborigines' Protection Society showed a similar refrain about the "showy dressing" of the educated West African and his desire to imitate English manners. Moreover, the motif was also reproduced by a drawing in Twain's Congo pamphlet, which depicted Mulunba of the 'Zappo-Zapps' wearing a Leopard-fur skirt combined with European hat and jacket and a modern rifle (Fig. 6).[136]

Moreover, in the case of the brutal and atrocious Free State regime, the opposed 'Europeanisation' dogma in colonial policy had resulted in a particularly worrying process of 'cultural amalgamation'. After all, the political threat of Léopold's 'cannibal army' was its reliance on "men of the Stone Age, armed with the weapons of the nineteenth century", as Doyle once wrote. Léopold's "striking force", the Bishop of Oxford decried, was composed of "savages, in many cases cannibals, armed with weapons of precision, with all the force of civilisation put at the disposal of their own untamed and savage passions".[137] Thus, Léopold had made the Congo much more dangerous, as Morel asserted; the "one lesson learned from contact with European 'civilisation'" was for the Congolese "savages" the "improvement in the art of killing their neighbours".[138]

In the Congo, the colonisers "have grafted upon the native's failings [...] the worst vices" of Europe, Morel wrote. On "a natural [...] savagery", the leader of the British reform campaign asserted, "the authorities have grafted the vices of the European savage". In this way, they have "converted the Congo territories into an earthly hell for African humanity, and have raised a monster which is already outgrowing, and will one day entirely outgrow, their control". Such cultural monstrosity had no right to exist, the reformers agreed. The Free State was "a monster which should not be allowed to live", American reformers wrote, and the European Powers responsible for its creation should "have strangled the monster in its cradle", as Doyle proclaimed.[139]

133   See Morel, *Nigeria*, 11–12 ('identity'); Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 706. See chapter 4.3 for more details.

134   Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, 661 ('missionary-made');

135   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 230.

136   Aborigines' Protection Society, quoted in Nworah, "Aborigines' Protection Society", 86 ('showy').

137   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 10 ('Stone Age'); The Bishop of Oxford [Francis Paget], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8. ('striking force', etc.).

138   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351.

139   Ibid. ('failings'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 124 ('natural', 'authorities', 'converted'); Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Correction of a Misunderstanding," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 6–7, here 6 ('lived'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 7 ('strangled').

A 'triumph of the wilderness': the erosion of superiority

The ideological legitimation of racist discrimination always included processes of differentiation and inferiorisation.[140] As the previous chapter has described, Stanley had created 'the Congo' as radically different and naturally inferior to 'European civilisation' and 'the white race'. The account of the epic conquest of the Congolese space and people through the heroic white imperialist symbolised the paramount position of the power of 'Brightest Europe' about 'Darkest Africa'. In the second dimension of the discursive crisis of racist representation, the Congo opponents extended their identification of the corrosion of cultural difference between the 'civilised' Free State and its 'savage' surroundings to the equally scandalous exposure of a fundamental weakness of the colonial state, its agents and the 'civilisation' they represented.

As chapter 3.1 has discussed, narrating the submission of Congolese nature as the physical condition of its eternal darkness symbolically contained Europe's entitlement to dominate Central Africa. 'Bula Matari', the breaker of the rocks, became the nickname for the 'empire builder' Stanley, who used dynamite to impose a colonial network of roads upon the defying Congolese landscape. Besides that, it became a synonym for the Free State and herewith linguistically comprised the promise of civilisation's power to control the Congo. More than 20 years after Stanley's first journey through the continent, and more than a decade after the formation the Free State, Joseph Conrad literally described the illusionary scope of these pledges from the optimistic time of exploration.

In the surroundings of the colonial capital Stanley founded, Conrad's protagonist Marlow quickly unmasks the myth of 'Bula Matari' as a farce. While he observes some explosive works indeed, these are nothing more than "objectless blasting" without any lasting effect: "No change appeared on the face of the rock". Such a passage was an explicit metaphor for the greater powerlessness of the colonial state. Deeper in the interior of the continent, Conrad's readers find the Congolese jungles that Stanley had so proudly 'penetrated' with his columns impressive and mighty like ever before. The abundance of tropical nature emphasised the insignificance of the isolated European pioneers: "Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high [...]. It made you feel very small, very lost", the British captain Marlow noted. Nature in the Free State was far from being reduced to the "shackled form of a conquered monster" one can find in Europe, but still "a thing monstrous and free".[141]

The bad state and weakness of the colony are mirrored in the "pieces of decaying machinery" that Marlow comes upon on his journey. European technology was not merely incapable of subduing African nature, but it was broken and corroded by the environmental impact. A "railway-truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air" which "looked as dead as the carcass of some animal", "a stack of rusty rails", a pile of "imported drainage-pipes" in which there "wasn't one that was not broken, a steamship

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140   See Hund, *Rassismus*, 91.
141   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 15 ('objectless', 'change'), 35 ('lost'), 36 ('shackled', 'monstrous').

laying damaged "at the bottom of the river", "all the things broken" at a colonial station, were symbols for civilisation's failure in the Congo despite its technological advances.[142]

Moreover, the health status of the proud European conquerors of 'Darkest Africa' was devastating. Stanley had, as discussed in the previous chapter, extensively described the impure and infectious Congolese climate and the forbidding atmosphere of horror and loneliness. He had nonetheless also embodied European confidence that the 'white body' and the 'civilised mind' were able to resist and colonise even in this most hostile region of the earth. The reality was extremely different, though. Fever, dysentery and other diseases frequently plagued the undernourished Europeans in the Congo and became prominent themes in the travelogues of colonial pioneers starting in the 1890s.[143]

"I lay sick and helpless on my bed of grass, suffering almost all the horrors of the damned", Ward noted in his second book on his experiences with the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, for instance. Conrad eventually made the physical and psychological deterioration of Europeans in the Congo a central theme of his Congo literature, as expressed in the inglorious death of his fallen hero Kurtz, who was ultimately carried off by a deadly fever that shattered his starving body and mind.[144]

John Harris, the British reform activist and former missionary, suggested in a report from a journey to the Congo that "all whites going to West Africa should brace themselves to the duty of visiting the cemeteries", although it "may be a melancholy undertaking", he added. Indeed, for many of the missionaries, traders and colonial agents that had invaded the Congo after Stanley's 'exploration', their 'journey' ended less than heroically at the graveyard.[145] Of the 263 Europeans agents establishing the Congo colony between 1879 and 1885 under the command of Stanley, 24 died through sickness. In 1890, 15% of European officials still died annually, while the death rates among militaries and missionaries were significantly above average. For Victorian evangelicals, the Congo became the deadliest destination in the 'white man's grave' of Africa and gained the macabre reputation as being a "shortcut to heaven". Only six of the first 35 Congo Balolo missionaries survived until 1900.[146]

The experience of the physical weakness and catastrophic mortality among Europeans in the Congo exposed the shallowness of Victorian beliefs in the resilience of the 'imperial white race'. "Africa – always cruel – has taken them in the very flower of

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142 Ibid., 15 ('decaying', 'railway', 'rusty'), 16 ('drainage-pipes'), 21 ('river'); Conrad, "Outpost of Progress" 125 ('all the things'). That the actual condition of the Congo River marine was devastating and for Edgar Canisius was similarly a prime illustration of his initially quoted assessment of the huge gap between phrasing and achievements in the Congo: Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 69.

143 See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 29–30.

144 Herbert Ward, *My Life with Stanley's Rear Guard* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Company, 1891), 47 ('sick'), [an excerpt that had also been quoted by Burroughs]; see Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 69.

145 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 75 ('cemeteries').

146 Eugene M. Harrison, *Giants of the Missionary Trail* (Chicago: Scripture press Foundation, 1954), 59 ('grave', 'shortcut'), who also called the Congo the deadliest African missionary destination. For the death rate among Stanley's officers, see Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 306 [table]; among European officials in general by 1890, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 107; among Force Publique officers, see ibid., 68; among Congo Balolo missionaries, see Conley, *Drumbeats Changed the World*, 76.

their manhood and womanhood", Harris noted about the many tombs of Europeans, a formulation that emphasises that these fatalities were also conceived as a collective European defeat in the struggle with African nature.[147]

Many reformers soon admitted their conviction that while East and South Africa might eventually become a "white man's land", the Congo "can never be so". In contrast to the message of Stanley's optimistic imperial narrative, the Congo Basin would remain a "Black man's land", forever impregnable for permanent 'white' settlement or labour.[148] As such, the Congo became a worrying reminder of the looming edges of 'white' racial superiority and political supremacy that had become the subject of a thriving 'white crisis' debate in the late 19th and early 20th century, ever since the Australian historian Charles Pearson had warned of the inevitable limits of 'white' proliferation in tropical climates.[149]

Moreover, in contrast to Stanley's claims, Conrad denied that the arrival of European envoys had effectively initiated historical progress and dispersed any 'epistemological darkness'. The trading post that Conrad only ironically called the 'Outpost of Progress' ridiculed such naming through the underlying motifs of stagnation, triviality and idleness. It was "perfectly insignificant" and "useless", Conrad noted, just like the two men that equipped it.[150]

In contrast to Kayerts and Carlier from the 'Outpost', the character Kurtz was initially created as a personification of European culture, reason, science and morality. The famous ivory trader was a "universal genius" and the only coloniser who had arrived with "moral ideas of some sort" in the Congo, Conrad wrote.[151] However, the expectation of this "emissary of pity and science and progress" that the superior cultural status of the 'white race' "must necessarily", as he believed, lead to a social position of mastery that would give him "the might of a deity" among the Congolese 'savages', was declared an illusion. Only on the surface had Kurtz and the European 'civilisation' he symbolised reached a godlike position of power. The 'tribes' surrounding the Inner Station "followed" and "adored him", their 'chiefs' "would crawl" in front of him. "'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my –' everything belonged to him", Kurtz believed. However,

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147   Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 75 ('cruel'). It took until 1897 for the bite of an infected female anopheles to be identified as the malaria vector instead of the long blamed *mal aire* of Africa. See Conley, *Drumbeats Changed the World*, 78.

148   Private letter of George Grenfell, 1903, quoted in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 482–4, here 482 ('never'); Morel to Johnston, quoted in Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 65; Morel, *Great Britain*, 28 ('Black man's land'). Also see 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; John H. Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1913), 83; Booker T. Washington, "The Future of Congo Reform," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 9–10, here 9.

149   See Pearson, *National Life and Character*, 31–90; Bonnett, "Crises of Whiteness", 9–11; Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 75–94; chapter 1.

150   Conrad, "Outpost of Progress" 149 ('useless'), 158 ('insignificant').

151   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 32 ('moral'), 46 ('universal'), 49 ('Europe'). Kurtz was a "prodigy" (25), a great painter, musician and poet, (see 47 and 58).

the surficial obeisance, the fantasy of lordship and the mastery of civilisation over savagery were a mere illusion. It was a distortion of reality that would make "the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places". Quite in contrast, the "powers of darkness" had since long "claimed him for their own", enchanted by "the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness". According to Conrad, Kurtz, like the Free State and European culture he symbolised, was captured by "the heart of a conquering darkness".[152]

Nothing symbolises that scandalous reversal of power relations between Europe and Africa in Conrad's narrative more symbolically than the relation between Kurtz and the mysterious African woman he introduces as his 'intended'. As in the exploration narrative of Stanley, the African space and its spiritual core are here imagined as a female body. Kurtz' intended is "like the wilderness itself", Conrad remarked, "the image of its tenebrous and passionate soul". However, far from being a submissive, sleeping 'virgin' waiting for the 'penetration' and 'insemination' of the imperial male, this Africa/woman was mature, self-assured, dominant and commanding, as Conrad described in detail: "She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her". Additionally, there was no doubt who 'belonged' to whom: "The wilderness [...] had taken [Kurtz], loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation". But in contrast to Kurtz' patriarchal habitus, his engagement with the wilderness did not create a proud representative of imperial masculinity; rather, it reduced him to a child: the 'wilderness' "had patted him on the head, [...] it had caressed him, and—lo!—he had withered [...] He was its spoiled and pampered favourite".[153]

Chapter 4.2 shows in detail how British and American reformers were outraged by the revelations about the Free State's failure to control an increasingly rebellious population. Hence, it discusses how the discursive crisis of racist representation that was expressed in the incapacity to honour the pledge of conquering the Congolese darkness was related to a political crisis of white supremacy on the African continent and beyond. For Conrad, however, the weakness of the European colonisers in relation to the Congo's 'primeval' nature and its 'savage' inhabitants was always, as stated above, a symbol for their defeat by their own dark interior. The true 'heart of darkness' that Conrad approached on his literary journey was not the interior of the Congolese 'jungles' but the instincts and lust that slumber under the thin veneer of civilisation and each 'civilised subject'. The lack of control over the external (African) darkness was a symbol of the ultimately even more frightening loss of control over this inner darkness. The real changes "take place inside", the author hinted at the very beginning of Marlow's journey.[154] "The wilderness had whispered to [Kurtz] things about himself", Conrad later noted, "and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating". In fact, it had seduced and "beguiled" the European pioneer "by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions", as one can read. Hence, Kurtz had

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152   Ibid., 25 ('emissary'), 43 ('powers', 'claimed'), 48 ('My', 'burst'), 50 ('must, 'might'), 56 ('followed', 'adored'), 74 ('heavy', 'conquering').
153   Ibid., 48 ('embraced', 'patted'), 60 ('image', 'superb'), 61 ('itself').
154   Ibid., 11 ('inside').

not only 'gone native', been absorbed by the African wilderness that surrounds him, but had 'gone wild', allowing "his unlawful soul" to go "beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations.[155]

Moreover, while the alliances with the 'forces of savagery' and evil discussed above were conceptualised as a conscious approach towards Congolese darkness by the Free State, Conrad suggested that this process of 'becoming the other' was also a sign of civilisation's essential weakness. Ultimately, Kurtz lost any "restraint in the gratification of his various lusts", and he lost his identity in the "inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself". The European pioneers, who had come like Stanley to 'conquer' and 'civilise' 'Darkest Africa', had themselves become the powerless object the external and internal 'darkness' that had seduced, subdued and incorporated the raiding Europeans. It was "a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion" of the African continent, Conrad concluded, and a shocking "triumph for the wilderness".[156]

A 'civilised savagery': the failure of modernity

Finally, the discursive impact of the doubts about 'racial' and cultural distinctiveness and superiority was intensified through the interpretation of the Congo Scandal as a symbol and symptom of a broader intrinsic cultural crisis of Western civilisation. Modern myths of the empire that Victorian literature had evoked around the heroic African adventurer Stanley and the public admiration for the philanthropic civiliser Léopold had contained the promise that "chivalric romance" and "the Ideal" had not been fully exorcised from a century of "materialism and steam". Beyond question, the reality of murder, torture and exploitation in the name of civilisation, deeply unsettled those Europeans and Americans who had personally, politically or discursively affiliated with the romantic period of exploration and the movement of civilising the Congo.[157]

The failure of Congo colonialism to meet these lofty expectations was a central theme of Spender's reflection on the 'Great Congo Iniquity': "While we have been dreaming of progress and benevolence", his article continued, "there has grown up among us a strange product". The "magnitude" of offences in the Congo pointed to the emergence of "nothing less than a civilised savagery, infinitely more dangerous and terrible than primitive barbarism", the liberal journalist asserted.[158] In a similar tone, Morel suggested that Léopold had introduced the "European savage" or a "civilised barbarism" to the Congo that was no less atrocious than the slave trade of the Arabs, "these semi-barbarians" that it had replaced. [159]

Thus, there was an additional frame of interpretation opened up by the reform movement in which the violence of colonialism in the Congo was defined as a "new thing", a "new savagery", hence a phenomenon of European modernity, neither bound

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155   See ibid., 57–58. Morel once extended this metaphor when he described the Congo Scandal as a "cesspool of iniquity and naked human passions", Morel, *Red Rubber*, 127.

156   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 57 ('restraint'), 66 ('inconceivable')

157   Stead, "Mr. H. M. Stanley", 20.

158   Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 45.

159   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 124 ('European'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 84 and 210 ('civilised'), 84 ('semi').

to the European past nor the African present. According to Spender, this new, civilised savagery was "born of the union between greed and science".[160] Indeed, within the international reform campaign, the motif of the intrinsic brutality of Western civilisation was generally conveyed through the disclosure of the destructive potential of capitalism and technology and thus material progress as such.

The transformations in the political economy of the Free State since the 1890s form a central aspect of all three dimensions of the Congo Scandal discussed in this study.[161] In the representational dimension of the Congo Scandal, many reformers interpreted the exposed Congolese economy as a sweeping sign of an on-going aberration of economic and political culture at the centre of the worrying 'civilised savagery' that was expressed through the rising dominance of a state-controlled monopoly capitalism, the intermixture of political and business milieus, and the dominance of high finance over the production process and the state.

Imperial capitalism at the turn of the 20th century was at a crossroads. Despite the ideological framing of New Imperialism as a project based on the principles of free trade, European economies steadily evolved towards the centralisation of capital and the establishment of monopoly-controlled economies. Often, this implied a substantial involvement of the state as a separate economic agent. The economic transformations in the Congo, which had "been appropriated by the Government" and "either been farmed out to monopolistic companies for exploitation or [...] retained by King Leopold as his private domain" until there was "no longer freedom of trade" nor an "open market", as William Morrison asserted, was in this context apparently received as a particularly ruthless spurning of the principles of the Gladstonian laissez-faire capitalism so powerfully represented by the Berlin Congo Act of 1885.[162]

The territories in the Congo Basin "which were supposed to be dedicated forever to free trade, have been given over to shameless monopolies", Stead portentously asserted. "Any '"commercial' relationship between the European and the African has been eliminated as a factor in the political conception of its European rulers", the former trading clerk Morel sorrowfully diagnosed. For a devoted free-trade activist like Morel or his patron, the merchant John Holt, the significant government involvement in the Free State economy, the trading monopolies and the heavy taxation of private enterprise formed the practical as well as philosophical "kernel" of the Congo question. However,

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160   Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 45.

161   As chapter 4.2 reveals, reformers of all ideological streams generally agreed that atrocities against the colonised Africans, "the lash, the raids of soldiers, the terror of the villagers, the weighing of baskets of rubber brought in by trembling natives, the scourging with the chicotte, of hippopotamus hide, the burning of villages, indiscriminate massacre, the severed hands, the excesses of cannibalism" (Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 8 ['lash']) but also the repression towards concurring colonisers and independent traders such as Stokes or Rabinek were structurally related to the mode of ivory and rubber production implemented by the Free State administration. Moreover, the restrictions of free trade not only challenged the political legitimation of the Free State as a collective and international colony but endangered, as chapter 5.2 discusses, the promised universal economic benefits for the international imperial community.

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

even evangelical and humanitarian reformers heavily opposed the radical restrictions of free trade through the Free State as fundamental political deterioration.[163]

Furthermore, American Congo opponents, in particular, expressed fierce outrage at how the Free State's king-sovereign commingled his roles as head of state and capitalist entrepreneur as much as the resulting style of governance. Park called Léopold a "business monarch" who ruled the Congo "rather as a business concern than a political organization", while his successor John Daniels complained about the Belgian "business king and his business people". Richard Harding Davis similarly asserted that the "Congo Free State is only a great trading house", and that Léopold "is not a monarch. He is a shopkeeper".[164]

Indeed, through the high involvement of the state in the concessionary trusts and his direct exploitation of the Domaine de la Couronne, Léopold had become the central economic actor in the Congo. This "strange, fantastic, and ominous" figure of a head of state who "unites in himself the political and social prestige of a reigning monarch with the vast material power of a multimillionaire" was for Park a sign of the ever-blurring boundaries between the economic and political sphere in a society which had reached a problematic new "business age".[165]

However, this assessed commingling of politics and economy, of the realms of the ideal and the material, was not only defined by increasing economic activity and profit-seeking of government institutions symbolised by the "king who is capitalist" but by a similar worrying gain in power of 'money' and 'finance'. This situation was caused by Léopold's engagement in what the editorial secretary of the American reform association called "the great game of high finance", that is, the approach of the financial markets in search of credit for the initially chronically underfunded colonial state and investments into the monopolistic trusts. Léopold "has gone openly into stockholders, the money market", where he sought "money and the power money gives", Park analysed.[166]

As a result, however, Léopold and the Free State had allegedly become puppets of the financial market themselves. It was repeatedly emphasised that modern trusts and syndicates like those operating in the Congo and the capital and banks behind them were "generally strong enough in influence at home and power abroad to menace any administration". According to Spender, the 'civilised savagery' he decried was "fortified by a moneyed command of brainpower in every country". However, "while other countries have shown an increasing disposition to take from capital its control of the industries", Park asserted, "in Belgium we may see a country where capital, represented

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163   Morel, "'Commercial' Aspect", 448 ('relationship'); Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Economic Aspect*, subtitle ('kernel'). For John Holt, see 'Treatment of Natives in the Congo', *The Standard*, 16 May 1902, 6: for a prominent evangelical missionary on the 'free trade question, see the speech of Morrison quoted above; for a leading humanitarian, see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 298–302.

164   Park, "King in Business", 627 ('business monarch'), 632 ('concern'); Daniels, "Congo Question", 901 ('business king'); Davis, *The Congo*, 94 ('trading house'), 95 ('shopkeeper'). Also see 'Address of Mr. E.D. Morel', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 232.

165   Park, "King in Business", 624 ('strange', 'unites'), 633 ('age').

166   Ibid., 624 ('capitalist'), 625 ('game', 'power'), 637 ('stockholders').

by the king, has taken possession of the government". Of the "the results of this policy the Congo Free State is, however, the capital illustration", he concluded.[167]

The increasing control of the industrial sector and political institutions through finance was an important aspect of the cultural crisis beyond the Congo Scandal. In the big picture, Congo reformers interpreted it as the defeat of an allegedly productive industrial capitalism and honest trade by a merely destructive financial capitalism. This "far-reaching change" of commercial methods, John Harris assessed, was essentially defined by an exchange of economic actors. The traditional colonial merchant who heroically engaged in exotic trade on the frontiers of civilisation was a romanticised character of the colonial imagination. In the Congo, one could witness his replacement by new, more ruthless actors; Harris argued: "As I have already pointed out, the old-time merchant is giving place to the highly organized syndicate, which possesses neither heart nor conscience".[168]

These 'organised trusts' in the Congo were "buccaneers [...] with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe", Conrad wrote. The stereotypical counterpart to the old-school independent merchant was the impersonal and unscrupulous syndicate or trust and also the small "clique"[169] (as Morel frequently named them) of rich and intriguing stock-speculators that control the trusts – and the Congo State: the "few millionaire subordinates and a handful of shareholders" that had invested in the state or the concessionary companies "for the purpose of speculation on the Brussels and Antwerp Stock Exchanges". In contrast to the traditional merchants, these speculators are described as lacking any higher moral standards, their objects "are purely financial", and they seek only "a rapid accumulation of riches. Since they measure "success merely by the quotations of the Antwerp rubber market" and they run their business in the Free State "merely as a commercial speculation", they made the African "a slave to minister to the requirements of speculators", no matter how ruthless and brutal the methods had to be.[170]

Even the "slave-raiding, slave-dealing Arab was, at least, constructive", Morel once wrote: "He destroyed, but to build again. He was a coloniser – a ruthless one, but still a coloniser". However, the Congolese capital investors were "not attached to the soil" and were "absentees". They simply drained "the life-blood of thousands of miserable negroes" to "spend those riches out of Africa", Morel bristled with anger. In contrast to the trope of an 'insemination' of 'virgin' and 'fertile' African soil through the 'penetration' of a European trader and coloniser, as Stanley's Congo narrative sketched it, the

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167   Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 267 ('influence'); Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 45 ('fortified'); Park, "King in Business", 633 ('disposition').

168   Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 267.

169   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 30 ('buccaneers'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 204; Morel, *British Case*, x; Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 6; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 62 (all 'clique').

170   Morel, *Great Britain*, xiii ('millionaire'); Morel, *British Case*, x–xi ('purpose'), xiii ('slave'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 88 ('purely', 'rapid'); Park, "Real Issue", 1 ('success'); Grogan and Sharp, *From the Cape to Cairo*, 154 ('merely').

Congolese stockholders and consortia created no value but only parasitically lived on the wealth of the Congolese resources.[171]

The logic of this line of criticism culminated in the characterisation of the Congo as "a vampire growth, intended to suck the country dry", a "vampire State" and the "vampire of the nations". Vampirism was a plurivalent metaphor in the reform discourse. It not only related the Free State to the gothic aspect of the imperial Congo stereotype but was also used to describe an allegedly boundless financial capital that only served the personal greed of distant speculators, bankers and financiers. The emerging patterns of modern antisemitism proved that this metaphor was a powerful discursive tool to arouse a regressive opposition to capitalist modernity.[172]

In this tradition, the reformers did not use the vampire-metaphor, as Marx had done, to illustrate the "appalling nature of capital" to feed upon living labour but to artificially distinguish between good (constructive) and evil (parasitic) modes of capitalist exploitation. Some insights into the correspondents of rubber growers left Roger Casement outraged about "the dastardly mind inhabiting the bosom of the Stock Exchange". The "financial 'soul' of this country is a thing to kick and spit upon", he added. And like in its antisemitic context, the reform trope did not primarily target the (financial) game, but its players, the "financial vampires" or "vampire groups of financial associates" that secretly controlled the colonial state and economy in the Congo. The most radical expression of the 'blood-sucking' and money-grubbing capitalist behind the Congo atrocities was, however, always the "Vampire" King Léopold himself, who fed upon the blood of the Congo and the Congolese.[173]

For the Congo reformers, the exceptionally voracious character of Léopold was expressed by "a shameless and unscrupulous clutching after gold", a new and worrying feature for an aristocrat. "Lust of conquest is royal; kings have always exercised that stately vice", Mark Twain similarly elaborated, "but lust of money – lust of shillings – lust of nickels – lust of dirty coin, not for the nation's enrichment but for the king's alone – this is new". This "awful king, this pitiless and blooddrenched king" was the "sole butcher for personal gain findable in all his caste", the American novelist added.[174]

With these riches, the king "whose private life has been a public scandal", as reformers felt obliged to point out, financed what they described as decadent debauchery, his

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171   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 88 ('slave-raiding', 'destroyed', 'attached', 'spend'); Morel, *Great Britain*, xiii ('absentees'); [Morel], "The Congo Scandal VI", 228 ('life-blood').

172   Stead, "Leopold to Be Hanged?", 246 ('State'), 247 ('nations'). Also see Williams, "Open Letter". The notion of Grogan is reproduced in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 257 and Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 206. At least in the case of Robert Park, the influence of a pseudo-romantic critique of progress and anti-Semitic attacks against financial capitalism he had absorbed during his doctoral studies in Germany through the lectures of the historian Georg Friedrich Knapp and the anti-Semitic peasant novels of Wilhelm von Polenz is more than obvious (see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago", 113).

173   Mark Neocleous, "The Political Economy of the Dead Marx's Vampires," *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 4 (2003): 684; Casement to Morel, quoted in Andrew Porter, "Sir Roger Casement and the International Humanitarian Movement," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 29, no. 2 (2001), 66 ('soul'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 160 ('financial vampires'); Stead, "Leopold to Be Hanged?", 246 ('vampire groups'); Park, "Terrible Story", 772; Park, "Blood-Money", 61 (both 'Vampire').

174   Park, "King in Business", 633 ('shameless'); Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 41 ('Lust', 'awful').

chateaux and palaces in Belgium, luxury estates at the Cote d'Azur, and especially his young affairs. Léopold, it is argued, had spent "untold thousands upon the women of the half-world who chance to please his fancy – the Queens of the Congo, whose jewels are bought with human lives".[175] This imagery of a "money crazy" Léopold was visualised in various contemporary caricatures like the one published in Twain's pamphlet (Fig. 7). It juxtaposed a scene of colonial violence, two kneeling Black persons attacked with a stick by a man in European clothes, with the drawing of a well-dressed Léopold, recognisable by his archetypical long white beard, sitting at a desk and avariciously guarding coins and bags of money that symbolise the richness gained from the exploitation of the Congo.[176]

However, not every Congo opponent was willing to reduce the negative forces of capitalism in the Free State to the suppression of commercial freedom or the character of a few exceptionally avaricious agents. The former Free State officer Canisius once suggested that the Congolese had fallen victim to the "white man's greed" in general. For Morel, the "cupidity, hypocrisy, cruelty, and lust", negative qualities that others embodied in the distortion of Léopold, were what he called the "vices" intrinsic to modern civilisation. And as Spender rightly suggested, Conrad's Congo prose was a radical literary exposure of the "insatiable commercialism" behind the 'civilised savagery' in the Congo.[177]

Conrad relentlessly exposed how greedy and ruthless profit-seeking had entirely superseded any humanitarian idealism that might have once existed in the Free State. Repelled by the "rot let loose in print and talk" in Europe that celebrated a philanthropic pretence, Conrad's alter ego Marlow felt obliged to remind his listeners that the company he had signed up for "was run for profit", even before he had ever set foot in the Free State. Once in the Congo, Marlow soon realises that a "taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse". Not only the absent shareholders or the capitalist king but every European 'pioneer of civilisation' is described by Conrad/Marlow as steeped in personal greed: "The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it".[178]

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175   See Morel, *Red Rubber*, 127; Park, "King in Business", 633 ('scandal'); Park, "Blood-Money", 69 ('Queens'). Park did not hesitate to spread a common but dubious story of those days, which suggested that it was one of Léopold's liaisons mocked as his "Queens of the Congo" who primarily came up with the idea of the notorious concession system to finance her greed for jewellery. He probably took up this topos from a "violent attack on the private life of King Leopold" in a Belgian newspaper in 1906 that was discussed in the American press as well, in which it was claimed the king was "using his money wrung from the Congo […] to satisfy the caprices" of Caroline Lacroix, the latest of his affairs. According to the press, the Belgian Socialists used the affair to "declare that the King is unfit to govern" since he was "in the hands of a rapacious and ambitious woman" ('Young Morganatic Wife of King Leopold Stirs Up a Nest of Trouble in Belgium', *The San Francisco Call*, 26 August 1906, 28).

176   Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 41 ('money-crazy').

177   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 78 ('greed'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351 ('cupidity'); Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 46 ('insatiable').

178   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 12 ('rot', 'profit'), 23 ('taint', 'ivory'). Later, the English missionary Scrivener would report from the Domaine de la Couronne that "the one and only reason for it all

Fig. 7 "My yearly income from the Congo is millions of guineas."
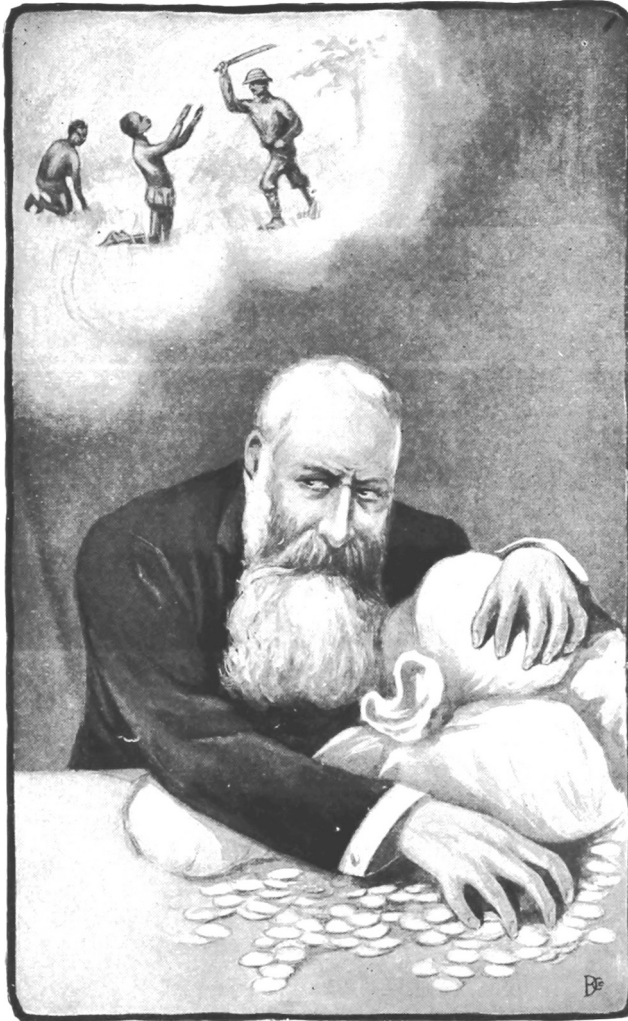
Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, page after 28.

Even the character of Kurtz at the Inner Station, sketched by Conrad as a person-ification of European culture and morality, later follows the call of the elephant tusks: "Evidently the appetite for more ivory had got the better of the – what shall I say – less material aspirations", Marlow assessed. The author called storehouses in *An Outpost of Progress* "the fetish" because they contained "the spirit of civilization", as he suggested.

was rubber. It was the theme of every conversation": Scrivener, quoted in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 52. "Rubber is his god!", Morel wrote about the average Congo coloniser in Morel, *Red Rubber*, 96.

Profit, it appeared to Conrad, had since long become an end in itself. Western civilisation as a whole had raised material profit as its real god. In sharp contrast to Morel, for instance, who still believed in (free) trade as a civilising tool, for the pessimist novelist, the old imperialist proverb "that civilisation follows trade" had become nothing more than a sarcastic way of ridiculing the work of "the Great Civilising Company" at the end of his first Congo novella. Confronted with the profane reality of colonialism in the Congo, Marlow felt entitled to put the old "noble words" about an idealistic civilising mission "for an everlasting rest in the dust-bin of progress, amongst all the sweepings and, figuratively speaking, all the dead cats of civilization".[179]

Such motifs point to a fundamental disillusionment with the European modernisation narrative. Nonetheless, Conrad, like Park, was not a progressive promoter of anti-capitalism or social reform, but primarily a deeply disillusioned romantic novelist with little confidence in the potential to obliterate the evils of the world he portrayed. He believed more in moral regression than cultural progress. It is "no small burden" to share "consciousness of the universe in which we live", he wrote in a public letter devoted to the Congo reform campaign. The fact that "the conscience of Europe, which seventy years ago put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds, tolerates the Congo State to-day" tended to negate the existence of any superior universal cultural community as such: "One is tempted to exclaim (as poor Thiers did in 1871), 'Il n'y a pas d'Europe'".[180]

Conrad was beyond doubt the most outstanding illustration of the discursive meddling between the Congo reform debate and a broader fin de siècle cultural pessimism that grasped various European and American artists, intellectuals and politicians on the eve of the 20th century.[181] However, Conrad was not the only Congo reformer who related the incidents in the Free State to signs of a general moral and cultural decline of what was understood as an increasingly materialistic and decadent modernity.

Arthur Conan Doyle, like Conrad a figurehead of Britain's late-Victorian, neo-romantic literature, was similarly worried how the Congo Scandal cast a "strange light upon the real value of those sonorous words Christianity and civilisation". In retrospect, in the speech quoted at the beginning of this study, he described a deep philosophical and personal convulsion in which classifications such as 'whiteness', 'progress', 'civilisation' and 'Christianity', and the racist imagined communities of superior human beings they described, were on the way to becoming meaningless.[182]

Morel was similarly shocked how "at the close of a century memorable for material progress and moral reform, a slave State has arisen in Darkest Africa". Even such a fundamentally optimistic British activist at times admitted that the public seemed to be "suffering" from one of these "waves of materialism and indifferentism which sweep over the intellectual world from time to time", although he believed these waves to be

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179   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 50 ('Evidently', 'everlasting'), Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 134–35 ('fetish'), 169 ('Company').
180   Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 69–70, here 70.
181   See chapter 1.
182   Arthur C. Doyle, introduction to *Great Britain and the Congo*, by Edmund D. Morel (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1909), xii ('strange'); see speech of Doyle, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22. Also see chapter 1.

"periodical" and already abating at the time he wrote.[183] Further, Robert Park expressed his deep "melancholy" resulting from "that terrible process of civilization" he could observe in the Congo, and he asserted that the Congo atrocities were the sign of a "blind and well-nigh fanatical belief in material progress for its own sake". Moreover, for the president of the American reform association Hall, it was "not pessimistic to realize that our civilization is not only a doom and disease when forced precociously upon lower races" but "in general has a dark as well as a bright side".[184]

For prominent reformers, it was precisely the systematic bloodshed in the Congo that signified a striking disparity between technological and cultural 'evolution'. "What is progress?" Doyle asked his readers. "Is it to run a little faster in a motor-car, to listen to gabble in a gramophone? – these are the toys of life. But if progress is a spiritual thing, then we do not progress. [...]. We live in a time of rush, but do not call it progress. The story of the Congo has made the idea a little absurd". Morel and Park expressed similar consternation: "The out husk of civilisation no doubt exists in the Congo State", the former admitted, and listed railways, steamboats, telegraph lines and buildings, but beneath "there flourishes a foul and sanguinary despotism". While the Free State was "[a]rmed with all the machinery of modern civilization", the latter agreed, it had only established what he called a "tinsel civilisation".[185]

Hence, the technological achievements that had been in times of Stanley's 'exploring' and 'civilizing' expeditions celebrated as a marker of cultural superiority became, at the beginning of the 20th century, ambivalent, at times openly negative symbols. As was initially remarked, science was, beyond capitalist greed, the second component of the 'civilised savagery' Spender identified. It was "armed in its own work with all the machinery of destruction that science has given to the modern man", the British journalist asserted. Stanley had, as the previous chapter has shown, celebrated the new automatic weapons he carried to the Congo. Reformers' references to the "usage of modern weapons of destruction" or the "machinery of death" by the Free State soldiers and sentries, or to their instruction in the "science of forest warfare", the "science of slaughter" or "the art of scientific destruction of human life" point to a new concern about the deadly component of modern technology.[186]

Moreover, the 'machine', the icon of industrial modernity, evolved into a strictly negative metaphor in the reform discourse. Remarks about the "judicial and administrative machinery" of the Free State, or about its "elaborate" or "gigantic machinery" of propagandistic agitation were used to indicate the immense challenge the humanitarian activists had to confront in the public relations struggle against Léopold's admin-

183   [Morel], "The Congo Scandal II", 488 ('close'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 6 ('suffering', 'periodical').

184   Park, "Recent Atrocities", 1328 ('melancholy'); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 4 ('blind'); G. Stanley Hall, "The Relations between Lower and Higher Races," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 17, January meeting (1903): 12 ('pessimistic').

185   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 86 ('progress'); [Morel], "The Congo Scandal VI", 228 ('husk'); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 4 ('machinery', 'tinsel').

186   Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 45 ('armed'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 351 ('usage', 'forest', 'slaughter'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 112 ('death'); Morel, *British Case*, 9 ('destruction').

istration.[187] Morel and Park also denounced the violent state itself as "machine-like", "a great and organized machine", "a formidable engine of oppression", "a mighty engine constructed for the sole purpose of exploiting the country and the people", a "vast, impersonal machine", a "machine, huge, and grinding tirelessly night and day". Such mechanical imagery shows the persistent scepticism about the disintegrating and alienating dynamics of an artificial and mechanical modernity that reformers saw revealed by the Congo Scandal, "steeled, against all human feeling of pity", operating with "passionless regularity", and "disregarding every human and personal relation of the men it employs".[188]

Thus, the "epistemological, existential and even ontological doubt" about the dehumanising and destructive power of capitalism and technology that has been identified in *Heart of Darkness* was not limited to the literary portrayal of the Congo atrocities. The significance of a fin de siècle cultural pessimism, combined with a regressive and romantic repudiation of capitalist modernity for the Congo reform debate, has generally been overlooked. This outrage can be understood as a major calamity of European culture and Western civilisation at the turn of the 20th century. In combination with the motifs of an appalling corrosion of imperial alterity and erosion of racist superiority that the previous pages have elaborated, it becomes apparent how the Congo Scandal was conceived as a deep and lasting crisis of racist representation – of the Congolese other, but most importantly of the white and European self.[189]

3.3   'Savage perpetrators', 'helpless victims', 'white and civilised saviours': The dramatic triangle of racist humanitarianism

In December 1903, after Roger Casement had approached him about potential involvement or even a leading role in the emerging Congo Reform Association, Joseph Conrad wrote to a friend about the reasons for his refusal: "I would help him but it is not in me. I am only a wretched novelist inventing wretched stories and not even up to that miserable game". However, the majority of the Congo opponents were not disposed to follow the philosophical fatalism of the distinguished British novelist. "Are the pessimists right, after all", Morel asked, in a direct answer to Conrad's dark assessment. "Is the conscience of Christendom dead? [...] Have we gone back, and not forward, these last fifty years? Surely it cannot be". As activists, the Congo reformers believed in the

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187   Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 4 ('steeled'), 12 ('judicial'); Park, "King in Business", 624 ('elaborate'); Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 43 ('gigantic').

188   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 96 ('machine-like', 'passionless'); 'Address of Mr. E.D. Morel', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 232 ('great'); Edmund D. Morel, "The Future of Tropical Africa," *The Southern Workman* 41, June (1912): 357 ('formidable'); Park, "Real Issue", 1 ('mighty', 'vast', 'disregarding'); Park, "Blood-Money", 68 ('huge'). Also see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago", 113–15.

189   Rochère, Martin H. D. de la, "Sounding the Hollow Heart of the West," in *Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and Contemporary Thought*, ed. Nidesh Lawtoo (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), 235 ('epistemological').

power of social and political reform to resolve the Congo Scandal that had shattered the discursive promises and expectations aroused by the imperial Congo narrative.[190]

Their discursive resort was the establishment of a humanitarian imagery of perpetrators, victims and saviours. Thus, the pioneering Congo activists were perhaps the first to develop what has been called, in reference to Stephen Karpman's classical model of social interaction, the "dramatic humanitarian triangle". Makau Mutua, the critic of the colonial and racist foundation of the grand narrative of human rights, who was quoted on the first page of my study, has called this trio a "damning metaphor". Perpetrators were presented as 'savage', victims as 'helpless', and both were generally non-European and non-white, he argued. Saviours, on the other hand, were almost exclusively 'white' Westerners who emphasised their cultural and racial superiority by defending 'backward' and 'inferior' people. "The metaphor is thus laced with the pathology of self-redemption", he concluded.[191]

Indeed, the dramatic humanitarian triangle established by the Congo reformers was ultimately a project of 'saving the saviours' from the crisis of racist representation. First, the caricature of an 'African perpetrator' driven by racial and cultural instincts to murderous violence, and the depiction of a morally degenerate influence of the 'dark' Congolese space and spirit on Europeans transformed the colonial misconduct in the Congo into an African crime and re-established the corroded boundaries between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism'. Second, the imagination of the Congolese victims as 'helpless' and 'childish' allowed the formation of pseudo-empathy for the distant sufferers while it counterbalanced the discursive shock triggered by the horrifying prospect of a 'triumph of the wilderness'. Finally, between 'savage perpetrator' and 'helpless victim', the position of the 'white and civilised saviour' emerged. As a racist stereotype, the image of the saviour emphasised the cultural superiority and moral integrity of 'heroic humanitarians' and the 'Western public'. The self-declared success of the saviours in the redemption of the Congolese pointed to the restored power of 'civilisation' with respect to African 'darkness' and also to the ultimate prevalence of idealism about the worrying tendencies of an overly materialistic modernity.

The identification of the perpetrator: 'where was the guilt'?

In heavy reliance on the stereotypes of the European Congo discourse, the reformers created their version of the perpetrator as 'savage' and 'black', although, in the early years of the reform campaign, there were still voices that warned of an exclusive focus on African soldiers and sentinels. Instead, "blame and the punishment in all its force" ought to be on the European district commissioners, as Rev Sjöblom demanded in 1897, for instance, or even on "all the white Belgian officials from the highest to the lowest", as his colleague Morrison asserted in 1900.

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190   Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, 26 March 1903, quoted in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 71 ('wretched'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 372 ('pessimists').

191   Jane Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 6 ('triangle'); see Stephen Karpman, "Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis," *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* 26, no. 7 (1968): 39–43; Mutua, *Human Rights*, 10 ('damning'), 14 ('underpinning', 'self-redemption').

