

CHOICES for the 21st Century Education Program

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The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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Africa Today



Image courtesy of V. Estabrook.

Introduction: The Congo and King Leopold

In 1903, a British man named Roger Casement submitted a report to the British Parliament about his investigations in what was then known as the Congo Free State. The Belgian King Leopold II privately owned the Congo Free State, a territory in Central Africa which was more than seventy-six times the size of Belgium. Leopold used Congolese workers to supply rubber, which comes from vines and trees, for the booming tire business. Casement's report confirmed what many in Parliament and elsewhere had suspected for some years.

“They [the Congolese] had endured such ill-treatment at the hands of the Government officials and soldiers that nothing had remained but to be killed for failure to bring in rubber or to die in their attempts to satisfy the demands.”

—The Casement Report

The report set off a series of international discussions and debates about what was happening in the Congo Free State. Millions of Africans were being killed or dismembered while harvesting rubber from the forest of Central Africa in order to satisfy the desires of Europeans and Americans for cheap rubber and to satisfy King Leopold's quest for wealth.

“We tried, always going further into the forest, and when we failed and our rubber was short, the soldiers came to our towns and killed us. Many were shot. Some had their ears cut off; others were tied up with ropes round their necks and bodies and taken away.”

—A Congolese worker

But how did a single man come to own an entire region of another continent? To understand how the Congo Free State came into

being one needs to understand the advent of European imperialism in Africa.

Why did Europeans go to Africa?

As the Industrial Revolution gained momentum in Europe, people there realized that if they wanted to surpass neighboring countries economically, they would need access to more raw materials to fuel their factories and more people to purchase the products those factories made. In the 1870s, some Europeans even thought that war was likely. To prevent such a war, leaders of Europe met in 1885 and divided up the continent of Africa. Nearly every European country wanted a piece.

Over the next sixty years, European countries “owned” areas of Africa. Europeans were largely responsible for drawing the borders of African countries that exist today.

King Leopold's interest in Central Africa spurred much of the competition for African land among Europeans. The establishment of the Congo Free State was a crucial part of the story of African imperialism and colonialism. The horrific events that took place there, and the responses to them, were also a crucial part of the development of the international community's response to human rights problems.

What is this unit about?

In Part I of this unit you will read about the peoples of Central Africa, what forces shaped their histories, and how they related to each other. You will also read about the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on Central Africa, the partition of the continent, and Leopold's grab for the area. In Part II, you will explore the nature of the Congo Free State and learn about the people and governments who opposed King Leopold's rule there. You will then be asked to reenact a debate that took place in the British Parliament which asked what, if anything, Britain should do about the situation in the Congo. Finally, in the epilogue, you will learn about the fate of the Congo.

Part I: Pre-Colonial Congo and Europe's Interest in Africa

The area that is now the Democratic Republic of Congo spans 1.5 million square miles, about the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. It is the third largest country in Africa. The region in which it is located, Central Africa, is the home of most of Africa's rainforest. The Congo River, nearly 3,000 miles long (the Mississippi is 2,300 miles long), cuts through Central Africa and drains into the Atlantic ocean. A number of smaller rivers feed into the Congo, forming the huge Congo Basin, home to numerous species of plants and animals. Mountains as high as 17,000 feet and Lake Tanganyika border the region to the east, and in the south, there are great stretches of grasslands and hardwood forests. The country also has deposits of gold, diamonds, copper, and manganese. All of these factors combine to make Congo one of the most geographically diverse and mineral-rich countries in the world.

Who were the groups of people who settled in Central Africa?

The earliest people to live in Central Africa were forest-dwellers who lived off the fruits and nuts they gathered and animals they killed. Anthropologists call these groups collectively "hunter-gatherers." These specialized hunters were Pygmies, or BaMbuti, and they began living in the area in about 40,000 BCE. Their descendants still live in the forests today.

Beginning in about 500 BCE small groups of people who spoke related languages moved from West Africa to Central and East Africa, forcing some of the groups of Pygmies to retreat further into the forested areas of the region, and absorbing others as they moved through. The migration of this category of people, called Bantu, lasted about two thousand years. Unlike the hunter-gatherers who had lived in the Congo region before, these Bantu groups knew how to smelt iron, and began working with sophisticated tools.



The Congo River.

Dmitri Kessel/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images. Used with permission.