The accused colonial administration strongly disputed such statements with a set of arguments strikingly, broadly similar to the metaphors later used by the reformers. Concerning the early charges of excessive violence and murderous raids against European officers raised by missionaries and the Aborigines' Protection Society, Morel, at this time still defending the Free State against the emerging criticism, pointed to the motifs of imperial travel literature that described the Congo as an 'impure' space with a deadly and hostile climate: "Many well-known African travellers [...] have admitted the proneness of violent outbursts of passion, when the frame is debilitated by constant fever, and all the nerves ajar through the frequent and exasperating vexations inseparable from residence and travel under the torrid skies and in the pestilential jungles of tropical Africa", he wrote. Hence, it was "in a great measure to these climatic drawbacks that we owe those deplorable acts of ferocity on the part of European to native".[192]

Léopold and other high ranking officials pointed to the inherent violence of what they described as a 'barbarous' region. The severed hands described by Sjöblom and other missionaries were defined as remains of the "sanguine habits" of the "wretched negroes" who were "necessarily" the recruits of the State's army, the Belgian king claimed in an open letter. "Our refined society", he added, "attaches to human life [...] a value unknown to barbarous communities". Towards his international critics, he guaranteed that the "example of the white officer and wholesome military discipline [would] gradually inspire in them a horror of human trophies".[193]

Nonetheless, the image of the severed hand became one of the most drastic and effective symbols of the Congo atrocities. In 1903, after Henry Fox Bourne had collected existing evidence about the practice, an extensive pamphlet claiming to disclose the 'Truth about Civilisation in Congoland' reproduced several pages of testimonies from prominent explorers, missionaries and administrators about the alleged "Barbarous Customs" of the Congolese populations, including the central imperial stereotypes of anthropophagy and human sacrifice. In particular, it was suggested that bodily mutilations were either "the surviving results of Arab cruelty" or an African tradition. "These abominable customs cannot evidently disappear in a moment", the veteran authority on the Congo, Henry M. Stanley, is quoted as saying.[194]

When Roger Casement compiled his Congo report for the Foreign Office soon after the publication of the aforementioned Belgian manifesto, however, he made "it perfectly clear that this hand-cutting horror is not a native custom", as American Congo reformers underlined. Indeed, the report, which collected evidence about several such mutilations in the Lake Mantumba region and Lulongo, stressed that the cutting off of hands was based on European instructions, and not on African tradition or predisposition: "It

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192 Testimony of Rev. E. V. Sjöblom (1897), reproduced in Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 26 ('blame'); William M. Morrison (1900), quoted in Dworkin, "Borders of Race", 192 ('all'); 'A Word for the Congo State', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 July 1897, 2 ('well-known').

193 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 286. Also see the reaction of Governor-General Wahis in 1897, reproduced in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 225.

194 See Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, chapters 10 and 11; Harry Johnston, the well-known former Congo explorer, colonial administrator, and author on African imperial history, quoted in A Belgian, *The Truth*, 9 ('surviving'), also see 47; Henry M. Stanley quoted in ibid., 52 ('abominable'). Ironically, the pamphlet also had recourse to Morel's early defence, without knowing its author.

was not a native custom prior to the coming of the white man; it was not the outcome of the primitive instincts of savages in their fights between village and village; it was the deliberate act of the soldiers of a European Administration, and these men themselves never made any concealment that in committing these acts they were but obeying the positive orders of their superiors".[195] In the same year, Morel independently, as he declared, reached a similar conclusion: "I assert deliberately that the employes [sic] of the Congo State in Africa have themselves introduced these practices" which "were unknown until the policy of 'moral and material regeneration' was introduced". Even more, they were a "direct outcome of that policy". To support his argument, Morel quotes the Casement report along with personal testimony of Ward, Conrad and Guinness, who all declared that, from their experience in the early years of the Free State, there was no such Congolese custom. All in all, there was no doubt for the leader of the British reform association that the "systematic hand-cutting and worse forms of mutilation" were, in contrast to the arguments of Free State apologists, "an exotic" both for the "Congo natives" as for the "Arab half-castes".[196]

Any attempts to use the position of the reformers in the severed hand controversy as an indicator of a progressive or anti-racist foundation of the Congo reform debate are unconvincing, however. Instead, the centrality of the severed hand image for the Congo reform propaganda explains the boldness of the reformers' response to the Free State's racist excuses in this particular case. Harry Johnston, for instance, was eager to point out that, in his opinion, "the Congo Basin was not a region of ideal happiness and peace for the Negro before the white man or the Arab broke in upon the life of the Stone Age, burst upon primitive peoples who had lost all contact with the Caucasian for two thousand years", but was marked by perpetual warfare, slavery and cannibalism. "These men", he wrote about the soldiers of the Free State, "accustomed, before ever a Belgian or Arab set foot on the Congo basin, to torture and mutilate men, women, and children, and to ravish women, continued these practices as the agents of a far-off white Sovereign".[197]

In this assessment, there was no structural dissent between a radical white supremacist like Johnston and other more 'cautious' racists like Morel or Casement. On the very first page of his report, the latter revealed his commitment to Stanley's discursive framework when he declared the Congo "one of the most savage regions of the world" populated by "rude savages", "dwarf races" and "cannibals" who had "lived their own savage lives in anarchic and disorderly communities" before the advent of European rule.[198] The "source" of the Congolese atrocities "need not be sought far", he suggested, when a state relied upon "an admittedly savage soldiery".[199]

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195   Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 15 ('perfectly'); Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 76 ('superiors').

196   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 115 ('assert', 'unknown', 'direct'), 117 ('exotic' etc.), 120 ('systematic'). For the statements of Ward, Conrad and Guinness, see ibid., 117–118.

197   Harry Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xii ('Basin'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 465 ('accustomed').

198   Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 21.

199   Ibid., 59; also see 30.

Likewise, in the same sentence that Morel emphasised that there was "absolutely no trace in Congo native custom" of "a system of cutting off of hands", the leader of the British reformers claimed that many of the soldiers would still "eat the dead bodies of the slain". Morel vigorously defended his stereotype of the 'cannibal army', as discussed in the previous chapter, and did so only one page after he rejected the African guilt for bodily mutilations.[200]

As has been described, the 'cannibal army' became a central discursive tool evoked by the reform campaign. A broad set of well-established racist stereotypes oscillated around the depiction of African soldiers described as 'cannibalistic', 'savage', 'barbarian' and 'wild'. Such appeals to the racist imagery of the Congo narrative have never been a merely ornamental or unconscious expression of a racist zeitgeist. Instead, reformers strategically used the widely accepted racist beliefs in the intrinsic brutality of Central Africa and its inhabitants to arouse public outrage against the Free State and its scandalous corrosion of alterity. Moreover, the image of the 'cannibal army' was closely related to the identification of Africans as the 'actual perpetrator' of the Congolese crimes. In this process, the Africans in the service of the Free State became identified as "the actual, though not the moral, perpetrators of so many horrible deeds". Through its discursive clout and the prominence in the reform debate, the image of the savage and cannibalistic soldier put the 'African perpetrator' at the centre of the humanitarian debate, and the initially described focus on the European perpetrators by Morrison or Sjöblom began to collapse.[201]

Furthermore, despite the aforementioned insistence that the cutting off of hands was a European import, prominent reformers actually agreed with apologists that Africans in Free State service became perpetrators of the 'horrible deeds' in the Congo due to a primordial disposition towards violence. "Unrestrained by natural sentiment of compassion these barbaric hordes are let loose upon the people", Protestant American Congo missionaries wrote in their first manifest to the Senate, "practically without restraint upon [their] savage propensities". They were, as the sculptor Herbert Ward suggested, "naturally cruel".[202]

When "these savages, some even cannibals" are at war and "do as they please", one can repeatedly read in reform publications, they "are like devils".[203] As Park claimed, the "natural tendency of the savage to bully those weaker than himself" had "made of the black an ideal instrument of an inhumane policy". He suggested that "the armed

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200   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 116; also see 120.

201   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23 ('actual'). While Casement's report, for instance, still included accusations directly targeted against Europeans, these were anonymised by the Foreign Office prior to publication. While some reformers, including Casement, criticised this procedure, it actually corresponded to a larger tendency within the later reform discourse. More and more, direct European responsibility was disguised, although not as openly as the disclosure of names.

202   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 11 ('Unrestrained'); Herbert Ward, *A Voice from the Congo* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 226 ('naturally').

203   Diary of the missionary Joseph Clark, reproduced in Morel, *Red Rubber*, 53; Edmund D. Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Congo 'Crown Domain'* (Liverpool: John Richardson & Sons, 1907), 43 and Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 48.

savages" with their "lawless lust and violence" had been a willing tool of the colonial regime.[204]

While such formulations complied with the dominant image of the 'blood-thirsty' and 'ferocious' African Congolese that Stanley had created mostly through recourse to the culturally argued 'savage' and religiously connoted 'devil' stereotypes, other depictions of the African soldiers by reformers reveal the same rising dominance of naturalist race-racism that had emerged in Stanley's latest Congo book.[205] Frequently, reform publications reproduce, for instance, a remarkable conclusion of the traveller Glave about the cruelties he had witnessed in the Congo: "Black delights to kill black, whether the victim be man, woman, or child, and no matter how defenceless", he stated. Consequently, the "black soldiers" of the Free State simply "want to shoot and kill and rob".[206]

Remarks that the Africans enforcing the colonial regime in the Congo "thoroughly enjoy" the massacres they conducted on European orders "merely for the exquisite pleasure of witnessing human suffering", that they "kill without pity",[207] that "there is no despot more cruel than a black given control of other blacks, when unrestrained by ties of race, family or tradition", or that "no one is or has been so cruel to the negro as the negro" and "of all the races of mankind perhaps the negro is the most inherently martial"[208] are formulations that show the strong inclination of the reformers to discursively connect the brutality of the Free State to a primordial predisposition of the 'black race' to violence and sadism. The Congolese "army is composed of Negroes, cannibals by instinct", it is argued, and repeatedly, such biological racism is combined with the radically dehumanising language of animal metaphors that compare the African soldiers to a "pack of hounds"[209] or that uses the terms "human wolves" or "parasites" to describe them.[210]

Hence, not only were Africans the 'actual perpetrators' in the Congo. In addition, it was their cultural backwardness and racial viciousness that made them offenders in the first place. For the reformers, the 'moral guilt' of the European Congo Administration was that they had not fully executed their colonial authority over the African military and police forces. The source of the brutality was that Congo officials had sent them

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204 Park, "Terrible Story", 771 ('tendency'), 772 ('lawless'); Park, "King in Business", 632 ('armed').

205 See chapter 3.1.

206 Glave, "New Conditions", 908. Also reproduced in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 28; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 183; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 11.

207 Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 105 ('enjoy', 'merely') [reproduced in G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 669]; Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*, 71 ('pity') [reproduced, inter alia, in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Duty of the US*, 2; Daniels, "Wretchedness of Congo Natives", 29; Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 11; Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 48 [Supplementary]; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Indictment Against the Congo*, 28].

208 Morgan, *Alleged Conditions*, 11 ('despot'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 464 ('cruel', 'martial').

209 Eduard Picard, member of the Belgian Senate, quoted in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 249 ('composed', 'hounds'). Also reproduced in Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 11; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 10; Congo Committee, Massachusetts Commission for International Justice, "Congo News-Letter: July," (Boston: 1904), 1.

210 Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 69 ('wolves'); also reproduced in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 157; Park, "Terrible Story", 772. The official report of the commission used the term "parasites" in references to the African perpetrators; Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*, 73 ('parasites').

"away without supervision" and thus allowed them to follow their 'racial' or 'savage' instincts. "This should not be allowed", Glave agreed: "Blacks cannot be employed on such an errand unless under the leadership of whites".[211]

For others, the true problem was the reliance on armed Africans in the first place. The American Canisius connected the misconduct of the Force Publique to what he called "the scandalous conduct of some of the negro regiments of the United States" to "justify" the conviction that "the African, as a general rule, is not suitable material for making a good soldier" since he lacks "patriotism", "devotion to duty", "intelligence" and "discipline".[212] Harry Johnston came to a similar conclusion, and, in particularly plainspoken words, he formulated the logical deduction this racist imagery implied. The "atrocities and misdeeds" in the Congo, he wrote, were the "necessary consequences" of enforcing taxation through an "army from the more warlike negro tribes".[213]

Hence, the image of the 'cannibal army' and the 'African perpetrator' was not only a powerful propagandistic tool and a potent symbol of the discursive crisis or racist representation triggered by the Congo Scandal. It was at the same time an excellent strategy of derailing. As such, it turned a public scandal about European colonial violence into a narrative about an inherent predisposition to ferocity; presented as either an expression of racial characteristics, frenetic savagery, diabolic viciousness, or a mixture of all facets. Of course, it could not entirely be denied that there were Europeans in the Congo with blood on their hands. Although, as "a rule", the outrages in the Congo were "actually committed" by Africans, as Doyle wrote, he emphasised that the violence happened "with the approval of, and often in the presence of, their white employers". Moreover, he admitted that, at times, these have "far exceeded in cruelty the barbarian who carried out his commissions" or even "pushed the black aside, and acted himself as torturer and executioner".[214]

However, Doyle, as with the vast majority of the reform movement, engaged in various discursive manoeuvres to minimise the role of this European perpetrator. Moreover, as the following paragraphs discuss, the Congo reform movement deliberately resorted to stereotypes of a threatening natural and spiritual 'darkness' that Stanley had declared to be the essence of the Congo's spatial identity. As the previous chapter has described, the poor mental and physical health of the imperial pioneers in the Congo was a central symbol of the worrying prospect of a 'triumph of the wilderness'. At the same time, the assessed weakness of the 'white body' and the 'enlightened mind' was frequently used to explain the violence of the 'civilised' colonisers via certain deteriorating influences of

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211   Diary of the missionary Joseph Clark, reproduced in Morel, *Red Rubber*, 53 and Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 48 ('supervision'); Glave, "New Conditions", 910 ('allowed', 'Blacks') [also reproduced in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 28]. The Commission demanded that the capita and sentry institution had to be suppressed like "the sending, in general, of black soldiers unless accompanied by a white man" (Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*, 73). Also see Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 209.

212   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 177–78. The "African, as a general rule, is not suitable material for making a good soldier", he claimed.

213   Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 464 ('atrocities'). Also see, for instance, Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 377.

214   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23–24.

the Congolese environment. In such tropical regions, it was difficult for Europeans to "maintain their civilized morale", Doyle remarked, for instance: "Human nature is weak, the influence of environment is strong", and all colonisers have sometimes "yielded [...] to their surroundings".[215]

The reformers never disputed the argument of Congo apologists that the tropical climate and the cultural and spiritual 'darkness' of the Congo was a central cause of the Congolese atrocities. Morel, for instance, maintained his conviction that the climate in West and Central Africa was "most trying to the constitutions and temper of Europeans" and that its "disordering", "pernicious" effect is an important cause of the cruelties of the "demoralised" European.[216] For the vice-president of the American reform association, David Starr Jordan, such arguments were a fundamental motivation for his anti-imperialist activism. He had become convinced that the "Anglo-Saxon or any other civilized race degenerates in the tropics mentally, morally, physically". Although "[v]ice and dissipation are confined to no zone", as he admitted, "in the tropics few men of northern blood can escape them".[217] In the Commons, Samuel argued that "it was not to be wondered at that the results were disastrous" considering that the Congo officials, among other things, "were subject to the influence of a deadly climate, affected by malaria".[218]

How much exactly "this [environmental] factor has to do with the condition in the Congo" was difficult to determine, according to Robert Park; however, "that it has to do with it, is very sure". The influence of the African surrounding was "subtle, intangible, yet indisputable", the leading American reformer was convinced.[219] Others, such as Guy Burrows, expressed a certain reluctance to resort to the same arguments as those defending the state. The "thesis that the extreme climate conditions in tropical latitude" made Europeans "prone to acts which in a temperate clime they would shrink from with horror" was among the "usual excuse for excesses" like the cruelties in the Congo, he wrote. "This may be true; I do not know if it is", Burrows, himself for several years in colonial service in the Congo, wrote in a sceptical tone. However, "if there is any foundation for it as a theory", he admitted at the same time, "certainly extenuating circumstances can be pleaded in the case of the man who commits the crime".[220]

'Extenuating environmental circumstances' were found in the tropical climate and in the allegedly severe psychological effects of the 'wild' and 'savage' Congolese inhabitants and nature and its 'dark' and 'evil' atmosphere, which Stanley evoked in his descriptions of the Congolese 'jungles'. "With barbarous surroundings even the mildest character often becomes brutal", the traveller Glave noted. "This is pardonable", he added, due to the lack of "finer feelings" among the Africans. Everyone knows

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215   Ibid., 85.

216   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 13 ('trying'), 260 ('disordering'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 303 ('pernicious, 'demoralised'); Also see Edmund D. Morel, *The Sierra Leone Hut-Tax Disturbances* (Liverpool: John Richardson & Sons, 1899), 17.

217   Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 94 ('degenerates'), 95 ('zone'). For Jordan, this threat of "race decline, personal degeneration, and social decay" (94) made imperialism a danger for the imperial nations, which was the main reason imperialism should be opposed.

218   Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1299.

219   Park, "Terrible Story", 769 ('gradual'), 769–70 ('subtle'), 770 ('factor').

220   Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 55.

"the demoralising effect of living in an unhealthy country under circumstances of isolation from European influence and among a savage and degraded race", the Lord of Chudleigh similarly argued in his plea for "sweeping away" the present Congo system.[221] The "effect of living amongst this gloom and silence is most depressing", one can read in Morel's first book, is like "the grip of some hideous nightmare from which there was no escape". All European visitors to the Congo region "have been alike impressed by its grandeur and its melancholy", he claimed, while naming only Stanley; "their feelings have been wrought upon by the natural phenomena with which they were surrounded".[222]

The outcome was amplified through the "'profound feeling of solitude'" that grasped Europeans in the "'utter loneliness of this great gloomy wilderness'", the "[l]oneliness, homesickness, the overwhelming sense of exile" experienced by the pioneering imperialists.[223] In this situation, the isolated Europeans had no chance of upholding their 'civilised' standards, ideals and morality, the reformers suggested. The imperial pioneers in the Congo "cannot fail to be impressed with the atmosphere of gloom and mystery that overhangs the dark land like the shadow of a pall", Park claimed. The "almost inevitable influences of climate and environment upon the white man's temperament and character", he added, caused not only "physical debilitation" but also a "gradual alteration of standards and ideals, often a loosening of moral fiber".[224]

When the Commission of Inquiry finally published its devastating report on the conditions in the Free State, it fully embraced these strategies of exculpation the reform movement evoked. According to the Commission, it was possible to "understand", although "not condone, the ill-treatment, even the acts of brutality of the white man towards the native". After all, the colonial agents in the Congo are "enervated by a terrible climate, always debilitating and often fatal, are isolated in the midst of a savage population; and the life of each day presents to them nothing but demoralizing spectacles". The report claimed what the Congo reformers also wanted their audience to believe. The colonisers "left Europe filled with respect for human life and they soon see in the barbarous circle into which they are transplanted, that this has no value".[225]

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221   Glave, "New Conditions", 900 ('mildest character'); Lord Clifford of Chudleigh: Congo Free State, HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–437, here c 418 ('demoralising'), c 419 ('sweeping').

222   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 201 ('grip'), 202 ('effect', 'feelings').

223   Dr. Austin Freeman, quoted in ibid., 201 ('profound', 'utter'); Park, "Terrible Story", 770 ('homesickness'); also see Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c. 1299. Loneliness, in this context, always meant the absence of other Europeans – the feeling of being "very much alone" (Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 128–29) does not emerge from the absence of other human beings, but from "the sentiment of being alone of one's kind, to the clear perception of the loneliness of one's thoughts, of one's sensations" (129). That a European man is supposed to feel lonely and isolated among Africans is first of all, of course, a brutal example of the dehumanising effects of racist discourse, which denies the African the ability to comprehend, speak and bond with the superior foreigner: Equal social relations between 'savage' and 'civilised' are rendered impossible by racism. Also see Glave, *In Savage Africa*, 71; Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 24 and 228.

224   Park, "Terrible Story", 769–70

225   Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*, 163–64.

"Where, then, was the guilt?" as Arthur Conan Doyle asked his readers. "Where did the responsibility for these deeds of blood, these thousands of cold-blooded murders lie"? As American Congo reformers bluntly stated, "[p]roofs of individual guilt", hence of actual criminal offences of European colonisers, were only "of secondary consequence". Morel defined the question of who was "responsible for these atrocities" in "a much more specific and direct sense" as a cultural question: Was it Africa or Europe?[226]

In its answer to this probing question, the Congo reform movement showed a fundamental ambivalence and inner inconsistency that partially explain the great variance in its historiographic and political assessment until today. On the one hand, as a political campaign of humanitarian prosecution targeting state-sponsored and systematic crimes, the Congo reformers needed to prove the actual accountability of the colonial administration. As a structurally racist intellectual movement, on the other hand, their reaction was to deny or downplay the cultural responsibility of European 'civilisation' and charge African 'savagery' instead. Hence, while they challenged the Free State's rejection of responsibility for the cutting off of hands, Congo reformers and apologists actually had recourse to the same set of racist stereotypes, although with different goals. While the defenders of the Free State administration attempted to repel the political and legal responsibility of the Free State administration for the crimes committed under its authority, the Congo reformers struggled to deny a European cultural responsibility for the Congo Scandal.

The 'actual perpetrators' were Africans; it is claimed, driven to violence by their cultural and racial characteristics. Behind the racist caricature of the African soldier, European delinquents and responsibility vanished. Even when European offences were still present in the reform discourse, they were explained by the physical, psychological and cultural influences of the African environment and thus once more relegated to the Congolese 'darkness' and 'savagery'. According to Harold Spender, Joseph Conrad rightfully showed how the violence in the Congo had happened: "Dragged down by the very barbarism which they went to reform [...], these men have gradually descended to depths of which the modern European was assumed to be incapable". Ultimately, it is suggested that the European colonisers turned from respectful philanthropists to murderous chauvinists only after they had entered the Congo. This was intentional. The Free State was, as presumably the editorial officer Robert Park had noted in a revealing manner, "the uncouth monster that the jungles of the Dark Continent have brought forth" – and not European civilisation. To reduce the discursive disturbances triggered by the crisis of racist identity beneath the Congo Scandal understood as corrosion of alterity, the reform activists strategically used imperial stereotypes about the 'dark' and 'savage' Congo and about an 'inferior' black 'race' to define this "greatest crime in history", as Arthur Conan Doyle called it, as an essentially 'African' crime.[227]

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226   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 25 ('responsibility'), 26 ('guilt'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 18 ('individual'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule* ('responsible').

227   Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 46 ('Dragged'); Congo Committee, "Congo News-Letter, July 1904", 1 ('uncouth'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 101 ('greatest').

The imagination of 'the victims'

However, as a racist humanitarian campaign, the Congo reform movement necessarily acted in a paradoxical discursive sphere. From an activist position, racism presented at the same time a severe obstacle for the activists. First, there was a persistent tension between promoting indignation and empathy for the African other within the imagery of the reform movement itself. Historically and strategically, the mobilisation of empathy was an essential element of humanitarianism. To arouse public sentiment and mobilise protest, humanitarian activists needed their audience to feel the pain of the suffering, distant victim.[228] However, as sociologists have noted, the "breakdown of empathy" is an essential aspect of racism that necessarily accompanies the "dehumanization of the other".[229] Second, apologists of the Free State tactically resorted to the same stereotypes evoked by the reformers to legitimate forced labour, land grabbing and the use of oppressive force.

In retrospect, Morel manifested his critical awareness of this tension in his reflection on the reform campaign. He pointed out how Free State apologists used to "accentuate particular characteristics" of the Congolese population such as cannibalism to repel public criticism. Moreover, he addressed a problematic lack of Europeans' compassion for African pain that the reformers were confronted within their campaign. When "victims belong to a non-white race", Morel concluded, the "Anglo-Saxon type of mind [...] is not naturally and intuitively sympathetic towards coloured races".[230]

Although the British reformer obviously understood this socially constructed emotional distance as an expression of pathological racial antagonism and exceptional for the otherwise just Anglo-Saxon, he was still aware that discursive practices enforced this lack of sympathy. The solution was, the Honorary Secretary of the British reform association argued, the promotion of a strategically constructed image of the 'victim' of Congolese atrocities to accompany the (African) 'perpetrator'. The "realisation of a great human tragedy" was only "vivid and historically enduring in the measure in which we are able to fashion ourselves a mental vision, which shall also be an accurate one, of its victims", he asserted. To give substance to the written accounts of atrocities, a European must "construct a mental picture" of those affected, he had argued earlier.[231]

'Accurate', in this context, meant consistent with the strategic challenges of the reform campaign. Thus, the construction of a mental vision or picture of the 'victims' of the Congolese atrocities was both directed against the set of stereotypes evoked by those defending the existing culture of oppression and violence in the Free State and an attempt to arouse empathy for the alienated Congolese other. In this process, the reformers produced many of those passages that are frequently used to attest to the 'anti-racist' and 'respectful' standing of the movement. Indeed, the active rejection of specific racist stereotypes seems particularly progressive from today's perspective. However, in

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228   See Richard A. Wilson and Richard D. Brown, introduction to *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1–30; Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire*, 4–5.
229   Hernán Vera and Joe R. Feagin, "The Study of Racist Events," in *Researching Race and Racism*, ed. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (London: Routledge, 2004), 73 ('breakdown'), also see 75–76.
230   Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 7.
231   Ibid., 7 ('realisation'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 32–33 ('construct').

many cases, the reformers merely constructed new, artificial images of the African or rearranged the different aggregations of the savage stereotype established by Stanley to describe the inhabitants of the Congo Basin.

Especially opposed in their apologetic function were references to the 'vacant land' myth. Popularised by Stanley's Congo literature in correlation to the stereotype of the 'natural savage' who allegedly only dwelled upon the African soil without occupying it through manual labour, the idea had been incorporated into the regulations of colonial governance to legitimise the appropriation of land through the Free State. Although Park described the Congolese rivers, forest and bushlands with the same fragments used by Stanley and Conrad to establish the Congo's spatial identity, he still emphasised that a "[t]eeming black life" of agriculture and craft "lurks in that jungle", for instance.[232] Morel similarly pointed to economic developments such as "native industries" and forms of political organisation such as "agricultural communities", "nomadic confederations" or even "states". In his review of the reform movement, he noted that "the existence of a native polity on the Congo" at the time of European conquest was beyond doubt. Hence, in opposition to Stanley's narrative, and to counterbalance arguments that the Congolese population had been "but a few wandering tribes" without "any proprietary rights in land", reformers described the Congolese space as 'cultivated' and 'claimed'.[233]

Even before the advent of European rule, according to Morel, the average Congolese was, like most West Africans, a hard-working "agriculturist, a farmer, a herdsman" and, "above all [...] to the marrow of his bones, a trader". The claim that the "dominating characteristic" of the inhabitants of Central Africa, even of those that Morel labelled as the "most primitive people", was "veneration for their land" (as peasants) and "eagerness for commercial pursuit" (as traders) was also an objection to the 'lazy native' stereotype, the "chief indictment against the African", as John Harris has once remarked.[234] Part of the 'natural savage' stereotype of Stanley's Congo image, the trope of the 'lazy native' was widely reproduced by explorers, travellers and imperialists throughout Europe. In particular, it was frequently used by the Free State to emphasise the cultural necessity of its compulsory labour system. Free State opponents, on the other hand, rejected the accusation that the Congolese were not disposed to hard work as "the usual stereotyped manner" of depicting Africans and "grotesque distortions". It was a "[p]rejudice" that was often disproved, and all experience suggested that "the negro is not an idler".[235]

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232 Park, "Terrible Story", 765 ('life', 'lurks').

233 Morel, *Red Rubber (b/1919)*, 93 ('industries'); Morel, "Economic Development": 134 ('communities', 'confederations', 'states'); Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 8 ('polity'); 10–11 ('wandering', 'proprietary').

234 Morel, *Nigeria*, xiii ('agriculturalist', 'above all'); Morel and Congo Reform Association, *Memorial on Native Rights*, 31 ('dominating', 'veneration', 'eagerness') [reproduced in Morel, *Great Britain*, 69]; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 181 ('most primitive'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 125–26 ('indictment').

235 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 28 ('usual'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 179 ('grotesque'); Glave, "Cruelty in the Congo", 701 ('prejudice') [reproduced in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 189 and Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 29]; Samuel, "Congo State", 881 ('idler') [reproduced in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Indictment Against the Congo*, 17. Also see the Baptist missionary George W. Macalpine, *Ab-*

However, such formulations were not a sign of an anti-racist critique but rather of a symbolic struggle between concurring sets of racist stereotyping. It was not only the omnipresence of motifs of 'barbarism' and 'savagery' and Stanley's archetype of the 'ferocious and cannibalistic warrior' in the depiction of the 'African perpetrator' by the reformers that revealed the shallowness of these statements. Even in their rejection of particular stereotypes, the reformers' arguments reveal their deep commitment to the belief that these socio-economic formations are products of inferior cultural and racial characteristics, inscribed 'into the bone marrow', as indicated further above. After all, it was "the instinct of primitive man" that let "races of relative low development" become "imbued naturally" with an inclination towards trade and agriculture, as Morel argued.[236] Moreover, when the reformers praised the great "energy and endurance" that the African had shown "directed by his white master" as a 'worker', 'boy' or 'carrier', they always glorified the colonial framework of the international division of labour. Hence, in their objection to the idea of a naturally existing laziness, the reformers never escaped their own colonial mind-set but rather resorted to the motif of the 'docile savage' established by Stanley's Congo narrative.[237]

Additionally, the motif of a Congolese peasant and trading culture established by the reform movement was itself as much an artificial stereotype as the opposing images of 'laziness' and an 'empty land'. According to the historians Louis and Stengers, the "almost idyllic description of the native races of the Congo in pre-European times" that Morel composed in his history of the Congo reform movement, for instance, had "only literary" value. In none of the books had Morel referred to any imagery "even remotely resembling his own".[238] As a matter of fact, the stereotype of a natural Black or African peasantry established by Morel and Park was itself a product of the primitivistic exoticism of its creators. "They are happy, these people, in their primitive way", Morel asserted, "primitive, savage, but as happy perchance, as a small village in Devon". For Park, this allegedly primitivistic African life was actually a counterbalance to the failures of 'white' civilisation. His mystical valuation of rural Black life in the American South directly correlated with the romantic transfiguration of a traditional peasantry Park had absorbed during his doctoral studies in Germany into the American tradition of 'romantic racism', which increasingly turned the Black American into "a symbol of something that seemed tragically lacking in white American civilization" and "a vehicle for romantic social criticism".[239] Hence, while the reformers successfully challenged the central legitimation of forced labour and the appropriation of land through the Free State, there was little reflection on their own commitment to racist stereotypes and

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stract of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Administration of the Congo Free State (London: J. Clark and Co, 1906), 11–12 and 80–81.

236   Morel, "'Commercial' Aspect", 432 ('imbued'), 433 ('instinct').

237   Weeks, *Among Congo Cannibals*, 82 ('directed', 'endurance', worker); see Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 126 (boy) and Morel, *Nigeria*, 18. "If I were a poet I would write an ode to the African carrier", Morel added.

238   W. Roger Louis and Jean Stengers, "Critical Notes," in *E.D. Morel's History of the Congo Reform Movement*, ed. W. Roger Louis and Jean Stengers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 257 ('remotely').

239   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 38 ('happy'); Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 108 ('symbol'), 109 ('criticism'). For Park's romantic racism developed during his reform activism, see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago".

colonial discourse, although Morel apparently at times came into conflict with a more self-confessed racist such as Harry Johnston about accentuating Congolese 'savagery' and 'barbarism'.[240]

Second, as initially indicated, the reformers were aware that the dehumanising European imagery was an obstacle to their goal of producing public outrage through the promotion of empathy with the distant sufferers in the Congo. To think of the African as "a brute beast", Morel observed, was often tied to the belief that he was "impervious to human sentiment". It was hence viable for the humanitarian activists to convince the imperial public that the African "was before all, a man, and he must be treated as a man, and not as a brute"; a "man", as Morel conciliated his readers, who was, of course, "more highly developed in some places than in others".[241] Additionally, public sentiment needed to be persuaded that a "black man – say of Upoto has nerves, feels pain, can be made physically miserable", as Joseph Conrad once asserted, and that, despite all "differences of colour, climate, environment and evolution, the main channels along which travel the twin emotions of suffering and joy are much the same in all races", as Morel emphasised. "They are deeper, more sensitised, with civilised man", he once more pleaded with his racist audience, but "they exist in primitive communities".[242]

In order to reach this goal, the reform movement deployed several discursive strategies. First, they accentuated different shades of Congolese darkness ranging from cruelty to innocence.[243] While every inhabitant of the Congo Basin was, for the reformers, legitimately subsumed under the categories of the historically immature 'savage' and the biologically inferior 'coloured races', they still pointed to variations in the value of 'savagery' and 'inferiority'. The bloodthirsty African perpetrators, the soldiers and sentries, and auxiliaries of the colonial regime were defined as exceptionally radical representatives of the Congolese other. They were drawn from the "most savage", "the wildest" communities,[244] from "the fiercest" cannibals and "the lowest" types of the Congolese and even of all African 'natives', the reformers asserted.[245] Their 'victims', on the other hand, such formulations suggest, were at least partially of a minor and less pronounced cultural inferiority. Morel and Johnston, for instance, claimed, as Stanley had, that the Congolese forests accommodate with the 'Pygmies' and other 'forest dwellers' "the lowest type of African humanity", representatives of the "earliest types of humanity". In the reformer's vision of the Congo, however, there were also more "sophisticated people

240   Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 213.

241   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 35 [footnote] ('brute', 'impervious'); Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('before all', 'highly').

242   Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903 ('Upoto'), reproduced in Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 32; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 351; Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 7 ('differences', etc.).

243   See Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel*, 67.

244   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 25; Lord Monkswell [Robert Collier]: Congo Free State, HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–437, here c 404 (both 'most savage'); Morel, *British Case*, 174; Testimony of Rev. E. V. Sjöblom (1897), reproduced in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 213; Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 24; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 47 (all 'wildest').

245   Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 19; Morel, *British Case*, 174; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 428 (all 'fiercest'); [Morel], "The Congo Scandal V", 17; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 64; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 203; Sheppard, "Light in Darkest Africa", 220 ('lowest').

living in a Neolithic culture", who had developed cultural institutions such as complex "language", traditional "customs" and "unwritten laws".[246]

While Casement had, as reproduced above, described the Congolese population as generally 'savage' and 'archaic', he still referred to the "large and flourishing centres of population" he had seen during his first time in the Congo, which were severely depopulated after the installation of the rubber regime. In the rubber zone, the region most affected by the Congo atrocities, also lived the 'Kasai natives', "the finest races on the Congo", according to Morel and others. These were celebrated for their "'moral and physical beauty'", and it was even conceded that they developed a "high level of art".[247] Among them were the Kuba, praised by William Sheppard for their art industries and well-organised capital, which he had 'discovered'. This was not a town, but a "city", the American missionary stated, "laid off in perfect blocks – like a checker-board", the "blocks and streets all named" and the latter "broad and clean".[248]

A second strategy was to create a gender and age bias in the representation of the sufferers of Congolese atrocities. While the 'perpetrators' were exclusively presented as adult men, 'victims' in the Congo reform discourse were overwhelmingly described as women and children. The monumental Casement report, for instance, elaborated in particular detail and at length about the suffering of children. In the same year, Morel's first book-length contribution to the reform campaign summarised how women and children "do not enjoy as much protection as a dog in this country", and Park issued a whole pamphlet concentrating solely on the treatment of women and children.[249]

The iconic photographs were similarly biased and were without question the most effective tool to define the collective symbol of the 'infantile victims' of the Congo Scandal.[250] Staged by its uncredited missionary photographer, the first atrocity photograph published by the reform movement showed a young boy placed on a wooden stool of European style in front of a scenery of abundant tropical vegetation (Fig. 8). The child, described as a "victim of a rubber raid", faces the camera and points the limb of his right arm, which contrasts with his white clothes, towards the distant philanthropic observers. The picture defined the visual framework for the Congo atrocity photographs that was frequently reproduced, as prints published by Park emphasise (Fig. 9 and Fig. 10). The vast majority of the photographs in magazines and pamphlets and projected as magic lantern slides in so-called atrocity meetings displayed children, adolescents or women.

When there were no pictures available, a reader had to "allow some play to his imagination", as Morel advised. In *Red Rubber*, which contained no photographs, he actively

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246   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 202 ('type'); Morel, "Economic Development", 134 ('language', 'customs', 'laws'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 2, 724 ('earliest', 'sophisticated').

247   Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 22 ('large'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 93 [footnote] ('art'), 144 ('beauty').

248   William H. Sheppard, "An African Missionary in Africa," *Missionary Review of the World* 28, no. 11 (1905): 811–2 ('city', etc.).

249   See Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 52 (about their imprisonment), 37–38 (trafficking), 36 and 56 (murder) [also see Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*]; Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 242 ('dog').

250   See Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel*, 290.

Fig. 8 "The Victim of a Rubber Raid."; Fig. 9 "Two or three days after a fight a dead mother was found with two of her children."; Fig. 10 "A Boy Maimed by Congo Soldiers."
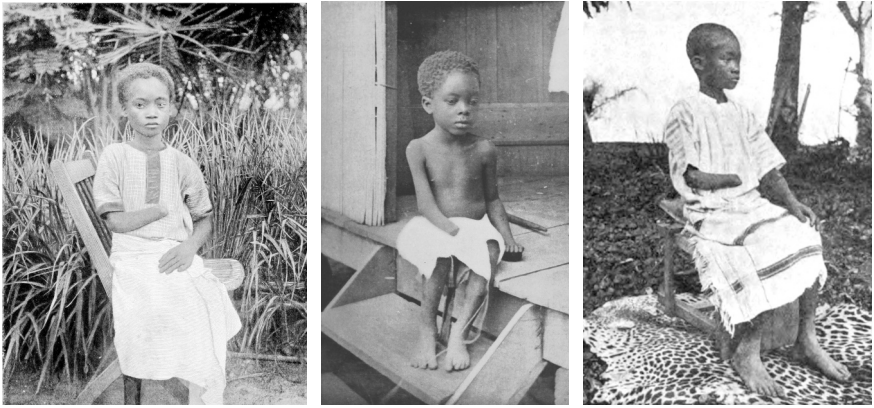
Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, page after 334; Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 33; Park, "Recent Atrocities", 1330.

guided his readers through such a mental journey. In the same sensory detail that Stanley had once used to create his image of the Congolese 'jungles', Morel attempted to make his audience see, smell and feel the 'victims' of the Congo atrocities in a fictive hostage house scene. "Look inside that hostage-house, staggering back as you enter from the odours which belch forth in poisonous fumes", Morel began. "As your eyes get accustomed to the half-light, they will not rest on those skeleton-like forms – bones held together by black skin – but upon the faces [...] A woman, her pendulous, pear-shaped breasts hanging like withered parchment against her sides, where every rib seems bursting from its covering, holds in her emaciated arms a small object more pink than black. You stoop and touch it – a new-born babe, twentyfour hours old, assuredly not more. It is dead, but the mother clasps it still".[251]

The fragments integrated into this short passage – emaciated bodies, withered breast and dying babies – would become central images of the humanitarian discourse of the 20th century. Likewise, emphasising the suffering of women and children has since become an effective, although thoroughly criticised, standard method of humanitarian and charity campaigns in their quest for political, and most importantly, financial support. The example of the Congo reform movement reveals that this method was also an attempt to solve the inner contradictions of racist humanitarianism. While 'victims' described as "poor helpless women and harmless children" became legitimate projection screens of empathetic pity for the distant Europeans, they could maintain their racist contempt for and fear of 'black' and 'savage' Congolese, channelled towards the image of the grown-up and male African 'perpetrator'.[252] Hence, to allow sympa-

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251   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 97.
252   Rev. John B. Murphy, reproduced in 'The Congo Free State', *The Times*, 18 November 1895, 6; Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 210; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 33. Also see Morrison, "Personal Observations", 39.

thy for the African victims, the reformers graded different levels of savagery and compartmentalised the 'savage' stereotype along the lines of age and gender. Ultimately, the weakness and naïveté of specific young and female sufferers were extended to become a characteristic of the "harmless", "innocent" and "unarmed" 'victims' of the Congo atrocities, described as "[h]undreds of thousands" or even "millions of helpless creatures".[253]

Third, the prominence of atrocity photographs and stories in general points to the reformers' attempt to vanquish the racistly induced insensibility of their 'civilised' audience through revolting and 'horrifying' depictions of explicit scenes of violence and particularly abused bodies. Thomas Barbour remarked how the "graphic and detailed" atrocities stories the reformers constantly reproduced made "the reader almost a spectator of the scenes of horror", and Robert Park praised how "one hears always the quaint and plaintive voice" of the tortured Congolese themselves in the testimonies collected by Casement.[254]

Once more, photographs displaying prisoners, scenes of lashing with the chicotte or Africans whose hands had been either smashed by shots or blows or cut off were particularly effective in triggering emotional responses. At the public demonstrations of the Congo reformers, the atrocity pictures were projected on large screens to be observed by hundreds or thousands of spectators, with a generally dramatic effect.[255]

Although the humanitarian spectacle evoked by the reformers successfully aroused emotions, it radically reproduced the objectification and alienation of imperial practices such as ethnographic photography and included multiple processes of dehumanisation. "How comes it that the millions of the Congo subject to the most cruel bondage the world has ever known, say nothing, do nothing to save themselves from slavery and death", John Holt once asked Morel in a private letter. "Alas they are speechless", he added. For the reformers, the 'victims' they imagined not merely lacked the ability to alter their fate but also to articulate themselves: only "inarticulate sounds" emerged from their lips if they were not "almost past speech" or simply "mute". Lacking any capacity of autonomous human agency, the subject status of the 'victims' was decisively denied.[256]

Moreover, Morel's aforementioned hostage-house scene paradigmatically revealed the ruthless, almost pornographic exposure of African bodies in the reformers' depiction of the 'victim'. Indiscreetly and meticulously, Morel described the black female body; without any distance, or ability to elude, the suffering mother and her dead baby are reduced to consumable objects of the 'civilised' European and American audience.

253   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, iii ('harmless'); Edwin D. Mead, "Daniel Webster, John Hay and Elihu Root," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 8–10, here 8 ('innocent', '[h]undreds'); Park, "Terrible Story", 772 ('unarmed'); Morel and Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *The Crisis*, 8 ('millions').

254   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 7 ('reader'); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 29 ('hears').

255   See chapter 5.3 for a discussion of the racist spectacle of Congo protests.

256   Holt to Morel, quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 214 ('bondage', 'speechless'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 197 ('inarticulate', etc.). This classification legitimised the exclusion of Congolese from the public sphere and the stages and texts of the reform movement that are in chapter 2.3.

Such a display could never create real empathy and a human relation between a humanitarian activist in the imperial metropoles and those affected by imperial violence in the periphery. The atrocity photographs might have given some victims of colonial exploitation a "face" and sometimes even a "name". However, they effectively obliterated the actual personality of those exhibited through the primacy of the 'body' and their reduction to a symbol of an abstract pattern of outrages, such as the cutting of off hands. Their suffering and the injuries were publicly displayed, exhibited, printed in books and pamphlets, projected in front of thousands of Europeans, rearranged, commented and contextualised, all, of course, without any chance of those displayed to consent or disagree. Photographic and textual displays of the victims or their bodies were always instrumental appeals for political support and donations to advance a political agenda that was not framed or advanced by the Congolese themselves. As Sharon Sliwinski has convincingly argued, the discursive framing of this humanitarian 'phantasmagoria' established by the reform movement turned a relation between 'Me and You', into a relation between 'Us and Them', and finally between 'Me' and an abstracted 'it'.[257]

Furthermore, the Congo reform movement essentialised the asserted 'victimhood', broadened it to a primordial, racial and cultural characteristic of Central Africa. At his personal celebration at the end of the reform campaign, Morel remarked that Equatorial Africa "has two peculiarities". For one, it stores the world's greatest vegetable riches. Secondly, its people "are most helpless in the world" and have been "[v]ictims for several centuries", and still "are today".[258] There are constantly mental leaps from the descriptions of concrete, real victims to an abstract totality of victims, and finally to the collective of the Congolese 'peoples', 'natives' or 'races'. Victimhood and the implied speechlessness and helplessness were ultimately converted into a primordial condition of Congolese social and cultural identity, a stereotype in itself, forced upon the population of Central Africa and described with terms such as "helpless natives", "helpless folk", "helpless blacks",[259] "helpless races" or helpless "race" of the Congo.[260] The atrocities and outrages, the reformers wrote, had been practised on a "helpless", "harm-

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257 Gehrmann, *Kongo-Greuel*, 288 ('face', 'name' [translation F.L.]); see Sliwinski, "Childhood of Human Rights", 353. For a critical discussion of the use of atrocity photographs in the Congo reform movement, also see Grant, "Limits of Exposure".

258 Morel, quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 27.

259 Park, "Terrible Story", 772 ('natives'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, xv; Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 342, Morel, *Great Britain*, 5 (both 'folk'); Park, "Terrible Story", 768 ('blacks');

260 Lord Monkswell and Edmund D. Morel, *A Reply to the Belgian Manifestos* (London: Congo Reform Association, 1909?), 3 ('races'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 212; The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8 ('race'). Also see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Present Status", 6; William W. Keen, ex-President of the American Medical Association, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Weighty Utterances," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 15–16, here 15; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Association Organises More Permanently," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1908), 1.

less", "unarmed" and "innocent" population and people: the "voiceless millions of Central Africa".[261]

At the same time, infancy was extended from a reference to the young age of those affected by colonial violence in the Congo into a symbol for a backward, immature status of cultural and racial evolution. The Congolese, Park argued, "display in their character a temperament more than any other race the attitudes and manners of children", and their "racial youth" expressed itself in a "habitual light-heartedness". Moreover, for the racist humanitarians, social evolution was analogous to arrested political development. These "savages peoples", Park once wrote, are "the children among the nations".[262] In a quote of G. Stanley Hall, the president of the American reform association, that prefaced the whole pamphlet, it was claimed that "[m]ost savages in most respects are children or more properly adolescents of adult size. Their faults and their virtues are those of childhood and youth".[263]

Thus, the American reformers closely tied their agitation to Stanley's recourse to the temporal and historical dimension of the 'savage' stereotype and his conviction that the Congolese were 'like a child'. Moreover, they also connected their agitation to persisting discursive traditions of American abolitionism. To delegitimise slavery, abolitionist activists had turned the 'child' stereotype, cultivated by "the most sentimental school of proslavery paternalists and plantation romancers", against the institution of slavery itself. If the African is innocent, good-natured and childish, they argued, then his enslavement is against all common morality.[264] A similar argument was raised by the evolutionary psychologist Hall, who was convinced that the mental development of 'primitives' and 'savages' was comparable to that of 'civilised' children or juveniles. Hence, "[t]o war upon [primitive peoples] is to war on children. To commercialize and oppress them with work is child labor on a large scale".[265]

All in all, the interjectional demand for accuracy in the initial quote can hardly hide the fact that the reformer's 'mental vision' about the 'savage victims' was no less stereotypical than the more apparent contempt for the 'savage perpetrators', or the colonial imagery of the Free State's apologists. In this context, the racist humanitarianism of the Congo reform movement developed at best what has been called a 'false empathy' in the context of paternalistic anti-racist struggles.[266] As effective as the image of the 'victim' evoked by the Congo reformers was in triggering compassion and challenging the attempts to legitimise the Free State regime, it always reproduced the discursive

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261 John Holt, quoted in Morel, *British Case*, 202; Morel, *Great Britain*, 5; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, iii ('helpless', 'harmless'), xiv ('unarmed'); William M. Morrison, quoted in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 261 ('innocent'); Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 2 ('voiceless').

262 Ibid., 2 ('nations'); Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 4 ('display', 'youth', 'habitual').

263 G. Stanley Hall, reproduced in ibid., 3. The idea was developed by Hall in an earlier speech, where he had recourse to Booker T. Washington to claim that one the "unique distinctions" of African-Americans was that they "live like the young in the realm of emotion and feeling"; Hall, "Lower and Higher Races", 7.

264 See Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 111.

265 Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 649. Robert Park choose to reproduce Hall's statement at the beginning of Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 3.

266 See Richard Delgado, *The Coming Race War?* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 31.

framework, of an evolutionary – both cultural and biological – state of underdevelopment of Africans.

The emergence of 'the saviours'

Between 'savage perpetrators' and 'helpless victims', the discursive space was opened up for the emergence of the 'white and civilised saviours': the Congo reform movement that took up the fight to stop the orgies of Léopold's cannibalistic soldiers and redeem their suffering prey from their misery, and ultimately succeeded, so one is told, in obliterating the notorious Free State system.

As the previous chapters have argued, the reformers perceived the Congo Scandal as a severe betrayal of the promises pledged during the imperial Congo narrative. Stanley's depiction of the region as 'Darkest Africa' had construed a similar powerful image of 'Brightest Europe'. His classification of the inhabitants of Central Africa as 'savages', 'barbarians', 'devils', 'monsters' and 'coloured races' created a pseudo-identity in differentiation to the alienated Congolese, an imagined community of the 'civilised', 'elected', 'human' and 'whites'. This process of negative identity formation was severely disturbed by the abuses of the European colonial administration of the Congo, which was interpreted by the reformers as an expression of European civilisation 'going native', hence of corrosion of alterity. The recourse to Stanley's terminology in the description of a 'barbarous' and 'dark' Congo, its bloodthirsty 'savage' and 'black' perpetrators, and the 'primitive' and 'childish' victims of oppression by the reformers can in this context be interpreted as the attempt to reinstate the corroded racist identity promised by the Congo narrative. As such, the degradation of both Congolese perpetrators and victims in the humanitarian discourse produced a stabilised image of 'civilised', 'progressive', 'mature' and 'white' European saviours.

Moreover, the Congo Scandal was portrayed as a worrying sign for a 'triumph of the wilderness', which turned the promised superiority of the imperial conquerors and civilisers over 'Darkest Africa' ad absurdum. In delimiting the 'defenceless', 'helpless' and 'voiceless' Congolese 'victims' on the other hand, their distant observers could once more conceive themselves as powerful, sovereign subjects capable of human agency, both materially and discursively. "The helpless, defenceless native on the Congo have no formal Ambassador and no Premier of England, no Rabbis of their church, Editors of their own faith or hundreds of thousands of their co-religionists in America to plead for them", American reformers emphasised. They "depend solely" on "those of other races, other colors and other countries" who "cry aloud in [sic] their behalf".[267]

This hierarchy was amplified by the aforementioned infantilisation of the Congolese victims and the objectification of their abused bodies in the humanitarian spectacle. There was a clear geometry of power inextricably entangled in their photographic and textual representation. When gazing down at the "faces turned upwards in mute appeal for pity" in Morel's fictive hostage house or at the pictured victims of mutilations deliberately seated on a chair or step by the missionary photographers, the European

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267   Keen, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Weighty Utterances", 14–15. Also see Sliwinski, "Childhood of Human Rights", 356.

and American audience was discursively elevated to a social position of superiority and dominance.[268]

Two realms of agency were presented as embodying the role of these powerful and superior saviours. For one, these were the leading activists and organisers of the campaign. The British press enthusiastically celebrated Casement as an embodiment of imperial masculinity and the chivalric incarnation of a British gentlemen's commitment to justice soon after the publication of his investigation, for instance.[269] Figureheads such as Bourne and Morel were declared by their fellow campaigners to be "synonymous with unselfish devotion on behalf of subject races which cannot protect themselves", blessed with a "keen sense of injustice" and "generous mind" and working with "self-sacrificing devotion".[270] The self-appointed evangelical and humanitarian proxies who, like Morrison, spoke "in the name of the millions of black men in Central Africa" or, like Park, appealed "in the name of the voiceless millions of Central Africa [...] to the civilized world", rose to an almost super-human position of influence and moral integrity through their standing for the dehumanised masses of Congolese victims. In the case of Morel, who was "the leader" and "hero of the cause", admiration quickly evolved to a worship that barely fell behind the popular glorification of the classical imperial heroes, as is detailed down.[271]

The second embodiment of the saviour to emerge in differentiating the perpetrators and victims was 'civilised public opinion'. Disillusioned by the reluctance of the Free State's administration to respond to the initially discrete criticism of Protestant missionary organisations that had not been "allowed to reach the public ear", leading Congo opponents eventually became convinced that they "were well advised in stirring up public opinion" at the beginning of the organised phase of the reform movement in 1904.[272] "This is not a matter for lawyers but for enlightened statesmanship and civilised public opinion", Morel stated in his first major Congo book. Furthermore, Park was convinced that "between these peoples and their oppressors there exists no power but that of the public opinion of the world" and pledged his "faith in the power of an international public opinion to compel a King to keep faith with the natives and do his duty to the helpless peoples submitted to his care".[273]

The interaction between 'civilised public' and 'enlightened governance' was the defined purpose of the newly established Congo Reform Associations. "Public opinion to be vigorous must be informed, and to be effective in moulding governmental action,

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268 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 97.
269 See Dean Pavlakis, "British Overseas Humanitarianism", n.p. Casement, however, was reluctant to become a national celebrity. At first, he was concerned about corroding his integrity as an official representative of the British Empire by obtaining a prominent position in a political campaign. As discussed in chapter 5.3, his increasing Irish identity made it impossible to embrace the role of a British imperial hero.
270 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 9 ('synonymous'); Doyle, *Introduction*, xi–xii ('keen', 'generous'); Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Indictment Against the Congo*, 13 [footnote] ('devotion').
271 Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41 ('black men'); Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 2 ('voiceless'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 118 ('leader' etc.).
272 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 199–200 ('allowed'); Samuel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 49 ('stirring').
273 Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 88 ('lawyers'); Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 2 ('between', 'faith').

it must express itself in a concentrated and concrete way", the American organisation stated. "The Congo Reform Association has the two functions of supplying to the public reliable information concerning conditions in the Free State and of representing to the Government public", they proclaimed.[274]

Initially, the imperial public was led astray, though, and actually "captivated" by Léopold's colonial movement, as the reformers realised. Léopold had managed "to throw dust in the eyes of European public opinion", Morel stated, to "bamboozle"[275] and "deceive public opinion" about the real structure of his colonial state in order to achieve international recognition of his endeavour. Hence, it was "of the utmost importance [...] that public opinion throughout the world should be brought to understand this question". By taking "the process of instructing Public Opinion" in hand, the Associations could turn "humanitarian feeling" into "an efficient power for good of a lasting kind", the leading British reformer asserted.[276]

However, Léopold and the Free State apologists were aware of the "great force of public opinion", as well, and they developed a "mastery of the art of swaying it through the press", as Park, himself a trained and experienced journalist, stressed. Especially in the early years of the organised reform campaign, the public sphere was understood as a highly contested discursive battlefield with concurring versions of 'the truth' between the reformers and the Free State apologists. Reformers warned that Léopold used his wealth "to buy newspapers and manufacture public opinion", "to hoodwink public opinion and offset criticism" through the establishment of a modern Press Bureau and "to disseminate lying literature".[277]

The activists were still optimistic that they could win this battle of representation. "Does the Sovereign of the Congo State really imagine that he can deceive public opinion in Europe or in America by such obstetrical pedantries, and dishonest trifling", Morel asked early in 1904. Ultimately, he was not, as the reformers asserted. By accepting to install an international Commission of Inquiry, Léopold had been "bowing to the storm of public opinion", as Samuel proudly summarised. Indeed, by late 1905, when the Commission confirmed most of the charges brought by the reform movement, the reformers had won the public controversy about the facts that constituted the Congo Scandal.[278]

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274   Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Association's Financial Needs," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1907), 12–13', here 12.

275   Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 341.

276   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 12 ('captivated'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 330 ('dust'), 341 ('bamboozle'), 348 ('deceive'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 10 ('utmost'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, xii ('instructing', etc.). Also see Morel, *Great Britain*, 43.

277   Park, "Blood-Money", 61 ('force'); 'Address of Mr. E.D. Morel', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 232 ('buy') [also see Morel, *Great Britain*, 112]; Park, "Terrible Story", 772 ('hoodwink') [also see Park, "King in Business", 624]; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 100 ('disseminate'). The Lord Bishop of South-Wark, Edward Talbot, warned in the Lords that the Congo controversy showed that "there is danger of influence behind the Press, of lobbying and suborning public opinion", apparently "even in free countries": Congo Free State, HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–437, here 426.

278   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 149 ('Sovereign'); Samuel, "Congo State", 875 ('bowing').

In contrast to their expectations, though, public success did not translate into a political triumph for the reformers. The 'enlightened statesmen' in London and Washington showed few signs that they would follow the demands of the reform movement to convoke a new international conference on the Congo or increase diplomatic pressure on Léopold to accept a Belgian annexation of his colony. Disappointed by cautious governments, reformers began to increase their focus on an idealised 'public': "My colleagues and I have done our utmost. We have given of our best. We have appealed to Governments and to Statesmen", Morel stated. "It is only left for us to appeal to [...] Public Opinion", as he pointed out.[279]

Concerning the strategies of protest, this assessment was accompanied by the transformation of an elitist lobby and pressure group into a popular movement. Instead of producing parliamentarian memorials, collecting criminalistic evidence and expert opinions to convince policy-makers and those holding governmental offices, the reformers concentrated on arousing the outrage of the masses through public demonstrations, atrocity lectures and local organisation. In terms of discursive strategies, public opinion became increasingly represented as the true embodiment of 'civilised' morality and righteousness and as the sole actor with the will and means to save the 'helpless victims' in the Congo from their 'savage perpetrators'.

Public opinion was the true sovereign in Western democracies, Morel argued, for it "creates Governments and invests Statesmen with executive authority". And the "power of aroused and intelligent public opinion" was the true "power of moral influence", the American *Congo News Letter* urged, "stronger than callous indifference or greedy tyranny". Only the public could set the diplomatic process in motion that would lead to a true abolishment of the Free State system, "and public opinion is the power which will keep it in motion till the work decided upon is completed", American reformers argued. It had the power to "force King Leopold to stop the evils" in the Congo.[280]

Ultimately, the reformers saw their trust justified. As chapter 2.2 has described, the Congo reformers and their supporters believed that the ultimate terms of the Belgian annexation in 1908 and the extremely limited reforms the new colonial secretary Jules Renkin implemented later signified the major success of their campaign. Enthusiastically, they celebrated their victory and the role of the leading activists and the general public as 'saviours' of the Congolese natives. A public ceremony organised for Edmund D. Morel in May 1911, the first in a series of events that celebrated the 'success' of the colonial reform movement, praised the Honorary Secretary of the British reform association. A letter from the Bishop of Winchester, hindered from presiding over the

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279   Morel, *Great Britain*, 234.
280   Ibid. ('creates'); Mead, "Daniel Webster", 10 ('intelligent', 'influence', 'stronger'); Letter of the Administrative Committee of the Congo Reform Association to Senator Lodge, 5 May 1907, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Association Expresses Gratitude to Senators for Congo Resolution," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1907) April, 10 ('keep'); Rev. Robert H. Nassau, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Congo Abuses Unabated," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 17–18, here 18 ('evils'). Also see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Postscript to News Letter", 5; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Latest Developments – the Call to Action," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1908), 4.

gathering by illness, opened the praise: "I am not ashamed to believe and say that for a great moral emergency the providence of God gave us the man", the Bishop wrote. "I believe Mr Morel to have done a hero's work, with a hero's motive and a hero's courage, and across difficulties which make a hero's task never more difficult than in our complex modern day."[281] Afterwards, notable friends and political allies applauded Morel as the man who "has saved the peoples of the Congo", as "the organiser of victory, the pioneer Workman [...] he who compelled the blind to see, the deaf to hear", and praised "his splendid and heroic crusade", or "his heroism, classic in its nature".[282]

Among the many guests were prominent editors and representatives of the British press, and so headlines throughout the country proudly announced the birth of a new national hero. One could read about "the highest praise" of Morel, "the champion of the native races of the Congo", his "boundless energy, enthusiasm, and unselfishness", who "wrought almost alone a heroic work", a "heroic labour".[283] Without the "great ambition", "indomitable will", "boundless knowledge", "remarkable linguistic endowments" and "iron constitution" of Morel, it was stressed, "the triumph for justice" in the Congo would have been limited.[284]

In the immediate aftermath of the Congo reform movement, prominent reformers like Morel and Johnston and their close personal and political environment, such as the American journalist Herbert A. Gibbons, the British Labour politician F. Seymour Cocks and the philosopher and anti-war activist Bertrand Russel, established the base for the hero narrative that dominates the modern historiographic representation of the campaign.[285] These early triumphal retrospections reduced, like Adam Hochschild decades later, the complex and ambivalent history of this international humanitarian movement to the "romantic" and "incredible" personal battle of a few brave individuals such as Casement and, above all, the "David in the person of a poor shipping clerk", Morel. These two 'saviours', painted like legends of biblical and Greek mythology, were blessed, it was held, by the "unimpeachable character" and "heroic simplicity" to embrace the "Herculean difficulty" ahead of them. Ultimately, they overthrew the vicious "Goliath" Léopold and his realm of pillage and slavery in Africa, and thus saved the suffering Congolese from their misery: "Victory at last", one is assured.[286]

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281   Bishop of Winchester, quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 3–4.

282   Émile Vandervelde, quoted in ibid., 9 ('saved', 'splendid'); C. Silvester Horne, quoted in ibid., 14 ('organiser'); Félicien Challaye, quoted in ibid., 17 ('classic').

283   'A Modern Hero', *Nottingham Daily Express*, 31 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 41 ('highest', 'wrought'); 'Honouring Mr. Morel', *Bristol Times*, 30 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 41 ('champion'); *Westminster Gazette*, 20 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 39 ('labour'). Also see 'A Liverpool Hero and His Work', *Liverpool Echo*, 31 April 1911, reproduced in ibid., 40; 'Honouring a Congo Hero', *Ipswich Star*, 30 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 42; 'Honouring a Real Hero', *The London Signal*, June 1911, reproduced in ibid. 48.

284   'The Hero of Congo Reform', *Christian World*, 1 June 1911, reproduced in ibid., 44.

285   See chapter 1.

286   Harry H. Johnston, *A History of the Colonialization of Africa by Alien Races*, new rev. and enl. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 355 ('romantic', 'incredible', 'David', 'Goliath'); Herbert A. Gibbons, *The New Map of Africa*, *1900–1916* (New York: The Century, 1916), 152 ('unimpeachable'); Bertrand Russell, *Freedom and Organization* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009 [1934]), 350 ('heroic'); Cocks, *E.D. Morel*, 99 ('Herculean'); Morel, *Red Rubber (b/1919)*, 214 ('Victory') [title of new chapter].

The formulation of these eulogies is strongly redolent of the praises of Henry M. Stanley, the most glorified of Europe's imperial heroes from the age of African exploration and conquest. The reformers answered the corrosion of colonial heroism that Conrad and others had diagnosed in the Congo with the creation of new imperial heroes. Although they were not adventurers or empire-builders but humanitarians, these new imperial heroes were believed to have picked up the almost extinct torch of enlightenment once carried by Stanley and his fellow explorers to the heart of the 'Dark Continent'. They became similarly influential symbols of the power and superiority of European civilisation, which had once more triumphed over African savagery and European depravation.[287]

The creation of the saviours, the position that completed the dramatic triangle of racist humanitarianism, was the final discursive response of the Congo reformers to the crisis of racist representation, the thriving self-doubts about cultural degeneration provoked by the Congo Scandal. As a racist stereotype, the 'civilised and white saviour' reinstated imperial alterity, reinstalled Europe in its promised position of power and superiority over the African other, and debilitated the cultural crisis of Western civilisation. As such, the "white light of criticism", as Park called it, discursively created a new position of humanitarian 'whiteness' and 'civilisation'. Morel was particularly praised for "rousing the conscience of Christendom", "enlightening the conscience of the civilised world" and "awakening the public conscience of the white peoples".[288] The Congo reformers "have prevented Europe from standing absolutely silent and indifferent before the greatest crime of all the ages", Doyle admired, and their appeals to the "soul" and "honour" of the white races were eventually answered.[289] After the first "faint stirrings of conscience", the "growl of national disapproval" arose, American reformers recalled, there were "resolutions, and discussions, and cries of pity and shame". Finally, the "heart and conscience of America and Europe cr[ied] aloud".[290]

The more optimistic activist had always pleaded for an understanding of the cultural decay that European 'civilisation' had exposed in its governance of the Congo as an opportunity. The Congo Scandal was "a request and a challenge to the solidarity of Christendom and the ability of civilized peoples to act in a single-hearted way in a righteous cause", Park announced to the members of the American reform association. Similarly, the Archbishop of Canterbury once proclaimed in front of a mass demonstration of religious Congo opponents in Royal Albert Hall that a "great issue of moral righteousness stands large before our eyes". The potential of a selfless humanitarian intervention in the Congo was a chance to prove the survival of past idealism in materialistic modernity. "Such opportunities, as it seems to me, occur more rarely nowadays in a striving and complex age of restless competitive commercial stir than they did

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287 The glorifying public perception of Morel but also of Roger Casement, is unbroken until today; see chapter 1.

288 Park, "Terrible Story", 770 ('white'); Rev. Reginald J. Campbell, quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 36 ('rousing'); 'A Liverpool Hero and His Work', *Liverpool Echo*, 31 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 40 ('enlightening'); 'A Modern Hero', *Nottingham Daily Express*, 31 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 41 ('awakening').

289 Speech of Arthur Conan Doyle, quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22.

290 Park, "Terrible Story", 772 ('growl', 'resolutions'); Mead, "Daniel Webster", 9 ('heart').

at some former epochs in English history", he added.[291] Hence, in saving the 'helpless millions' of the Congo, 'civilisation' could prove that the 'civilised savagery' diagnosed as an expression of the murderous aberration of technology and capitalism was not the dominant characteristic of modernity. In this way, the reform movement weakened the cultural crisis of European civilisation that reformers decried in their outrage about the Congo Scandal. "All the forces of unscrupulous capitalism were brought to bear against the Congo Reform Association", a Liverpool newspaper remarked towards the end of the campaign. "Happily, all the powers arrayed against the forces of humanitarianism have not prevailed, and the cause of righteousness has triumphed, as it is always eventually bound to do in a universe governed by moral law".[292]

In re-establishing the boundaries between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' and re-assuring Europe of its cultural and moral supremacy, the representational crisis of racism within the Congo Scandal, fuelled by doubts about racial and cultural decline, was resolved. Even though, concerning the fate of the Congolese, there remained "very much to be desired", as it was admitted, the assembled guest at Morel's public ceremony and the reporting press seemed to agree that one main goal of the reform movement had been achieved. Morel had "saved the reputation of Europe, the honour of England, and the soul of the Church", it was maintained. The "horrid blots on humanity and Christianity have gone", and the "stain from the records of civilisation" has been removed. The Congolese population had endured almost half of a century of colonial oppression under Belgian rule when the British reform association finally declared the victory of its campaign. What was rescued by the saviours of the Congo reform movement, however, was the integrity of the European self.[293]

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291   Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 2 ('request'); The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8 ('great').

292   'A Liverpool Hero and His Work', *Liverpool Echo*, 31 May 1911, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 40.

293   'Honouring Mr. Morel', *Bristol Times*, 30 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 41–42, here 42 ('desired', 'blots'); 'Honouring a Congo Hero', *Ipswich Star*, 30 May 1911, reproduced in ibid., 42 ('stain'); Speech of C. Silvester Horne, reproduced in ibid., 13 ('soul of the church').

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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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,

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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

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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-

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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

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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

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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 re-markable 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 ris-ing 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 ed-ucated 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 Al-abama 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

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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.

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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

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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

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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]

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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.
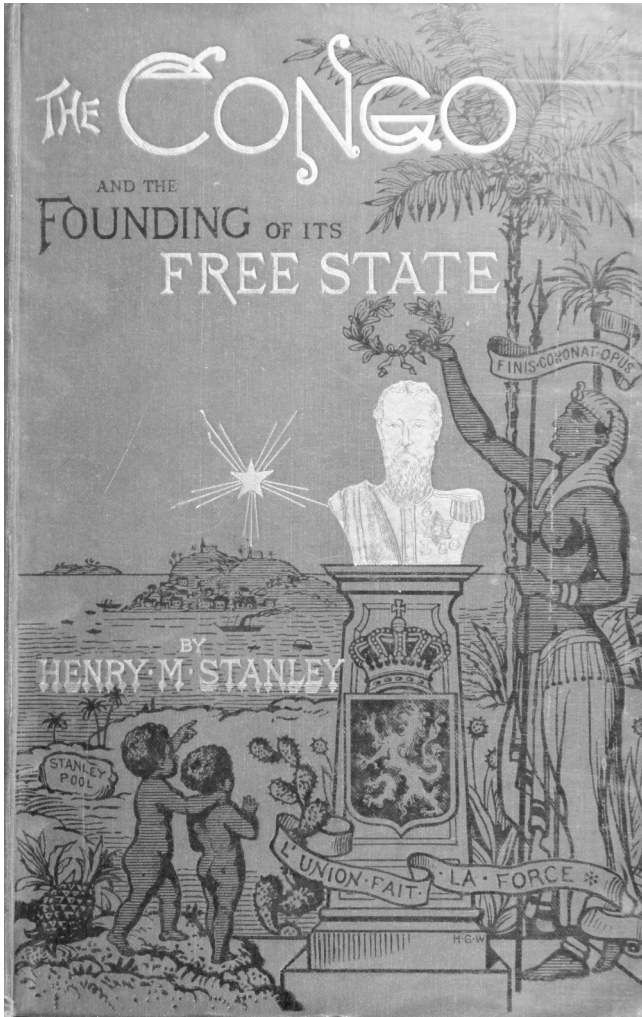
The racist contract of Berlin

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

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<div style="margin-left:2em">

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').

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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 multi-faceted 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

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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

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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 satis-faction', 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 atroc-ities, "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 sim-ilarly 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 cul-tural 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 com-plained 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 no-ble 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, *Treat-ment 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 Con-goland*, 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

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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

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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,

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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

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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-

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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 op-posed 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 le-gal 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 destruc-tion. 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-legiti-mation of New imperialism. The abundance of those international humanitarian, com-mercial and religious milieus that had initially sustained Léopold's colonial movement

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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-

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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'

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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 re-main" 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 strate-gies and policies that would allow those statesmen in charge to cope with the monu-mental 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 re-formers 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 civil-ising 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 segre-gation. 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 in-stitutional 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 struc-turally 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 for-mer explorer and colonial administrator held that the military invasions of the Congo Basin had been "legitimate conquests over Arabs and cannibals". Moreover, the human-itarian, 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

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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

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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

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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 practising 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

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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-

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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"

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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

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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

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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

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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]

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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]

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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 enfranchise-ment 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 apolo-gists 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 "lib-erty 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 condi-tion 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 egali-tarian 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]

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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 'Ungleich-heit als Programm', Frankfurt, 24 November 2006, 11; Wulf D. Hund, "Der Rassenvertrag," in *He-gemoniale 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 Hu-man 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",

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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

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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 cc 1289–1332, here c 1332 ('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,

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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

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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-

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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]

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

5. Congo reform and the crisis of racist societalisation

> "And no wonder! Such things are an ineffaceable blot upon the white race in Africa; and every white man who has a soul, whether brought into contact with them on the spot, or acquainted with them from a distance, cannot but 'cringe with shame' for his race".[1]
>
> Edmund D. Morel

From a sociological perspective, racism has been approached as a distinctively negative form of societalisation. Based on the exclusion of those people stigmatised as 'savage' or 'coloured', for instance, racist identities such as 'civilised' or 'white' can integrate both (economically, culturally, politically) dominant and deprived spheres of a hierarchised society in the same imagined community. Since the "racist symbolic capital" or "ethnic honour" accumulated by those considered superior human beings is ascribed regardless of the social status of an individual, racism can create a negative form of cohesion in societies defined by, inter alia, class conflicts and political disparity.[2]

As *chapter 5.1* shows, the peculiar social formation of the Congo colony makes it a prime object to research this process of negative racist societalisation. Initially, the colonial frontier situation and an 'egalitarian' policy allowed the inclusion of the exceptionally diverse Congolese colonial master class into the community of 'colonial whiteness', which was rewarded with various symbolic and material benefits. Moreover, as an 'empire for the masses', the Congo lured imperial middle and working classes with promises of economic growth, new fields of consumption and the 'ethnic honour' allocated through the commodified spectacle of exploration and conquest.

However, as the quoted words of Edmund D. Morel, the honorary secretary of the British Congo Reform Association, reveal, the process of racist societalisation was in a state of severe state of crisis, as *chapter 5.2* discusses. Preferential access for Belgians and

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1   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 243.
2   See Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 64; Wulf D. Hund, *Negative Vergesellschaftung* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2006). The idea of a 'purely negative' societalisation and an 'ethnic honour' builds upon notions of Max Weber in Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 303, 309. The concept of a 'racist symbolic capital', relying on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of multiple social inequalities, is developed in Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 46–49. Also see chapter 1.

Catholics to the administration, economy and church sector; a repressive stance of the state; and inner conflicts among the colonisers led to corroding cohesion in the allegedly universal community of colonial 'whiteness'. Moreover, agents of the state and trading companies complained about miserable living conditions and the disgrace of their allegedly 'heroic' endeavour. The crisis of racist societalisation affected the metropole, where Free State opponents decried the degradation of once-admired imperialists and came to conceptualise the Congo, as Morel's words indicate, as an 'empire of shame'. Finally, under the economic policy implemented by Léopold since the 1890s, all the benefits promised to the British and American economy vanished.

Finally, *chapter 5.3* analyses the reaction of the reform movement to this crisis and investigates the remedies they proposed. Although a return to the 'open door' guaranteed by the Berlin Conference from 1885 would allow merchants and missionaries to regain their promised access, most internationals chose to withdraw from the Congo. This allowed the reformers to blame Belgian and lower-class recruits for the Congolese atrocities and maintain the idea of morally sound and politically legitimate British or Anglo-Saxon imperialism. Finally, through the racist spectacle of a commodified humanitarianism, the Congo once more became a resource of 'ethnic honour' for the British and American public.

5.1   'To combine all elements of the civilised world': The formation of colonial 'whiteness' and its promised benefits

In the summer of 1884, Henry M. Stanley returned to Europe after almost five years of supervising the foundation of the International Association of the Congo. In articles, interviews and lectures, the admired 'explorer' praised – and greatly exaggerated – the accomplishments of his mission in Central Africa and advertised the potential of Léopold's colony, which still lacked diplomatic recognition and a solid material base. On one of these occasions, Stanley not only emphasised the economic liberties guaranteed by the Association but presented the emerging colonial state as a quasi-utopian social-political project of egalitarian character, at least for the colonisers. "The spirit of this proposed government", the assembled audience at the Manchester Town Hall was told by the iconic 'explorer', was not merely "free trade, free commerce, unrestricted enterprise". Its spirit was also impartiality towards its future subjects "irrespective of colour, creed, or nationality, [...] rank or social status".[3]

In the Congo, Stanley promised, fundamental categories of social inequality and personal identities like 'race' and class, national belonging and faith would be suspended for those willing to join the new colonial ruling class as military officers, civil administrators, artisans, missionaries or merchants. Thus, Stanley discursively connected his colonial mission in Africa to the capability of colonial frontier communities to superimpose the social fragmentation of the imperial metropoles through an inclusion of

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3   Speech of Henry M. Stanley at the Manchester Town Hall, 21 October 1884, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 8.

the colonisers into imagined communities (like 'civilisation', 'Christianity' or 'white-ness') defined in absolute opposition to the colonised (stigmatised as 'savage', 'heathen' or 'coloured'). This social phenomenon was elaborately described for European settler colonies established beyond the Atlantic Ocean and later in the Pacific. In the Australian case, the capability of 'whiteness' to outshine social antagonisms has, in this context, been compared to the physical effect of "white noise", the broadband signal that covers all audible frequencies and results in all-embracing homogeneity. [4] As Stanley's speech in Manchester hints at and the following chapter shows, a particularly raucous 'white noise' was promised to be generated in 'Darkest Africa'.

First, it is discussed how Léopold promised 'to combine all elements of the civilised world' in the Congo. Political strategy as much as practical necessity led to a uniquely diverse national, confessional, social and 'racial' composition of the state agents, mis-sionaries and merchants pouring into the Congo Basin starting in 1879. Second, through the violent confrontation with and absolute delimitation to the colonised and alienated Congolese population, all colonisers were offered inclusion in an imagined community of colonial 'whiteness'. The 'white noise' indeed predominated over any social stratifica-tion among the colonisers in the Congo. As a cultural category and social relation, colo-nial 'whiteness' was even allocated to those members of the colonial master class who were most likely considered not fully, or not yet 'white' in the colonial metropole. More-over, all colonisers were promised multidimensional benefits. This included a racist symbolic capital expressed as the right to humiliate and despise the colonised, high material wages and an increase in prestige and public reputation through their partic-ipation in the prestigious endeavour of conquering and 'civilising' 'Darkest Africa'.

Moreover, the Congo was also deliberately created as an 'empire for the masses'. Materially, the macroeconomic effects of integrating Central Africa into the capitalist world economy were promised to stimulate industrial growth and the labour market, while colonial commodities based on the tropical richness of the Congo could sweeten and comfort the life of the metropolitan consumers. Symbolically, the 'commodification of racism' allowed those who stayed behind to incorporate the racist hierarchies estab-lished in the colonies, as well. Tremendously successful travel literature and imperial exhibitions brought the Congo home to the metropole and assured millions of readers and visitors of their belonging to the communities of civilisation and whiteness, and they allowed vast parts of the imperial societies to accumulate a 'racist symbolic capital' through the colonial exploitation of the Congo.

A 'cosmopolitan colony': the colonial master class in the Congo

From the outset, the International Association of the Congo attempted to make the egalitarian spirit Stanley evoked a fundamental pillar of the emerging colonial order in Central Africa. As has been discussed above, Léopold successfully disguised his poorly legitimated personal grasp over the vast Congo Basin as an 'international' colonisation

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4   See Aziz Rana, *The Two Faces of American Freedom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 12; Stefanie Affeldt: Consuming Whiteness, 36 ('white noise'). Affeldt borrowed the concept from Tay-lor, *Buying Whiteness*, 352.

scheme. This political manoeuvre involved promises of open and indiscriminate access to the resources and markets of the Congo, and it resulted in a departure from the particular alignments dominating the 19th century imperial narratives. In general, these had been closely associated with national grandeur, 'racial' destiny or a denominational sense of mission. In contrast, the colonisation of the Congo was presented as a collective endeavour devoted to "the combination of all civilised nations" on a "common ground" and universally appealing to all imperial 'races' and Christian confessions.[5]

Every keen 'civilised' person could participate in and benefit from the colonisation of 'Darkest Africa', it was promised. The right "to enter, travel and reside" was explicitly conferred to British and American citizens in bilateral agreements, for instance, and the General Acts of the Congo Conference 1885 and the Anti-Slavery Conference 1890 guaranteed merchants and missionaries "free access" and special protection "without distinction of creed" or nationality.[6]

Moreover, the administration of the International Association (and later the Congo Free State) not only recruited around the globe but also specifically attempted to attract candidates from the social margins of the imperial societies for the various civil and military positions in the new colony.[7] That it was a "Welsh workhouse boy who has just plucked the heart out of the mystery of the Dark Continent", as W. T. Stead noted, was perhaps the best advertisement in this regard. The remarkable biography of Stanley, who grew up in poverty and became the most celebrated imperial 'hero' of the 19th century, strengthened the conviction that even the ordinary and common "country yokel, or child of the slums, is the seed of Empire", as Stead argued.[8]

Furthermore, "well-educated" Black Americans and West Indians were explicitly invited to serve as "educators of their backward and uncivilised brethren" in the Congo, as an English newspaper reported from Brussels.[9] Previous chapters have approached Léopold's promises of creating a 'Black Republic' in Central Africa as an attempt to enmesh American milieus that promoted African-American repatriation. At the same time, the Belgian king and his associate Albert Thys had a genuine interest in skilled African-American but also West African labour. To these, Stanley generously promised the "paternal care" of the new colonial state for "each of its subjects' rights, whether black or white".[10]

In this context, it is worthwhile to remember that, in Stanley's early Congo narrative and Léopold's version of the 'civilising movement', cultural or historicist patterns of racism had predominated over 'racial' categories. In his first two travelogues, Stanley,

5   Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 139 ('combination'); see Murray, "Building Congo", 11–12 and chapter 4.1.

6   "Treaty of Amity U.S.–Congo", Art. I ('enter'); *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. II ('free access'); *General Act of Brussels 1890*, Art. II Sec. 3 ('distinction'). Also see "Convention Her Britannic Majesty–Congo 1884".

7   On international recruitment, see "'King Leopold's Promises'", 465 and chapter 4.

8   William T. Stead, "To All English-Speaking Folk," *Review of Reviews* 1, no. 1 (1890): 16 ('yokel').

9   'The Congo', *Nottingham Evening Post*, 14 January 1890, 4 ('well-educated', 'educators').

10   See chapter 4.1; Speech of Stanley at the Manchester Town Hall, 21 October 1884, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 8 ('paternal', 'each'). On the interest in Black labour, see S[ylvanus] J. S. Cookey, "West African Immigrants in the Congo 1885–1896," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 2 (1965): 261–70; McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 204.

who was, in a formulation similar to the common excuses of white racists until today, "proud to call" some Black men in the United States "friends", explicitly rejected "colour" or "physiognomy" as the foundation of the hierarchy of humanity. [11] Likewise, the Belgian diplomat Émile Banning, who promoted the movement inaugurated at the 1876 Brussels Geographic Conference in England, called "old prejudices" about the peculiar and inferior "physical type" of Africans out-dated. Dissociating themselves from the increasingly popular 'race' concept allowed the pioneers of Congo colonialism to promote the desired participation of 'civilised' Blacks in the new colonial state. [12]

This wide-ranging promotion of colonial service in the Congo and the pledges of free access, unrestricted commerce, and equal treatment proved to be successful. When hundreds of Americans and Europeans poured into the Congo Basin starting in 1879 to 'open the region to civilisation and trade', their personal background was of a diversity that was unique among the neighbouring imperial formations. As has been argued before, cosmopolitanism and multi-confessionalism were a defining aspect of the church and economy sector of the young colony. Missionary organisations from Great Britain, America, Germany, Sweden and France, including various Anglican, Roman Catholic and Protestant denominations, soon established themselves, together with European merchants from at least eight nations. [13]

In a later sketch of Léopold's character, Robert Park stressed that there were "few men more cosmopolitan", and he pointed out that the Belgian king employed "men of all nationalities in the Congo State". The European officers (or "whites") of Stanley's early expeditions included a large company of Belgians but also significant numbers of Swedes, Germans and Britons; smaller French, Danish, Dutch, Italian and Portuguese groups and one Swiss and one 'Arab' recruit – including the Irishman Roger Casement and the English Herbert Ward and Edward J. Glave, some of the most prominent Congo critics in later years. [14]

The international character of its civil and military body initially prevailed after the proclamation of the Free State in May 1885. Most foreigners were by then recruited in Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. Moreover, while the majority of officers in the newly established Force Publique were recruited from the Belgian army, a considerable amount were military men from Great Britain and the United States, Italy and Scandinavian countries. [15] In 1891, it was with William Stairs, a Canadian-British soldier and former participant of the Emin Pasha expedition, who led the military mission that attempted to bring Katanga under Free State control, for instance. [16] Moreover, after the sudden escalation of conflicts with the 'Arab' slave em-

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11   Stanley, *Livingstone*, 10 ('proud', 'friends', 'colour', 'physiognomy'); see Stanley, *Dark Continent*, Vol. 1.
       48; Tyler D. Parry, "A Brief History of the 'Black Friend'," Black Perspectives. Blog of the African American Intellectual History Society 2018, https://www.aaihs.org/a-brief-history-of-the-black-friend/.
12   Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 69 ('old', 'physical'). On the rising prominence of 'race' in racist discourse, see chapter 1.
13   On missionaries, see Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 274; on merchants, see Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism*, 91.
14   Park, "King in Business", 626 ('cosmopolitan'); Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 306 ('whites'). For the exact numbers, see the table reproduced on the same page.
15   See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82, 100–07.
16   See Gondola, *History of Congo*, 61–64; chapter 2.1.

pires in the early 1890s, the state sent commissioners to Britain and the United States to recruit militaries for the Force Publique; among them were Edgar Canisius and Guy Burrows, who would later make headlines with their devastating account of their employers.[17]

Thus, the prospect of an opportunity to partake in the 'heroic' task of 'civilising' the heart of the 'Dark Continent' lured not only men from well-established imperial nations (such as France, Great Britain and Portugal) but particularly citizens of nations that, by 1879, had not (such as the United States, Austria or Switzerland), were no longer (such as Denmark, the Netherlands or Sweden) or had not yet (such as Belgium, Germany or Italy) been involved in the colonisation of West and Central Africa. Not without symbolic significance, as has been maintained, the systematic recruitment of Italian military personal culminated immediately after Italy's defeat at the Battle of Adwa in 1896, which marked the end of Italy's first attempt to invade the Ethiopian Empire.[18]

Furthermore, many contemporary sources indicate that the Free State service indeed became a particularly attractive destination for young men from the margins of imperial societies. Stanley repeatedly referred to the lower social and educational status of some of the Europeans he engaged with in the formation of the Free State. The proportion of middle-, lower-middle- and working-class backgrounds among the Force Publique officers, for instance, excelled the already high rate in German or British colonial armies. Moreover, many British colonists emerged from the so-called 'Celtic Fringe', and the involvement of Irish and Scottish in the Congo was particularly high.[19]

Finally, the prospect of participating in the Congolese 'civilising mission' particularly appealed to Black Baptists. As early as February 1886, a European newspaper announced that "Dr. Theo. E.S. Scholes and Rev. J. E. Ricketts – both black men – had sailed for the Congo" in the name of the 'African Mission', an organisation of Black Baptists in Britain.[20] In the same year, the 'United States and Congo National Emigration Steamship Company' was established and was to "run and operate a line of steam vessels" between Baltimore and the Free State "for the purpose of emigration and commerce". It was founded by white businessmen but was soon exclusively run by Benjamin Gaston, a Black Baptist from Georgia. By 1889, the company already had more than 2,000 subscribers, mainly poor people from the South hoping to escape poverty and racial discrimination; although not a single ship had yet sailed towards the Congo.[21]

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17   The recruiting efforts are mentioned in Henry M. Stanley, introduction to *The Land of the Pigmies*, by Guy Burrows (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1898), viii; Leigh, *Introduction*, viii.

18   See Elena, "Overseas Europeans", here particularly 76; chapter 1.

19   See Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 84; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 69–70.

20   The Belfast Witness, 3 February 1886, quoted in Thomas. L. Johnson, *Born Three Times* (Chester: Anza Publishing, 2005), 126. The two Jamaicans were pioneers of cooperation between Black Baptists and the American Baptist Missionary Union, and the first African-American missionaries working in the Congo. In September 1886, the General Association of the Western States and Territories, one of the major organisations of Black Baptists in the United States, unanimously resolved that it would cooperate with the American Baptist Missionary Union in the Congo: see ibid., 127.

21   'Emigration to the Congo Country', *The Washington Post*, 24 June 1886, 3 ('run'); see 'Emigrants to Africa', *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1889, 6; see 'To Return to Africa', *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1889, 9.

"A tide of Negro Emigration" may soon set strongly "to Liberia or the Congo", the *Southern Workman* nonetheless predicted in December 1889. In the same month, the emigration activist Williams, who had returned from a trip to Brussels, where he had personally met Léopold during the Anti-Slavery Conference, caused a stir among the students of the Hampton Institute when he revealed that he had been authorised by the Belgian 'Companies of the Congo' to recruit 24 men as citizens and workers of the Free State. Full of hope, Williams embarked on a six-month personal inquiry towards the Congo in 1890.[22]

As the following chapter reveals, this idea ultimately collapsed after Williams composed his two devastating reports about his experience in the Congo. Nonetheless, the Congo remained a prominent theme in the Black imagination in the American South, particularly due to the prominence of the evangelical work of William Sheppard, the Hampton graduate missionary who had arrived in 1890 to establish a station for the American Presbyterian Congo Mission in the Kasai region with his 'white' colleague (and supervisor) Samuel Lapsley. When Sheppard returned for a visit to the United States in 1893, soon celebrated as the 'Black Livingstone', as has been mentioned, his lectures and articles aroused great enthusiasm in the Black community. In Virginia, Black Baptists established the 'Congo Missionary Society' to support Sheppard's work, and he secured four new Black volunteers, one man and three women. By 1900, 20 African-American missionaries worked for Baptist and Presbyterian societies in the Congo. Moreover, several hundred West Africans, recruited as soldiers or workers, had reached the Free State by the early 1890s.[23]

Hence, in regard to the personal background of the colonists entering the Congo Basin, the universal utopia evoked by Stanley, Léopold and others in texts, lectures and conferences in Europe and the United States found some expression on African soil. Concerning the direct actors, the colonisation of the Congo was indeed not the project of a particular nation, class, confession or 'race', but the collective endeavour of colonisers from many the parts of the globe considered 'civilised' and 'progressive'.[24]

'White noise' in 'Darkest Africa': the social construction of 'colonial whiteness'

That this universalism became more than a statistical phenomenon an indeed a social experience was, on the other hand, far from self-evident. The members of the new colonial elite were predominantly (but not exclusively) male and all comparatively young; however, in addition, it is reasonable to assume that the lives of the state agents, missionaries or traders had little in common at the time they embarked towards Africa. They did not share one language or denomination, they came from countries or regions that had only recently encountered violent conflicts and wars, and they emerged from social strata that were strictly separated or even segregated in their home countries.[25]

22   The *Southern Workman*, quoted in Dworkin, *Congo Love Song*, 22 ('tide'); also see ibid., 21.

23   See Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 159–60; David Killingray, "The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s–1920s," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (2003): 22. The exact numbers are unknown, see Cookey, "West African Immigrants", 263.

24   Banning, *Brussels Geographical Conference*, 139 ('combination').

25   See Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 60.

Nonetheless, once they disembarked at the Congo River mouth, all new European and American arrivals experienced the association and integration into the newly formed colonial master class. What bound the pioneering Europeans and Americans in the Congo together was not primarily age and gender (and probably a shared fascination for distant countries and lust for adventure and glory), but the radical opposition between colonisers and colonised. National rivalries, religious conflicts, class- and 'race' prejudices did not simply disappear.[26] Nonetheless, at the colonial frontier, there was simply little room for personal animosities and status consciousness. "[A]s if by a mutual understanding, no personal questions were ever asked" about the "past lives" of fellow colonisers, Ward recalled from his early engagement in the Congo. Surrounded by a hostile environment and millions of increasingly rebellious original inhabitants, the few hundred missionaries, traders and state agents were inevitably dependent on the mutual support and solidarity of all colonisers.[27]

Politically, the International Association and the Free State attempted to promote this egalitarian frontier spirit and to implement its promises of a colonial order in which national belonging, confession, and the social and 'racial' background of the colonisers had little relevance. For instance, although higher functionaries tended to be drawn from a higher social class and were rather well educated, salaries and career opportunities were structured in a much more egalitarian way than in neighbouring colonies.[28] Moreover, the segregated legal system of the Free State did initially not rely on 'racial' distinctions to define, for instance, whose land titles would be recognised by the State or who had a right to appeal against judgments of a court-martial, but between 'natives' and 'non-natives'.[29] "As non-native should be considered", a Royal Decree of 7 January 1886 explicitly defines, "[e]very person born outside the territory of the State, regardless of the race to which he belongs".[30]

Hence, by survivalist necessities and political regulation, the universal character of Congo colonisation transformed from a statistic value into a social experience. "Leopold II has knit adventurers, traders and missionaries of many races into one band of men under the most illustrious of modern travellers to carry to the interior of Africa new ideas of law, order, humanity and protection of the natives", the *Daily Telegraph* wrote

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26   Stanley, for instance, repeatedly complained about the unhealthy lifestyle and fondness for liquor among the "sailors, engineers, and the illiterate class of men" working for him: Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 84. Sidney L. Hinde, a British officer of the Force Publique referred with little sympathy to the "American nigger from Liberia" he fought with: Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 152.