Finally, a third category of people called Nilotes moved into Central Africa from what is now known as Sudan, and brought with them knowledge of farming, fishing, and herding. Over a period of several hundred years the Bantu came into contact with the Nilotes from the northeast. Villages of farmers who had access to iron tools spread across the Central African region. Eventually, these groups developed into distinct tribes with different languages and social structures. By about 600 CE more than two hundred different ethnic groups occupied the Central African region, each with its own customs and language.

How were groups different from each other?

Several factors defined the different ethnic groups. Throughout the Congo region, the religious beliefs and practices of ethnic groups defined their identity. In general, people

How Historians Know the History of Pre-Colonial Congo

The various ethnic groups in pre-colonial Congo were non-literate societies, meaning they did not possess written languages before Europeans arrived. As a result it is difficult to form a complete picture of what these cultures were like. In addition, the first Europeans often misinterpreted what they saw and recorded observations that confirmed their biases. Most Europeans arrived in Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries assuming that European civilization was superior to African civilization, and their writings usually show this prejudice.

Today historians use a variety of sources to get a more accurate image of these societies. First, they use the writings of European explorers, missionaries and merchants. By examining a variety of different written sources, historians begin to identify which statements are objective facts and which show biases of the writers. Second, historians refer to the writings of Africans who learned to read and write soon after the Europeans arrived. For instance, King Afonso of the Kongo people became literate soon after Portuguese ships arrived in the late 1400s. Writings such as his provide a different point of view from European writings. Third, the various ethnic groups of the Congo River basin developed oral history traditions to pass knowledge from one generation to the next. Many of these oral traditions survive today. Historians and anthropologists have interviewed those who keep this knowledge alive. In many of these oral traditions, there are stories that describe life before the arrival of Europeans and the way that Africans responded to the early European activities in their homelands. Fourth, archaeologists are able to use physical artifacts to reconstruct the movement of products and people over great distances. Finally, linguistic anthropologists look at the structures of languages to determine the migrations of people and the time periods when they moved.

From all of these sources, historians have been able to develop a fairly complete picture of pre-colonial Central Africa. However, it is important to remember that this involves a certain amount of guesswork. Students of history should understand that some of the guesses we make about pre-colonial cultures cannot always be confirmed or refuted.

worshipped multiple spirits that were associated with a supreme being. People prayed to these spirits or to dead ancestors whom they believed could influence the spirits. In most areas, leaders derived some of their power from religious practices. The rulers of the Kongo people, for instance, were thought of as protectors of the “spirits of the land.”

In addition to religion, the varieties of Central African geography helped to define different ethnic groups. Regional environmental differences between the tropical rainforest and savanna regions led to variations in plant and animal life. As a result, the groups of people who lived in those areas developed different practices and cultures. For instance, in areas close to the Congo River, fishing provided a major source of food and the river allowed for trade and communication among neighboring groups. In the savanna, groups

had access to large areas of fertile agricultural land where they could settle and be assured of a plentiful variety of food.

On the other hand, in the rainforest, people developed different ways of life. Tropical rainforest soils lose their fertility very quickly. As a result, new fields had to be cleared for agriculture every three to five years to allow exhausted soil to lie fallow and be replenished by the forest. This process of letting land lie fallow meant that villages needed to hold in reserve four or five times the amount of land they were currently farming. This practice helped to keep population densities (the number of people per square mile) in rainforest areas low and created distance between villages.

By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE, large empires or kingdoms developed as populations grew and smaller communities

merged together. Many of these kingdoms were located in the savanna lands south of the Congo River, which could support large populations. Some of the biggest groups were the Luba, the Lunda, and the Kongo. These kingdoms took advantage of trading opportunities to gain access to the copper mines in the south, to salt from the east (salt helped to preserve food), and crafts and tools from each other. As these trade networks expanded, cultural and technological ideas spread along with the products traded. Sometimes neighboring groups fought over resources, and sometimes these trading relationships were friendly and peaceful.

Slave Trading

In the 1480s, Portuguese ships arrived in Central Africa at the mouth of the Congo River, the center of the Kongo kingdom. It was from the Kongo that Europeans got the name for the entire region. Initially, the Kongo were glad to trade with the Portuguese, because the relationship provided a new market for their goods and they received goods from the Portuguese. The Kongo also hoped that the Portuguese would share new technological knowledge. In a few years, however, the Portuguese traders found that the Kongo could not supply the volume of gold, copper, and other valuable resources that they wanted. After the Portuguese established sugar-cane plantations on nearby islands off the coast of central Africa, they found African labor—slaves—to be a much more valuable commodity.