27   Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 249.

28   In the early years of the colony, the sharp line of social distinction between higher and lower functionaries that would later emerge among the Free State officials, comparable to the division between commissioned and non-commissioned officers in European armies, was still largely non-existent; see Mountmorres, *Congo Independent State*, 78; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 67.

29   See Art. 1 of "Régime Foncier (Royal Decree, 22 August 1885)," in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 31–5, here 31–2 (land rights); Art. 27 of "Conseils de Guerre (Royal Decree, 22 December 1888)", in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: F. Hayez, 1889), 14–21, here 20 (court-martial).

30   Art. 25 of "Justice (Royal Decree, 7 January 1886)," in *Bulletin Officiel*, ed. État Indépendant du Congo (Bruxelles: P. Weissenbruch, 1886), 1–18, here 7 (translation F.L.).

in praising words. However, what truly 'knit together this band of men' was the differentiation from the 'natives', the exclusion of the alienated other whose fully developed humanity was contested. The Congo revealed the power of racism to create a negative form of cohesion in a socially differentiated group, hence an 'inclusion through exclusion', and the capability of the 'white noise' in the colonies to be superimposed on the social stratifications defining the imperial metropoles.[31]

As has been discussed in chapter 3.1, Stanley's Congo literature discursively incorporated Europe's alleged progressiveness and superiority into the ideal type of a heroic 'white' and 'civilised' imperialist conquering and civilising 'Darkest Africa'. The formation of the Congo Free State attempted to institutionalise this narrative and promised to turn this racist phantasm into a social relation. Thus, all members of the colonial master class were prima facie not only considered "pioneers of progress" and "forerunners of civilisation", but 'white' in the colonial nomenclature – in official statistics such as Stanley's muster roll, personal communication and publications. "The Congo pioneers were, as I have already stated, men representing many different European nationalities", Herbert Ward remembered, for instance: "The natives, who gathered in groups by the wayside to take their first view of white men, gazed in utter bewilderment upon the passing caravans, under the command of flaxen-haired Northerners and swarthy Southerners".[32]

With the latter description, Ward very likely referred to Portuguese or Italian colonial agents. Their aggregation with blond Scandinavians under the notion of 'white men' was apparently neither visually conclusive nor was it actually culturally self-evident. After all, late 19th-century immigration discourse and policy in the United States, for instance, still treated immigrants from Southern (and Eastern) Europe as 'not yet' 'white'. Like the Irish had been before, they were relegated to a status of "[r]acial [i]nbetweenness" and still had to prove their equality with early immigrants of Northern and Western European descent.[33]

Moreover, the 'racial' status of the many working-class agents that had poured into the Congo since 1879 had been probably similarly contested before they embarked for their service in the Free State. Within the imagined community of the 'white race', the position of the British working-class, for instance, remained marginal throughout the 19th century. The upper classes were reluctant to admit full membership to aristocratic and bourgeoisie notions of 'whiteness' for those lower strata of society who seemed socially and culturally like "a race wholly apart".[34] That Italians, like British (and American) workers in the later 19th century, developed a 'white consciousness' and would eventually become accepted as 'white' was the outcome of complex structural transformations and racist group agency; however, the departure to 'Darkest Africa' allowed what could

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31 'As We Come Nearer', *Daily Telegraph & Courier*, 22 October 1884, 5. For an analytical discussion of an 'inclusion through racist exclusion', see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", particularly 84–88 and chapter 1.

32 "'Letter from the King of the Belgians'", 285 ('progress'); Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250 ('forerunners'), 249 ('Congo pioneers', etc.).

33 David Roediger, *Working Towards Whiteness* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 57 ('[i]nbetweenness').

34 Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (New York: John W. Lovell Co, 1887), 83.

be called a 'whitening' merely "by sea change". In the Congo, 'dark' Southerners or workers who were part of the new colonial master class defined in contradistinction to and 'in command' of the Congolese 'natives' were prima facie considered 'white men'.[35]

In this context, 'whiteness' fully revealed that it was a social and cultural concept, not a colour but rather a relation of power.[36] As such, it even allowed the integration of African-Americans. At his mission station in the Kasai, William Sheppard was always more concerned with exploration, ethnography and big-game hunting than with converting the local population. Photographs reveal his desire to stage himself with the insignias of colonial power such as white clothes, superior weapons, and mastery of African wildlife and nature. In the Congo, he successfully reshaped his identity to the dominant stereotype of imperial masculinity, including a similar sense of moral and cultural superiority towards the African 'heathens', like his 'white' colleagues. He was thus received by other colonisers and the colonised Africans as part of the 'white' colonial masterclass. Lapsley, Sheppard's 'white' colleague and supervisor, repeatedly referred to his African-American companion as "white" in his diary and letters, for instance. Moreover, the Congolese called Sheppard "'Mundéle Ndombe' the black white man", as Lapsley noted.[37]

The alleged use of 'whiteness' as a foreign appellation is a common motive in colonial discourse. Stanley's travelogues, for instance, used the notion 'white man' almost exclusively in the direct or indirect speech of Africans. However, colour symbolism and phenotypical features of course had little significance in a region like the Congo Basin, where the European 'race' dogma had been largely unknown at the time of colonisation. It is not surprising, then, that Africans perceived the foreign invaders not as 'white'. Indeed, the Bobangio term 'mondele' or 'mundéle', which became a common term to refer to colonisers in the Congo and French colonies and was generally translated as 'white man', like similar terms in Zulu or Hausa, had no linguistic relation to the colour 'white', which was called 'exengo'. Linguistically, 'mundele' instead referred to moral and social characteristics such as insincerity, and practically it referred to a certain style of Western clothes that distinguished the foreign invaders from the original inhabitants.[38]

The example of the Congo Free State proves the value of the notion that colonial 'whiteness' was less a biological property than "a state of being, desirable habits and customs, projected patterns of thinking and living, governance and self-governance". Indeed, in the Congo, everyone in the tropical suits worn by traders, missionaries and

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35   Allen, *Invention of the White Race*, Vol. 1, 27 ('sea-change'). For the role of anti-black racism in the constitution of the 'white' American working class, see Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; on the relevance of reformations of British capitalism and a popular imperialism for the emergence of a 'white' identity among British workers, see Bonnett, "British Working Class".

36   See Mills, *Racial Contract*, 127.

37   James W. Lapsley, ed., *Life and Letters of Samuel Norvell Lapsley, Missionary to the Congo Valley, West Africa* (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1893), 192 ('white'), 83 ('Mundéle'). Also see Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 72; Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p.

38   See Mervyn C. Alleyne, *The Construction and Representation of Race and Ethnicity in the Caribbean and the World* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 77; Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p.

state agents alike was defined as part of the group of the colonisers and was considered 'white'. Due to the attempt to create an imperial formation of universal character and the resulting exceptional diversity of the colonial elite in the Free State, the experience of colonial mastery and its benefits were offered to a larger part of American and European societies than through any other previous African colonial project; including aspiring colonists from smaller or non-imperial countries. The incorporation into the community of colonial 'whiteness' offered a 'whitening' even to those stigmatised as 'black', or social and 'ethnic' strata considered only recently (like the Irish) or not fully (like the working class or southern Italians) 'white' in the imperial metropoles.[39]

'Racist symbolic capital' and 'wages of colonial whiteness' in the Congo

The inclusion in the imagined community of colonial 'whiteness' was rewarded with a radical increase in status and power and multi-layered symbolic and material benefits. Travellers in the Congo were astonished by the social standing that even an "ordinary white man" could achieve in colonial society, where "the smallest insect of a pale face earns the title of '*bwana mkubwa*' (big master)". A common European could experience remarkable social breakthroughs and achieve an almost royal status among the colonised population, as the case of former Irish missionary Charles Stokes reveals; he became one of the most influential ivory traders in the Eastern Congo Basin. "According to the people, the country belonged to Stokes: Stokes was their Sultan", a personal acquaintance remembered, "he was regarded as the real and paramount chief.[40]

While Stokes' social standing was perhaps exceptional, minor agents of the state or trading firms in the region shared his habitus. Indeed, at the colonial frontier in Central Africa, some of the former European 'country yokels' or 'children of the slums' Stead had in mind could find themselves suddenly reigning over thousands of Africans. As Canisius reported, "every low-born and illiterate person who was placed in charge of one of the [...] posts soon imagined himself a despot on a smaller scale". Where the colonial order was consolidated, its representatives in remote stations experienced an almost unrestricted mastery based on the protection of the state and the access to its superior military means. After the defeat of the Muslim realms in Eastern Congo, a young Belgian junior officer of the Force Publique called Émile J. G. Lémery, for instance, was suddenly catapulted to a position of power that was barely lesser than that of the old potentates. Assigned as Chef de Zone at the town of Nyangwe in 1894, he became ruler, judge, military commander and economic director in "the grand old slave capital" of Eastern Congo, once the seat of powerful Sultans and visited by all pioneering Central African explorers. Lémery experienced his new colonial mastery as a personal liberation. "Vive le Congo", he wrote to his family "there is nothing like it! We have liberty, independence and life with wide horizons. Here you are free and no more a slave of society".[41]

39   Goldberg, *The Racial State*, 171 ('state of being').
40   Glave, "New Conditions", 913 ('ordinary'); Decle, "Murder in Africa", 588 ('paramount'), 589 ('Sultan').
41   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 120 ('low-born'); Hinde, *Congo Arabs*, 183 ('capital'); Letter of Lémery, January 1894, quoted in Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, 116 ('Vive'). On Lémery's colonial service, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 61–62; M[arthe] Coosemans, "Lemery," in *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, ed. Insitut Royal Colonial Belge, (Bruxelles: 1952), Vol. 3, cc. 539–51.

The resolution of the restraints of society that had restricted his 'horizon' and 'liberty' in the metropolis that Lémery celebrated suggests that the 'white noise' generated in 'Darkest Africa' had indeed become capable of superimposing the social fragmentation of the new colonial ruling class. Of course, for an African-American like the Presbyterian Sheppard, born a month before the end of the Civil War in Virginia, no longer being 'a slave of society' would have had a much more literal connotation than for the young Belgian officer born in Brussels. For Black Americans, the 'white noise' of the Congo lured with the prospect of overcoming restrictions of class or nationality and of overcoming the racist hysteria of the segregated Jim Crow South.[42]

In 1891, full of racist contempt, an American newspaper reported how the circulars of the 'United States and Congo National Emigration Company' advertised their emigration scheme to African-Americans as a chance to escape the narrow 'racial' boundaries in America. In their ancestral lands, they were promised to "be kings among dogs". There, "they could make Rome howl by virtue of their civilisation and superiority. There they could be all that the white man was in Africa". For Williams and other advocates of African-American participation in the colonisation of the Congo, this opportunity to reach a social status and power similar to that of a 'white' man was, indeed, a pivotal incentive. In the Congo, Black Americans could "stand on equal footing with European white colonists as pioneers of civilization", Williams hoped.[43]

At least for some years, African-American missionaries in the Congo experienced a grade of equality, autonomy and power in their posts they could have hardly achieved at home. Between 1894 and 1897, Sheppard's missionary station in the Kasai was almost entirely run by Black Americans, for instance. Here, as argued above, Black missionaries such as Sheppard were received as representatives of the Western and Christian culture that they had been prohibited from fully enrolling into in their home society.[44]

In the colonies, "any white man" was able to "reinvent himself as belonging to a higher class and treated those he colonized as inferior to himself regardless his own status at home", as has been held.[45] Additionally, in the colonial situation in general, and in the Congo in particular, everyone could 'fall into whiteness'.[46] Merely through their recognition as members of the colonial master class, all colonisers in the Congo were rewarded with what can be conceptualised as a racist symbolic capital. It was expressed as a certain prestige, as the right to despise and humiliate, control, physically or culturally annihilate those belonging to the group of the colonised. This racist symbolic capital, which described a social relation of subordination, subjugation and exploita-

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42   Sheppard's mother was a free-born woman; however, historical records cannot preclude that his father was a slave, see Kennedy, *Black Livingstone*, 8; Phipps, *William Sheppard*, 2. On reconstruction and segregation in the New South, see also chapter 4.1.

43   'Striking Business Talent', *The Idaho Daily Statesman*, 21 February 1891, 7 ('kings among dogs'); Williams, quoted in Dworkin, *Congo Love Song*, 21 ('equal footing').

44   See Dworkin, "Borders of Race", 197; Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p.; Shaloff, *Reform in Leopold's Congo*, 47–52.

45   Lentin, *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination*, 16.

46   A formulation Charles Mills has used in rejection of what he called the "essentialist illusion" about the existence of "anyone's intrinsic 'racial' virtue": Mills, *Racial Contract*, 128–29.

tion, was assigned equally among the colonisers, notwithstanding their social, 'racial' or economic status.[47]

Although racist symbolic capital does not necessarily translate into economic or cultural capital, the material 'wages' of colonial 'whiteness' for the colonial masters were manifold, as well.[48] The Free State promised to pay its agents comparatively well and to ration them generously. While supplies varied with the rank of the recipient, even the lowest-ranking inferior functionary who, often alone, equipped a remote station, was lavished with luxurious rations, as is conveyed by the Viscount Mountmorres. The supplies assured to a Chef de Post quarterly included "a bottle of red wine a day", "pates [...] from Fischer's of Strasburg, [...] marmalade from England, [...] jams and preserved fruits from St. James, Paris, [...] table butter from the Danish Creamery Co., [...] milk [from] 'Bear' brand unsweetened, [...] vegetables [...] from Malines, and finally, [...] British cane sugar". For a minor colonial administrator, these goods were "certainly [...] far superior to anything they are used to in Europe", Mountmorres reported. Hence, colonial 'whiteness' was rewarded even to colonists of a working-class or lower-middle-class background with the admission to luxurious spheres of consumption from which they were largely excluded in their home countries. At the same time, eating and consumption defined a strict cultural boundary between the colonisers and the colonised.[49]

For luxuries that were not provided by the colonial administration, the 'white' masters searched in their direct surroundings. Drunk with power, many colonists used prestige and coercion to accumulate what they considered an appropriate material accoutrement of their newly found lordship. Proudly, Lémery wrote, for instance, that he was in possession of a leopard, a monkey, 24 parrots – and plentiful 'Arab' women. "Whatever they say, I am here for the good of the State", he continued, "and all the means are permissible if they are honest". What was 'honest' was broadly interpreted by the colonists, whose standard of morality was particularly flexible when it came to their power over the bodies of the colonised women. While some colonists developed intimate relationships and even married African women, (forced) prostitution and sexual exploitation was more common. Lémery, one can read, was provided with about two dozen concubines for his pleasure.[50]

Moreover, all colonists could partake in the ruthless economic exploitation of the legendary natural richness of this "African El Dorado", Stanley assured. The highly profitable trade in ivory, for instance, lured merchants and missionaries such as Stokes.

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47   See Weiß, "Racist Symbolic Capital", 46–49; chapter 1.

48   For an analytical development of the concept 'wages of whiteness', see Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*; also see chapter 1.

49   Mountmorres, *Congo Independent State*, 73 ('red wine', etc.). On the 'edible' identity of the colonisers, see Diana M. Natermann, *Pursuing Whiteness in the Colonies* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag, 2018), 196–216. Similar observations have been made for 19th-century Australia, see Stefanie Affeldt, *Consuming Whiteness* (Wien: Lit, 2014), 117.

50   Letter of Lémery, January 1894, quoted in Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, 116 ('good of the State'). On Lémery's luxuries and concubines, see Wayne Morrison, *Criminology, Civilisation and the New World Order* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 182; Robert Edgerton, *The Troubled Heart of Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 105. On the relation between sexuality and empire in the Congo, see Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 67–68; Amandine Lauro, *Coloniaux, Ménagères et Prostituées* (Bruxelles: Éd. Labor, 2005); on sexual violence in colonial Congo, see Hunt, *A Nervous State*.

State agents such as Lémery could earn high commissions for the 'white gold' they collected for the state. "Here one is everything! Warrior, diplomat, trader!!", as the Belgian officer celebrated. "Why not!"[51]

Above all direct financial benefits, colonial service in the Congo offered even subalterns social prestige, public recognition and military distinction. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad hints at the "humbug", as he called it, of the early days of Congo colonialism that declared any common colonial agent to "[s]omething like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle". Indeed, the "heroic Belgians" or "exceptionally bold" Scandinavian officers of the Force Publique were internationally praised for their "brilliant victories" over the 'Arab' slave traders which appeared "like episodes in an impossible Rider Haggard romance", as the veteran explorer Harry Johnston noted. Distinguished Force Publique veterans were highly decorated with medals and titles by Léopold and became, at least in Belgium, national legends that were together with the "héros coloniaux morts pour la civilization" blessed by the church for their divine service and were celebrated in memorials, schoolbooks and songs for their 'bravery' in Central Africa.[52]

In addition, civil administrators, trading agents or missionaries were able to capitalise upon their Congolese experience. For their contribution to the 'exploration', mapping, conquest, pacification and 'civilising' of 'Darkest Africa', they were bestowed with fellowships and awards by national geographic associations and imperial institutions. In the name of science or personal acquisitiveness, many colonisers 'collected' (sometimes bought, often confiscated or simply stole) uncountable religious and cultural artefacts, pieces of art, handcrafts and weaponry. After their return, these items were presented in lectures, generously donated to museums of natural and colonial history or decorated, often together with hunting trophies, the houses of the veterans as a reminder of their Congolese adventures and their master status. On speaking tours, they entertained with dramatic tales about their adventures in the Congo, and in long travel books, they attempted to interweave their biography into the grand narrative of imperial Congo literature established by their idol, Stanley. Some American and British Congo colonists of the second generation reached national, at times international, recognition and even stardom, and they built successful careers upon the social and cultural capital accumulated through their participation in the colonial subjugation of the Congo.[53]

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51   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 372 ('El Dorado'); Letter of Lémery, January 1894, quoted in Slade, *King Leopold's Congo*, 116 ('everything'); see McStallworth, *United States and the Congo*, 211–12.

52   Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 12 ('humbug', 'emissary'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 429 ('heroic', 'bold', 'brilliant', 'romance'); Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, *À Nos Héros Coloniaux Morts pour la Civilisation* (Brussels: La Ligue du Souvenir Congolais, 1931), title. On chances of upward social mobility and prestige, see Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 61–63; Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 62.

53   See Ward, *Five Years*; Glave, *In Savage Africa*. Besides lecturing and writing about their experiences, Ward, for instance, became a famous sculptor celebrated for his statues of Africans, while Glave, the highly admired "pin-up boy" among the romantic heroes of Victorian imperialism, continued to conduct expeditions in Alaska and the Congo financed by American newspapers: Joanna Lewis, *Empire of Sentiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 107. Casement eventually continued his career in the British Colonial service.

Hence, the considerable risks of colonial service in the Congo were compensated not only with a racist symbolic capital for those included in the group of the colonisers, but also with the multi-layered wages of colonial 'whiteness'. Quite in contrast to the lofty commitments to care for the improvement of the "moral and material conditions" of the 'native tribes' of Central Africa, the representatives of the new colonial master class were those who accumulated tremendous economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital from the exploitation of the Congolese population and resources.[54]

The Congo as an 'empire for the masses'

Nevertheless, only a few thousand Americans and Europeans saw the Congo with their own eyes. About one decade after its formation, statistics concerning the Free State stated a 'European' population (meaning all colonisers) of merely 1,325 – state officials, missionaries, independent merchants, trading agents and their families combined.[55] Even if one takes into account that most men and women spent only a couple of years or even months in Africa, and considering that a growing amount of non-residents – scientists, travellers or tourists – passed through the region, only small numbers were able to experience the symbolic and material benefits of colonial mastery in the Congo in person, both in total and in comparison to other European overseas dependencies. The colonial authorities in Brussels never pursued more substantial settlement programmes for Europeans were in particular due to high mortality rates that were generally believed to be the impact of an unhealthy climate.[56] Although Stanley had attempted "to eradicate this silly fear of the climate", as he called it, others such as the missionary-explorer Grenfell became convinced that the "Congo can never be" effectively colonised by significant numbers of 'white' settlers.[57]

That the colonisation of the Congo nonetheless had a significant impact on Western culture and society was the result of its unique political configuration and its outstanding discursive representation, which was facilitated by broader cultural-historical transformations. While previously mostly articulated in scientific, philosophical or political texts written for an upper-class audience, the latter half of the 19th century turned the narration of racist hierarchies and imperial power "into mass-produced consumer spectacles". There was probably no more paradigmatic historical example of the emergence of a "commodity racism" and "popular imperialism" or the creation of an "empire

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54   *General Act of Berlin 1885*, Art. 6.
55   See J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1897), 439–40. It grew slowly to 2,943 in 1908, the year that the colony would be transformed to Belgian Congo (1,713 Belgians, 145 English, 129 Portuguese, 200 Swedish, 54 Norwegian, 58 French, 47 American, 197 Italian, 36 Danish, 124 Dutch, 57 German, one Spanish, seven Austrian, 88 Swiss, 55 Russian, 25 from Luxemburg, six 'others'; see J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 642.
56   See Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo*, 60–61.
57   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 330 ('eradicate'); private letter of George Grenfell, 1903, quoted in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 482–4, here 482 ('never').

for the masses" that have been identified in this historical period than the formation of the Congo Free State.[58]

Racism and imperialism in the Congolese context were marketed exhibited on an unprecedented scale. As a previous chapter has shown, the popularisation of his colonial enterprise was pivotal in the political strategy of Léopold and his advisers. To acquire diplomatic recognition and a pretence of legitimacy for his private colony, Léopold propagated the Congo as an 'international colony' and its colonisation as a 'popular movement'. Since the inauguration of his African colonial enterprise at the Brussels geographic conference in 1876, Léopold and his associates canvassed leading actors of the European and American civil societies.[59]

Pledges to provide freedom of trade and a safe environment for investments soon aroused the interest of European commercial milieus. Among economic elites, it was a common understanding that access to the Congolese markets under conditions of free trade would not only generate extraordinary profits for those involved in West and Central African trade but that the macroeconomic effects would eventually benefit the metropolitan-based business and industries, as well. After all, the imperial expansion to non-capitalist regions of the planet was considered inevitable for European and North American capitalism. According to Rosa Luxemburg, a contemporary analyst and Marxist critic of the economic foundation of imperialism, producing on a universal scale and creating a world market was an essential condition of capitalism. The incorporation of non-capitalist regions such as the Congo Basin in a global capitalist economy was, first, needed as a market for surplus value; second, it provided supply means of production; and finally, it was needed as a reservoir of labour-power.[60]

In all three dimensions, Stanley enthusiastically praised the Congo as unique in its economic potential on speaking tours through Europe and the United States.[61] The "great explorer's appeal was heard", at least by British capitalists such as the circles represented by William Mackinnon and James Hutton, who were willing to invest in trading and railway companies in the Free State, or operators of shipping lines to West Africa such as the Liverpool-based Alfred Jones. In Belgium, Stanley's economic promises also attracted adventurous medium- and small-scale entrepreneurs.[62] Even Free State critics such as the free trade eulogist Morel, who had worked for Jones' Elder Dempster shipping company and once been an enthusiastic advocate of Congo colonialism, admitted, "the African gives employment to tens of thousands of European workmen and artisans". Thus, the African "provided thousands of European families with the wherewithal to obtain the necessaries of life, in the shape of wages arising from the labour

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58   McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 33 ('spectacles'), 34 ('commodity'); Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black*, 77 ('popular'); William H. Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), title. Also see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 72; chapter 1.

59   See chapter 4.1.

60   See George Lee, "Rosa Luxemburg and the Impact of Imperialism," *The Economic Journal* 81, no. 324 (1971): 848.

61   See Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 130; chapter 3.1.

62   Compagnie du Congo pour le commerce et l'industrie, *The Congo-Railway from Matadi to the Stanley-Pool* (Brussels: P. Weissenbruch, 1889), 25 ('appeal').

of the African thousands of miles away". In this way, the 'wages of colonial whiteness' would eventually reach the middle and working classes as well, it was expected.[63]

Additionally, growing parts of urban societies were included as customers in the imperial economy. The drinking of coffee, tea and cocoa, and the consumption of cane sugar, for instance, played a major role in the formation of a metropolitan consumer culture, a new bourgeoisie habitus and middle-class comfort during the 19th century. The newly opened Congo Basin bore "within itself nearly all the products required by the necessities of Europe", Stanley had promised the assembled plenipotentiaries at the Berlin Conference, once it could be integrated into global commodity chains. Between 1891 and 1898, "1,500,000 coffee and 200,000 cocoa plants" were planted in the Upper Congo, Léopold's mission leader proudly announced, and with the consolidation of imperial power, more and more of the abundant precious Congolese gifts, in particular ivory and rubber, were made purchasable in the form of a variety of colonial commodities.[64]

The export of ivory exploded soon after the formation of the Free State. In the United States and Europe, Congolese ivory fuelled the mechanised production of combs, cutlery handles, fans, knobs of canes, buttons, piano keys, billiard balls and other highly valued products that had a lasting influence on Victorian commodity culture in the late 19th century. Even more significant was the impact of Congolese rubber exports. With the development of the vulcanisation process in 1839, rubber had become suitable for the mass production of shoes, shoe soles, rain jackets and other household products. Moreover, in the second half of the 19th century, rubber became an important part of many new machines and engines that allowed the industrialisation of key production processes. Finally, the invention of pneumatic tires for bicycles in 1886 by Dunlop and, nine years later, for automobiles by the Michelin brothers, two central consumer products of the Second Industrial Revolution, led to a rubber boom that was to a substantial extent served by the Congo.[65]

Stanley's preaching of the "gospel of enterprise" eventually secured the sympathy of entrepreneurs organised in the British chambers of commerce, for instance. For the associated traders and manufacturers in Liverpool or Manchester, it was easy to imagine the benefits of free trade imperialism.[66] Together with well-calculated self-staging as a generous guardian of exploration, abolitionism and the 'civilising' movement, these economic promises successfully secured Léopold's colonial movement the support of influential (evangelical, philanthropic, abolitionist and commercial) middle- and upper-classes organisations in Great Britain and the United States.[67]

However, as much as (imperial) philanthropy was primarily the realm of a bourgeois 'gentlemen policy', the material benefits of the collective and universal imperial subju-

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63   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 203 ('employment'); see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36.
64   See Dale Southerton, ed., *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture*, 3 vols. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011), Vol. 1, 143; "'The Commercial Basin of the Congo': Henry M. Stanley at the Berlin Conference," 1884?, reproduced in the appendix of Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 2, 409–414, here 412 ('within'); Stanley, *Introduction*, xvi.
65   See Chaiklin, "Ivory in World History", 540; Harp, *History of Rubber*, 13–16; chapter 2.1.
66   Stanley, *The Congo*, Vol. 1, 377 ('gospel');
67   See chapter 4.1.

gation of the Congo were of course not distributed equally in the metropolitan societies. Under the conditions of a capitalist mode of production, the direct and indirect surplus generated by the exploitation of the Congolese resources and people was primarily absorbed by capitalists. Similarly, the field of consumption was regulated by spending capacity. Although, towards the late 19thcentury, mass-produced (colonial) commodities became increasingly available for lower social strata, as well, ivory products based on Congolese resources, for instance, remained luxury items and status symbols reserved for bourgeoisie or aristocratic milieus.[68] As a result, the key to broader public support that the Belgian king desired in order to disguise his personal colonial enterprise as a popular colonial movement was the esteem of the masses for the admired 'heroes' of Central African 'exploration' such as Livingstone, Cameron and, in particular, Stanley.[69]

Indeed, as has been broached before, the textualisation of Stanley's Congolese 'adventures' had (regarding actors, style of narration and the approach to the audience) closely tied 'New Imperialism', 'New Journalism' and modern fictions of the empire to an extraordinary commercial and popular success story.[70] Sponsored by the *New York Herald* and the British *Daily Telegraph*, two media companies that pioneered the establishment of a "press for the masses" through their production of penny-papers 'for the millions', Stanley's first two Central African expeditions became outstanding media events of the late 19th century, and the readership of Stanley's articles reached deep into middle- and working-class realms – after all, by the 1870s, the *Telegraph* was considered the most broadly circulating newspaper in the world.[71]

The stir caused by Stanley's Emin Pasha Relief Expedition was without precedent, however. The monumental rescue operation for the beleaguered governor of Southern Soudan that set out from the Congo River mouth in March of 1887 ultimately turned Stanley from an international celebrity into a "charismatic hero" worshipped throughout the Western world.[72] Once more, the press carefully reported on every piece of progress and setback in the three years of the mission. A "Stanley telegram during those three years caused more excitement than the threat of a European war", the Scottish geographer J. Scott Keltie remembered. When Stanley returned to Europe after successfully escorting Emin to East Africa, his first stop was a personal audience with Léopold in Belgium. When he arrived in England, the welcome at Dover and London's Victoria Station was extraordinary: "Probably no hero fresh from victory, certainly no traveller,

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68   See Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things* (London: Penguin Books, 2017), 166. The nonetheless increasing inclusion in new fields of consumption did much to increase the imperial fervour of parts of the working-classes, however, and turned a Labour leader like Ramsay MacDonald into a convinced imperialist: "the Temperate lands have a right to ask from the Tropics" some of the products that keep the former "in comfort and sweeten life for them", the Congo reformer argued: MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire*, 98.

69   See chapter 4.1.

70   See Griffiths, *New Journalism*, 14–15.

71   Fellow, *American Media History*, 85 ('masses'); Joel H. Wiener, ed., *Papers for the Millions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), title ('millions'). For the circulation of the Telegraph, see Griffiths, *New Journalism*, 130.

72   See Berenson, *Heroes of Empire*, 122.

has ever been received with more intense and more widespread enthusiasm", Keltie remembered.[73]

Huge crowds received the "popular hero" after what the *Times* celebrated as "a journey unparalleled [...] in all the long and heroic annals of African exploration".[74] For an academic such as Keltie, this public lionisation was baffling: "What are the causes which have led to this excitement, unparalleled in the case of any previous explorer?" he asked. With some resignation, the librarian of the Royal Geographic Society admitted that it was not geographic 'discoveries' but "the dangers and adventures connected therewith that rouse the popular excitement". Eventually, even the fierce controversy about the high death toll of the expedition could hardly damage Stanley's popularity.[75]

The public loved the 'romance' of Stanley's African exploits, and they admired his power. Even many of those who became active opponents of the Free State in later years had fallen for the 'chivalry' of the 'civiliser and conqueror. "On the shelves of Don Quixote's library there were no tomes more full of romantic fascination and enthralling interest than the volumes which tell of how Mr. Stanley found Livingstone, converted King Mtesa, opened up the Congo, and rescued Emin", as William Stead, himself a pioneer of New Journalism, noted.[76] Published within weeks of his return to Europe, Stanley's dramatic two-volume travelogue about the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition and his adventures in the Congolese forest reached bookshelves simultaneously in England, America, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Holland, Bohemia and Hungary. The success even excelled that of Stanley's earlier bestsellers, and *In Darkest Africa* sold a breath-taking 150,000 thousand copies in the first three months in the English language alone.[77]

Although the first editions of imperial travel literature were comparatively high-priced, their societal impact was even larger than these sales-figures reveal. In the later 19th century, African travel-books became an essential part of the holdings in the growing number of lending libraries, public or commercial, in factories, churches and schools, for instance. Moreover, the adventures of Livingstone and Stanley became part of the geography syllabus and were reprinted, condensed or retold in countless cheaper editions and boyhood anthologies all over the world. [78]

In this way, the charismatic imperial 'hero' Stanley and the Congo became a fixed point in the Victorian imperial imagination, a fascinating passion that affected the traditional, well-educated reading-classes and also reached the modern mass readership. However, devouring these imperial adventure stories was no innocent form an entertainment; it always involved the consumption of its cultural and racial hierarchies. As

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73   J. Scott Keltie, "Mr. Stanley's Expedition," *Fortnightly Reviews* 48, no. 180 (1890): 66.

74   'Mr. Stanley's Return', *The Times*, 28 April 1890, 10. ('popular'); 'London, Monday, April 28, 1890', *The Times*, 28 April 1890, 9 ('journey').

75   Keltie, "Mr. Stanley's Expedition", 66 ('causes'), 67 ('dangers'); see chapter 2.1.

76   Stead, "Mr. H. M. Stanley", 20 ('shelves'). For the admiration of other Congo reformers, see chapter 3.1

77   See Edward Marston, *How Stanley Wrote 'In Darkest Africa'* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890), 71.

78   See Leila Koivunen, *Visualizing Africa in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Accounts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 115–20.

chapter 3.1 has described in detail, Stanley's Congo narrative confronted the reader with a highly stereotypical counter-world described as a 'prehistorical', 'natural' and 'evil' space of darkness inhabited by the most 'savage', 'monstrous', 'devilish' and 'darkest' people on earth. Stanley's Congo literature and titles such as *Five Years with the Congo cannibals*, *In savage Africa*, *The land of the Pigmies* or *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country*[79] which were produced in the aftermath of his success by some of his officers, were instrumental in the popularisation of racist stereotypes that defined the Western representation of the Congo throughout the late 19th century. At the same time, the myth of 'Darkest Africa' created a pseudo-identity for an imagined community of the 'civilised', 'human', 'elected' and 'white' Europeans in differentiation to this Congo, but in particular through the narration of its confrontation and submission by the 'heroic' imperial pioneers. However, the textual representation of colonisation was not merely a linguistic but a social practice, as well. As a discursive operation, it interpellated the Western reading subjects "by incorporating them in a system of representation".[80]

Travel writing was particularly open to an active and participative form of reading. "Whoever reads the book in spirit", the *New York Evening Post* praised in a review of Vachel Cameron's *Across Africa*, for instance, "accompanies the traveller, sees what he sees, feels the perplexities that he feels, and, in a certain sense, shares the journey with him". Likewise, in the process of reading Stanley's travelogues full of sensory detail, hundreds of thousands of fascinated Europeans and Americans not only followed each step of their imperial idols but became 'one' with them, participated in their adventures, which became the experiences of the readers as well.[81] "One forgets, in reading [*Darkest Africa*], everything but the eagle eye and the inflexible will of the leader, the steady tramp of armed men, the down-pour of the tropical rain, the glowing furnace of equatorial heat, the hurtling spears and whistling arrows of naked savages, the sullen roar of the wild beasts", the *Literary World* wrote. In sharing the excitement and fears of the protagonists in their confrontation with the Congolese darkness, the readers associated themselves with the imperial adventure until the inevitable "joy of safety, the satisfaction of the triumphant doing of a duty" at the victorious end. Through their emotional association with the heroic protagonists, the readers of imperial travel literature experienced their inclusion in the imagined community of 'Brightest Europe', as well.[82]

A similar effect was probably desired by the curators of a spectacular 'Stanley and African exhibition', patronised by Queen Victoria and King Léopold, which opened in March of 1890 in London. It dealt with the zoology, geography and ('savage') culture of Central and West Africa; the history of its exploration; and the achievements of the

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79   See Ward, *Five Years*; Glave, *In Savage Africa*; Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*; Albert B. Lloyd, *In Dwarf Land and Cannibal Country* (New York: Scribner, 1899).

80   Tiffin and Lawson, *Introduction*, 3 ('incorporating').

81   *The New York Evening Post* quoted in 'Cameron's Across Africa', in Harper & Brothers' summer book-list. Appendix to *Harper's Magazine*, July, 1877, 1–2, here 1 ('reads'). For the idea of a 'participative' reading of travel literature, see Clare Pettitt, "Exploration in Print," in *Reinterpreting Exploration*, ed. Dane K. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 94–97.

82   'Stanley's Book', *The Literary World*, 19 July 1890, 236–238, here 237.

'civilising movement'. In five sections, objects from all major colonial collections in Europe, together with souvenirs and relics of pioneering explorers and missionaries, were presented in a sensational arrangement. "No such African Exhibition has ever been got together before", the *Times* assured potential visitors. Abundant weaponry, cultural and economic instruments, tropical plants and heads of wild animals were exhibited, and the work of European idols such as Livingstone, Baker and of course Stanley was celebrated. "A jungle scene with a native and a crocodile deserves mention", the *Times* wrote, as did the reproduction of "a native hut [...] furnished according to the original pattern". However, the "great sensation of the exhibition" was the "wonderful" and "fairly true to nature" artistic reproductions of a "wild" and "dark" forest scene, a model of a "peaceful village scene" and a "horrible" Arab slave raid. With a visit to Regent Street, the narrative of the *Times* reveals, the common Londoner could allegedly encounter a "genuine" representation of Central African life and scenery and was turned into an explorer himself: "The entrance is through a palisade or fence of tree stems". Inside, "one enters the camp of an explorer" and, continuing through the various galleries, "finds himself in the heart of Africa". Here, in the middle of London, the colonisation of the Congo had been turned into a spectacle for the metropolitan masses.[83]

Even more dramatic were the two major colonial exhibitions staged by Léopold in the 1890s, which have been mentioned in previous chapters. There, the 'savage' Congolese were finally disclosed to the gaze of the masses. The 1894 Exposition Internationale d'Anvers not only celebrated Léopold's victory over the 'Arab slave traders' with the display of booty and portraits of colonial heroes; it also showed the reproduction of a 'Congolese village' in which 144 African Force Publique soldiers presented a staged life, exhibited among cattle and raw material from the Congo. Three years later, at the Exposition Internationale de Bruxelles, the racist spectacle of a human zoo was extended and became the main attraction at the gigantic exposition of colonial ethnography, imports, transportation and exports in the 'Palais de Colonies' on the royal compound of Tervuren. More than 250 Congolese were exhibited in several 'negro villages' and 'civilised villages', attempting to illustrate the original 'savagery' of the Congolese population and the first successes of the 'civilising movement'. These exhibitions were, of course, primarily advertising efforts of Léopold "to attract capital and adventurers" to his colonial enterprises, as the Congo reformer Bourne has asserted.[84] However, they also had an immediate benefit for the visitors. In confronting the Congolese people displayed in staged reproductions that meant to represent their 'savage' and semi-civilised ways of living, they could recognise themselves as 'civilised' and 'white', millions of spectators could associate themselves with the colonial masters in the Congo, and they could develop pride about 'their' philanthropic and abolitionist achievements in 'Darkest Africa'.[85]

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83   'The Stanley and African Exhibition', *The Times*, 21 March 1890, 14. For a critical discussion of the exhibition', see Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 63–83.

84   Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 242 ('attract').

85   On the Belgian colonial exhibitions, see Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, 36–38. On human exhibitions as a racist social experience, see Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 71. In 1897, more than 1.2 million out of the overall 7.8 million visitors saw the colonial exposition in Tervuren; see Natermann, *Pursuing Whiteness*, 52 [footnote].

Hence, it was the commodification of the imperial experience and its presentation as a popular spectacle that turned the Congo into a profitable enterprise for broader spheres of the imperial societies. Through its mediation in newspapers, travel literature and exhibitions, the triumph of the 'conqueror' and 'civiliser' Stanley and his heroic officers had become the triumph of the masses. In this way, it turned into the source of what Max Weber has called an "ethnic honour". A form of "mass honour" that was "purely negative", since it was solely based upon the degradation of an alienated other, in this case, the 'Congo' and the 'Congolese'. For the Hungarian geographer Emil Torday, for instance, the "heroic" Europeans who had served in the Arab war or carried the Free State flag to the unconquered regions were a sign of the superiority of the white 'race'. They showed distinctly that "however brave the negro be he cannot approach the white man".[86]

This 'ethnic' or 'mass honour' was a form of racist symbolic capital formed through the racist colonial spectacle. In contrast to the material wages of Congo colonialism, it was distributed equally to members of the imperial societies, notwithstanding their economic and social status. Thus, by the last decade of the 19th century, the Congo had truly become an empire for and 'owned' by the masses in the metropole, which were able to consume and incorporate the racist hierarchies established in the colonial relation in the periphery. Millions of consumers, readers and spectators were offered inclusion in the imagined racist community of colonial 'whiteness' and 'Brightest Europe' established in differentiation to 'Darkest Africa', and they were granted participation in the material and symbolic benefits of the 'honourable' conquest of the Congo.

5.2 'The white man's undoing': Negative societalisation in crisis

Not long after the official proclamation of the Congo Free State in May 1885, when the de jure sovereignty of the new colony had become diplomatically recognised by the imperial community, and its de facto power seemed consolidated, a series of political transformations antagonised interested spheres in the Congo and the metropole. In the 1890s, a growing amount of commentators began to criticise how the Free State administration, at an increasing pace, revoked its pledges of a universal inclusion in the community of colonial 'whiteness' in the Congo, of 'fair' treatment and equal chances for material and symbolic benefits to the representatives of the colonial order in Africa and the masses at home. The emerging Congo reform movement in Great Britain and the United States loudly protested against the Congo Scandal and the exposed betrayal of Léopold's promises to the imperial community. In the Congo, they asserted, the process of racist societalisation was in crisis.

First, in 1886, the Free State began to restrict access to the Congo. Non-Belgians and Protestants were increasingly excluded from the civil and military administration, private trade and the church sector. Additionally, the reformers criticised a repressive

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86   Max Weber, quoted in Hund, "Negative Societalisation", 64 ('ethnic', 'mass', 'purely'); Emil Torday, quoted in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 429 ('brave').

and biased Free State administration that favoured Belgian and Catholic state agents, traders and missionaries. The negative cohesion in the imagined community of colonial whiteness finally corroded when fragmentations along the lines of nationality, confession, class and 'race' began to (re-)appear in the political institutions and social practice of Free State. Furthermore, those who were still admitted to the colonial master class were scandalised by miserable living and working conditions, neglect by the administration and the witholding of the promised material benefits for the colonisers. Moreover, instead of a social and symbolic elevation, many of the aspiring colonial 'heroes' were demoralised by an often monotonous daily routine and disgraced through their shameful involvement in the atrocious rubber regime.

Eventually, the 'undoing of colonial whiteness' and Congolese heroism in the periphery affected the metropole, as well. Revelations of sickness, despair and the brutalities of colonisers increasingly estranged the metropolitan observers from their once-admired imperial idols. In the wake of the exposed Congo atrocities, the close association with the 'conquerors' and 'civilisers' of 'Darkest Africa' that had offered millions of Europeans and Americans an 'ethnic mass honour' was turned into a burdening source of 'ethnic shame'. Finally, reformers criticised the monopolisation and nationalisation of the Free State economy as an attack on the promised material wage increases from the conquest of this African 'El-Dorado'. The closure of the markets of the Congo, as well as the destruction of its resources and labour force through the atrocious mode of production, threatened to destroy a wealth once assured to benefit the imperial community as a whole.

Fragmenting whiteness: the fading 'white' noise in the Congo

Years before the Free State would officially be turned into a Belgian colony in 1908, international observers realised with consternation that the colonial administration had gradually revoked one of its central pledges to the imperial community. Instead of integrating all fractions of the 'civilised world' in a truly universal colonisation scheme, as Léopold and Stanley had promised, more and more aspiring colonial agents, missionaries and merchants were antagonised upon finding their access to the Congo and their chance of inclusion in the colonial master class denied based on nationality and confession.

As chapter 4.2 has stressed, Léopold had quickly begun to pursue his plan to transform the international Congo colony into a Belgian dependency more candidly, once full diplomatic recognition was achieved and a growing number of Belgians began to apply for colonial service. This directly affected the social composition of the Congolese colonial master class. After the resignation of de Winton in April 1886, the post of the Free State's Governor-General was exclusively staffed with Belgian citizens, which were, right from the start, the administrative councils and ministries based in Brussels.[87]

Whenever possible, the new colonial administration began to choose candidates from Belgium to staff open civil or military positions. Any of the more prestigious state positions in the Upper Congo were from then on strictly reserved for Belgians, as some

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87   See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 88–96; Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, 63.

of the international recruits soon learned the hard way. Herbert Ward, for example, was recalled to the Lower-Congo and his commando of Bangala was handed over to a Belgian officer. Furiously, he resigned from Free State service in August 1886.[88]

Moreover, once the Muslim realms in the East were defeated and the power of the new state seemed to be consolidated in the Central provinces, as well, recruiting Belgian officers for the Force Publique also became a priority. While the Free State still initiated its large scale Italian recruitment programme in 1897, and Scandinavians continued to dominate the important river marine and the mechanical force, Belgians soon became the majority in the Free State service. The multinational character of the civil and military administration of the Free State continued to fade away in the following years, when the contracts of British Free State officers such as Guy Burrows, for instance, were no longer extended.[89]

Initially, the commercial sector offered an alternative for non-Belgian participation in the colonisation of the Congo. In 1886, Ward, like Edward Glave and Roger Casement, joined the Sanford Exploring Expedition, which was about to unlock the ivory trade in the Upper Congo. Afterwards, the future British consul Casement surveyed terrain and supervised workers for the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo, the railway consortium attempting to bypass the cataracts between Matadi and Stanley Pool. The first station of the railway was opened in June 1892, and it was operated by "[i]mported white men" "of all nationalities".[90]

Nonetheless, as has been discussed in detail above, the Congolese economy was drastically transformed by the monopolisation of trade and industry that began in 1889. With the establishment of the 'vacant land' policy and the so-called 'domain system' between 1889 and 1892, the Free State effectively closed about three-fourths of its territory for merchants not affiliated with the state or its concessionary companies.[91] In 1898, the British Consul Pickersgill reported that, besides Protestant missionaries, he had found only a few "agents of the once all-powerful 'Dutch house'" and "of an old Liverpool firm" and "a few Portuguese traders" left in the Upper Congo.[92]

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88   See Joseph M. Jadot, "Ward," in *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, ed. Insitut Royal Colonial Belge (Bruxelles: Librairie Falk Fils, 1948), Vol. 1, 956. Also see chapter 2.1.

89   See Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 59–60, 82. On recruitment in Italy, see Elena, "Overseas Europeans"; on the career of Burrows, see G[uy?] Malengreau, "Burrows," in *Biographie Coloniale Belge*, ed. Insitut Royal Colonial Belge (Bruxelles: Librairie Falk Fils, 1948), Vol. 1, cc. 185–186; Leigh, *Introduction*, vii–xiii.

90   Burrows, *Curse of Central Africa*, 8 ('imported'). On Casement, see Séamas Ó Síocháin and Michael O'Sullivan, general introduction to *The Eyes of Another Race* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press 2003), 8. When Conrad operated a commercial steamer up to Stanley Falls in 1890, the river journey that would serve as inspiration and backdrop for his famous Congo novellas, he was under contract of the powerful Société Anonyme Belge which had absorbed Sanford's firm in December 1889. See Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, 2nd rev. ed. (Rochester: Camden House, 2007), 145–65; White, "Sanford Exploring Expedition", 302.

91   See chapter 4.2.

92   Report of Consul William Pickersgill on the Congo Independent State in 1898, quoted in Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 301 ('Dutch'). Also see Catherine A. Cline, "The Church and The Movement for Congo Reform," *Church History* 32, no. 1 (1963): 46.

The nationalising scheme also affected the church sector, although the principle of religious neutrality remained officially untouched. After Léopold's generous support of the abolitionist movement of Cardinal Lavigerie, Belgian Catholic missionary societies abandoned their reserved attitude towards Léopold's multi-confessional colony. Moreover, on Léopold's specific demand, the Vatican had ordered that the Congo should be from now on evangelised by Belgians only, and by the turn of the century, all Catholic missionaries in the Congo were Belgian subjects.[93] Finally, after Protestant missionaries had publicly criticised the on-going violence in the Free State, Léopold categorically denied Protestant missionary organisations land grants to establish new posts in the Congo starting in 1898, to the great outrage of evangelicals in Great Britain the United States.[94]

Hence, although the colonial elite in the Free State remained, compared to neighbouring colonies, exceptionally diverse throughout its existence, the access to all three pillars of colonial governance in the Congo (the state administration, the trading sector and the church) had been transformed into Belgian-dominated institutions by the turn of the 20th century. While Léopold's dream of a Belgian overseas dependency came closer to its realisation, employment and career opportunities for Americans and Europeans eager to partake in the prestigious and 'heroic' conquest of 'Darkest Africa' were drastically narrowed, and the prospect of a truly international colony in Central Africa was debunked as a chimaera.

In addition to broken pledges of indiscriminate access to the Congolese colonial master class, the impartiality and egalitarian spirit of governance began to show severe cracks. Soon after its formation, the Free State revealed an increasingly repressive attitude towards those non-Belgian and non-Catholic subjects that remained in the Congo. As early as 1890, Williams was astonished to find independent European merchants in a "most unfriendly" relation to state agents. The extra-legal hanging of the renowned missionary-turned-trade Charles Stokes in 1895 and the death of the Austrian merchant Gustav Rabinek in state custody in 1902 finally revealed the "kind of justice and fair play that one got in the Congo State", as it was held in the British Commons. The two affairs illustrated an increasingly authoritarian "treatment accorded to white men" not part of concessionary companies or the state, Bourne was convinced.[95]

Lionel Decle, who had agitated against the murder of Stokes and the shocking "justice à la Congolaise", in 1895 maintained that the Free State oppressed "Europeans and natives alike". The journalist Decle was particularly irritated about the denouncement of 'white' solidarity. So far, 'white' men in Africa had been "brothers" in the eyes of the Africans, he warned, but that one "white man" had dared "to lay hands on" another, in particular, a man of high standing like the well-respected Stokes, was an outrage upon 'white' reputation in Africa.[96]

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93   See Vermeersch, "Congo Independent State", 235–36; Slade, *English-Speaking Missions*, 141.
94   See chapters 2.2 and 4.2.
95   Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 19 ('unfriendly'); Alfred Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1310 ('fair play'); Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 266 ('treatment')
96   Decle, "Murder in Africa", 587 ('alike', 'brothers'), 588 ('white man', 'lay hand'), 594 ('justice').

Instead of protecting the colonisers against the African population, the colonial state had become a danger for non-Belgian members of the colonial master class, the reformers warned. "First an Englishman, now an Austrian have fallen victims to the insatiable greed, the disreputable avariciousness, the brutality and illegality of the system of 'moral and material regeneration' in Africa", Morel dramatically stated in his first book on the Congo Scandal. "Who will be the next European to suffer?"[97]

Not only merchants came into serious conflict with the state authorities. Those Protestant missionaries who were still allowed in the country were "persecuted in all sorts of ways". Their daily life became increasingly complicated by state harassment, especially for those who had publicly challenged state authority or and practice. Measures included the withholding of food supplies, insults, violent threats and, repeatedly, state officials threatened missionaries with imprisonment if they continued to report about atrocities.[98] Moreover, Harris complained how "sentries were sent into the towns" to daunt locals affiliating with the Protestants and American missionary organisations and filed "definite complaint as respects the security of missionary work". With ever-harsher restrictions on their privileges of freedom of movement, the "stay of missionaries in the country practically is threatened", American missionaries asserted.[99]

Based on personal letters of Danish and Italian officers he had received, Morel severely criticised "the treatment by the Congo Executive of the foreign officers who have accepted appointments in the Congo army". In particular, Italians frequently complained that they were treated as second-class officers. This experience felt as a worrying reminder of their ambivalent position in the racial hierarchy of contemporary Europe, and an embarrassing hint at Italy's deteriorated national prestige following the military debacle in Ethiopia in 1896. [100]

Moreover, promotion to "higher positions" increasingly became a Belgian privilege, which directly affected the ratio of foreigners in the lower and middle ranks of colonial service, as well. After all, increasingly fewer internationals were "prepared to accept positions with futures 'only for Belgians'".[101] Internationals in lower and medium-ranked service complained about an increasingly chauvinistic nationalism in the colonial corps after the higher positions in the Free State had become almost exclusively Belgians: "'Je suis officier Belge' is an ejaculation so frequent that, to escape it, one would fain believe such rank to be the highest honour on earth", Canisius noted. Moreover, he complained about the "pleasure" that his Belgian superiors "find in making their subordinates feel

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97   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 259 ('suffer'). For more details on the death of Stokes and Rabinek, see chapter 4.2.

98   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 192 ('persecuted'). With the Reverends Edgar Stannard, William Morrison and William Sheppard, charges of libel were brought against three prominent Protestant opponents at Congolese courts, see Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 7; Morel, *The Stannard Case*; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 192; Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 198.

99   Harris, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], *Conditions in the Congo*, 7 ('sentries'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('stay', 'definite'); see Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41.

100   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('treatment'); see Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 97–98; Morel, *Great Britain*, 154; Elena, "Overseas Europeans", 80–81.

101   Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 221.

their inferiority". Some of the "comments on brother officers" were considered "as most offensive" by the American formerly in Free State service in the Province Oriental.[102]

Such framing reveals that the negative cohesion created at the colonial frontier, which had bound the socially differentiated group of the colonisers together through the racist exclusion of the colonised, showed signs of exhaustion. The more that the official policy of impartiality was abandoned, the more the daily social practice of the colonisers was affected, as Canisius' perspective suggests. In his case, nationalism was met with classist scorn. The Free State had, as was described in the previous chapter, successfully promoted the participation of working or lower-middle-class men in its ranks. Canisius, son of a German-American journalist who had once been the United States consul in Vienna, emphasised the lack of manners, intelligence and education among his "ill-bred" Belgian superiors who discriminated him and other foreigners: "Until my first contact with this class of men, I had always held the belief that officers in any army were gentlemen" he stated. "I was disillusioned on this point, however, very soon after my first association with the Congo. [...] The ignorance of some of these is really astonishing to one accustomed to look upon an officer as at least an educated man".[103]

Furthermore, the Free State's political practice radically betrayed Stanley's promise that the administration would treat its subjects irrespective of "colour". When Williams arrived in the Congo to inspect, inter alia, the potential of Black emigration, he was soon left "disenchanted, disappointed and disheartened". In his short stay, he had observed both "violence and injustice" against the "poor children of nature" (the Congolese natives) but also violations of contract and "cruel and unjust treatment" of soldiers and workers recruited in other parts of Africa. For some army officers, "race distinctions and prejudices" were sufficient to leave the "beating and stabbing" of a Black man by a white man unpunished.[104] Complaints of British subjects from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Accra or Lagos, who were recruited for the railway construction or service in the Force Publique, about involuntarily extended contracts, the holding off of payments, the violence of superiors and dangerous working conditions continued to reach British Consuls and the Foreign Office in the 1890s.[105]

For Williams, the treatment of West African soldiers and recruits debunked the Free State as structurally discriminating on the grounds of 'race' distinctions and defied its 'colour-blind' legislation: "The laws printed and circulated in Europe 'for the protection of the blacks' in the Congo, are a dead letter and a fraud", he emphasised. Williams' hopes that Black Americans could participate on equal grounds with 'white' colonists in the Congolese 'civilising mission' were seriously disappointed.[106] Under these circumstances, African-American "[e]migration cannot be invited to the Congo for a quarter

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102   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 107.

103   Ibid.

104   Williams, "Open Letter", 2 ('disenchanted'), 6 ('violence', 'poor', 'cruel'), 9 ('prejudices', 'beating').

105   See Morel, *Great Britain*, 124–25; Burroughs, *African Testimony*, 23–24; Cookey, "West African Immigrants", 264–70. The Colonial Office had, to the applause of the Aborigines' Protection Society, imposed a formal ban on the recruitment of British subjects from West African dependencies in March 1896, see ibid., 268.

106   Williams, "Open Letter", 9 ('laws').

of a century", the once-optimistic advocate of Léopold and the Free State summarised. Even then, "only educated blacks from the Southern United States" who come "not as laborers, but as landed proprietors" would be suited for living in such a society. Moreover, "[t]hey must come only in small companies. One hundred families in ten years would be quite enough and not for twenty five years yet".[107]

As the following chapter shows, plans for larger-scale emigration towards the Congo were quickly abandoned after this devastating judgement, although there remained a small but constant flow of Black American and West Indian missionaries to the Congo. However, the marginality of their inclusion in the colonial master class became increasingly apparent for African-American missionaries, as well. Their terms of service tended to differ from those of their 'white' colleagues, they received lower wages, served longer and with shorter vacations, were promoted more slowly and seldom became their superiors. Towards the end of the century, missionary boards at home increasingly attempted to limit the autonomy of their Black employees in Africa. 'Racial' prejudice and patronising treatment experienced by Black missionaries from the West Indies or the United States increased over the years, and the relation between 'black and white' missionaries often deteriorated. Sheppard, and after him three other Black males, were accused of sexual misconduct by Morrison, for instance, "racially motivated charges", as has been suggested.[108]

Moreover, on his occasional returns to the United States, the Presbyterian missionary Sheppard painfully realised that the racist symbolic capital he was rewarded with in the Congo as a member of the ruling colonial elite was not a personal possession but a social relation that was not simply transferable overseas. In the Jim Crow South, Sheppard was once more forced into the strict boundaries of a racially segregated regime of white supremacy, despite the public admiration for his exploration and adventures in the Congo.[109]

Hence, the longer the Free State existed, the more the 'white noise' generated in 'Darkest Africa' seemed to fall silent. National, confessional and racial biases in the colonial institutions and apparent nationalist and classist prejudices and 'white' notions of racial superiority among colonisers challenged the solidarity and cohesion of the colonial master class. The reasons for this process cannot be found in the specific political and social context of the Free State alone. While Léopold and the Free State administration actively revoked their promises of equal treatment and universal inclusion in the Congolese colonial master class, this crisis of racist societalisation transcended the discursive and geographic boundaries of the Congo.

In fact, universal concepts such as European civilisation and 'whiteness' had come under severe pressure by more particular political identities throughout the Western world. Ideals of universal rationality and related hopes for peace and political unity that had been promoted since the French Revolution "were bitterly disappointed" in the late 19th century, as the political scientist and Congo critic Paul Reinsch wrote: "It became

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107   Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 19 ('century', 'educated'), 20 ('laborers', 'companies'); see Williams, "Open Letter", 14.

108   Killingray, "Black Atlantic", 18–19; Dworkin, "Borders of Race", 197.

109   See Turner, "'Black-White' Missionary", n.p. See chapter 2.3 for more details.

impossible to realize the unity of civilized mankind, and the narrower feelings of nationalism and race antipathy completely overbore the earlier enthusiasms".[110] Indeed, the idea of a universal European polity had become increasingly intermingled with the "inherently limited" concept of the nation. Rising national rivalries not only increased geopolitical conflicts on the European continent and among imperial powers in Africa, but also impeded the potential of multinational governance and coexistence, as the case of the Free State shows.[111]

Moreover, as Black Americans painfully realised, notions of the biological inferiority of the 'coloured races' gained the upper hand over cultural and historicist concepts such as 'savagery' or 'barbarism'. It is intriguing, for instance, how Stanley, who, in his early travelogues, had rejected that 'colour' and physiognomy were signs of an inherent inferiority, in 1890, for his last main work 'Darkest Africa' developed an elaborate 'racial taxonomy' of Central Africa that put the Congolese 'pygmies' and 'negroes' at the lowest stage of the human species.[112]

At the turn of the century, the 'civilising movement' that Léopold had inaugurated in Brussels in 1876 had become the 'white man's burden' in the popular imagination,[113] which excluded even 'civilised' and 'educated' Black Americans such as Williams or Sheppard from the colonial narrative. The performative and cultural notion of 'colonial whiteness' that had been realised in the Congo in its early years was increasingly adapted to the biological concept that now dominated racist thinking in the metropole.

Furthermore, the cross-class alliance that racism was able to offer through negative societalisation was not only challenged by demands for international and cross-racial solidarity raised in the labour movement, but by a thriving 'self-referential racism' or 'class-racism' among traditional elites that specifically targeted certain 'degenerated' elements of subaltern milieus or working classes, as well.[114]

The late 19th century exposed how the capacity of imagined communities such as 'whiteness' or 'civilisation' to create a sustainable form of political and social solidarity was limited. In the early 20th century, when the organised Congo reform movement took shape, Léopold's promised project of 'combining all elements of the civilised world' in one colony had become largely anachronistic. Institutionally, and in social interaction, the social fragmentations of the imperial metropoles proved in this specific historical context stronger than the negative cohesion created through the inclusion of the diverse military officers, civil administrators, artisans, missionaries or merchants invading the Congo as a colonial master class that was formed in strict opposition to the alienated colonised population. The 'white noise' in 'Darkest Africa' had faded, and the quasi-egalitarian colonial project that Stanley had disclosed to the world in 1884, and that had temporally been implemented by survivalist necessity at the colonial frontier, remained, in the long term, an unrealised racist utopia.

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110   Reinsch, *Colonial Administration*, 3 ('bitterly', 'impossible').
111   Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6. ('limited'); see chapter 1.
112   See chapter 3.1. On the rising dominance of the 'race'-concept, see chapter 1.
113   See Kipling, "White Man's Burden".
114   For 'class racism', see Hund, *Rassismus*, 16; for 'self-referential racism', see MacMaster, *Racism in Europe*, 33.

'An earthly hell': the degradation of the 'white' masters

Moreover, the crisis of negative racist societalisation in the Congo was further intensified through an absence of symbolic and material wages promised to the colonial master class in the Congo. Those Europeans and Americans willing to participate in the colonial conquest and exploitation of the Congo had been lured by luxurious provisions and financial compensation, the increase in social status and power, and the allocation of a racist symbolic capital. Painfully, however, foreigners reaching the Congo realised the glaring gap between the grandiose promises of the Free State in Europe and the actual performance in Africa.[115]

As has been argued in a previous chapter, Léopold and his international advocates had greatly exaggerated the material foundation of Stanley's expedition to suggest an already de facto existing state structure. Instead of a powerful confederation of cities and states embracing the Congo Basin, travellers such as Williams were puzzled to find a thin cluster of often-ramshackle outposts. [116] The impression that tales about well-developed stations and even towns of European standards were nothing more than propaganda continued to intrude itself upon visitors to the state in the following years. New arrivals' disappointments began immediately after disembarking at one of the two main Congo ports and cohered into frustration and finally desperation the farther they reached the interior of the colony. In Boma, accommodation was humid, Canisius complained, filled with insects and "rats literally swarm[ed]". Moreover, there was no opportunity for amusement or socialising in the town that was, after all, the capital of the Free State since 1886. "No cafes are open, no sailors carouse, no lighted window suggests that some one is giving a dinner, that some one is playing bridge", the American journalist Richard Harding Davis complained after a journey to the Congo: "Darkness, gloom, silence mark this 'European watering-place'". In Matadi, some 50 kilometres farther up-river, the situation was hardly better. Here, "everything was scratch and uncomfortable", Burrows recounted.[117]

Leaving Matadi, early visitors such as Conrad still had to tackle the almost 370 kilometres to Stanley Pool by foot. A long march full of privation for Europeans, even though the major burden was quite literally shouldered by around 40,000 African porters working on this route. Travelling with the railway between Matadi and Léopoldville, completed in 1898, was more comfortable, but its high prices and strict weight limits forced "many a poor officer" to leave behind many of his personal belongings, from medicine to ammunition and books. In Léopoldville, the central Free State station, which was built at the start of the navigable part of the Congo River, fresh disillusionments awaited. The settlement "is sometimes spoken of as a Congo town", Roger Casement noted, "but it cannot rightly be so termed". Apart from a well-equipped government station, "there is nothing at all resembling a town – barrack would be the correct term".[118]

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115   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 63.
116   See chapters 4.1 and 4.2; Williams, "Open Letter", 8.
117   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 64 ('rats'); Davis, *The Congo*, 64 ('cafes', 'Darkness'); Burrows, *Land of the Pigmies*, 6 ('uncomfortable'); see Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 15.
118   Davis, *The Congo*, 73 ('poor'); Casement, "Report on Upper Congo", 22 ('Congo town'). On the number of porters, see Stanley, *Introduction*, xvii.

To reach their final destination in the Upper Congo, future stage agents, merchants or missionaries would spend days and often weeks on small and clumsy steamships. The government was "inordinately proud" of its river marine, which was "glowingly depicted in official and semi-official documents" as a symbol of the material progress that was introduced into the Congo. However, its actual condition was devastating. As "a general rule", the ships were "as uncomfortable and badly arranged as they well can be", the cabin "ill-appointed and dirty", "absolutely sticky with filth", the food "a painful subject".[119]

Once the proud 'pioneers of progress' and representatives of an allegedly superior European culture reached their state or trading post in the remote areas, the real wretchedness began. The material standard of living, for instance, that awaited most state or trading agents in the Congo, in contrast to expectations fuelled by the embellishment of imperial literature and official publicity, showed no signs of comfort, not to mention luxury. Some large stations – those whose photographs had been proudly presented to the European public and aspiring recruits – were indeed well developed and fortified settlements. However, most of the smaller stations that were managed by one or two state or company agents were isolated outposts consisting of a few ramshackle sheds that created only the lowest level of comfort. In contrast to men such as the Belgian Force Publique officer Lémery, who had been thrilled about the luxuries and almost royal status he had achieved, many Europeans who reached the Congo were shocked about a miserable life full of deprivation.[120]

According to Congo critics, "neglect to the white agents" by the state was widespread, moreover. Indeed, due to lacking infrastructure and unreliable techniques, omnipresent security problems and financial shortcomings, over the years, the state administration in Boma showed increasing difficulties in supplying its more distant outposts with the luxurious rations of foodstuff and other necessities proudly listed in Europe. Moreover, concessionary companies such as the Anversoise became particularly "infamous" for their "treatment of its white agents", Canisius complained, and "the parsimonious directors at Antwerp were evidently determined that we should have nothing better" then baked plantains and Kwang.[121] One could recall in this context how pointedly Conrad's first Congo novella tells the miserable story of a colonial station that loses contact with the supply network for months, culminating in a desperate and deadly conflict between Kayerts and Carlier, the two isolated European colonisers, over the last ration of sugar.[122]

Hence, instead of rewarding even working- or lower-middle-class Europeans with admission to a luxurious sphere of consumption that elevated even low-ranking colonists over the inherent African population, the isolated colonial masters often had little material or 'edible' assets to assure them of their cultural superiority over the surrounding Congolese 'savages'. In fact, most of the state stations and trading and missionary posts were completely dependent on supplies from the surrounding

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119   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 70.
120   See chapters 2.1 and 4.1.
121   Davis, *The Congo*, 100 ('neglect'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 178 ('infamous').
122   See Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 159–65.

African villages to survive. The "forerunners of civilization [...] entered among the Pagan negroes full of high ambition and enthusiasm", Ward remembered. "Later on, one saw German barons of ancient lineage, Italian nobles, and distinguished Austrian officers, building mud huts and planting maize for sustenance".[123]

In contrast to the promise and expectation that inclusion in the community of colonial whiteness would allow every 'white man' in the Congo to reinvent himself as belonging to a superior group of people over the colonised others, "the condition of the white man" at some of the isolated wood posts was "only a little better" than the "utterly miserable" state of the Congolese. An Italian Free State officer, appalled by the indignities, privations and dangers he experienced, saw little distinction between his fate as a coloniser and the misery of enslaved Africans. In a letter to Morel, he described the conditions of colonial service in the Congo as "'la traite des blancs,' the white slave-trade" – "rightly" so, as the leader of the British reformers asserted.[124]

Moreover, the lack of food and medical supplies exacerbated the already serious health problems of the isolated agents struggling with the harsh climate and tropical diseases, critics warned.[125] In addition, as Williams had reported, full of indignation, the state showed little intent and capacity in supporting its suffering subjects. "Your white men sicken and die in their quarters or on the caravan road", he confronted King Léopold in his public letter, since "there is not a solitary hospital for Europeans".[126]

Indeed, as has been mentioned, the mortality rates among Europeans in the Congo were extremely high.[127] Moreover, the climatic hardships (and the surrounding 'darkness' and 'savagery", as the reformers asserted) challenged the character, temperament and morale of the colonial pioneers, as did an often-deadly dullness. Once the romance of exploration was cast off, many Europeans who had been lured by the tales of exotic adventures dominating the imperial Congo literature were deeply disenchanted by a daily routine that was often marked by stagnation and idleness. 'An Outpost of Progress' forcefully described one of these stations equipped by "two pioneers of trade and progress" as Conrad labelled them in bitter sarcasm, who "did nothing, absolutely nothing".[128]

Profound feelings of solitude, loneliness and homesickness were rampant. In these conditions, the most 'heroic' struggle of these proud representatives of 'white' and European supremacy was perhaps their grim daily fight to obtain nutrition, health and hygiene, a skirmish that many of them, as suggested above, lost. "It was always the same story", Ward argued, "each man's calendar showed the days marked off with scrupulous

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123   Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250 ('forerunners').

124   Davis, *The Congo*, 99 ('condition'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('traite').

125   See Davis, *The Congo*, 99; Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 178.

126   Williams, "Open Letter", 5 ('Your white men').

127   For health problems of European colonisers and the weakness of the 'white body' that they seemed to signify, see chapter 3.2. Their broken health even followed the colonisers home. Weakened by tropical diseases such as malaria, many of the Congolese adventurers faced an early death. See Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250.

128   Park, "Terrible Story", 770 ('temperament'); Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 155 ('pioneers', 'nothing'). For the alleged negative influences of Congolese climate and 'savagery' on the 'civilised' European subjects, see chapter 3.3.

care, and the one topic of conversation alike among men of all nationalities was of the departure from Africa and the return to the comforts of civilisation".[129]

Even the direct economic compensation was beneath the expectations of many Europeans. More and more of the lower-ranking agents were only "wretchedly paid" and they risked their lives for "three hundred dollars a year". In contrast to the early practices, promotions were only slowly granted and were increasingly reserved, as has been contended above, to Belgian citizens. Moreover, in the 1890s, the system of reimbursement in the Congo changed. Fixed salaries were reduced and became replaced by high commissions and bonuses for the collected ivory and rubber collected. In this way, state and company agents could still make a fortune in the Congo. However, they were obliged to engage in the moral outrage of the rubber regime or rest in "poverty".[130]

Hence, along with physical hardships and despair came the moral burden of the "degrading work" the colonial masters in the Congo performed, Washington argued. "Who shall tell the miseries" of an ordinary Belgian who came to the Congo filled with patriotic imaginings, only to find himself thrust into some out-station and told to get rubber, plunged suddenly into an earthly hell," Morel similarly asked. Too much commiseration for the 'patriotic' feelings and 'miseries' of these European conquistadors is certainly misplaced. However, it is still right to assume, as Washington reasoned, that "the degradation and weakening of the oppressors always follow any wrong done to a defenseless people".[131]

Indeed, many colonisers, empowered by a deep sense of racist superiority, had few scruples about imprisoning, torturing or murdering the dehumanised Africans. Others, drunk on their power and exasperated by the misery and hardships of their service, even developed a sadistic joy in their use of excessive violence. Nonetheless, the racist slur and excessive brutality of the colonial regime certainly left its mark on all those who performed it. Some officers he had met had seen "the depths of their degradation" and "tasted the dirty work they were doing", the journalist Davis reported from his visit to the Congo in 1908.[132]

As has been described in the previous chapter, many of those entering colonial service in the Congo had been lured by the prospect of social prestige, public recognition and military distinction. After the larger prestigious battles of the Free State against the 'cannibalistic savages' and 'Arab slave traders' had been won, though, the colonial masters found themselves imprisoning women, whipping children and shooting old men. To those among the Congo colonists whose moral consciousness and empathy had not been entirely extinguished by racist contempt, the lack of 'chivalry', 'honour' or 'pride' in the allegedly 'heroic' work of 'introducing civilisation and trade' into Central Africa

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129   Ward, *Voice from the Congo*, 250 ('same story'). For reports on homesickness and loneliness, see ibid., 24, 228; Park, "Terrible Story", 770; Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1299; Conrad, "Outpost of Progress", 128–29; Glave, *In Savage Africa*, 71; Dr Austin Freeman, quoted in Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 201.

130   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23 ('wretchedly paid', 'poverty'); Davis, *The Congo*, 113 ('dollars'); see Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 461.

131   Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 375 ('degrading', degradation'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 127 ('miseries').

132   Davis, *The Congo*, 112.

under the flag of Léopold's philanthropic colony was staggering. "One of them picked at the band of blue and gold braid around the wrist of his tunic", the experienced war correspondent Davis reported from his encounter with Force Publique officers, "and said: 'Look, it is our badge of shame'".[133]

The young European colonisers showed the greatest difficulties in upholding what was considered their 'civilised' ideals in these conditions, the reformers claimed. "All reports agree that these men almost invariably give themselves over to the worst vices", Washington noted in the *Outlook*, for instance, "if for no other reason than to escape from the melancholy which their isolation breeds".[134] Indeed, alcohol abuse, for instance, was widespread. Full of detestation, Canisius described the drunkard manager of a trading station "falling upon the gravel walk" under "the loud laughter and apparently witty comments of a crowd of naked savages, gathered around to witness the antics of the noble white man". The racist symbolic capital of such a humiliated coloniser showed severe signs of corrosion. While even a drunken European maintained the structural power to control, physically or culturally annihilate the colonised other, his right to despise the Africans as culturally and morally inferior became shallow. The 'nobleness' of the 'white' colonial master had become a theme of ridicule even by the 'naked savages' that they had come to 'civilise', the anecdote of Canisius suggests. The "awe with which the savage formerly regarded the white man", as he believed, "has largely given way to a feeling of contempt".[135]

Similarly devastating was the self-contempt that a once-aspiring colonial 'pioneer of civilisation' could develop: the burdening combination of physical, psychological and moral deterioration he experienced where he had expected cultural, social and symbolic elevation through inclusion in a colonial master class and abundant symbolic and material wages of colonial 'whiteness'. "What can he do then?" Doyle asked in his pamphlet on the crime of the Congo: "There is one thing which he very frequently does, and that is to blow out his brains". Indeed, the suicide statistics in the Congo were "higher than in any service in the world", the famous writer reminded.[136]

The 'undoing of colonial whiteness' and the 'empire of shame'

The degradation of colonial masters and the general corrosion of colonial heroism in the periphery directly affected the metropolitan societies, as well. The British journalist and executive member of the Congo Reform Association Harold Spender proclaimed in an article on 'The Great Congo Iniquity' that, in the Free State, "the white man's burden" was becoming "the white man's undoing".[137] This notion can, quite literally, be understood as a reference to the physical decay and high mortality of the 'white' colonists in the Congo. However, it also hints at the collapse and 'undoing' of the prevailing stereotype of heroic colonial 'whiteness' through and within the Congo Scandal.

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133   Ibid.
134   Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 377 ('reports'); see Park, "Terrible Story", 769.
135   Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 81 ('falling'), 105 ('awe').
136   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 44 ('suicide'). On suicides of colonial agents, also see Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 377.
137   Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity", 45–46.

As has been described in the previous chapter, the popularisation of Léopold's colo-
nial enterprise and the commodification of Stanley's African quests had turned the
Congo into an 'empire for the masses'. However, after the climax of public admiration
for the lionised Stanley in 1890, a process of alienation had begun to estrange the Eu-
ropeans and Americans from the Congolese 'heroes'. In travel literature, the imperial
pioneers in the Congo even began to sink into a kind of anti-heroes. This rupture be-
came particularly apparent in the storyline of Herbert Ward, the former Free State and
trading agent who had joined the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition in 1886.[138] In 1891, after
his return to England, Ward simultaneously published two books. Although the first,
about his initial five years as a state and trading agent, mainly recounted adventur-
ous but ultimately victorious struggles with a stereotypical Congolese counter-world
created in the tone and style predetermined by Stanley's travelogues, Ward's second
book put the traveller's own psychological and physical deterioration at the centre of
attention. "Oh, the horrors of that weary time!" the future sculptor noted frankly: "No
flight of fancy was too great, no conception too horrible for my fevered imagination".
This new, internal focus on the traveller's hardships, fears and inadequacy appeared,
from then on, more frequently in travel literature and to some extent anticipated the
emerging Congo reform discourse.[139]

Indeed, many fictional representations of the Congo Free State circled around
"[d]egenerated [h]eroes and [f]ailed [r]omance". Conrad, for instance, as has been re-
peatedly mentioned, turned the sickness, insanity and brutalisation of colonial 'heroes'
and the 'undoing' of colonial heroism into a central motif of his Congo literature.
The characters in Conrad's two Congo novellas and the company director or ignorant
Belgian officers described by the American Canisius had little in common with the
heroic imperialists who had been glorified in popular culture for their supremacy over
the Congolese 'darkness'. Such crude and weak, suffering and humiliated colonists
were rather problematic projection screens for the racist desires of the reading masses
in Europe and the United States, who drew their sense of cultural and racial superiority
from the identification with their imperial heroes. Davis had conveyed this change
when he argued that the young Free State officers he met were no longer colonial
heroes to be admired but "men one could pity".[140]

To tales of health problems and psychological distress was added the staggering
amount of moral erosion revealed by the activists of the Congo reform movement, who
in their pamphlets and books, atrocity lectures and town meetings described in horri-
fying detail the brutalities committed by the Victorians' admired popular heroes. At the
beginning of the 20th century, the cultural monument of the Central African conqueror,
this icon of 19th-century popular imagination, was seriously corroding. The almost out-
right hero-worship of the public for the Central African explorers and colonisers per-
ished under the impression of the sheer abysmal outrages they enacted upon the African
population. "[A]ll this fine work on the part of Belgians – or of British, Scandinavians,

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138   See Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 29–30; chapter 3.2.
139   Ward, *Stanley's Rear Guard*, 47 ('horrors'), 48 ('flight'); see Ward, *Five Years*.
140   Gehrmann, "Degenerated Heroes", title; Davis, *The Congo*, 113. On Conrad's colonial anti-heroes, see
        chapter 3.2.

Italians, and other Europeans", Johnston asserted, was from now on associated with the horrible atrocities of the Free State, "instead", as it should have been, "of resulting in a monument to the white man's courage, nobility of purpose, shrewd common sense, and victory over the Devil of reactionary Nature". Indeed, those Free State agents who returned after the Congo Scandal had been exposed, and who had expected honour, social approval or even public admiration for their service at the 'frontiers of civilisation', had to learn that they were increasingly perceived as ruthless murderers, instead. Similarly, those men and women whose biographies had become intertwined with the foundation of the Free State saw their reputation and names destroyed. For Johnston, himself one of Britain's idols from the romantic period of exploration, "the bitterest part" of the Congo Scandal was the destruction of an unprecedented legacy of valour, "a heroism, a cheerful endurance of privation and disease, an honest liking for these feckless savages under their control" that he associated with Léopold's and Stanley's officers.[141]

Eventually, even the tallest statue fell. The veteran explorer Stanley himself had always stayed loyal to Léopold and the Congolese administration and had vigorously defended the Free State against all allegations. [142] However, towards the end of the 19th century, criticism of Stanley's ruthless methods in the Congo became louder. When the full extent of the atrocities in the colony that he had established was disclosed to the British public in February 1904 by the Casement report, Stanley's reputation was seriously hit, as well. The veteran explorer died a few months later after an attack of pleurisy. He was "embittered", noted Harry Johnston, one of his pallbearers, assured by the "gradual growing conviction" that he had established an unscrupulous and disastrous regime. In contrast to the expectations of his wife, the once almost unconditionally worshipped imperial hero could not be buried in Westminister Abbey, next to David Livingstone, as Stanley had hoped. Dean Joseph A. Robinson refused to give his permission. Apparently, these highest national honours were, at the start of the new century and concerning the growing controversies about Stanley's colonial legacy, no longer appropriate for the grandest of all Victorian imperial heroes.[143]

For Park, a major misfortune of the Congo Scandal was this corruption of Stanley's reputation, this greatest icon of African 'exploration' through the brutality of the Congo regime. His work "was intended for and should have effected nothing but good", the leading American Congo reformer was convinced. However, it had "so far led to nothing but evil". Here was "the tragedy and the pathos" of the story. Like other reformers, the American journalist mourned the deprivation of the imperial grandeur and pure 'romantic whiteness' once associated with his imperial boyhood heroes as a personal loss.[144]

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141   Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 463.

142   See Stanley, *Introduction*, xii–xiii; 'Stanley the Bugbear of Congo Land', *New York Herald*, 14 April 1891, 8.

143   Harry Johnston, quoted in Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 15 [footnote] ('embittered', 'gradual'). Dean Joseph A. Robinson never explained his decision. However, in another context he referred to the violent character of Stanley's missions; see Newman, *Imperial Footprints*, 333–34; Tim Jeal, *Stanley* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), 464. Very likely, the outrage about the atrocities in the Congo Free State influenced this decision, as well.

144   Park, "Terrible Story", 764; see Lösing, "Congo to Chicago".

Moreover, the atrocities and misdeeds that were committed by the 'white' colonial heroes in the name of Christianity, civilisation and progress deeply unsettled the belief in the moral or cultural supremacy of these imagined communities. "Such things are an ineffaceable blot upon the white race in Africa", they "are befouling the honour of the white races", Morel grimly stated, and his close friend and associate Doyle agreed that the "immense series of crimes" had resulted in a "lowering of the prestige of all the white races".[145] Moreover, Congo opponents called the crimes of the Free State "disgraceful to civilisation", "a disgrace to civilization", "a disgrace to civilized Europe" and a "disgrace to European civilization".[146]

At the same time, "national honour" and "national dignity" were involved by the national "complicity in [this] most colossal infamy". For Doyle, the broken "pledge of the united nations of Europe" to protect the Congolese natives was "a disgrace to each of them". However, many reformers pointed to the "peculiar and very clear responsibility" of the United States and Great Britain due to the early recognition by Washington and the huge British public and diplomatic support for Léopold's endeavour in its foundational years.[147]

Secular and religious British Congo opponents declared the fight against the Congo Scandal to be a national duty. The Congo Scandal "affects not only the dignity and prestige of Great Britain in the councils of the world", a resolution of 1,000 Congo protesters maintained, "but, what is of even greater moment, the honour and the moral character of the nation". For the liberal parliamentarian Sir Henry Norman, the disgrace of the Congo Scandal "was not an academical question" but a deeply personal matter for every British gentleman. It seemed to the member for Wolverhampton South and former successful journalist and editor that "without exaggeration or cant, we were so much involved in this matter that any man amongst us who knew the facts must feel compelled to say: 'My country is disgraced by them; I myself am disgraced by them'".[148]

As chapter 3.2 has discussed, many prominent reformers had interpreted the Congolese atrocities as signs of a fundamental moral and cultural decline of an overly materialistic and decadent modernity. The words of Norman suggest that the humiliation to 'civilisation' and the 'white race' through the Congo Scandal also evolved into a deeply

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145   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 243 ('blot'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 8 ('befouling'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 8 ('lowering').

146   Morel, *Great Britain*, 127 ('disgraceful'); Reverend Richard B. Smith, quoted in Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 51; Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1329 (both 'disgrace to civilization'); Lord Cromer [Evelyn Baring], introduction to *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, by John H. Harris (London and Beccles: William Clowes and Sons 1912), vi ('Europe'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 57 ('European').

147   Henry Norman: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1861 ('honour', 'dignity');*Morel, Great Britain*, 127 ('complicity'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 8 ('pledge', 'each'); Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 10 ('peculiar'). On the national honour involved in the Congo question, also see 'Address of Mr. E.D. Morel', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 232; Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter", 5; Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 44; Sir Francis Channing: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1867.

148   'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4 ('affects', 'nation'); Norman: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1857 ('academical', 'exaggeration'); see Morel, *Great Britain*, 3–6.

personal crisis. It challenged identity and subjectivity for those who had drawn their 'ethnic honour' from their inclusion in these imagined racist communities. Under the umbrella of a humanitarian 'civilising mission', the atrocities against the African population had not only "made civilisation ashamed of its name", as Lord Fitzmaurice, the liberal Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs asserted, but had disheartened those Congo reform activists who had proudly defined themselves as 'progressive' or 'civilised'.[149]

The statements of Casement and the English missionary A.E. Scrivener, two Free State opponents who had seen the atrocities with their own eyes, finally reveal how the elevating character of the racist symbolic capital had been turned upside-down. The violence in the colonial endeavour he had once supported made him "ashamed of my own skin colour", Casement admitted, and the missionary Scrivener similarly stated that he felt "ashamed of my colour" when he thought of the crimes of other 'white men' in the Free State. Hence, the Congo Scandal eventually turned ethnic honour, or racist symbolic capital, into 'ethnic shame' – and not only for those who had directly participated in the Congo atrocities, as Morel emphasised: "'every white man who has a soul, whether brought into contact with them on the spot, or acquainted with them from a distance, cannot but 'cringe with shame' for his race".[150]

Eventually, the crisis of racist societalisation triggered by the Congo Scandal affected large spheres of the imperial societies. A deep sense of betrayal took hold of the British and American public that was particularly articulated in the hundreds of atrocity meetings organised by reform activists. Those who "attended these meetings and heard the case presented", Lord Monkswell, the President of the British reform association said, were "filled with surprise, as well as shame, horror, and indignation". 'Ethnic shame' could even affect the sphere of everyday consumption. Whenever "you ride down the streets of your beautiful cities on your bicycles, with the tires made of rubber, and in your automobiles, with the tires made of rubber", Morrison told his listeners at the Universal Peace Congress in Boston, there exists the possibility "that the very rubber that you are riding upon has cost a human life".[151] Hence, instead of becoming a source of racist symbolic capital and creating a mass honour for the imperial societies, the colonisation had become a burden for the British and American public. When the full extent of the Free State atrocities reached the metropolitan public, the Congolese empire for the masses became an empire of shame.

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149   Fitzmaurice: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here 1329 ('ashamed'); see speech of Doyle, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22; Park, "Recent Atrocities", 1328; see Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 69–70, here 70.

150   Casement, quoted in Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 57 ('skin colour'); A.E. Scrivener, quoted in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 52 ('colour'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 243 ('soul').

151   Lord Monkswell [Robert Collier]: 'The Congo Free State', HL Deb 29 July 1907 Vol. 179 cc 402–437, here c 403 ('surprise'). 'Address of Rev. W.H. Morrison', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 237 ('ride').

The Congo Scandal and the metropolitan 'wages of whiteness'

Merchants, manufacturers but also workers in the imperial metropoles had not only been promised a racist symbolic capital but tremendous material benefits through the unlocking of the Congolese markets and natural resources for the global economy. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Stanley had enthusiastically described the region as an 'African El Dorado'. Most reformers, with this narration in mind, believed that the economic potential of the Congo remained tremendous. The Congo Basin was "leading all other sections of the earth in its supply" of rubber, for instance, they reminded the United States Senate. Hence, "[i]t is evident that the resources of the country, rightly conserved and developed, would secure for it wealth indefinitely great".[152]

In 1905, the experienced colonialist Johnston was still convinced that there "should be a great future, commercially at any rate, before the Congo Free State". However, the great expectations outside Belgium had been darkened, as he admitted. The Congo colony neither conserved nor rationally developed its resources and, most importantly, it refrained from sharing this unlimited wealth with its imperial co-conspirators. As has been previously maintained, since 1889, the Free State had gradually established a monopolised and state-run economy that largely excluded independent and international trade. By the mid-1890s, the free and open access to the Congolese markets and resources guaranteed in international treaties and bilateral conventions had been revoked. The "regret naturally felt" that "this wealthy territory" was now closed was a central motivation for the public criticism of Léopold's politic, as Johnston confessed.[153]

The "claim of one man [Léopold] to a gift of so fabulous value" meant to sacrifice the "allied rights of all mankind" to the wealth of the Congolese nature, American missionaries urged.[154] Indeed, Alfred Emmott emphasised the immense differences between the promises made to the British economy and the actual trading figures. "Sir Henry Stanley, many years ago, promised us £ 20,000,000 of trade per annum", he reminded. "Our exports are £125,000 at present", he argued in the spring of 1903. One year later, trade between the United States and the Free State similarly amounted to "little or nothing", as American reformers noted.[155]

British parliamentarians continued to point to the importance of Congo trade for their constituencies and demanded that there "must be freedom of trade in the Congo and guarantees for collective and individual liberty".[156] The closure of the Congo endangered the anticipated profits of those directly engaged in African trade. Moreover, it directly affected expectations of a macroeconomic stimulation of economic growth. "Tropical Africa was probably the China of the future for the absorption of British manufactured goods", it was argued, hence "as business men [sic], we could not afford to

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152   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 3 ('leading', 'evident').

153   Johnston, *History of Colonization [1905]*, 230. For the free trade dimension of the crisis of racist policy in the Congo, see chapter 4.2.

154   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 18 ('claim', 'allied').

155   Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39 ('Sir Henry'); The Boston Herald, 28 September 1904, reproduced in Congo Committee, "Congo News-Letter, July 1904", 3 ('little').

156   John Kennaway: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1852 ('liberty').

allow a huge country like that to be closed to our trade. Why should it be?" [157] Eventually, Léopold's restrictions on free trade would affect the British economy as a whole, Morel warned. The "destruction of commerce" through monopolisation let the "home manufacturers suffer" he pointed out, and as a result, also those workers and artisans whose wages in Europe were dependent on Congolese trade. Hence, the leader of the British reform campaign demanded persistent pressure upon the British Government by "chambers of commerce, by manufacturers and trades unions" alike. [158]

Moreover, for the reformers, the free-trade dimension and the so-called 'native question' had intersecting aspects, for example concerning the effect of the Free State atrocities on the promised Congolese potential as an outlet market. The violent Free State regime had a devastating impact on the millions of Congolese 'savages' who should have been turned into obeying customers through the assimilation programme of the 'civilising mission', it was warned. "Already rich areas are almost hopelessly impaired, and the depopulation of the land and the incitement of a brooding hatred in the hearts of the people threaten irrecoverable loss" of the Congolese "wealth rightfully belonging to the world". [159] If central Africa was deserted by the colonial terror of the Free State, who was going to buy the European commodities in the future? In this way, "African markets for the absorption of European merchandise" were not only closed but also "ruined". [160]

The depopulation of the Congo Basin of course also affected the supply of labour-power and thus, eventually, the grasp on the desired Congolese natural resources. The repeatedly discussed health problems of pioneering European colonists, combined with fragments of climatic determinism, had established the conviction that a broader transfer of European workers to the Congo was illusionary. "White labor can never hope to get a foot-hold here", Williams had already predicted. This argument was frequently made throughout the reform debate. In consideration of the fact that European industries' grasp of Congolese resources would always depend on African labour, critics blamed the murderous Free State economy not only as inhumane and morally questionable but also as economically unsound: "And it all seemed so foolish. To kill the people off in the wholesale way [...], because they would not bring in a sufficient quantity of rubber to satisfy the white man – and now here is an empty country and a very much diminished output of rubber as the inevitable consequence", Scrivener stressed, full of consternation. [161]

"Another great evil was the steady robbing of the country of all its resources" through its ruthless mode of production, the reformers argued. Indeed, the trade in elephant

157   Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46.
158   Morel, *British Case*, 185 ('destruction', 'suffer'), 186 ('chambers'); see Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36; Morel, *Red Rubber*, 203.
159   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22.
160   Morel, *British Case*, 185 ('ruined').
161   Williams, "Report upon the State of Congo", 20 ('white'); Rev. A.E. Scrivener, quoted in Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 51 ('foolish'). Also see Davis, *The Congo*, 115; Alfred 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; Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9.

tusks, for instance, which in the first decade of the Free State was the most important Congolese commodity, was a self-destructive industry. Towards the end of the century, the reservoir of ivory vivant showed signs of exhaustion through the ruthless shooting of elephants.[162]

As Harris pointed out, the "wanton destruction of elephants in order to obtain rapidly every tusk of ivory" had its counterpart in "the ruthless exploitation of rubber". The quickly rising export numbers of rubber in the 1890s were only possible due to the implementation of the notoriously atrocious rubber regime. However, while this forced rubber collection led to "immense profits", such "exhaustive exploitation cannot conceal its ruinous nature", the reformers emphasised.[163] Time and again, they told the "piteous tale" of the manner in which the rubber vines were handled. Under the high pressure of brutally enforced rubber quotas, "vines were cut down with little thought for the future", the existing lianas so frequently tapped that they "soon dry up and die". In this way, the "rubber is got, but a plant which has taken centuries to grow is destroyed for ever".[164]

The "lack of attention" to proper and sustainable collection was intensified by "the natives' hostility to the Congo State officials", Bourne reported. Indeed, rubber vines were also the target of sabotage, and they were thus deliberately destroyed to damage the economic foundation of the colonisers.[165] Apart from the "inhumanities" and "monopolies", Congo opponents also pointed to "the crass stupidity of a system which dries up the sources of production". By 1903, "the exhaustion of the rubber-vines [had] already begun [...] in very sensible degree", and in their first Congo-critical memorial to the United States Congress, the American missionaries claimed that the "profuse bleeding of the rubber vines has brought about their destruction in wide areas".[166]

Throughout the reform debate, Congo opponents continuously expressed their outrage about the Free State's destruction of "the sources of wealth to which it owed its birth", a wealth that, it had been promised, would reach all spheres of the imperial community. "[E]ven if it was in accordance with the spirit" of the Berlin Act, "it was still the duty of Europe to intervene", Emmott emphasised in the Commons, since "the resources of rubber were being dried up" through the forced production. "In other words, the State was exploiting its chief natural resource, and there would be nothing left to trade upon", even if the Free State were abolished and the region were once more opened

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162 Leif Jones: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1844 ('evil'); see chapter 2.1.

163 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 213 ('wanton', 'ruthless'); Paul S. Reinsch, "Real Conditions in the Congo Free State," *The North American Review* 178, no. 567 (1904): 221 ('immense', 'exhaustive').

164 Cromer, *Introduction*, vii ('piteous'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 239 ('cut down'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 79 ('dry up'); Decle, "Murder in Africa", 587 ('centuries').

165 Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 266 ('hostility'); see Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 82.

166 Emmott, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 39 ('inhumanities', 'monopolies', 'stupidity'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 67 ('degree'); Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 14 ('profuse'). Similarly, see Commission of Enquiry appointed by the Congo Free State Government, *The Congo*, 63; Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 73, 106; 'Rev. Dr. W. Morrison to M. Ohaltin', quoted in Foreign Office, ed., *Further Correspondence Regarding the Taxation of Natives, and Other Questions, in the Congo State* (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Harrison and Sons, 1909), 43.

to international merchants.[167] In 1906, Park summarised the whole economic disaster: "The supply of ivory is practically exhausted; in certain districts the yield of rubber has nearly ceased. The land is being depopulated".[168]

Eventually, the closure of markets and the destruction of workers and resources could also negatively affect the technological development and production of consumer goods in Britain and America, the reformers warned. Rubber, for instance, had become "one of the most important and most profitable of commodities" of modern economies, as the Liverpool parliamentarian Austin Taylor reminded in a Congo-critical debate. Other regions in the world market could perhaps compensate for a decline of ivory or coffee imports from the Congo. However, an exclusion from its immense rubber reservoirs had severe effects on the production of important articles such as bicycles or automobiles. After all, the Congo "is the great rubber-exporting district of the world", a resource "that is increasingly used in all the appliances of civilization".[169]

5.3   'To root out the canker': Access, purge and the racist spectacle of humanitarianism

For Congo opponents in Great Britain and the United States, an organised attempt to overcome the scandalous betrayal of social, symbolic and material promises by the Free State was inevitable. "We owed it to our honour as a nation; we owed it to our dignity, we owed it to one another; we owed it to civilization", Henry Norman contended in the House of Commons, but "each man, it seemed to him, owed it to his self-respect".[170] In defence of their personal self-worth but also the collective interests of the British or American nation and civilisation as a whole, the reform movement developed multi-layered remedies for the crisis of racist societalisation exposed in Central Africa.

First, it is be shown how secular and religious activists alike demanded full access for Protestant missionaries and independent merchants to the Congo and respect for their privileges as members of the colonial master class. A return to the 'open door' policy and freedom of trade would at the same time secure the imperial societies their 'rightful' share of the Congolese wealth. However, in consideration of the shameful atrocities committed by Free State agents, British and American reformers were reluctant to insist that civil and military officers should once more be recruited internationally. In fact, Black American activists and Italian officers had entirely abandoned the hope that a genuinely universal colony could be re-established.

Moreover, a complex discursive manoeuvre of purification based on an extensive medical symbolism and eugenic metaphors attempted to repel 'ethnic shame' triggered

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167   Cromer, *Introduction*, vi–vii ('sources'); Emmott: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1315 ('accordance', etc.).

168   Park, "Terrible Story", 772. Indeed, within the first decade of the 20th century, the wild rubber reservoirs of the Congo Basin were already largely extinguished, see Harms, "End of Red Rubber", 77.

169   Austin Taylor: 'Class II', HC Deb 9 June 1904 Vol. 135 cc 1235–96, here c 1248 ('commodities'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 43 ('great', 'appliances').

170   Henry Norman: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 February 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1861.

by the Congo Scandal. First, the British nation, Protestant religion and Anglo-Saxon 'race' were identified as the moral centre of a once-'healthy organism of European imperialism' that was now threatened by the contagious Free State 'disease'. Afterwards, the Congolese 'malady' was traced back to an 'inferior type' of colonisers in the Congo, namely Belgian officers and those with a lower-class background, who had allegedly been driven to violence and atrocities through a class-specific deficiency of morality and a lack of national character. With demands for the removal of Belgian and subaltern agents from colonial mastery and their association with the 'dark' Congolese counterworld, the reformers attempted to re-establish the moral integrity of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' through the exclusion of these 'unworthy' elements. The price was, however, a further fragmentation of these once-universal imagined communities, which directly affected the political cohesion of the reform movement.

Finally, it is discussed how the reformers included the European and American masses in the position of the 'civilised and white saviours'. Through the success of so-called atrocity lectures, the Congo reform movement became a mass campaign of national scope. At these public demonstrations, which attracted hundreds of thousands of Americans and Britons, humanitarian activism was turned into a racist mass spectacle. In this way, the overwhelming 'ethnic shame' of the Congo Scandal was once more turned into a source of mass honour, generated in demarcating the alienated Congolese other as well as the 'foul' elements of European 'civilisation'.

Access or withdrawal from colonial mastery?

Attempts to reinstate the privileges of British and American imperial stakeholders such as missionaries or merchants that had been abrogated through the scandalous Free State policy played a major role throughout the Congo reform movement. Indeed, reform activists such as Morel showed little restraint in admitting that their colonial reform strategy combined "moral contention" with "legitimate utilitarian considerations".[171] As the previous chapter has shown, the Free State had gradually revoked its pledges concerning the establishment of a truly universal colony. This had promised, first, all those considered 'civilised' a chance at inclusion in an imagined community of colonial 'whiteness', and second, impartial treatment and equal symbolic and material wages to all members of this colonial master class irrespective of social status, nationality, confession or 'race'. Instead, Americans and Europeans were increasingly excluded from the economy, church and administration in the Congo, and they were outraged about discrimination by a state that had openly begun to favour Belgian, Catholic and 'white' candidates in all pillars of colonial governance.[172]

In response to this first dimension of the crisis of racist societalisation, the aforementioned 'legitimate' practical considerations raised by the reformers culminated in straightforward demands. The reformers requested that the United States and British governments insist upon the "open door" in Central Africa and re-establish what were

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171   Morel, "Future of Tropical Africa", 361 ('contention').
172   See chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

understood as the fundamental rights of its citizens, namely to participate in and benefit from the colonisation of the Congo, as had been promised in the foundational years of the Congo Free State and codified in racist contracts such as the General Act of the Berlin Conference.[173]

As chapter 4.3 has described in more detail, evangelicals and free trade partisans thoroughly disagreed over whether Christianity or commerce was the pivotal condition for a humane and practical colonialism or the principal medium to 'civilise' the Congolese 'savages'. However, despite the at-times strident ideological disputes, calls for freedom of trade and free missionising were also raised by all camps of the organised reform campaign. In this context, Protestant missionaries in Great Britain and the United States and British merchants, manufacturers and free traders could agree on the central remedy for their inequitable marginalisation in the community of the Congo colonisers or the full exclusion from the Congo they opposed. The Free State and its eventual successor had to return to the principles of the Berlin Congo Conference and recognise the privileges of indiscriminate access to the Congo Basin and equal participation in its economic exploitation and cultural assimilation established for imperialists of all nations and creeds.[174]

Early in the Congo controversy, the strong influence of missionaries and merchants in the British and American reform movement had been effectively used by apologists of the Free State to reject public criticism as an interested campaign of "'Liverpool merchants', jealous of Antwerp's growing importance as a rubber market" and Protestant missionaries "pursuing 'material interests'", as Morel remembered. While the reformers initially strongly decried these charges as attempting to undermine the sincerity of their public criticism of Léopold's Congo, the indignation expressed by Morel was flimsy if one takes into account the prominence of free trade and missionising questions within the reform debate.[175]

However, to suggest that the insistence upon the 'open door' in Central Africa was exclusively motivated by the personal gain of missionaries or merchants involved or hoping to become involved in the colonisation of the Congo would oversimplify matters, as well. For one, to 'open up the Congo to Christian civilisation and capitalist trade' was promoted as a beneficial means of "uplifting" the Congolese 'savages' from their alleged backwardness and moral and material misery by those committed to the principle self-legitimation of Europe's New Imperialism, the 'civilising mission' narrative. Additionally, the Congo reformers claimed to defend not particularities but the "legitimate interests" of broader commercial and evangelical milieus, or even the British and American peoples as a whole.[176]

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173   Morel, *British Case*, 186; Congo Reform Association to Foreign Office, 5 December 1912, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Present State*, 53, 54; Stead, "Emperor of the Congo", 38; Cahill, "Humanity", 7 (all 'open door'). For the provisions of the Berlin Conference, see chapters 2.1, 4.1 and 5.1.

174   For the political demands of the reformers, also see chapter 4.3.

175   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, xi ('Liverpool'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 191 ('pursuing'). For an elaborate rejection of the accusations by Free State apologists, see Morel, "King Leopold's Defence".

176   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 16 ('uplifting'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 206, 208; Morel, *British Case*, 148 ('legitimate').

As has been previously described, the establishment of an international colony in the Congo Basin guarding over the free trade provisions of the Berlin Congo Conference was sold to the interested spheres of the British and American public as a macroeconomic stimulation of tremendous potential. However, the monopolisation and nationalisation of Congolese trade and industry gradually implemented since 1889 had increasingly barred American and British economies from the promised multidimensional wage increases resulting from the access to the so-far undeveloped Congolese market, as Congo reformers complained. "As Englishmen", Morel emphasised in one of his first public appearances as a Congo opponent, "we had a right to protest against that, and to insist upon our Government remembering that commerce is the backbone of the prosperity of our country, and that we could not allow the markets of the future to be closed to us".[177] Morel believed that a rising demand for manufactured goods and the supply of important resources such as rubber collected by a cheap force of African labour benefited merchants and manufacturers as well as the middle and working classes in the metropole. For the leader of the British reformers, only a return to the free trade regime of Berlin would guarantee the British masses their rightful share of the surplus generated through the conquest of the Congo and its forced integration into the global capitalist market. Freedom of trade in Central Africa was not only "for the good" of the colonial merchant or the colonial administrator, Morel emphasised, but "for the good of the Europeans in the far-off Western world, who handle the product of the black man's labour".[178]

Moreover, there had never "before been a case in which humanitarian and commercial considerations so coincided", Morel accentuated. As the previous chapter has shown, the reformers had opposed forced labour and the violent rubber regime implemented by the Free State as atrocious and inhumane but also ultimately as destructive for the Congolese natural resources and labour force. Hence, concerning the future economic exploitation of Tropical Africa, "what is morally right is economically sound", as the secretary of the British reform association later summarised. Precisely, the reformers understood their demand for the abolishment of forced labour and the atrocious rubber regime also as a plea for a more sustainable mode of production. At the "frontiers of civilization", Booker T. Washington stated, a particular political "wisdom" was needed: "A wide view of the world's economy demands that we protect from destruction not only the forests, and the beasts that live in them, but the indigenous races". A political economy based on free labour and the recognition of 'native land rights' under the firm colonial control of a European sovereign power, as was promoted by many reformers, would not only stop the depopulation of the Congo Basin through murder and flight, but also reduce the ruination of rubber vines and other resources through terrorised workers. Thus, the Congolese natural wealth could be preserved for the benefit of contemporary but also future American and British generations.[179]

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177   Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('Englishmen').

178   Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 36 ('for the good'); see Morel, *Red Rubber*, 203; Morel, *British Case*, 185; chapters 5.1 and 5.2.

179   Morel, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 46 ('coincided'); Morel, "Future of Tropical Africa", 361 ('sound'); Washington, "Future of Congo Reform", 9 ('frontiers', 'wisdom', 'wide'); see also Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 22.

However, while Protestant missionaries, British merchants and their supporters in the reform movement vigorously fought for their access to the church and the economic sector of the Free State, others had early and profoundly equivocated about the idea that an equal and inclusive colonial master class could be (re-)established in the Congo. After the devastating report of W. Williams in 1890, organised emigration programmes for Black Americans were quickly abandoned. Those who had promoted emigration as an escape from the racist violence and segregation they experienced in the United States, and as a chance to become colonial masters themselves, had no inclination to travel to a colony that was, as Williams had shown, defined by structural 'racial' discrimination, as well. Instead of struggling for their promised chance at participating in the colonisation of the Congo on an equal level with 'white' colonisers, the 'United States and Congo Emigration Company' of the Baptist Gaston, for instance, by 1890 had already begun to promote emigration exclusively to Liberia, although it still operated under its old name.[180]

In the face of the previously discussed disturbing reports about health problems and high death rates, devastating living conditions, restrictions of promotions, reduced salaries, debasements by superiors and, not at least, the appalling moral outrages committed against the African population, the interest in a colonial career in the Congo diminished not only among Black Americans. While many foreigners such as Herbert Ward, Guy Burrows or Edgar Canisius were initially incensed by the increasing marginalisation or exclusion of non-Belgians from the colonial master class, the experience that 'pioneering in Darkest Africa' brought physical and psychological deterioration and shame instead of the promised increase in status, prestige and material wealth had led to a broad disillusionment among acting and prospective colonial agents. This disenchantment further accelerated the demographic change in the Congo advanced by the on-going preference of the Free State administration for Belgian recruits. By 1908, in the final years of the Free State before its transformation into Belgian Congo, Belgians already accounted for two-thirds of its military and civil agents. In regard to these changes, it was no surprise that the issue of the living and working conditions of foreign colonial agents and their mistreatment through the administration lost in relevance when the mobilisation of the British and American reform association reached its height. By then, the activists in Liverpool and Boston lacked first-hand reports of fellow citizens to raise the interest of the American and British public into joining the fate of the Congo's foreign legion. While there were still considerable amounts of Swiss, Swedes and Italians on the payroll, not a single American or British recruit remained in Free State service in 1908.[181]

For some time, as the previous chapter has shown, reformers were still able to use the reports of Danes and particularly Italians to create scandal about the ill-treatment of foreign state agents. After all, between 1903 and 1909, during what contemporaries

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180   See 'Liberia for the Negro', *The Washington Post*, 22 July 1890, 8; 'Emigrants to Africa', *The Washington Post*, 19 September 1889, 6; 'To Return to Africa', in *The Washington Post*, 21 December 1889, 9. Williams' early death in 1891 prevented a further engagement in the Congo debate.

181   See Edgerton, *Troubled Heart*, 105; Gann and Duignan, *Belgian Africa*, 100. There remained also small numbers of Danes, Norwegians, Dutchmen, Luxembourgers, Finns, French, Russians, a Bulgarian, an Austrian and an even an Argentinian in Free State service.

had called the "Italian epoch", Italians had become the European nationality second in numbers in the Congo after Belgians. However, by 1909, all Italian officers had retreated from the Congo. After their continuing protests against the "duties assigned them" and the disadvantages they experienced remained unheard by the administration, more and more Italians resigned, as reformers emphasised. Moreover, their outraged reports "led to fierce debates" in the Italian parliament and ultimately an official revocation of cooperation with Léopold's colony by the Italian government in 1909. Like Black Americans two decades before, Italians chose to withdraw from a colonial elite that only offered them a second-class position in the community of the 'white' colonisers and had become a source of shame and misery rather than of racist symbolic capital, social advancement and material wages.[182]

The "eloquent action of the Italian Government" was commented on sympathetically within the reform movement. In this way, Italy has "washed her hands of the King of the Congo and his works", as Park noted. Concerning the state sector, the British and American reformers revealed a similar inclination that stood in contrast to the approaches to church and economy. Despite the opposition to transformations of the originally international colony into a narrow Belgian dependency raised in the early years of the Congo controversy, new chances for European and American adventurers to participate in the military and civil service of the Congo were not among the demands raised in the heyday of the movement. This was the case for several reasons. On the one hand, as chapter 4.3 has discussed in more detail, only a few reformers at the beginning of the 20th century believed that the international origins of the Free State represented the desirable institutional framework for colonial governance in Africa. Instead, they favoured empires organised along national lines. Second, in consideration of the sheer magnitude of moral outrages committed by the Free State administrators, the reformers had little inducement to emphasise or even extend the participation of their fellow citizens in the Congolese crimes. Instead, they also attempted to wash their hands of the Congo Scandal, and the dishonour and 'ethnic shame' with which it had deluged 'civilisation' and the 'white race'.[183]

The 'healthy organism' of civilisation and the 'Congolese disease'

The abandonment of the idea of international colonial governance implemented by a multinational corps of civil and military administrators by the majority of the Congo reformers points to a tense relationship between at least two aspects of the crisis of racist societalisation in the Congo. Firstly, Congo opponents were offended at how the confessional and national bias of the Free State government had led to a collapse of the promised egalitarian frontier community in the Congo. Secondly, the notorious Congo atrocities had turned the broad inclusion of recruits of many nationalities, confessions and classes into a colonial elite that initially indeed seemed to represent 'civilisation' as a whole into a burden for the British and American public. This was true not merely for

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182   Elena, "Overseas Europeans", 79 ('Italian Epoch'); Park, "Blood-Money", 68 ('duties').

183   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, iii ('eloquent'); Park, "Blood-Money", 68 ('washed'); see chapters 4.2 and 5.2.

those personally involved in the conquest of 'Darkest Africa' and its inhabitants, but also for those broad spheres of the imperial public that had drawn some sort of 'mass honour' from their affiliation with the 'heroic' colonisers, for whom the Congo had become an 'empire of shame' instead of a source of 'ethnic honour' or racist symbolic capital, as the previous chapter has claimed.

In this situation, the Congo reformers were inclined to accept and even extend the fragmentation of the once-universal concepts of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' in order to reduce the shame and dishonour emerging from the Congo Scandal. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, nationalism and a self-referential or class-racism was generally rising at the turn of the 20th century. This meant that the racist speculation about an external other was increasingly supplemented by a concern about the affiliation and integrity of the internal self. Concepts of 'race' and 'nation' became increasingly synchronised, and various sub-races of the 'white race', such as the Anglo-Saxon or Germanic 'race', gained in importance in the political imagination. At the same time, a rising eugenics movement concerned with 'racial' and national 'hygiene' promoted the safeguarding of society understood as a fragile "political organism" through the elimination of 'unworthy' and 'injurious' elements, including undesired parts of the working classes or those declared physically or mentally 'unfit' or suspected of behaving in ways that were considered to deviate from moral and social norms.[184]

As the following pages show, reform publications reveal both a strong influence of race-nationalist thinking and a deeply engraved eugenics metaphoric. In this respect, the Free State or the Free State system was, in a reoccurring symbolism, called a "cancer" or a "disease" and described as an "open" or "festering sore". This medical symbolism was far-reaching and multidimensional. In the first instance, it maintained the pre-existence of a 'healthy', hence stable, legitimate and morally justifiable institution of European imperialism before the actual advent of the Congolese 'malady'. This was the main precondition of the thesis of exceptionalism that Morel promoted with particular vehemence, as did other prominent Congo opponents.[185]

The atrocities committed by the Free State, it was claimed, were without analogy in any other contemporary European empire, and they outshined all imperial crimes of the past. The "hands of no colonising Power are clean", Morel was ready to admit. However, to argue that these "occasional back-slidings" were "in any sense of the word comparable" to the abuses in the Congo was "to exhibit a lack of proportion and absence of mental balance beyond the boundaries of reasonable discussion", he sturdily stated. "We have all failed at times", Doyle similarly argued in references to contemporary colonial scandals in German or French dependencies, but these were "isolated

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184   Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 170 ('organism'). With Starr Jordan and G. Stanley Hall, two leading members of the American Congo Reform Association were dedicated eugenicists, see Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 131–34; Winfield, *Eugenics and Education*, xix, 115–17.

185   Morel, *Congo Slave State*, 32; Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Present Status", 6; Address of William W. Keen (1906), reproduced in Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "The Service of the Congo Missionaries," in *The Congo News Letter*, ed. Congo Reform Association [U.S.] (Boston: 1906), 8; Morrison, "Personal Observations", 42 (all 'open sore') [This notion was also a reference to a remark of David Livingstone on the slave trade, inscribed on his tomb in Westminster Abbey]; Hall, "Mr. Roots Letter", 4 ('festering'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 302, 352 ('cancer'), 352 ('disease').

cases", divergences from an otherwise just colonial norm.[186] Even the "amenities of the 'middle passage' in the old days", as Conrad sarcastically called it, "were as nothing" to the misconducts in the Free State. The Congolese atrocities were simply the "ghastliest episode"[187] and "the greatest crime of all history" and.[188]

By declaring the Congo atrocities a spatially limited and historically exceptional phenomenon intrinsically tied to the particularities of the Congolese imperial formation, the reformers repudiated the realisation that all colonial conquests and relations were necessarily based upon military, structural and epistemological violence. This discursive manoeuvre allowed the adherence to the idea of just imperialism even while recognising the massacres and outrages committed in the Congo.

In their closer depiction of this once-'healthy organism' of imperial rule, British reformers resorted to a strident glorification of Britain's "dignity as a great nation", its "great liberating traditions", "glorious part in the emancipation of the negro race" and "heritage of moral glory". 'We', it is proudly proclaimed in reference to the great abolitionist campaign at the turn of the 19th century, "are of the race of Clarkson and of Wilberforce". Choruses of praises of Anglo-Saxon humanitarian and "antislavery traditions" were combined with celebrations of a supposedly specifically just and rational treatment of the colonised masses in the British Empire.[189] "It had always been the boast of this country", Samuel lauded in the great Congo debate in May 1903, "not only that our own native subjects were governed on principles of justice, but that, ever since the days of Wilberforce, England had been the leader in all movements on behalf of the backward races of the earth".[190]

Nonetheless, in consideration of Britain's broad support for Léopold's colonial movement in the late 19th century, the Congo Scandal was often described as a heavy assault on British national dignity and honour, as the previous chapter has shown. Through its complicity in the Congo atrocities, the British nation was faced "with a crisis in its moral history", secular and religious Congo opponents agreed.[191] However, reformers attempted to perceive this crisis also as a chance, "an occasion", for the British people to "pursue" its "great traditions [...] by taking the initiative in this matter", as Samuel emphasised. "[S]aving the races of Central Africa" by taking the lead of the movement for Congo reform was Britain's destiny, Morel asserted, the "plain and

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186   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 199 ('hands', 'occasional', 'exhibit'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 85 ('isolated'); 86 ('failed'); see Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 41.

187   Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 70 ('amenities', 'nothing'); Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, 41 ('ghastliest').

188   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 126 ('greatest'); see speech of Doyle, quoted in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 22. The notion of Doyle was frequently reproduced by Congo reformers, see, for instance, the remarks of Dr Clifford at the Protestant demonstration in the Royal Albert Hall 1909, reproduced in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

189   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 181 ('dignity'), 200 ('glorious', 'Clarkson'); Morel, *Great Britain*, 5 ('liberating', 'heritage'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 44 ('antislavery').

190   Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1299–1300 ('boast'); see Spender, "Great Congo Iniquity".

191   Morel, *Great Britain*, 4 ('crisis'); see 'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4; chapter 5.2.

simple duty" of a chosen people: "Can we fail to see the finger of God pointing out to us the path we are called upon to tread"?[192]

Religiously charged nationalism was also apparent at public protests in Britain. "God had given Englishmen a world-empire", the Chairman of an anti-Congo demonstration in Banbury argued, since the British people possessed special "powers of organisation and principles of emancipation". These powers could now be turned towards the suffering Congolese, he suggested.[193] To the irritation of some secular reformers, the Protestant stream of the reform movement particularly emphasised the centrality of Christian faith and Christian morality for these emancipative traditions of the British nation and empire. In a national manifesto, British church dignitaries and Nonconformists stressed that it was "especially in the minds" of those "guided by the principles of the Gospel of the Lord Jesu Christ" that objections against the "dishonour" of the Congo Scandal would evolve. Hence, it was mainly the members of the Christian churches who held the power to abolish the Free State system, it was argued; they were defined as the world's true moral conscience and could point 'civilisation' towards the right path to return. If they "speak out", the political leaders of the world "must need listen, and the best instincts of every civilized country will respond".[194] Moreover, evangelical activists such as John Harris used the silence and complicity of Catholics to emphasise that "the honour of having on the spot saved the Congo natives from extirpation" and of generally opposing "any form of oppression" belong to "one section of the Christian Church" in particular: "The colossal crime of the Congo was exposed on the spot almost entirely by the Protestant missionaries". At the same time, Harris did not hesitate to suggest "that the Almighty had the Anglo-Saxon race in view [...] when He gave Moses the ten commandments on Sinai's mountain".[195]

Pleas to Protestant conscience and national or Anglo-Saxon pride went hand in hand among evangelical Congo reformers. Religious leaders protesting against the Congo Scandal agreed that the "greatest by far of British interests is the maintenance of the moral force of the nation". The 9,000 representatives of the Protestant missionary and church organisation assembled in Royal Albert Hall in November of 1909 began their Congo protest "with the signing of a hymn beginning 'O God, our help in ages past'" as the *Times* wrote, the large assembly only dispersed after "the National Anthem had been sung".[196]

Moreover, the frameworks of Protestantism and particularly Anglo-Saxonism allowed the inclusion of the American reformers into the imagined community to which these reformers appealed. The definition of the Anglo-Saxons as the paramount subgroup of the 'white race' and foremost actor of European civilisation became increas-

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192   Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here c 1300 ('occasion', pursue', 'traditions'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 200 ('saving', etc.)

193   Rev Spendlove, quoted in 'The Congo Reform Association', *Banbury Guardian*, 22 November 1906, 7.

194   'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4.

195   Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 124 ('Almighty'), 265 ('colossal').

196   'The Congo', *The Times*, 12 July 1909, 4 ('greatest'); 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8 ('singing', 'Anthem'). "Britons awake", a Congo hymn that was intonated in churches and town halls throughout the country commenced in a typical combination of evangelical fervour and nationalist appellation, see Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 67–68. For more details, see below.

ingly popular in the latter half of the 19th century among British and American intel-
lectuals, in a time when notions of 'race' and 'nation' gradually became synchronised.
With Dilke, the Radical Liberal and committee member of the Aborigines' Protection
Society, an important mentor of the political imagination of a legitimated global Anglo-
American dominance based on an alleged racial 'superiority' of the Anglo-Saxon was a
pioneer of the British reform movement.[197] Likewise, Jordan, the president of Stan-
ford University who became vice president of the American reform association, was
one of the most important figures in the eugenics movement of his day and an outspo-
ken advocate of Anglo-Saxon superiority, which he attempted to safeguard through his
concerns for the 'blood' of the American nation.[198]

Both American and British Congo opponents expressed their view that past aboli-
tionist traditions, contemporary humanitarian empathy and the ability of 'just' rule of
the 'dark races' were British as well as 'Anglo-Saxon' virtues.[199] In a speech in London,
the American missionary Morrison articulated his "hope that England and the United
States would ever be found the foremost advocates of justice and freedom through-
out the world, and would unitedly seek to advance the cause of righteousness and of
civilization". According to Morel's biographer, the potential of an appeal to a common
Anglo-Saxon 'identity', described as the primary global agents of justice, was one of the
main reasons for the British reformers' preferences for alliances in the United States to
those on the European Continent. Indeed, Morel finished his first major Congo book
with the expectation that the "Anglo-Saxon race", hence the "Governments and the Peo-
ples of Great Britain and the United States", would "make up their minds" to handle the
Congo's outrage, and "point a way and set an example" that others would then follow.[200]

These examples can be interpreted as an attempt to offer identification with a strong
racial-national 'we' as a resort to parts of the crisis of racist societalisation that has been
described in the previous chapter. The deterioration of racist symbolic capital emerging
from the affiliation with universal communities of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness', hence
the 'ethnic shame' that was part of the Congo Scandal, were met with strong appeals
to national honour, religious chosenness and 'racial' pride. The reformers not only sug-
gested the existence of a once-'healthy body' of European imperialism delimited from
the Congo Scandal but also maintained the idea that this political organism had a
British, Protestant and Anglo-Saxon 'heart'. However, the already mentioned medical
metaphoric indicated that the Congolese 'disease' or 'cancer' threatened this healthy
imperialism and the heart of civilisation it represented. The Free State system was de-
scribed as "infectious", a "virus" and as spreading hazard that "pollutes" the surrounding

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197 For the rise of Anglo-Saxonism and Dilke's significance, see Lorimer, *Race Relations and Resistance*,
     27.
198 Starr Jordan opposed imperialism and warfare precisely because they promoted the 'survival of
     the unfit', as he claimed, since only the most devoted and fit men tended to sacrifice their lives
     in these causes, see Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*; David S. Jordan, *The Blood of the Nation* (Boston:
     American Unitarian Association, 1902).
199 See Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 106; George White: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 26 Febru-
     ary 1908 Vol. 184 cc 1839–83, here c 1856.
200 Morrison, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 49 ('foremost'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 372
     ('Anglo-Saxon race', etc.); see Cline, *E.D. Morel*, 45.

empires and imperial societies.[201] "Let it be remembered that in the heart of Africa, vitally affecting the welfare of all the surrounding portions of the continent which are in present or prospective occupation by the European Powers is a poisonous growth of spurious 'civilisation' which contaminates and more than threatens overwhelming injury to all its neighbours", the veteran humanitarian Bourne dramatically warned.[202]

'Cutting out the parent growth': saving 'civilisation' through 'purification'

Furthermore, the disease-metaphor implied that it was possible to identify certain inimical elements, quasi-'germ' cells of the Congolese malady. In this aspect, the motif revealed its eugenic dimension. Chapter 3.3 has already discussed in detail how widespread stereotypes about the inherent violence of the soldiers of the Free State, driven by murderous 'racial' and 'savage' instincts and unrestrained by morality and culture to murderous violence, declared Africans to the 'actual' perpetrators of the Congolese atrocities. Still, the reformers admitted that there was also wilful, purposeful and excessive violence by Europeans in the Congo. At least partially, these disturbing acts of atrocities by 'white' and 'civilised' agents were explained by recourse to the myth of an allegedly morally degenerative influence of the 'dark' and 'savage' Congolese space and sprit upon the minds of European colonisers already present in Stanley's foundational Congo literature. In this way, even torture and murder by a European agent could be defined as an essentially African crime, and the corroded frontiers between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism' could be re-established.[203]

At the same time, as the following pages show, the reformers turned, in the manner of the eugenic thinking of their days, their attention to the integrity of the community of colonial 'whiteness' established in the Congo and speculated about the limited worth and type of the colonisers Léopold sent. In this speculation, the reformers reveal the strong impact of national chauvinism and class contempt. This applied not only to critics who had worked in the Free State, as the remarks of Canisius in the previous chapter have shown, but also to prominent reform activists in Europe and the United States. The exceptionally high ratio of lower- and working-class recruits among the colonial elite in the Congo, "driven to serve [...] by the whips of failure, poverty, or crime", as Richard Harding Davis asserted,[204] became a prominent topic for scornful remarks in critical Congo publications.

Morel would, in retrospect, still claim to remember his "involuntary shudder of repulsion" when, during a visit to Belgium, he observed a group of men waiting to be shipped to the distant colony in Central Africa: "Young mostly, and mostly of a poor type, undersized, pallid, wastrels. Some shaking with sobs: others stumbling in semi-intoxication". This mixture of negative physical (shortness and pallor) and social shortcomings (youth, fear and alcoholism) and eugenic classifications ('poor type' and 'wastrels') in the

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201   Morgan and Barbour, *Memorial Concerning the Kongo*, 21; Morel, *British Case*, 8 (both 'infectious'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 213 ('pollutes'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 101 ('virus').

202   Bourne, *Civilisation in Congoland*, 302–3.

203   See Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23; chapter 3.3.

204   Davis, *The Congo*, 112 ('whips'). Davis, however, still preferred these "soldiers of fortune" to "the truly rich" behind the Free State, ibid., 113.

description of Free State agents was already fully developed in Morel's main work *Red Rubber*. Here, he described the civil servants in the Congo as "ill-bred" and composed of the "déclassé, the failures, the off-scourings of Europe", while the army corps consisted of "blackguards", the "riff-raff of European armies, the 'lost souls'".[205]

At the same time, particularly those reformers who actively fought against the Belgian annexation as a potential political remedy to the crisis of white supremacy in the Congo vigorously emphasised that the transformation of the once-international colony, which had steadily increased the ratio of Belgian nationals in military and civil administration, the church and the economic sector, had made the crimes of the Congo essentially a Belgian crime. "They cannot disassociate themselves from this work or pretend that it was done by a separate State", Doyle stressed: "It was done by a Belgian King, Belgian soldiers, Belgian financiers, Belgian lawyers, Belgian capital, and was endorsed and defended by Belgian governments". Morel had declared in 1902 that the Free State was the "Belgian Curse in Central Africa".[206]

In this way, the European offenders of the shameful violence in the Congo were relegated to the social and national margins of the 'civilised' and 'white' community. Furthermore, a direct correlation between the social and national composition of the colonial master class in the Congo and its atrocious outrages was suggested, and at times openly asserted. The colonial agents that Morel and other reformers described were quite obviously not the proud representatives of the superior 'race' and 'culture' that had enlivened the Victorian imperial imagination. For the leader of the British reform movement, they were also men "of whose fitness for residing and governing in tropical Africa even a novice would have doubts". The 'unfitness' of the lower- and working-class agents for colonial mastery became a recurrent theme. Missionaries such as Grenfell and Harris doubted that "the type of official on the Congo" gave any hope for an "enlightened administration" or a "wise and capable" leadership.[207]

For many of the middle- and upper-class reform activists, a low social background was tantamount to a low-grade morality and a tendency towards excesses and violence. The journalist Morel and Doyle, a writer and medical doctor, pointed to the alleged "indifferent" or "low morale" of the deprived recruits, and the Cambridge-educated Second Baronet Charles Dilke asserted that the average low-ranking agents were "the very last kind of persons likely to deal tenderly with the natives in newly occupied countries".[208] The university president and head of the American reform association G. Stanley Hall likewise claimed that the "inferior" type of colonisers in the Congo often had "little moral courage", and for his compatriot Canisius, "low birth and instincts" were intrinsically related. For some better-off Europeans, as a remark of the prominent traveller

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205   Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 27 ('involuntary', 'young'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('blackguards', 'riff-raff'), 127 ('ill-bred', 'déclassé').

206   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 123 ('Belgian King'); Morel, "Belgian Curse", title ('Belgian Curse').

207   Morel, "History of the Congo Reform Movement", 27 ('fitness'); Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 300 ('type', 'enlightened'); Private letter of George Grenfell, 29 December 1902, reproduced in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 480–482, here 482 ('wise').

208   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 96 ('indifferent'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 23 ('low'); Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 42 ('last kind').

Grogan reveals, the Congo had simply become a "happy hunting-ground for a pack of unprincipled outcasts and untutored scoundrels".[209]

Moreover, the particular class composition of the Congo colonisers was at times directly correlated with the vilification of Belgians. The "quality of men sent by King Leopold, [...] is far inferior to those sent by England", Hall claimed and referred to the experience of Canisius. The former Free State and trading agent suggested that, in contrast to the imperial courage of Anglo-Saxon elites, only a few Belgians "of the better class" had been willing "to risk health and renounce the luxuries of European life in order to promote the civilization of the jungle". Belgians, Canisius scornfully claimed, were generally of a "selfish and cowardly character". Moreover, the "happy genius which demands just dealing with the aborigines", which allegedly few English colonisers lacked, was "utterly wanting in the Belgians even of the better class", he added.[210] "I at once noted the great inferiority of the Belgians in every way to the English or Anglo-Saxons", the missionary Morrison wrote in similar tone about a stop in Antwerp on his way towards the Congo.[211]

Over the years, Morel's and Doyle's special antipathy against Belgium became particularly pronounced.[212] The two men related the alleged lack of imperial fervour and 'class' among the Belgian recruits to a deficiency in the national character of a minor nation without any imperial tradition. Morel doubted that "so small a people" would be able to solve the large problems at stake: "can they apply the remedy? Can they tear the races of Central Africa from that relentless grasp? Are they able to do it? Were they able to do it, could they shoulder the burden [...] – a burden heavy, ungrateful, dangerous for so small a people"? Arthur Conan Doyle had a clear answer: "No, it is impossible, and that should be recognized from the outset". He agreed with Morel's assessment of the limited imperial qualities of the Belgian nation: "She could not carry the burden".[213]

Hence, after the identification of the healthy foundation of European civilisation in British nation, Anglo-Saxon race and Protestant religion, the Congolese disease was traced back to national and social elements at the margins of the racist imagined community declared 'unfit' to represent 'superior' European civilisation and enact Europe's claim to imperial power over 'Darkest Africa': "men of inferior character, wholly unsuited to exercise authority over uncivilized peoples". Finally, the medical and eugenics metaphoric led to the demand for surgery on the infected organism, which was, this study maintains, offered as a remedy for the crisis of racist societalisation within the Congo Scandal. "The source of the disease must be dealt with", Morel demanded: "The canker must be rooted out and cast upon the dunghill".[214]

209   Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 669 ('inferior', 'little'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 72 ('low birth'); Grogan and Sharp, *From the Cape to Cairo*, 227–28 ('hunting-ground').

210   Hall, *Adolescence*, Vol. 2, 669 ('quality'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 73 ('selfish'), 106 ('better', 'risk', 'genius', 'utterly').

211   Letter from Morrison to Mrs. Sterling, 24 February 1897, quoted in Robert Benedetto, *Presbyterian Reformers in Central Africa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 104. Also see Herbert Samuel: 'Congo Free State', HC Deb 20 May 1903 Vol. 122 cc 1289–1332, here cc 1298–1299; Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 300.

212   See Stengers, "Morel and Belgium", 237–46.

213   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 123 ('impossible', 'out of question'); see Johnston, *Introductory Chapter*, xi; Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 298.

214   Samuel, "Congo State", 874 ('exercise authority'); Morel, *Affairs of West Africa*, 352 ('source', 'cancer').

This cleansing operation had both practical and symbolic dimensions. At first, it aimed at the "speedy disappearance" of the Free State, hence its political elimination, which was, as Morel stated, an "imperative for Africa, and for the world". Additionally, the operation also focused on the removal of the unworthy and contagious elements from the imperial organism. On the one hand, as has repeatedly been suggested, Morel, Doyle, Harris and other reformers fought strenuously against the Belgian annexation of the Free State. "It is out of the question that Belgium should remain on the Congo", or in Africa as a whole, they stated. The opponents of the Belgian solution preferred, in the case of Morel, international governance or, in the case of Doyle and Harris, a partition of territory between France and Germany. Either way, 'inferior' Belgium or Belgians had to be excluded from the collective experience of European imperialism.[215]

On the other hand, reformers called not only for the recruitment of men of "better education and breeding", since the "tendency to misuse" power would become less likely when "men of higher grade" were chosen for colonial service, but they also straightforwardly demanded a social purge. To "break completely with the past", Harris claimed after a visit to Belgian Congo in 1912, would mean "to clean out" the 'unworthy' lower- and working-class sediment within the colonial master class in the Congo. "[T]hese soi disant administrators, [...] incapable of appreciating colonial requirements", he suggested, should be sent back to Europe and relegated to their 'rightful' place within the European class society, and should thus "return to their original employments of running music halls, tram driving, breaking stones on the highway, bus conductors, waiters, bricklayers, clerks, and so forth".[216]

Furthermore, while reformers demanded physically removing Belgian and lower-class members from the community of the colonisers, they also challenged the belonging of these inferior and harmful social and national elements to the racist community of Brightest Europe symbolically and categorically. In terming the Belgian colonial corps of officers a "sea of blackness", or referring to Belgian colonial agents as "brute" or "brutes", or in describing King Léopold as 'Vampire', 'cannibal' or 'oriental despot', an affinity between Belgians and the 'dark' Congolese counter-world was suggested, for instance. Belgian 'cruelty', it was asserted, was more related to tales of non-European brutality than to European standards of civilisation. "I have heard and seen much of the callousness of the Chinese", Canisius wrote, "but certainly their indifference to human suffering does not exceed that of the average Congolese Belgian".[217]

Likewise, the notions of moral and physical 'inferiority' or 'ill-breeding' that reformers used to describe lower-class colonists were semantically related to European stereotypes about the Congolese other. Comparisons between the lower classes at home and 'coloured races' and 'savages' were widespread within racist discourse, and not only in

215   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 213 ('speedy', 'imperative'). For the controversy about the 'Belgian solution' as political remedy for the Congo Scandal, see chapter 4.3.

216   Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 221.

217   Morel, *Red Rubber*, 126 ('sea'), 127 ('brutes'); Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 127 ('brute'); Canisius, *Campaign Amongst Cannibals*, 70 ('callousness'). As chapter 3.3 has shown, indifference to human suffering was a central allegation made of African soldiers and sentries. For reform images that present Léopold textually and visually as a vampire, cannibal or despot, see chapter 3.2.

the modern framework of eugenics.[218] In the reform discourse, the motif of the worrying corrosion of alterity between 'civilisation' and 'savagery' and the 'triumph of the wilderness' over the colonising subjects that had been identified as central to the crisis of racist discourse and representation in the Congo had achieved a distinct class dimension. Lower-class Europeans planted among African 'savagery', it was suggested, had a particularly high risk of 'going native' and of cultural 'degeneration', as Johnston had argued in 1897. "I have been increasingly struck", the former British colonial administrator wrote, "with the rapidity with which such members of the white races as are not the best class, can throw over the restraints of civilization and develop into savages of unbridled lust and abominable cruelty".[219]

Such formulations support the interpretation that some reformers extended the marginalisation of responsibility for the Congolese atrocities into a symbolic externalisation of the 'ethnic shame' and dishonour. The crisis of negative societalisation was resolved through the surgical removal of foul and miasmic elements to overcome the disgrace of 'civilisation' and 'whiteness' triggered by the Congo Scandal. In this way, the moral integrity of the imperial powers, and the imagined communities 'European civilization' and the 'white race', were reinstalled not only through the exclusion of Belgium, as was rightfully maintained,[220] but also the lower and working classes from the collectives they were once chosen to represent in Central Africa. The price, however, was an intensification of the fragmentation of these once-universal categories along confessional, national and class lines.

Disintegrating universalism and the fragmentation of the reform movement

This fragmentation was not a merely discursive phenomenon; it directly affected the social reality of the reform movement. The prominence of social antagonisms such as nationality, class, confession and 'race' within the reform debate led to controversies and animosities, and they eventually challenged the cohesion and mobilisation potential of the campaign.

First, it is reasonable to assume that the strong class contempt of the middle- and upper-class reformers was a main cause for the failure of the reform movement to reach the parties and trade unions representing organised British and American working-class milieus. Ramsay MacDonald, the only prominent Labour politician who joined the executive ranks of the British reform association, similarly believed that failures in (British) imperial policy could be blamed on the thriving practice of entrusting colonial governance to "the most narrow-visioned of our social classes". However, for the promoter of a socialist reformation of imperialism, these were the "sons of the well-to-do" and not workers.[221]

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218   See Hund, *Rassismus*, 9.

219   Harry H. Johnston, *British Central Africa* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1897), 68. For the 'corrosion of alterity' and the 'triumph of the wilderness', see chapter 3.2.

220   See Dunn, *Imagining the Congo*, 51; Bass, "Imperial Alterity", 301.

221   MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire*, 26–27 ('sons'). For the limited working-class affiliation with the Congo reform movement, see chapter 2.3.

Moreover, the strong religious fervour of evangelical Congo opponents had allowed apologists of the Free State "to represent the matter as a contest between rival creeds", as other reformers criticised. Indeed, Roman Catholic missionaries in the Congo and dignitaries in Great Britain and the United States had rarely protested against the treatment of the colonised in the Congo and were among the most active defenders of the Free State against public allegations. Secular reformers such as Morel, Bourne, Doyle and Park, and the American Baptist Barbour, had unsuccessfully attempted to avert this sectarian character of the reform movement.[222]

Protestant Congo opponents, on the other hand, rejected the harsh stance on Belgium and Belgians by Doyle, Morel and other English journalists who "classed together" Belgian officers "as a bloodthirsty, incapable lot". Publicly, they emphasised that it was "not their desire to irritate or exasperate" or "to denounce" the Belgian people. [223] Despite such reassurances, the majority of the Belgian public was inclined to dismiss the reform movement as a campaign based on anti-Belgian sentiment, as apologists frequently claimed. Even the closest Belgian ally of the international reformers, the Socialist Émile Vandervelde, warned that the anti-Belgian rhetoric of writers like Doyle, combined with speculations about a partition of the Congo, threatened to unite Belgians against the foreign criticism. "I cannot refrain from saying that the support given us in England and in the United States would be still more efficacious, and our position in Belgium would be far better if [...] things had not been said which could only produce a most unfortunate impression in our country", he concluded an article in the English speaking press.[224]

The British nationalism and Anglo-Saxon pride that were particularly strident in Morel's Congo criticism alienated Belgians but also complicated alliances between British reformers and humanitarians in France and Germany.[225] At the same time, these provoked unease and objections among British and American reformers, as well. A glorification of Britain's abolitionist achievements in the Congo debate was a backhanded compliment, the English primate warned, for instance. After all, England had once almost held "a monopoly in the West African slave trade". In consideration of "that dark and shameful record", any "spirit of self-righteousness [...] would be pitifully

222   Doyle, *Crime of the Congo*, 97 ('admitted', 'unworthy'). Bourne and Morel strongly criticised the evangelical style and tone in Congo protests of the missionary Henry Grattan Guinness, for instance (see further below). Thomas Barbour withheld information about escalating conflicts of the Baptists with Jesuits in the Congo to avoid further religious polarisation (see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 276). Robert Park appealed to the "solidarity of Christendom" as a whole, instead (Park, "The Congo News-Letter", 2). Mark Twain, on the other hand, attempted to escalate Roman Catholic opposition in order to stir up the Protestant majority in the United States (see Hawkins, "Mark Twain's Involvement", 160–61).

223   Private letter of George Grenfell, 29 December 1902, reproduced in Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 481 ('classed together'); The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson] ('denounce') and Rev. C. Sylvester Horne ('irritate'), both quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8. Also see John Weeks, quoted in Congo Reform Association [U.K.], *Evidence Laid*, 60.

224   Émile Vandervelde, "Belgium and the Reforms of the Congo," *Contemporary Review* 96, July-December (1909): 659 ('refrain'); also see Stengers, "Morel and Belgium", 221–28.

225   See Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 185.

out of place", he cautioned the Protestant Congo opponents assembled in Royal Albert Hall in November of 1909.[226]

While the myth of a just and non-violent British imperialism thrives in historiography until today,[227] the claim that the methods of exploitation in the Free State differed categorically from those in British dependencies had already been rejected by contemporaries, including some with direct insights into British imperial policy. "Ghastly!" Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne internally commented on the Congo affairs in March 1905, for instance: "But I am afraid the Belgians will get hold of the stories as to the way the natives have apparently been treated by men of our race in Australia". In 1908, the Colonial Office concluded that one "might say that there is no atrocity in the Congo – except mutilation – which cannot be matched in our [East African] Protectorate".[228]

Prominent Congo opponents were sceptical, as well. Conrad rejected the rise of nationalism in Europe in general and in the reform movement in particular. "[I]n the old days England had in her keeping the conscience of Europe", he was ready to accept. "But now I suppose we are busy with other things" like business interests instead of "humanity, decency and justice", the novelist wrote to his friend Casement.[229]

Casement similarly rejected any claim that "England and America are the two great humanitarian powers" as unsustainable. He was increasingly estranged by the "God-is-a-British-God style" of evangelical activists such as John Harris and the rising nationalism of Morel. "British honour, so far as I am concerned, disappeared from our horizon in Ireland more than a century ago", Casement wrote to his once-close friend in 1909.[230] In retrospect, Casement claimed that it had been the "the image of my poor old country" that had come to his eyes first when he had seen colonial violence in the Congo. "The whole thing had been done once to her – down to every detail", Casement emphasised in reference to the long and violent history of British rule over the Irish island. For the Ulster-born Casement, his Congolese experience in 1903 had been tantamount to an awakening of national consciousness. In "those lonely Congo forests, where I found Leopold, I found myself also, the incorrigible Irishman", he famously noted.[231]

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226 The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

227 See Wagner, "Savage Warfare", 218.

228 Minute of Lansdowne, March 1905 and minute of the Colonial Office, April 1908, both quoted in Louis, "Morel and the Congo", 185.

229 Conrad to Casement, 21 December 1903, reproduced in Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 70 ('old days', 'now'); also see Hawkins, "Joseph Conrad", 73–74. In 'Heart of Darkness', first published in 1898, Conrad still referred positively to British rule, see Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", 10.

230 Casement to Morel, quoted in Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 269 ('great humanitarian powers'); Casement, quoted in Porter, "Sir Roger Casement", 68–69 ('God-is-a-British-God'); Casement to Morel, 29 May 1909, quoted in Porter, "Sir Roger Casement", 68 ('British honour').

231 Casement to Alice Stopford Green, 24 February 1905, quoted in Angus Mitchell, *Roger Casement* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2013), 98 ('poor country', 'whole thing'); Casement to Alice Stopford Green, 20 April 1906, quoted in A[ndrew] N. Wilson, *After the Victorians* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 108 ('lonely'). For Casement's activism for Irish independence that eventually brought him to the ballot, see Mitchell, *Roger Casement*, 173–350.

As an Irishman, his perception of the Congolese atrocities was necessarily different from that of his English friends, and Casement became convinced since he "was looking with the eyes of another race – of a people once hunted themselves". Casement's reaction to the shameful Congo Scandal was as unusual as it was radical. The once-proud representative of the British Empire, who had been "on the high road to being a regular imperialist jingo", as he confessed,[232] became highly critical of British imperialism and fundamentally re-imagined his political identity, altered from 'coloniser' to 'colonised'. Subverting the imagined community of 'civilisation' or 'whiteness' that allegedly bound together Ireland and England was the community of fate between the colonised people of Africa and the Americas and the Irish people, whom, after his second major humanitarian inquiry in the Putumayo region of Peru in 1910, Casement began to call the "Irish Putumayo", the "White Indians of Ireland", or "the white slave race of European people".[233]

In the United States, the idea of a 'healthy' and 'just' American or Anglo-Saxon tradition of imperialism was even more controversial. After all, the American Congo Reform Association had been heavily influenced by the Anti-Imperialist League, founded in June 1898 in opposition to the aggressive expansionism of the McKinley era, initiated by the American-Spanish War and the annexation of the Philippines. Reports about atrocities of American soldiers and the high death toll in the Philippine independence movement in 1899–1902 had "banished illusions" that the imperial expansion of the United States would be exceptionally humane, American anti-Imperialists felt. Instead, they had shown "what tyrannic instincts can lurk in democratic breast".[234] Moreover, in the simultaneously occurring Second Boer War, many American anti-imperialists – like Irish nationalists – had deeply sympathised with the fate of the Boer states in South Africa, whom they stylised as an innocent people that fell victim to British imperial oppression. For the pro-Boer activists, Anglo-Saxonism was more related to the "lust of power and greed" that fuelled the violent expansionism in Great Britain and the United States than to humanitarianism. Consequently, these anti-imperialists believed that their struggle against the imperial turn of American foreign policy was also a "struggle against the swelling pride of Anglo-Saxon self-consciousness" in the United States.[235] In these milieus, Morel's appeals to British and Anglo-Saxon pride likely further hindered

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232   Casement, quoted in Wilson, *After the Victorians*, 107 ('jingo'), 108 ('eyes').

233   Roger Casement, "This Irish Putumayo," Letter to the Editor, *Irish Independent*, 20 April 1913, 5 ('Putamayo'); personal notes of Casement, quoted in Séamas Ó Síocháin, *Roger Casement* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2008), 356 ('White Indians'); Casement to John J. Horgan, 16 February 1914, quoted in Wilson, *After the Victorians*, 108 ('white slave race'). For Casement's Putumayo-experience, see Burroughs, *Travel Writing*, 122–43.

234   William L. Garrison, in Anti-Imperialist League, *Report of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: The Anti-Imperialist League, 1904), 20–23, here 21 ('banished', 'tyrannic'). Also see 'The Report of the Secretary', reproduced in Anti-Imperialist League, *Report of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Imperialist League* (Boston: The Anti-Imperialist League, 1905), 3–15, here 13. For the emergence of American anti-imperialism, see Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-Imperialism*, 11–50 in particular.

235   Garrison, reproduced in Anti-Imperialist League, *Sixth Annual Meeting*, 20 ('lust', 'struggle'). On the Boer-campaign of the League, see Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 303–6.

the formation of transatlantic alliances rather than facilitating them. Indeed, in consideration of the strong influence of Anglophobe anti-imperialists in the American Congo Reform Association, its editorial secretary Park felt particularly obliged to emphasise its independence from the British counterpart.[236]

Moreover, as chapter 2.3 has mentioned, radical Black American commentators were little inclined to understand the Congo Scandal as exceptional, and they emphasised similarities and structural relations between colonial atrocities like those of the Free State and the murderous Jim Crow regime in the American South. Du Bois and, notably, his conservative intellectual antagonist Washington directly connected the atrocities in the Congo to the lynch mobs active in the United States. The "oppression of the colored race in any one part of the world means, sooner or later, the oppression of the same race elsewhere", the latter warned. For both Black American leaders, anti-black violence in the colonies and the United States were based on the same "[r]ace hatred" or the "colour-line", and were thus structurally related.[237]

American government officials, on the other hand, were reluctant to take the lead in the diplomatic pressure on Léopold precisely because they feared greater international attention to their imperial atrocities or domestic racist violence and segregation. That "the United States, whose negroes are burned at the stake [...] and whose soldiers have been water-curing Filipinos, should profess to have an anxious concern for the inhumane treatment of the negroes in Africa subject to King Leopold's caprices", the editor of the *Boston Transcript* summarised, "is something to make him laugh. He would be warranted in retorting with pious gravity: 'Physician, heal thyself'".[238]

However, the influence of these critical perspectives on the dominant ideological position of the reform movement remained limited. Previous chapters have shown that 'racial' stereotypes and contempt for 'educated' or 'Europeanised' Africans and African-Americans were rife in the reform discourse. In contrast to the expectations of Black Americans, the disposition of white reformers to extend their Congo activism to a general criticism of 'race relations' or racism in the colonies and the metropole was extremely limited. Moreover, the system of racial segregation implemented in the American South was a role model for the reformed system of imperial governance the segregationist stream of the reform movement promoted.[239]

In 1912, towards the end of the reform campaign, two of its most prominent voices publicly disavowed the thesis of exceptionalism it had long promoted, although at a time

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236   See Cullinane, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 308–9; Clay, "Transatlantic Dimensions", 20–21. In the persons of W.T. Stead and John Clifford, the British reform movement was supported by leading anti-war activists. Arthur Conan Doyle, on the other hand, had been one of the most prominent jingoists during the Second Boer War.

237   Washington, "Cruelty in the Congo", 375 ('oppression'); 'Address of Dr Booker T. Washington', reproduced in The Secretary of the Congress and Rose, *Universal Peace Congress*, 260 ('hatred'); Du Bois [draft author], "Nations of the World", 259; Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 19 ('colour-line'). See chapter 2.3 for more information.

238   Editorial of the Boston Herald, 28 September 1904, reproduced in Congo Committee, "Congo News-Letter, September 1904", 3.

239   See chapters 2.3, 3.2 and 4.3.

when both men were no longer members of the organisations. Although the colonisation of the Congo was "[e]xceptional [...] in some respects", it was "in other respects typical" for European imperialism, Robert Park expressed in a speech at the Tuskegee Institute: "wherever European civilization has touched Africa it has been on the whole a disintegrating, destructive" effect.[240] John Harris, who left the British reform association after on-going quarrels with Morel, became equally sceptical that the "more progressive" imperial powers "treat the natives better" than the Free State. If so, he asked his readers, "where is the evidence? Does East Africa provide it? Does the treatment of the Herreros and the shooting of British Kaffirs demonstrate it"?[241]

However, for those defending the singularity of the Congo atrocities, violence in other European empires were only indicators of the described infectiousness of the Congolese disease. "So far as other powers are open to evil influences in dealing with native races", Dilke stated, "it is the example of the Kongo Free State that has largely affected them". If methods of the Americans in the Philippines, or the Dutch in Sulawesi and Sumatra, or of Britain, France, Portugal, Germany in Africa at times resembled the Congolese atrocities, it was only because other states tended "to imitate" the notorious Free State system, Johnston claimed. The "mental outlook on colonial enterprise" of other European nations was "poisoned and corroded by the foetid example placed before them". The Congo had become "a forcing house for the propagation of poisonous seeds, seeds which the wind carried hither and thither". Hence, the Congolese 'disease' may have produced offshoots, but "the essential task" of the reform movement remained "cutting out of Africa the parent growth", Morel responded.[242]

Humanitarian activism as racist mass spectacle

Moreover, Morel firmly rejected any claims that British national 'honour' was vanishing or had already been buried. While he quoted at length "admirable sentences" from the public letter Conrad devoted to the reform movement, precisely those pessimistic remarks from the "well-known author" about Britain's moral integrity were edited out. Nonetheless, Morel's strong appeals to nationalist emotions in his grand oeuvre, published in 1906, read like a direct response to the aforementioned objections of Conrad or Casement: "Let us reject with indignant scorn the croaking of the pessimists who tell us that our people have deteriorated and that they have forsworn the ideals of their forebears", Morel demanded: "Let us prove to them that they are wrong! Let us prove to them that the heart of the nation still beats soundly as of yore!"[243] Only three years later, the once-optimistic secretary of the British reform association contentedly remarked that the British "nation has challenged that monstrous" endeavour of King Léopold, as

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240 Park, "Cultural Groups", 369.

241 Harris, *Dawn in Darkest Africa*, 295–96 ('more progressive', etc.)

242 Dilke, in "Meeting on the Kongo Question", 44 ('So far'); Johnston, *George Grenfell*, Vol. 1, 475 ('imitate'); Morel, *Red Rubber*, 164 ('mental', 'poisoned'); speech of Morel, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 28 ('forcing house'); Morel, *British Case*, xiii ('essential task').

243 Morel, *Red Rubber*, 200 ('Let us'); Morel, *King Leopold's Rule*, 351 ('admirable'). In the reproduction of the 'Statement of Joseph Conrad' in Park and Morel, *Treatment of Women and Children*, 30, the critical parts were similarly edited out.

he had supposed. The "nation has pledged its honour, its prestige, its reputation that an end shall be made of the rubber slave trade in the Congo" and the "the forces of national consciousness" have shown their humanitarian capacity.[244]

Between 1906 and 1909, the British and American reform campaigns had indeed evolved into mass movements, and, at least in the case of Great Britain, into a "great national movement". In this way, the humanitarian intervention in the early 20th century was turned, like the 'heroic' conquest of 'Darkest Africa' in the late 19th century, into a commodified racist spectacle. Reform publications of world-famous authors such as Doyle were purchased in high numbers, and more polemic publications from Morel or pamphlets issued by the reform association reached a considerable readership, particularly if some of the famous atrocity photographs were included.[245]

The tens of thousands of readers of these various reform publications, like those of earlier imperial travel writings, were not only confronted with a highly stereotypical representation of the Congo and its inhabitants, as previous chapters have shown, but were similarly able to associate themselves with the righteous cause of the heroic Congo reformers saving the allegedly 'voice- and helpless' Congolese victims of atrocities from their African perpetrators, stereotypically described as 'ferocious' and 'cannibalistic savages'. As chapter 3.3 has maintained, the crisis of racist representation within the Congo Scandal was met with the emergence of the position of the 'white and civilised saviour'. Congo reform activists such as Morel and Casement were celebrated as a new type of imperial heroes. The 'humanitarian' stood in the void that was left by the humiliated 'civiliser' and 'conqueror', those icons of the Victorian imperial imagination and popular culture whose reputation had collapsed under the pressure of the Congo Scandal.[246]

In the several hundred public demonstrations organised by Congo reformers in churches and town halls throughout Great Britain and America, and in large venues like Royal Albert Hall in London, hundreds of thousands of visitors encountered these 'heroic' humanitarians.[247] Through these public demonstrations, the final part of this chapter claims, the American and particularly British masses eventually experienced their inclusion in the community of the 'white and civilised saviours' and were (re-)assured of their own moral and cultural superiority, beliefs that had been seriously shattered by the impact of the Congo Scandal.

The most popular among the mass happenings organised by the reform movement were so-called 'atrocity meetings'. In these lectures, the audience was shocked with

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244   Morel, *Great Britain*, 5 ('monstrous', 'pledged'), 6 ('forces').

245   Ibid., 13 ('great'). Morel's *Red Rubber*, first published in November 1906, sold 7,500 copies within 6 months. Already in May 1907, a new printing of 10,000 copies, priced at only one shilling, reached the shops; see Marchal, *Morel contre Léopold II*, Vol. 2, 250. Simultaneously, the British reform association sold 10,000 copies of a brochure titled 'The Camera and the Congo Crime', which included 24 atrocity photographs, see Grant, "Limits of Exposure", 76. Doyle's *The Crime of the Congo*, written in August 1909, sold 25,000 copies within a week; see Hochschild, *Leopold's Ghost*, 271.

246   See chapters 3.2 and 3.3.

247   The historian Dean Pavlakis has collected evidence of 1,590 Congo meetings in the United Kingdom alone and estimated the overall attendance from 1903 to 1913 as somewhere between 400,000 and 1,100,000; see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 104–5.

'horror narratives', graphic descriptions of the infamous Congolese carnage, their setting and aftermath, and they were illustrated with larger-than-life projections of photographs through the so-called magic lantern, a limelight projector that had become increasingly popular and technologically sophisticated in late Victorian times.[248]

The first lantern lectures that broached the issue of the Congo Scandal were organised by Guinness, the founder of the Congo Balolo Mission, which had been present in the Congo since 1889. Even before his involvement in the reform movement, which would eventually make him a co-founder and member of the executive committee of the British reform association, the son of a charismatic and famous Irish evangelist had toured Scotland and England with popular lectures on missionary work in the Congo, dedicated to raising funds for his evangelical organisation. "Illustrated by Magnificent Lime-Light Views", as an announcement promised, and promoted under titles such as "Toil and Triumph Among Congo Cannibals", these lectures were racist spectacles that entertained visitors with highly stereotypical representations of 'Darkest Africa'.[249] Guinness styled the Congo as a "savage land, where cannibalism, cruelty, domestic slavery, polygamy, and other vices bound", while assistants projected "beautifully reproduced" slides of Congolese landscapes, villages and "anything but attractive people" on larges screens. Afterwards, the evangelical leader praised the dangerous work of his missionaries, who had committed to "carry the gospel to that country" and to overcome the Congolese vices and 'savagery'. In conclusion, Guinness asked not only for prayers but also "for the practical sympathy of his hearers", and a collection for the Balolo mission would end "a most interesting and enjoyable meeting".[250]

Starting in early 1903, the Congo Scandal found its way into Guinness's by then well-established lectures. Images of Congolese 'savagery' and praises for the imperial civilising mission were increasingly supplemented by references to the persistence of "forced labour" and to the "iniquitous" way in which European administrators treat "these poor folk". Moreover, Guinness began to include photographs of "a burning village" or "natives in chains" to emphasise the gravity of the charges.[251] In November and December of 1903, a recently returned Congo Balolo missionary from the Faroe Islands organised a series of presentations in Edinburgh about the "terrible slavery" he had experienced in the Free State. Daniel J. Danielsen had accompanied Casement on his tour of inquiry and could, to the great sensation of the visitors, project photographs of some victims of mutilations that the consul had interviewed, the atrocity pictures that would profoundly influence the course of the Congo debate. Impressed by the tremendous public response to the talks, Guinness decided to put together a new show that included

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248   See ibid., 187.

249   'Public Notes', *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 10 March 1893, 1 ('Illustrated'); 'Visit of Dr Guinness', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6 February 1903, 5 ('Toil'); 'Lecture by Dr Guinness', *Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette*, 21 March 1903, 3 ('To-Day').

250   'Mission Work on the Congo', *Islington Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1903, 4 ('savage land', 'beautifully', 'anything', 'practical', 'enjoyable'); 'Lecture by Dr Guinness', *Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette,* 21 March 1903, 3 ('carry').

251   'Visit of Dr Guinness', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6 February 1903, 5 ('forced labour', 'iniquitous'); 'Congo Maladministration', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 28 October 1903, 5 ('village', 'chains'). Also see 'Lecture by Dr Guinness', *Paisley & Renfrewshire Gazette*, 21 March 1903, 3.

slides of Danielsen's soon iconic atrocity photographs. While the colonial imagery and religious style persisted, the new lecture put the focus on 'The Reign of Terror in the Congo'.[252]

The new lecture series became a huge popular success. Nonetheless, the strong evangelical atmosphere of the events irritated prominent secular reform activists such as Morel and Bourne, who feared the intimidation of Catholic sentiment and generally favoured a less emotional approach. When the commercial, philanthropic and religious milieus of the British reformers combined their forces in the Congo Reform Association under the leadership of Morel in March of 1904, a more conservative and traditional style of humanitarianism prevailed. In the following two years, the new organisation concentrated on the collection of extensive evidence, the production of documentation and parliamentarian memorials to lobby policy-makers and ministers, instead.[253]

Mass events and the spectacle of atrocity meetings regained importance by 1906, though, after a general disenchantment with the political reservation of the governments in London and Washington captured reformers on both sides of the Atlantic. Religious reform activist in particular, who could resort to a substantial tradition of grass-roots activism and the successful example of the early Guinness lectures, advised against the organisation of the reform associations as elitist pressure groups. Urging them to widen the popular foundation of the movement, they emphasised the importance of arousing public sentiment. "You appeal to the educated classes and politicians", the recently returned Congo Balolo missionary John Harris wrote to Morel in August 1905, "what I want to do is appeal to the popular mind".[254]

About six months later, John and his wife Alice arrived in the United States at the invitation of the American reformers to conduct an extensive tour through 50 cities and smaller towns between January and March of 1906. In more than 150 Congo protest meetings, the two skilled speakers amazed the crowds with dramatically recounted first-hand experiences of Congolese atrocities. Frequently, the outraged audience formed local committees of the reform association on the spot.[255]

Inspired by this great success, the British reform association, still headquartered in Liverpool, began to organise a series of local meetings, as well, and successfully established local auxiliaries in London, as well as in smaller and larger towns in the province. Most importantly, the Harrisses produced a new, standardised lantern lecture now that also included the photographic evidence Alice collected in the Congo. The two alone led about 300 atrocity lectures in and around London between May of 1906 and April of 1907.[256] Moreover, a third set of the lantern lecture was made available for other speakers and was frequently lent by the reform association. Additionally, a commercially produced lantern lecture on 'The Congo Atrocities', based on photographs of Alice

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252   'Congo Slaves', *London Daily News*, 27 November 1903, 10 ('terrible'); see Slade, "English Missionaries", 69; Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 60–61.

253   See Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 61–62. Grant accounts for 3,000 visitors of the 'Reign of Terror' lecture in Aberdeen, 3,000 in Dundee, 2,000 in Edinburgh and 4,000 in Glasgow, all in early 1904.

254   John Harris to Morel, 19 August 1905, quoted in Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 189 ('You appeal').

255   Congo Reform Association [U.S.], "Campaign of Education", 16 ('amazement'); see 'Atrocities in Congo', *New Haven Morning Journal and Courier*, 1 February 1906, 3. See chapter 2.2 for more details.

256   See Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 187.

Harris and information from Morel's *Red Rubber*, was issued and distributed by Riley Brothers, which, according to its own account, was then the largest outfitter of magic lanterns in the world. The new sequence of atrocity meetings launched in 1906 played a major role in the transformation of the American and British reform campaign from elitist lobby groups into mass movements.[257]

In terms of style and content, the lantern lectures of Guinness, the Harrisses and Riley Brothers followed a fairly consistent dramaturgy. The strong evangelical influence frequently gave the meetings the character of a religious ceremony. Often set in a religious environment, led and presided over by Nonconformist ministers or church dignitaries, atrocity lectures started with prayers and Bible readings and concluded with the Benediction. Proudly, the audience intoned missionary hymns such as 'Forward Christian Soldier' or Reginald Heber's 'From Greenland's Icy Mountain', the most famous chant in this genre. These hymns loudly demanded the continuing dispersal of Christian 'light' towards the 'darkness' of the non-European world through the missionary movement.[258] "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone", it was intoned at the beginning of lectures of Guinness, Harris and other religious Congo demonstrations: "Shall we, whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high, Shall we to those benighted the lamp of life deny?"[259]

Hence, as early as its ceremonial opening, these mass events were set in the racist context of the 'civilising mission'-narrative. In the following lectures, the account of atrocities was certainly the dramatic climax; however, it was neither the sole nor the predominant part. Likewise, the slides shown were also "not devoted to that phase of Congo life entirely", as has been noted. In the first part of the shows, lecturers held the crowd "spellbound" with eloquent descriptions of the Congo as a wealthy but 'savage' country illustrated with projected maps and geographic fact sheets. "Let them not think that the Congo was a paradise before the Belgians went there", said the speaker of a lantern lecture in Cheltenham. "On the contrary, it was a land of darkness". More "cinematograph pictures depicting the daily life in the Congo" before the advent of European rule followed and showed the brutalities of the slave trade or an alleged "Entrance to a cannibal village", thus emphasising the persistence of 'Arab'-slavery and 'African savagery' as two pivotal motifs that had been used to legitimise the imperial intervention of the 1870s. Photographs of the iconic Stanley accompanied a recounting of his 'heroic conquest', and the audience was reminded of the economic and philanthropic promises of Léopold and the Berlin Congo conference.[260]

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257 Riley Brothers, *The Congo Atrocities* (Bradford, 1907). List and titles of slides retrieved from Lucerna – the Magic Lantern Web Resource, http://lucerna.exeter.ac.uk/set/index-slide.php?language=EN&id=3001743; see Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism*, 187.

258 See 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8.

259 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains', reproduced in Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 386. The hymn was sung in lectures by Harris, but also at the Royal Albert Hall demonstration, for instance; see 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8. It was also part of Guinness' early Congo lectures, see 'Mission Work on the Congo', *Islington Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1903, 4; 'Visit of Dr Guinness', *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 6 February 1903, 5.

260 Reports on lectures of Rev. J. R. M. Stephens, Congo missionary of the Baptist missionary society, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 23 November 1907, 8 ('paradise'); 'The Congo Atroci-

Hence, even before the actual part on the infamous Congo Scandal began, the crowds at the atrocity meetings were offered an entertaining colonial spectacle. Fascinated by Harris's slides of a journey on the missionary steamer Livingstone, for instance, the spectators were probably, like the audience of one of Guinness's early lectures, travelling "in imagination from one Mission Centre to the another". Like the Congo exhibitions or adventurous travel literature of the late 19th century, the narrative and images at the mass events organised by the reform movement "brought home to the audience" a highly stereotypical image of the Congo and allowed fascinated visitors to identify with the 'noble civilising work' of their compatriots.[261]

Afterwards, in the middle of usually one-hour-long lectures, the attention was turned towards the betrayal of this allegedly heroic and philanthropic legacy of colonisation through the Free State, and the 'horror narratives' began. The main speaker would draw a "vivid picture" of the infamous Congolese atrocities, such as the cutting off of hands, the whipping with the chicotte or alleged instances of cannibalism by Free State soldiers. Both 'savage perpetrators' and 'helpless victims' were projected onto the screens. Slides claimed to show "savage" sentries and "Cannibal Soldiers" but included also images of "women hostages" and the now world-famous photographs of mutilated boys and girls or depicted limbs.[262] The impression of these graphic (verbal and visual) accounts was dramatic on the audiences. How "immensely effective" the slides of mutilated bodies had been in exciting the masses was already emphasised by Guinness personally, and journalists praised his sensational projections of Congolese "with one or the other of the hands missing" as "views admirable in the extreme".[263] Likewise, at the lectures of John Harris, "the excitement was much intensified when the pictures were thrown upon the curtain"; the photographs that were of "a revolting nature" but "greatly moved the audiences", as it was noted.[264]

Finally, after illustrating the imperial 'promises' once made by Léopold, Stanley and the Free State, and their 'betrayal' through the Congo Scandal, the atrocity meetings concluded with the disclosure of a path to redemption for the suffering colonised population and for the masses in the metropole, as well.[265] Unsurprisingly, considering the

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ties', *Coventry Herald*, 18 October 1907, 4 ('cinematograph'); Riley Brothers, *Congo Atrocities*, slide 9 ('Entrance'). Also see slide 10–11 and the report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Congo Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4.

261   Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Mission Work on the Congo', *Islington Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1903, 4 ('imagination'); Report on a lecture of Rev. J. R. M. Stephens, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Coventry Herald*, 18 October 1907, 4 ('brought home'); see reports on lectures of John Harris, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 November 1906, 7; 'The Congo Reform Association', *Banbury Guardian*, 22 November 1906, 7.

262   Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Congo Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4 ('vivid'); Riley Brothers, *Congo Atrocities*, slide 14 ('cannibal'), 15 ('savage'), 21 ('hostages'), 34, 36, 40, 41 (mutilated), 29, 38 (limbs).

263   Guinness to Morel, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 61 ('immensely'); Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Congo Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4 ('missing', 'admirable'.)

264   Reports on lectures of John Harris, 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8 ('excitement'); 'The Congo Reform Association'¸ *Banbury Guardian*, 22 November 1906, 7 ('revolting', 'moved').

265   Grant has convincingly shown how the reformer's atrocity lectures were framed by the evangelical narrative of "promise, betrayal, redemption"; Grant, "Christian Critics", 42.

strong Protestant influence in the design and organisation of lantern lectures, significant emphasis was put on the importance of Christian conversion. Guinness's early critical Congo lectures had presented the practical support of his own missionary organisation as the appropriate response to African 'savagery' and European atrocities.[266] With the pressure of Bourne and Morel, it was later announced in Guinness' 'Reign of Terror' lectures that the meetings "were not connected with anything definitely religious"; however, the leader of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union only reluctantly softened the evangelical style and tone of his lectures.[267]

Moreover, in Riley's set, it was still proclaimed with utter conviction that "amid all these tales of darkness there is just one ray of light": the Protestant missionaries. While a photograph of John Harris was projected on the screens, the speaker urged the establishment of more Protestant mission stations in the Congo.[268] As was scheduled in this commercial set, in his own lectures, John Harris would show slides about the daily life of missionaries and 'natives' in the Congo to emphasise how "wonderfully responsive" the latter were to the fair treatment of the evangelicals. In general, the religious framing of John Harris's Congo meetings and the accompanying appeals to "Christian love" and "Christian sympathy" revitalised the evangelical impetus of Guinness' early lectures. The last pictures in a Harris lecture showed photographs of the missionary-explorer David Livingstone and eventually the devoted leader of the British reform association Morel, whom Harris "described as one of the greatest emancipators of the Congo, and one of the greatest humanitarians who ever lived". This combination not only related the contemporary humanitarian activists to the admired icon of Britain's glorious imperial past but also emphasised Harris' conviction that Christian conversion and political reforms had to go hand in hand.[269]

Most importantly, however, the mass spectacle organised by the reform movement culminated in the symbolic inclusion of the masses. The joint prayers and the communal singing of evangelical hymns transcended the barrier between speaker and audience at the Congo protest, but the participation of the audience was particularly promoted in other parts, as well. After the notorious atrocity pictures had been displayed, the accompanying script of the Riley lecture advised appealing directly to the crowd. "Are the Churches of Christ to remain silent?" the speaker should ask. "Will the heart of the civilisation remain unmoved? Surely not".[270] Indeed, talks of John Harris were "fre-

266   See, for instance, 'Missionary Meeting at the Colston Hall', *Western Daily Press*, 25 November 1903, 9.

267   Report on a lecture of Guinness, 'Reign of Terror', *Preston Herald*, 30 March 1904, 4.

268   Accompanying script to Riley Brothers' "Congo Atrocities" lecture, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 68. Also see report on a lecture of Rev. J. R. M. Stephens, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Coventry Herald*, 18 October 1907, 4.

269   Reports on lectures of John Harris, 'The Congo Atrocities', *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 November 1906, 7 ('wonderfully responsive', 'described'); 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8 ('love', 'sympathy'). Also see 'The Congo Atrocities', *Banbury Advertiser*, 22 November 1906, 7.

270   Accompanying script to Riley Brothers' "Congo Atrocities" lecture, quoted in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 68.

quently punctuated with cries of 'Shame!'", as an observer reported.[271] Collective moans, cries, and sobs intensified a ritualistic experience of the atrocity meetings. Humanitarian protest and evangelical ritual were completely merged in the singing of so-called Congo hymns, which were composed for the reform movement. "Britons awake", one of these demanded, "let righteous ire, kindle within your soul a fire, let indignations sacred flame, burn for the Congo's wrongs and shame".[272]

The call to the soul of the audience and the collective intonation of hymns point to the performative character of these humanitarian protests. Within the entertaining, imaginative tour through the Congolese 'darkness', the revolting but fascinating exposure of the shameful Congo atrocities and promising outlines of a path to redemption, the collectively experienced emotional outrage, and the enflamed indignation of the audience, assured the assembled men and women of their full membership in the community of the saviours at the 'heart of civilisation'. This discursive manoeuvre was most clearly revealed by one of the largest Congo protests, the Protestant demonstration in November of 1909 that brought, as was previously mentioned, thousands of Congo opponents to the packed Royal Albert Hall. In a well-orchestrated choreography, the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered his speech around five projected tableaus that stood for the crucial episodes in Congo history. The first picture recalled the great task of Cameron's and Stanley's "unveiling" of the gigantic land "practically unknown" but with "varied wealth", and the colonial "enthusiasm", "praises", "hopes" and "buoyant optimism" that "Stanley everywhere inspired". The second picture showed the German Chancellor's Palace in Berlin 1884, to remind audience members of the humanitarian pledges of the Berlin Convention, and Great Britain's and America's role in recognising Léopold's colonial endeavour. The third picture was the delegation of the London Lord Mayor to Brussels in May of 1885, which celebrated the "enlightened, philanthropic, and disinterested efforts" of Léopold. The fourth picture showed the Congo Free State as it was perceived after "hideous outrages" have been exposed. Finally, the last picture was dramatically revealed: "It is the Albert Hall to-night". The Archbishop drew a direct line from the heroic and promising days of Congo colonialism to the assembled Congo opponents.[273] Similarly, the Bishop of Oxford, who spoke afterwards, "believed that the recital and memory of their meeting that night would go far to awaken in England that old chivalry for righteousness and justice". This audience's dedication to saving the 'helpless victims' in the Congo from their 'savage perpetrators' was the true heir and reincarnation of Britain's heroic and just imperial legacy, it was suggested.[274]

Like Stanley's Congolese quests in the romantic age of exploration, imperial humanitarianism in the early 20th century was culturally enhanced and made a collective social experience. The commodification of humanitarian activism through Congo reform literature and photography, and particularly through the atrocity lectures, allowed the popularisation of the saviour stereotype that the Congo reform discourse had

271   Report on a lecture of John Harris, 'The Congo Horrors', *Buckingham Advertiser and Free Press*, 19 October 1907, 8 ('Shame').

272   Congo hymn, reproduced in Grant, *Civilised Savagery*, 67–68.

273   The Archbishop of Canterbury [Randall T. Davidson], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

274   The Bishop of Oxford [Francis Paget], quoted in 'Congo Reform', *The Times*, 20 November 1909, 8.

generated. The third pillar completing the dramatic triangle of racist humanitarianism discursively reinstated the boundaries between European 'civilisation' and African 'savagery' and reinstalled the former in symbolic dominance over the latter. On the strength of the atrocity lectures, the reformers were able to open this position of humanitarian 'whiteness' to broad spheres of society and offer a remedy for the burden of 'ethnic shame' that the Congo Scandal had unloaded upon the masses in the imperial metropole. For only a small entrance fee or donation, hundreds of thousands of visitors were admitted to a multimedia-based racist spectacle, and those who had become alienated from their imperial boyhood idols and disillusioned by the undoing of colonial heroism in the Congo could encounter the celebrated humanitarian as a new type of imperial hero, to be admired without remorse.

Most importantly, the visitors participated in a protest ritual that performatively accomplished their inclusion in the group of the white and civilised saviours. Next to brave individual leaders, in particular Morel, the general 'public' became the second – a collective – protagonist of this narrative of imperial heroism. "Public opinion has been the real author of the change in Congo administration", a Christian newspaper asserted, although, as it was added, it was Morel who had "done more than any other man to create that public opinion".[275] Empowered to save the distant Congolese from 'the greatest crime of all history', and symbolically elevated to a position of moral righteousness, for Europeans and Americans, the imperial gaze towards the Congo once more became a source of 'mass honour', a racist symbolic capital generated not only in demarcation of the African other but also of the 'spurious' part of European civilisation that was represented by the Congolese malady.

Proudly, the Bishop of Winchester announced at the public ceremony in honour of Morel in May of 1911 that opened this study, the reform campaign became "one of those achievements which become part of our permanent moral capital". Relieved of his feelings "of shame and remorse" related to the Congo Scandal, Lord Cromer, who presided over the hundreds of notable guests in the London Metropole Hotel, confessed that now that he could "look with sympathy on the endeavours which have been made to overcome it", and he was once more "proud of European civilisation". A fundamental achievement of the reform movement was, such formulations reveal, the redemption of the discursive and political as well as the social crisis of racism that had unsettled the imperial public. Among the many speeches and greetings, the words of Arthur Conon Doyle were particularly intriguing. Like many others, the famous author was convinced that Morel and the Congo reform movement has served the interest of the Congolese, but he insisted that Morel and the "little band of humanitarians" who had helped him – the first great international human rights movement of the 20th century – "has served others as well". The Congo reform movement "has restored to many of us those beliefs which we should desire to have"; Doyle emphasised, precisely the belief in the cultural superiority of imagined communities, which included aspects such as progressiveness, civilisation, Christianity or the 'white race', which had been shattered by the moral burden of the Congo Scandal. "Therefore", Doyle concluded, "I say, that in restoring our

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275 'The Hero of Congo Reform', *Christian World*, 1 June 1911, reproduced in Cromer, *Public Presentation*, 45 ('real', 'more'); see chapter 3.3.

faith in the race to which we belong, he has served us as truly as he has served the down-trodden races of the Congo".[276]

276   Speech of the Bishop of Winchester, reproduced in ibid., 5 ('moral capital'); speech of Lord Cromer, reproduced in ibid., 6–7 ('sympathy', 'proud'); speech of Doyle, reproduced in ibid., 22 ('appealed', etc.).

6. Conclusion

Without doubt, the international Congo reform movement, to a large extent led by activists from Great Britain and the United States, exposed and opposed one of the ghastliest regimes of New Imperialism. Mercilessly, the 'Congo atrocities' revealed the structural, military and epistemological violence that informs all colonial relations. Relentlessly, the brutalisation of the Congo colonisers showed that racism stimulated even the most appalling iniquities: reduced to 'subhuman' beings, the colonised Congolese women, men and children were unscrupulously punished, tortured and murdered. At the 'heart' of the deterioration of European 'civilisation' that the moral outrages in the international, universal and allegedly 'philanthropic' Congo Free State laid open, an ineluctable realisation awaits: racist dehumanisation and colonial exploitation demolish all ethical boundaries.

As this study has shown, the activists of the British and American reform movement never reached such a conclusion. On the contrary, they maintained, against all evidence, that the Congo Scandal was exceptional in Europe's and America's on-going subjugation of the globe, distinguished not in degree but kind from neighbouring imperial formations. Moreover, it has also become clear that a belief that humanity can be divided into hierarchically ordered, inherent groups, in which the indigenous population of the Congo Basin was 'inferior' or less 'developed' than Europeans, was the fundamental political consensus among all Congo reformers. It is equally apparent that they shared the conviction that the subjugation of the former under the rule of the latter was legitimate, and the resulting accumulation of economic and symbolic capital in the imperial metropoles was well deserved. Moreover, appeals to the racist mind-set of their contemporaries, the activation of the abundant archive of knowledge accumulated in the long history of European racism, and a confident, often instrumental use of stereotypes about the 'myth of the dark continent' and the imperial representation of the Congo as 'Darkest Africa' have been revealed as a central method of Congo protest, to a large extent responsible for the great popular success of the reform movement. Racism, one could conclude, was the ideological 'glue' that bound together the evangelicals, free traders and philanthropists in Great Britain; Protestant missionaries, peace activists, opponents of American expansionism, Black promoters of 'racial' accommodationism

and 'white' architects of 'racial' segregation in the United States; and the many devoted politicians, academics, journalists and artists who supported the campaign.

Not despite but *because* of its racist foundation, the Congo reform movement became the first great international human rights movement of the 20th century. For contemporaries, the Congo Scandal always transcended the geographic boundaries of the Free State and the narrow question of atrocities. What bothered the activists concentrated in Boston and Liverpool more fundamentally, more dramatically, was how seriously the outrages in Léopold's distant colony affected themselves, their personal (national, 'racial' and cultural) identity and the (collective and individual) rights, privileges and benefits they took for granted as citizens of imperial states and members of imagined racist communities such as the 'white race' and 'Christian civilisation'. At the bottom of the 'heart of darkness' that the Congo reformers opposed, this study has claimed, they identified a profound calamity that shook the discursive, political and social pillars of racist relations and predominance.

The dramatic impact of the Congo Scandal on the contemporary British and the American public has (hopefully) been made intelligible by an investigation of the great expectations that the imperial community invested in the colonisation of the Congo and a constant awareness of the broader discursive-political contexts. In this way, it became apparent that the colonisation of the Congo, represented as the 'most savage' part of Africa, contained far-reaching pledges of 'racial' and cultural superiority, of the establishment of a hegemonic colonial dominance over Central Africa, and of including a fragmented imperial world in one universal, racist imagined community evenly awarded with the economic and symbolic benefits arising from the subjugation of the Congo. As this study has shown, all of these discursive, political and social promises were categorically betrayed, which constituted the real catalyst of the Congo reform campaign. Nonetheless, the outrage would probably have been less pronounced if many 'white' intellectuals, artists and politicians at the turn of the 20th century had not become deeply unsettled by alleged signs of racial decline and cultural regression, fears of an inevitably approaching end of 'white' and European supremacy, and a frustration about the apparent failure of racism to create a coherent form of social and geopolitical solidarity. In this way, the Congo Scandal became symbol and signifier of a sweeping 'crisis of whiteness' that haunted contemporary literary and political discourses. To a significant extent, it was not the fate of tortured and murdered Africans, but rather the conjuncture of two radically opposed racist formations, an 'optimistic' and a 'pessimistic' century, that turned the deterioration of the Free State into a scandal that could stir both political and cultural elites and mobilise the masses in Great Britain and the United States.

Moreover, this study of racism in the context of the Congo reform movement, which ranged over three continents and two centuries, has been able to demonstrate how comprehensive and versatile American and British racism was at this specific historical conjuncture. For one, it has been shown that both Congo reformers and Congo colonisers fundamentally agreed that they were superior human beings invested with the right to subdue the Congo, and that they were entitled to the richness of the 'dark' but 'wealthy' 'heart' of Africa. Racist beliefs constituted the ideological common ground of those generally considered colonising 'villains' and those considered humanitarian

'heroes' in the great Congo controversy. Of course, racism has never been the exclusive ideological property of the 'villains' of history. The example of the Congo reform movement supports the conceptualisation of racism as a complex social relation marked by the interplay of stereotypical classifications, (institutionalised) politics and group formation processes that affects all spheres of society and can be embraced by actors of all classes, milieus and political orientations – or ascribed 'racial' identities.

However, it has also become apparent that racism was still a heavily contested social relation. This was not only expressed through the enduring anti-colonial resistance against the European occupation of the Congo Basin that was broadly acknowledged – although without any sympathy – by the Congo reformers and the isolated but articulated objections against racism and colonialism raised at the margins or outside of the reform movement. It was also shown by the discordances revealed within the dominant side of imperial and racist relations. Not only Congo reformers and Congo colonisers, but also the reformers themselves thoroughly disagreed about the 'right' representation of the racistly stigmatised 'other', about the most appropriate translation of racist ideas into political practice and about what exactly constituted the imagined communities of superior beings. Cultural antagonisms between 'civilisation and savagery' that had dominated the Congo narrative in its foundational years were increasingly pushed aside by the opposition between 'white and coloured races', for instance, although the 'savage' stereotype continued to thrive in the Congo reform discourse, even in the hey-day of 'race' in the early 20th century. Moreover, inner conflicts within the reform movement exposed the range of contemporary racist and colonial politics, oscillating between assimilation and segregation, international and national colonial governance, and direct and indirect colonial rule. Finally, the growing fragmentation of universal identities such as 'whiteness' and 'civilisation' through nationality, class or confession; the impact of a self-referential 'racism'; and the segmentation of the 'savage' stereotype along lines of age and gender that this study has exposed emphasise that racism can only be compressively studied if its intersections with other socially constructed antagonisms are considered.

However, these symbolic struggles – within the reform movement and between apologists and critics of the Free State – about the nuances of racist hierarchies and the practicability of racist policies should not be misinterpreted as criticism or even as the rejection of racism. On the contrary, as this study has shown, racism was the ideological foundation that drove the motivation and agenda of this reform campaign. In recognition of the inner structuration of the reform discourse around the themes of 'promise, betrayal and redemption', and guided by an understanding of racism as a social relation based on representation, politics and group formation, this study was able to conduct a thorough analysis of racism in the Congo reform movement, its shapes, forms and ambivalences, the 'crisis of whiteness' that emerged in the 'heart of darkness', and the proposed remedies of this racist humanitarian campaign.

The central representational promise of the imperial Congo-narrative was the formation of a collective identity for 'Brightest Europe' that was negatively defined in differentiation to and in the submission of the people and space of an imaginary Congo. In his best-selling literature, the journalist-turned-'explorer' Henry M. Stanley declared the Congo to be 'Darkest Africa'. The Congolese people were divided into two clusters.

While the political elites who followed Muslim faith and 'Arab' customs were raised to an in-between cultural status, the 'African Congolese' were relegated to the lowest level of human development. The evaluation of the former mirrored changing political alliances and the ambiguity of Orientalist ascriptions oscillating between the appraisal and rejection of allegedly primordial 'Arab characteristics'. In the representation of the latter, several aggregations of the 'savage' stereotype were used to assert a radical historical immaturity of people who supposedly dwelled in a 'state of nature', were 'ferocious cannibals' and followed a 'beastlike' life. This sweeping dehumanisation was further accentuated by fragments of ancient 'monster' stereotypes and patterns of medieval demonological racism. Despite initial scepticism, Stanley eventually developed a 'racial' taxonomy that attempted to turn his established cultural hierarchies into a biological relation. Accordingly, inferior indigenous 'African races' ('Negroes' and 'Pygmies') had, throughout history, gradually been suppressed by superior 'Semitic races' ('Ethiopians' and 'Arabs'). The Congolese forests thus became the last retreat of the 'true negro', it is argued. Stanley's classifications upheld monogenesis and conceded the possibility of 'progress' under European tutelage and dominance, as the ascribed 'docile' and 'childish' character of some 'savages' suggested. Nonetheless, the radical alienation and inferiorisation of the subhuman 'African Congolese', defined as the most degraded, most vicious, most devilish and most primitive people on earth, always implicitly challenged their humanness in principle.

Moreover, the envisioning, mapping and classifying of space was an essential characteristic of Congo literature. The omnipresent motif of 'darkness' that informs all of Stanley's imaginative geography had three dimensions. As an 'epistemological' status, it describes a region untouched by the 'light' of Christian 'civilisation'. That the Congo Basin was 'unknown' to Europeans was tantamount to the claim that the region existed before 'meaning' and 'being' as such, an anachronistic space outside historical time and stuck in a dim 'prehistoric' past. As a 'physical condition', the Congolese 'darkness' was allegedly created by its wild nature. Spectacular imageries of tropical flora and fauna created the Congolese forest as an archetypical 'jungle' that delineated the Congo's as a 'natural' and 'dark' space. Under the perpetual shadow of its giant trees, Stanley claimed to have found one of the 'darkest' places on the planet. Congolese nature was an ambiguous creation. Compared to a 'virgin' and 'fertile' female body, it allured the (male) reader with promises of tropical resources and fascinating scenery. However, Stanley vigorously warned about the hypocritical character of this mysterious beauty. Omnipresent physical and psychological perils culminated in the ascription of a 'metaphysical darkness'. Through the reliance on gothic motifs of horror and Christian colour symbolism, the Congo is described as an eerie pitfall and earthly hell. Eventually, Stanley identifies a supernatural and 'dark' agency that allegedly controls this spiritual home of 'the evil'.

The imperial gaze towards 'Darkest Africa' always led back to the European self, the 'civilised', 'human', 'elected' and 'white' higher beings who stood out against those stigmatised as 'savages', 'monsters', 'devils' and 'coloured'. With the 'heroic' confrontation of this radical African counter-world through the 'discoverer', 'civiliser' and 'conqueror', Stanley signified the inherent supremacy of these imagined communities. The story of a single 'white' and 'civilised' man forcing the people, space and spirit of 'Darkest

Africa' into submission was read as an iconic demonstration of the racial and cultural superiority of 'Brightest Europe'.

Thus established, this representation of a 'prehistoric' and 'natural' space of 'darkest darkness', inhabited by the most 'backward' and 'inferior' groups of humanity and enlivened by a 'spiritual evilness', defined how generations came to envision 'the Congo' – and it remains scandalously effective today. Nonetheless, under the impact of the Congo Scandal, Stanley's narrative almost collapsed. The classification of the alienated Congo was not challenged, however, but rather the relation of Europe to 'Darkest Africa'. The Congo reform movement accused the colony established by Stanley and ruled by the Belgian King Léopold II first of tearing down the boundaries between 'self' and 'other'. In Joseph Conrad's multifaceted Congo novellas, this 'corrosion of alterity' is the most imposing subject matter. These pioneering (fictional) contributions to the reform debate explore the 'dangerously' close affinity between the 'dark and anachronistic' Congolese 'wilderness' and the 'dark and anachronistic' lusts and instincts slumbering in their European protagonists. The stories cumulate in the horrifying realisation of how easily the thin veneer of 'civilised' behaviour can erode. The claim that the Free State had 'gone native', as the ivory trader Kurtz did in *Heart of Darkness*, was a reoccurring indictment in the reform discourse. Motifs such as the 'cannibal army' and 'the slave state' and the demonisation of Léopold as a 'vampire king', for example, conveyed as much outrage about colonial atrocities as about an alleged approximation of European colonisers to the 'savagery', 'despotism' and 'evilness' inscribed in the contemporary Congo image. The result was a 'monstrous' cultural crossbreed, an amalgamation of Africa and Europe, as the reformers held.

Furthermore, the campaigners assessed a lack of power on the side of the colonisers that betrayed the 'racial' and cultural optimism of Stanley's narrative. Enduring problems with 'domesticating' the rampant Congolese 'nature' through European technology were asserted, and the disastrous mortality rates of the colonisers were interpreted as hints at a worrying weakness of the 'white body', which was apparently incapable of resisting the harsh climate and related diseases. Further fuelled by reports about difficulties in repressing an increasingly rebellious population, many reformers concluded that the attempt to turn 'Darkest Africa' into a 'white man's land' was about to fail. Thus, the Congo suddenly became a disturbing sign of the (biological and political) limits of 'white racial superiority' discussed in so-called 'white crisis literature' since the late 19th century. Conrad's fictional fallen 'hero' Kurtz, once more, brilliantly grasped this 'erosion of superiority', the second major allegation of the reform movement in the realm of representation. Despite his excellent broad education and culture, the once-dedicated philanthropist Kurtz had long since been conquered by the 'darkness' and 'wilderness' around and within him – unnoticed by the would-be colonial master. Indistinguishable and powerless, the negative identity of a superior imagined community of 'Brightest Europe' was unmasked as an illusion.

Third, the Congo Scandal came to symbolise a deep crisis of 'white' or Western culture. Any 'romance of exploration' and 'philanthropic idealism' in the Congo was pushed aside by an unsettling 'civilised savagery'. This motif hinted at an intrinsic viciousness of Western 'civilisation' and modernity, and more precisely at the murderous potential of capitalism and technology. For one, the reformers criticised the suppression of

free trade through monopoly capitalism and the conflation of political power with that of money as a deterioration of political and economic culture. Some denounced with particular vehemence the influence of a destructive and 'vampiric' financial capitalism and the 'debauchery' and 'moneygrubbing' of Léopold and thus revealed the influence of a regressive anti-capitalism thriving, for instance, in contemporary antisemitic milieus. Others disagreed, however, and argued that the Congo Scandal had revealed the dominance of profit-seeking and commercialism in all spheres of Western culture. For these critics, the deterioration of Léopold's allegedly philanthropic colony categorically contested the moral value of terms such as 'civilisation', 'Christianity' and 'progress'. The outer shells of 'civilisation might have been established, it was maintained, but the atrocities in the Congo exposed that spiritual 'progress' could hardly be asserted. On the contrary, considering the modern weapons and scientific warfare used for the Congolese carnage, doubts were raised about the destructive power of technological advancement, linguistically engraved in the designation of the Free State as a remorseless 'machine' and 'engine' of oppression. Thus, the outrage about a 'corrosion of imperial alterity' and an 'erosion of racist superiority' was combined with patterns of a 'romantic' repudiation of a 'decadent' and overly 'materialistic' modernity.

In reaction to the this crisis of racist representation, the Congo reform movement created a potent humanitarian narrative based on a vivid, three-cornered metaphor, in which 'civilised and white saviours' rescued 'helpless Congolese victims' from their 'savage African perpetrators'. The first step in this discursive manoeuvre was the identification of the 'perpetrators'. Proving individual guilt for the Congolese atrocities was only secondary. Attempts to hold the colonial administration accountable for its crimes were contradicted by the desire to deny an actual or symbolic European responsibility for the horrible deeds exposed. In the debate about the 'cutting off hands', the reformers still vigorously rejected the notion that a similar 'native' and 'barbarian' practice had existed. However, throughout the reform debate, the humanitarian activists embraced to a large extent the same set of stereotypes as the apologists of the Free State. This became particularly evident in the remarks about the 'cannibalistic', 'wild', 'savage' and 'devilish' character of the 'black' Africans in the service of Léopold's Free State, soon declared to be the 'actual perpetrators' of violence. In a strict analogy to Stanley's imagery and the related, broader racist 'knowledge', the reformers asserted a 'natural' predisposition to brutality and sadism that turned these African soldiers and sentries into wilful torturers and murderers who, like wild animals, followed their violent instincts. The 'moral guilt' of the Free State was then identified as the recruitment and limited control of such 'culturally backward' and 'racially vicious' soldiers. The public outrage about colonial violence was derailed by a debate about Africa's 'inherent' cruelty – even when the direct involvement of the colonial masters in acts of atrocities was under discussion. From the reform camp, a broad variety of 'extenuating environmental circumstances' was brought to bear to unburden the common colonial agent, including the 'barbarous' culture, the fierce tropical climate and the 'evil' spirit of the Congo. In such a setting, it was argued, isolated Europeans had understandable difficulties in upholding their 'civilised' morality, and they adapted to the surrounding 'savagery', as the exposed atrocities allegedly showed. Ultimately, the 'cultural' or 'collective' responsibility for the colonial violence was relegated to the essence of a mythical African 'darkness' most rad-

ically epitomised by the Congo. Thus, new categorical boundaries between 'civilisation' and 'savagery' were raised.

Concerning its racist dynamics, the imagination of the 'victims' was an ambivalent act. While the reformers denied that 'unclaimed' soil or an inherent 'laziness' were as widespread in the Congo as the Free State maintained to justify its systematic land appropriation and forced labour, the evoked counter-image of a primitive peasant and trading culture or praises of the durability of African 'workers', 'boys' and 'carriers' were no less stereotypical. In this context, the reform imagery was influenced by patterns of 'romanticising' racism, heavily swayed by racial determinism, had recourse to the alleged 'docility' of Congolese 'savages' and replicated the existing colonial labour hierarchies.

Moreover, as a racist humanitarian campaign, the reform movement faced a dilemma. The reformers realised that a too-radical dehumanisation of the Congolese led to a breakdown of compassion, which was problematic since the mobilisation of empathy was an indispensable component of humanitarian protests. In response, it was conceded that the 'victims' of Congolese oppression were generally less 'savage' than their 'perpetrators'. In addition, the reformers strictly focused on the display of suffering women and children. The evaluation of cultural 'backwardness' and a division of the 'savage' stereotype along the lines of age and gender channelled racist contempt exclusively onto the 'wild', adult and male perpetrators, while their 'harmless' and 'innocent' targets could once more be embraced by humanitarian empathy. Exceptionally graphic accounts of atrocities were similarly successful in breaking through the insensitivity of a racist public. However, gruesome 'horror stories' and an almost-pornographic exposure of mutilated bodies still dehumanised those displayed. Reduced to mere 'signifiers' of an abstract crime and objects of a paternalistic and voyeuristic curiosity, thus exhibited, these 'victims' were denied any autonomous subjectivity. Eventually, the reform movement extended this 'victimhood' into an ethnographic characteristic of the Congolese people, who consisted of particularly 'helpless races' and 'child-like savages', as the reformers asserted.

While this imagery could never produce more than a 'false empathy', it successfully aroused public sentiment. Most importantly, between 'perpetrators' and 'victims', the discursive space was opened up for the emergence of the 'saviours'. In the case of the Congo reform movement, this subject position was manifestly constituted as a racist stereotype. In differentiation to the 'savagery' of the 'black oppressors' and in relation to the 'helplessness' of the 'black sufferers', the 'redeemers' were envisioned as 'white', 'civilised' and 'powerful'. Leading reform activists were celebrated as vigorous, ardent and altruistic 'defenders' of the Congolese people and praised for the 'heroic' effort, purpose and bravery manifested in their humanitarian 'crusade'.

The tone was thus set for the 'hero-narrative' that thrived in the popular and scientific representation of the Congo reform movement until today. The humanitarian idols were described as reincarnations of classical and even biblical 'heroism', and symbolically took up the merely glimmering torch of enlightenment that the imperial icon Stanley had once brought to 'Darkest Africa'. Only at first glance celebrated for the redemption of the colonised, the heroic Congo reformers had redeemed the imagined community of 'Brightest Europe'. By re-establishing the corroding boundaries between

'savagery' and 'civilisation', re-installing the latter in a position of power, and reassuring that idealism could prevail in materialistic modernity, the liberation narrative organised around the 'dramatic triangle of racist humanitarianism' ultimately solved the crisis of racist representation triggered by the Congo Scandal.

The essential political promise of the imperial Congo narrative was the transformation of racist representation into institutional dominance through the establishment of a hegemonic colonial structure in 'Darkest Africa'. Lured by reports about the Congolese natural richness and goaded by a long-nourished colonial desire, Léopold II had become determined to establish a privately controlled colony in the Congo Basin that would eventually be turned into a Belgian dependency. In order to acquire support and the pretence of legitimacy, the young Belgian monarch engaged in a series of well-calculated political ploys. First, the impression of a popular colonising movement was created. While philanthropic and abolitionist commitments secured the support of evangelical, humanitarian and anti-slavery organisations in Europe and the United States, the engagement of Stanley as mission leader, given that he was then the most popular among the 'heroes' of Central African 'exploration', brought the sympathy of the masses. Second, the establishment of an international colony was promoted. Pledges to unlock the fabled Congolese resources through a politically, commercially and religiously neutral colony embraced commercial milieus and the governments of concurring imperial powers. Third, public commitments to confederate free Black men and women in the Congo and to offer prospects to 'civilised' African-Americans allured milieus promoting 'repatriation' schemes for the recently emancipated American slaves. As a result, both Black intellectuals interested in overseas opportunities and white supremacists dreaming of a racially homogenous 'white' America began to support Léopold's enterprise. Finally, the material dominance of the emerging colonial state was greatly exaggerated. The admired 'conqueror' Stanley transfigured the nuclei of the colonial infrastructure he had established starting in 1879 into something militarily impregnable, while the 'civiliser' Stanley assured the public that most 'docile savages' readily submitted themselves to European authority and thus facilitated the establishment of a consensual domination merely based on symbolic power relations.

Pressured by supporters in civil society, the sovereignty of the 'International Association of the Congo', which was fully controlled by the Belgian king, was eventually recognised by the United States and relevant European states in The General Act of the Congo Conference 1885, which translated Léopold's political promises into international law. The 'racist contract' of Berlin dispossessed the Central African polity of all sovereign rights in 'exchange' for vague commitments to abolish slavery and to 'uplift' the colonised population, while it established a set of privileges for the imperial community – most importantly, the rights of free entrance, trade and missionising. Under these premises, the assembled powers signalled their support for Léopold's Congo colony as a trustee of European interests in Central Africa.

Shortly after, the Congo Free State was officially proclaimed. Despite initial difficulties, the new colonial state eventually secured its borders against concurring imperial approaches and crushed a fierce primary resistance. With the triumph against the Muslim empires in Eastern Congo in 1894, the Free State destroyed its most powerful inner rival. Proudly, Léopold announced the 'effective occupation' of his territory and the be-

ginning of the implementation of his 'civilising'-agenda. Dedicated to Europe's historic mission to open up the region to 'civilisation' and 'trade', apparently not only supported by all factions of a fragmented imagined community of 'civilisation' but even the submissive colonised population, and without rivalling power structures challenging its supreme power, the Free State appeared as a hegemonic historic structure, marvelled at by the imperial public for the establishment of European supremacy over 'Darkest Africa'.

Nonetheless, expectations of colonial hegemony were soon severely betrayed. In its political facet, the Congo Scandal had three interrelated dimensions. The 'African' or 'native' dimension was comprised of the 'Congo atrocities', which, until today, are most frequently related with the depravation of Léopold's colony. Starting in 1895, a steadily increasing flow of eyewitness reports reached the metropole, collected and published by British and American reform activists. While these emphasised the systematic character of atrocities within the forced rubber production, they strategically reduced the violence to a few particular outrageous motifs such as alleged acts of cannibalism, the notorious hostage houses, the flogging with the hippopotamus whip 'chicotte' and, above all, the complex of 'severed hands'. While this dramatic symbolism heavily relied on racist stereotypes and tended to obscure the structural character of Free State oppression, it effectively destroyed the benevolent zeal of the colony. Instead of 'civilising' the Congolese, 'savagery' was actually on the rise, it was held. All material improvement, such as infrastructure and technology, had the sole aim of facilitating economic exploitation, and new forms of slavery had replaced the abolished 'Arab' slave trade. Under the impact of this severe 'perversion' of philanthropic commitments, many of Léopold's former supporters in evangelical and philanthropic milieus, and also those engaged in emigration schemes for African-Americans, publicly broke with the king-sovereign of the Free State, and the concept of the Congo colony as a 'popular colonial movement' collapsed.

Instead of ethical or moral problems discussed in relation to the 'Congo atrocities', the 'European' dimension of the Congo Scandal concerned more practical questions. The transformation of the colony's political economy, implemented starting in the early 1890s, became a principal point of contention in the Congo controversy. As the reformers accused, the appropriation of all so-called 'vacant land' and its resources through the administration and its concessionary companies had effectively culminated in the establishment of a monopoly over the lucrative ivory and rubber trade. For international critics, the deaths of the Irish ivory trader Stokes and the Austrian merchant Rabinek in state custody revealed that the administration was willing to recklessly defend its economic interests. British chambers of commerce, merchants and manufacturers, ideologically represented by the former shipping clerk Morel, declared this commercial side to the crux of the Congo Scandal. However, even missionaries and humanitarians and the less commercially influenced American Congo reformers loudly decried the violations of the Berlin free trade obligations.

With particular vehemence, the reformers opposed the national bias that became apparent in these economic transformations. The Congolese markets were gradually closed to all except Belgians, and even in the monopolistic concessionary trusts, British and American investment was replaced by Belgian capital. Moreover, the rising constitutional, political and financial dependency on the Belgian state and a strict Belgian

priority in the recruitment of civil and military agents signified the shallowness of any commitments to internationalism. In addition, the administration began to favour (Belgian) Catholicism. Despite its commitment to religious neutrality, the Free State categorically denied land grants for new stations for Protestant societies following the first public criticism of state atrocities through Baptist missionaries.

Moreover, the 'white supremacy' dimension was comprised of charges of a corroding material and symbolic power. The reformers created doubts as to whether the colony had the necessary financial and military assets to subdue 'Darkest Africa'. The state expanded only slowly, and many military operations were less successful than was publicly reported, it was asserted. At the same, all claims of a consensual, symbolic form of domination were contradicted by political disorder and a rising contempt for the colonisers. After the tightening of the rubber regime in the mid-1890s, the Free State territory was once more captured by a surge of armed resistance, and the state showed extreme difficulty in guaranteeing the safety of missionaries and merchants. Impetuously, the reformers warned that the engagement of the most ferocious 'savages' for the Force Publique constituted a significant danger. Incapable of suppressing even isolated mutinies of its well-trained and well-equipped African soldiers, the reformers predicted, the Free State might well collapse once Léopold's uncontrollable 'cannibal army' turned against its colonial masters on a large scale.

The peril exceeded the geographic boundaries of the Free State. Critics warned of a weakening prestige and authority of the 'white race' emanating from the Congo, and they prophesied that the resulting 'anti-white' feelings could spread to neighbouring colonies. In the context of the discursive shockwaves sparked by Russia's monumental naval defeat by Japan in 1905, which had ignited both hopes and fears about the apparent limits of 'white' political and military supremacy, the reformers eagerly warned of a continental and even global 'conflagration' of anti-colonial sentiment from the Congo. The impact of the 'Congo Scandal' might well ignite a unified Black resistance movement with the power to overturn 'white rule', it was held – in Africa and perhaps beyond. Hence, once a celebrated guardian of colonial hegemony, the Free State became a menace for white supremacy.

The remedy proposed for this crisis of racist politics was the reestablishment of a stable colonial order in Central Africa. The reformers vigorously rejected demands raised for self-governance. Their 'humanitarian' racism agreed with Stanley's that the Central African population could, in principle, 'progress' to self-reliance. However, there was an overwhelming consensus that this could only be achieved under 'civilised' trusteeship: The asserted present state of Congolese 'immaturity' (explained as 'cultural backwardness', 'racial inferiority' or a mixture of both) made European mastery both inevitable and legitimate.

A return to the legal and ideological framework of the Berlin Congo Conference, with its principles of free trade, religious neutrality and philanthropy, would allow for the restoration of a form of colonial governance that was both practical and humane, the reformers agreed. While guaranteeing open access for missionaries and merchants to the souls and markets of the Congo could reunite the concurring fractions of the imperial civil societies in one colonisation scheme, genuine care for moral and material 'up-lifting' would break the vicious circle of violence and resistance, it was hoped.

There were severe controversies about the right form of the 'civilising' scheme, though. The 'moral salvation' through Christian conversion propagated by the influential religious reform milieus was the most dominant assimilative ideology of its time. The ability to pursue this evangelical agenda was the principal demand of the Protestant missionary organisations rallying against the Free State. However, some secular reformers wholeheartedly rejected any 'Europeanisation' efforts. Intellectually influenced by the polygenetic racism of Mary Kingsley, these critics of Christian universalism argued that culture was 'racially' and spatially determined. To bestow a superior 'white' and 'European' culture upon a 'Black' and 'African' people was deemed harmful (since it unmade 'racial identity' through 'hybridization') and impractical (since it raised unrealistic expectations of equality between imperial and conquered 'races'). Instead, an 'up-lifting' should be achieved principally by trade and subjection under a capitalist labour ethic to transform the Congolese into obeying customers, peasants and agricultural workers. In this regard, the strictly manually orientated Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was considered a role model for a racially segregated scheme of education to 'civilise' Africa. Instead of promoting a respectful cultural relativism, as has often been suggested, this counter-concept against evangelical assimilation aimed at the institutionalisation of racial inequality through segregation. The 'principle of non-interaction' and the pseudo-empathic care for 'racial purity' ultimately cemented the exclusion of the alienated others from a 'white master culture'.

Beyond these ideological quarrels, most reformers agreed that economic freedom and 'native land tenure' were the core of any benevolent and functional colonialism. In this context, humanitarians, Protestant missionaries and, in particular, Liberal free traders rejected the 'vacant land policy' of the Free State as illegitimate appropriation and insisted on the recognition of the 'ancestral' and 'heredity rights' of the colonised population in the agricultural land and forests they cultivated. The confinement of the colonial 'terra nullius' myth and the postulation of the colonised masses as rights-bearing individuals constituted a thorough difference to the contemporary racist and colonial mainstream. Commitments to reinstall the 'human rights' of the Congolese population, as reformers frequently described them, revealed not only a departure from traditional humanitarianism and evangelical philanthropy but can also be interpreted as the denunciation of a radically dehumanising racism.

However, even more 'progressive' reform activists remained fundamentally racist. While they affirmed a common humanity between the colonisers and the colonised, they still insisted that the human family could be divided into superior and inferior groups based on biological capacities or cultural development. The creation of 'sub-humans' allowed the synchronisation of universalist rhetoric with the reality of white supremacy and colonial domination because it allowed the differentiation of 'human rights', as well. Those that the reformers postulated for the Congolese were not 'natural', 'equal' or 'universal', but merely privileges defined and restricted by the colonisers, always granted under the condition of a submission to foreign domination. Deliberately, the reformers restricted the 'human rights' of the Congolese to economic property rights and separated them from any political, civil or social rights. In this regard, the reform movement once more revealed its ideological ties to the Jim Crow regime of the New South, which explains its alliance with Senator Morgan, one of the chief architects

of racial segregation in the United States. 'Colonial human rights', as proposed by the Congo reformers, were not a tool of emancipation but constituted an instrument to stabilise the stumbling colonial hegemony in Central Africa.

Through all the years of its activity, the reform movement was chronically at odds about the institutional framework necessary to implement its suggested colonial reform strategy. Regardless, direct appeals to Léopold and more radical plans, such as a partition of the Free State among neighbouring imperial powers or its control through a multi-governmental organisation, were ultimately abandoned. The reform movement settled on the so-called 'Belgian solution', the annexation of Léopold's privately ruled colony through Belgium, which was eventually implemented in November of 1908. Although some of the reformers' significant demands remained unrealised, the Congo Reform Associations ultimately considered the Congo Scandal as resolved by the creation of 'Belgian Congo'. Politically, culturally and economically, the new colony was as oppressive as the notorious Free State. However, the notorious 'rubber regime' and the related political destabilisation had, at this point, already broadly collapsed due to extinguished wild rubber reservoirs. Most importantly, the new administration quickly assigned land for new Protestant mission posts, and free trade regions were moderately expanded. Although the collective European hegemony once promised by Léopold would remain an unrealised utopia, the international campaigners considered a shallowly 'reformed' Belgian colony an adequate solution for the crisis of racist politics and institutions.

The central social promise of the imperial Congo narrative was the negative societalisation of a fragmented imperialist into an egalitarian colonial master class and a broader racist imagined community of 'Brightest Europe'. In consideration of its political legitimation as an 'international colony', Léopold promoted his colonial enterprise not as the fulfilment of a particular national grandeur, racial destiny or sectarian mission, but as a genuinely universal colonisation scheme that appealed equally to all elements of the 'civilised world'. Rights of entrance, settlement and commerce were granted to merchants and missionaries of all nations and confessions, and the colonial administration advertised its military and civil positions globally, to lower social spheres and, as was mentioned above, even to 'educated' African-Americans. This was all done successfully: the national, denominational and social diversity of the state-, economic- and church-sectors of the new colony was unique. Devoted colonisers from well-established imperial powers, those from countries without African dependencies and an exceptionally high ratio of lower-class recruits took their chance to participate in the 'heroic' conquest of 'Darkest Africa'. Moreover, soon, the first African-American missionaries arrived while Black Baptists launched plans for large-scale emigration schemes in the United States.

Arriving in the Congo, all merchants, missionaries and state agents experienced their inclusion into the narrow colonial elite. Initially, the state administration promoted this group formation process with commitments to impartiality towards the nationality, creed, social status or 'colour' of its foreign subjects. However, this was an exclusion fundamentally based on the exclusion of the Congolese. The 'frontier spirit' of the early years and the violent confrontation of the racistly stigmatised 'native' population bound together colonisers of all nations, classes and 'races'. A negative form of

cohesion was created that successfully covered over the social antagonisms that structured the home countries of the Congo colonisers through a veil of 'colonial whiteness' – not a biological property but rather a social relation and a position of power. Thus, all members of the master class were prima facie considered 'white'. Hence, the Congo offered a 'whitening per sea change' even to those considered not (like Black American missionaries) or not-yet (like Southern Europeans or working-class recruits) (fully) 'white' in their home societies.

The inclusion into the community of 'colonial whiteness' was rewarded with manifold symbolic and material benefits. All 'white' colonisers were ascribed a 'racist symbolic capital', a specific increase in prestige that accrued from the right to despise and humiliate the colonised others. Colonial agents marvelled at the 'awe' of the 'natives and at their sudden increase in power and influence and almost 'royal' status, which was similar to that of the defeated 'Arab sultans' and 'African chiefs'. This racist symbolic capital was distributed equally among all those included in the community of 'colonial whiteness' notwithstanding rank, social background or 'race'. Other 'wages of colonial whiteness' included not only comparatively high salaries, extraordinary luxurious provisions even for a minor administrator and the benefits of the lucrative ivory trade, but a taken-for-granted grasp of the material possessions of the subdued communities and the unrestrained sexual exploitation of African women. Moreover, after their return, many Congo colonisers could build successful careers upon the social and cultural capital accumulated through their experience of colonial mastery.

Material and symbolic benefits were pledged to the metropole, as well. Stanley and Léopold praised the macro-economic potential of the Congo as a market for manufactured goods and as a reservoir of supply means and labour-power in the highest terms. The integration of the region into the global economic circuit under conditions of free trade was promoted to merchants and manufacturers in Great Britain and the United States, but it also promised the creation of jobs and could open up new spheres of consumption by providing the resources for critical commodities of a new metropolitan consumer culture, it was held. Of course, the surplus generated by colonial trade was primarily absorbed by capitalists, just as the access to colonial commodities remained regulated by spending capacity. However, the symbolic benefits of the colonisation of the Congo had the potential to reach broader spheres of the imperial societies. The close association of Léopold's colonial movement with the popular hero Stanley allowed for its marketing on an unprecedented scale. The textualisation of Stanley's imperial adventures in the widely circulating press of New Journalism and the tremendously bestselling travelogues, together with their reproduction and visualisation in spectacular exhibitions, brought the mythical 'Darkest Africa' home to the metropole. Through the particularly 'participative' reading of travel literature, or as a visitor-turned-'explorer' on imperial exhibitions, the British and American masses were incorporated into the set of racist representation evoked in the Congo narrative and emotionally associated themselves with the 'romance' and 'glory' of the 'conquerors' and 'civilisers' of the Congo. Through their gaze upon the several hundred Congolese exhibited as 'savages' in human zoos in two major colonial international exhibitions in Belgium, for instance, visitors of all social and economic classes recognised themselves as 'civilised'. Hence, through its pioneering role in the emergence of a popular form of imperialism and the on-going

commodification of racist relations in the late 19th century, the Congo was an empire for and of masses. Millions of consumers, readers and spectators from intermediate and subaltern spheres of imperial societies experienced their inclusion into the same imagined community of 'Brightest Europe' with those holding the political and economic power, and they could draw a racist symbolic capital, experienced as 'ethnic mass honour', from the subjugation of 'Darkest Africa'.

However, the promise of the Congo as a geographic and imagined arena of negative societalisation was fundamentally betrayed. Instead of uniting the 'civilised world' in one universal colonial scheme, the Free State restricted the 'free access' guaranteed at the Berlin Conference to the Congo in general, and to the colonial master class in particular. By the turn of the 20th century, all three pillars of colonial governance, the state, the economy and the church, had become institutions dominated by Catholic Belgians, as Léopold's former supporters irately realised. Additionally, the initially promoted egalitarian 'spirit' was radically revoked over the years. Those independent non-Belgian merchants and Protestant missionaries who were still present in the country were confronted with harassment and persecution by state agents. Instead of providing security for all colonisers, as was expected under the implicit 'racist contract' underlying all imperial relations and the explicit provisions of the Berlin Congo Act, the oppressive Free State had become a menace for Europeans, the reform movement asserted. Moreover, the remaining Italian, Danish and American civil and military agents complained about their treatments as 'second-class' officers and about the thriving national chauvinism from their Belgian superiors, which was at times answered with classist scorn about the low education of Belgian officers. Black Americans, on the other hand, were scandalised by the 'racial' bias in the Free State's judicial system and daily practice that, together with discrimination by 'white colleagues', contradicted the pledges to create a 'colour-blind' colonial master class.

That the power of racism to create a negative form of group cohesion showed severe signs of corrosion in the Congo was both the result of a changing Free State policy and a reflection of broader discursive developments. At the turn of the 20th century, universal concepts such as 'Christianity' or 'civilisation' were increasingly replaced by more particular political identities. In this regard, criticism of the rising fragmentation of the once-universal community of 'colonial whiteness' in the Congo along the lines of nationality, class and 'race' related to unease about the apparent limits of racism to create sustainable social and political solidarity, which was a central aspect of the profound crisis of racist relations experienced by many contemporaries.

Moreover, visitors and former employees of the Free State harshly criticised the lack of comfort in the depressing 'barrack towns' and miserable outposts, and they accused Léopold of neglecting his agents. More remote stations often lost contact with supply networks for months, and both state and companies had difficulty providing even the most basic food and medical supplies, not to mention the luxurious rations promised to interested candidates. Instead of being elevated to superior fields of consumption, Europeans were mostly dependent on African communities for sustenance. The living conditions of the colonial masters were barely distinguishable from those of the surrounding 'savages', international critics complained. Overall, the manifold 'wages of colonial whiteness' that had lured them to the Congo remained an unfulfilled promise for most

colonisers. The lack of medical infrastructure, poor nutrition and hygiene significantly aggravated climatic hardships and health problems, and colonial agents also struggled with loneliness and boredom and (if they were not wholly absorbed in racist sadism) the moral 'degradation' of the atrocities they conducted and accounted for. Homesickness, despair and shame affected many of the once-proud 'pioneers of progress'. Alcohol abuse was widespread, and suicide statistics were high, the reformers asserted. Where the 'white' masters had once enjoyed their high prestige and royal status as part of their ascribed racist symbolic capital, shabby, sick, drunken and brutal colonisers were humiliated by (self-)contempt.

The degradation of the Congolese colonial master class directly affected metropolitan relations, as well, where Congo reformers were much offended by this 'undoing' of colonial heroism. In the public perception, the exposed physical, psychological and moral deterioration had turned the once-admired 'conquerors' and 'civilisers' of the Congo into anti-heroes. Under the impact of the outrageous atrocities in the colony he had founded, even Stanley's public esteem crumbled. For many reformers, the corrosion of the Congolese hero narrative was a crucial aspect of the Congo Scandal. Moreover, committed by 'white' agents and in the name of 'civilisation', 'Christianity' and 'progress', the moral outrages in the Congo dishonoured and 'lowered' the prestige of these collectives, the humanitarian activists asserted. Unsettled reformers felt culturally and 'racially' disgraced by the Congo. Hence, from a public source of racist symbolic capital and 'ethnic mass honour', the Congo had become an 'empire of shame'.

Last, the reform movement protested that the economic promises made had been severely betrayed. Not merely had the Free State closed the Congolese markets to American and British trade, but it actually ruined these markets for all future generations, the reformers maintained. The ruthless rubber exploitation had depopulated vast regions of the Congo and would soon lead to the exhaustion of the precious wild rubber, it was warned. Thus, the Free State threatened to destroy the Congolese economic wealth that belonged to the entire imperial community. This affected traders as well as broader fields of production and consumption that relied on Congolese rubber, for instance. Hence, chambers of commerce, manufacturers and labour organisations should also protest this deprivation of their 'rightful' share of the material benefits arising from the colonial subjugation of the Congo, reformers urged.

The remedies that the reform movement developed for this crisis of racist societalisation involved concrete demands to reinstate the privileges of the imperial community, multifaceted discursive manoeuvres of 'purification' and the staging of humanitarian activism as a racist mass spectacle. In the first dimension, evangelical, philanthropic and commercial milieus agreed that the rights of Protestant missionaries and international merchants to participate in (and benefit from) the economic exploitation and cultural assimilation of the Congo had to be restored. In this, they defended not merely self-serving interests, the reformers emphasised, but the allied rights and economic interests of the British and American societies. Moreover, ethical and utilitarian aspects perfectly overlapped, the reformers contended, since a more humane rubber production would automatically be more sustainable and preserve both people (hence, the labour force and customers) and resources.

Others deliberately withdrew from the allegedly universal colonial movement. Following the revelations about structural 'racial' discrimination in the Congo, Black Americans quickly abandoned their Congolese emigration plans. Moreover, international recruits' interest in pursuing a civilian or military career in the Congo diminished. The reformers refrained from demanding a return to the multinational administration of the early years, which some considered impracticable, but it was mostly undesirable given the shameful work the Congolese master class performed. In fact, despite the indignation about the national and confessional bias contradicting the early promises of impartiality, the reformers were generally inclined to accept and extend the inner fragmentation of the universal racist community once realised in the Congo in order to disassociate themselves from the related burden of 'ethnic shame'.

Prominent reformers rigorously argued that the 'Congo atrocities' were without historical or contemporary precedent. The 'thesis of exceptionalism' allowed the violence of all colonial relations to be disguised and perpetuated the chimaera of fair and benevolent imperialism. Glorifications of Great Britain as the 'emancipator' of the 'coloured races', Protestantism as the Christian 'conscience' and Anglo-Saxonism as a 'global agent of justice' were, in this regard, rampant in the reform debate. Such appeals to national honour, religious vanity and racial pride were attempts to counterbalance the disgrace of 'Christianity', 'civilisation' and 'whiteness'. In a reoccurring pattern, the reformers compared the Free State (system) to a 'disease', which implied that a 'healthy' body of these imagined communities pre-existed and could recover through the power of its Anglo-Saxon-British-Protestant 'heart' to fight the Congolese 'infection'.

Medical symbolism fully developed into a eugenics metaphor when the reformers speculated about the 'inferior' and 'pernicious' elements within the Congolese colonial elite identified in the lower-class and Belgian Free State officers. In the terminology of an increasingly popular self-referential racism, fuelled by nationalism and classism, the 'poor type' of these agents, their alleged physical disabilities and social deficiencies, became a reoccurring theme. Many reformers claimed that the lower social milieus that were overrepresented in the Free State administration lacked 'manners' and 'morality', while others ascribed a lack of national character and racial quality to Belgian colonisers. Both groups were 'unfit' for and 'unworthy' of colonial mastery, it was asserted, and their predisposition to brutality was largely responsible for the violence in the Free State. In this regard, both practical and symbolic 'cleansing operations' were promoted. Practically, lower-class agents should be replaced, while Belgium should no longer control an African empire, as some leading reform activists opposing the 'Belgian solution' demanded. Symbolically, a cultural affinity between lower classes and Belgians to Congolese 'savages' was subtly implied and at times openly asserted, thus challenging the formers' status as (fully) 'civilised' in the first place. In this way, the moral integrity of the racist imagined communities disgraced by the Congo atrocities was reinstated through the marginalisation and externalisation of its foul elements and the 'ethnic shame' these had produced.

The strong emphasis on particular identities also led to objections and tensions, however. Class contempt, evangelical fervour and anti-Belgian sentiment explain the limited involvement of Labour organisations in the reform movement, the estrangement of Catholics worldwide and the scepticism of the Belgian public. The thriving

British nationalism complicated alliances with Congo opponents in France and Germany but was similarly disapproved of by leading British activists such as Roger Casement. Considering the long history of Irish repression, the Ulster-born consul was disinclined to see England and the United States as humane imperial actors. Neither were many activists of the Anti-Imperialist League, which had a strong influence in the American Congo Reform Association. Its members opposed the violent American occupation of the Philippines and had often sympathised with the fate of the Boers in the Transvaal conflict with the British Empire. Moreover, Black American commentators emphasised the structural relation of colonial atrocities in Central Africa with anti-black atrocities in the Jim Crow-South, which were bound together by the same 'race-hatred', as they pointed out. Nonetheless, the thesis of exceptionalism was only hesitantly challenged in the reform movement, and attempts to extend the campaign against the Congo Scandal to a broader criticism of racism and colonialism were never pursued.

Finally, the reinvention of humanitarianism as a commodified spectacle included hundreds of thousands of ordinary Britons and Americans in the racist regime of representation established through the reform discourse. Tremendously successful 'atrocity lectures', organised around graphic 'horror stories' and illustrated by limelight projections with the 'magic lantern', became the central tool of a strategic realignment that eventually transformed the British and American reform campaigns into mass movements. Due to the significant influence of Protestant missionaries, the dramaturgy of these protest meetings often recalled a religious ceremony, and they opened with prayers and missionary hymns. While these framed the gathering within the civilising-mission narrative, the first central part of a standard atrocity lecture was designed as a highly entertaining colonial spectacle. The lecturers spoke at length about the alleged 'savagery' and 'darkness' of the Congo and praised the work of pioneering 'explorers' and missionaries, accompanied by spectacular slides of landscapes and people before they turned to the betrayal of the imperial hero narrative. Horrifying accounts of atrocities were intensified through photographs of African soldiers described as 'cannibals' and maimed children, which had a dramatic effect on visitors.

The prominent speakers promoted an extension of Protestant missionary work and political reforms as redemption. However, just as importantly, they appealed to the 'heart' and 'souls' of the 'civilised' audience. Collective singing and praying and loud moans underlined the ritualistic character of the gatherings. Through their emotional response to the 'horror' displayed, the visitors experienced their performative inclusion in the group of the 'civilised saviours' invested with the power to relieve the distant sufferers. Through the racist spectacle of a commodified reform campaign, 'humanitarian whiteness' eventually became a mass property, and the imperial gaze towards 'Darkest Africa' once more became a source of 'ethnic pride' and a 'mass honour' – negatively created against both the Congolese 'darkness' and the foul elements of European 'civilisation'.

All things considered, any humanitarian impetus in this allegedly 'noble' and 'altruistic' campaign had always been supplemented (and many times pushed aside) by the desire to counter worrying signs of racial and cultural decline, attempts to stabilise a stumbling European hegemony in Africa (and white supremacy on a global scale) and the attempt to secure those material and symbolic benefits considered the legitimate

'wages' arising from the colonisation of the Congo for those included in the racist imagined communities of 'whiteness' and 'civilisation'.

On 16 July 1913, the British Congo Reform Association gathered for the last meeting in the Westminster Palace Hotel in London. More than two years after the American Congo opponents had quietly suspended all activity, and more than two decades after the first public protest against the Congo Scandal was raised, Edmund D. Morel solemnly declared the victory of the campaign he had shaped like no other. Of course, the African population of 'Belgian Congo' would continue to suffer under an oppressive colonial regime for almost half a century. In their struggle for dignity, freedom and equality, the Congo reform movement had brought no advance.

However, the British and American activists had indeed accomplished their historical mission. By confronting the Congo Scandal, this first great human rights movement of the 20th century brought redemption to the redeemers: the imperial community that had struggled deeply under the impact of the 'crisis of whiteness' that accrued in the Congolese 'heart of darkness'.

Contemporaries quickly celebrated the reformers as 'heroic' for this accomplishment. I hope that this study can provide sufficient insights for its readers to decide if they want to continue to adopt this interpretation as their own. Perhaps it is simply time to admit that the European invasion and subjugation of Africa has produced no heroes but only villains – and to recognise that the idea of a just and humane imperialism, as promoted by the Congo reform movement, is nothing more than a delusion. It is possible that a recognition of the racist origins of the modern human rights movement, discussed in the pages above regarding the example of a pioneering campaign, can also be a small step in the 'decolonisation' of human rights in general and can thus help to unfold the full emancipative potential of a concept that, today, is as desperately needed as in the high time of imperialism.

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