Slavery existed throughout the continent of Africa before Europeans began to travel there. In Africa, slaves were often prisoners of war captured from enemies, who were either eventually ransomed back to their families or sold to others. Frequently, enslaved people were allowed to earn money or own land, or even to marry locals. Over the course of generations, enslaved Africans and their descendants were often able to assimilate into their new societies. Despite these traditions, some slaves still were abused and many desired their freedom.

How did Portuguese slave trading influence Central Africa?

When the Portuguese suggested trading merchandise for slaves, the concept among the Kongo and other peoples of the region was not new. However, the influence of the Portuguese and their high demand for slaves changed the local African societies. Conflicts between different groups intensified as they searched for new captives who could be traded for European manufactured goods, including weapons. The introduction of guns disrupted societies, and changed the nature of their relationships with one another. Those with direct contacts with the Portuguese could trade humans for weapons which could then be used to capture still more slaves.

In 1506, King Afonso took the throne of the Kongo. Afonso converted to Christianity and even communicated with the Pope in Rome. He sent his son to study in Portugal, who returned to become the first black Catholic bishop. He also increased his power and the size of his kingdom by using guns he purchased from the Portuguese.

Beginning in 1514, the slave trade became an integral part of the economy of the area. Like all Kongo monarchs, Afonso owned slaves, but he was troubled by the nature of this new slave trade. In 1526, he wrote to the Portuguese king about its disruptive effects on his kingdom.

“Sir, Your Highness should know how our Kingdom is being lost in so many ways.... We cannot reckon how great the damage is, since the mentioned merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives, because the thieves and men of bad conscience grab them wishing to have the things and wares of this Kingdom.... So great, Sir, is the corruption...that our country is being completely depopulated, and

Your Highness should not agree with this nor accept it.”

—King Afonso’s letter to the
King of Portugal

Afonso’s pleas had no effect. Instead, increasing numbers of Europeans—notably the French, British, and Dutch—came to the region to purchase more slaves for their plantations in the New World. By the late eighteenth century, Europeans were exporting about fifteen thousand slaves per year from the Congo. Congolese middlemen traded with groups in the interior to supply this demand. European records from the 1790s show slaves arriving at the coast from as far inland as seven hundred miles. Until Europeans abandoned the slave trade in the early 1800s, it dominated the commerce of the area.

Many ethnic groups in the interior abandoned their traditional productive activities such as farming and fishing to devote all of their time to the slave trade and the trade of other European products. Records show that the Aruwimi people, over two thousand miles from the coast, received European and American cloth, satin strips, kettles, umbrellas, brass rods, iron cooking pots, pipes, mirrors, knives, beads, muskets, and gunpowder in trade for local products. While some ethnic groups lost large numbers of their people to slavery, other groups prospered as the middlemen of the slave trade.

The damage the slave trade caused Africa can never be fully calculated, but some statements can be made with certainty. The slave trade caused direct loss of life through warfare, both with Europeans and among African ethnic groups. Fighting caused indirect loss of life through destruction of crops and food storage areas, and through the spread of diseases. The slave trade enriched African kingdoms and communities that had developed advanced methods of warfare, but destroyed many smaller populations that fell victim to conquest.

Many captives died while being transported to the coast or on the voyage overseas. The result was the loss of millions of lives. However, the Congo interior suffered far less

from the slave trade than did many areas of West Africa and coastal areas of Central Africa, the main sources of slaves taken by European traders. Historians estimate that one and a half million slaves were taken out of the Congo region. Overall, the Atlantic slave trade took about twelve million people from Africa.

How did the end of the Atlantic slave trade affect Central African trading systems?

Changing economic conditions in Europe and the New World led to a decreased desire for slave labor. Eventually the Europeans who had created this trade in human cargo had a change of conscience. The British, formerly dominant in the slave trade, banned it in the early 1800s. Others followed suit. By the 1850s, the European demand for slaves had nearly dried up. But Europeans were still interested in trading for other goods.

By the time the Atlantic slave trade ended, there were new kingdoms in the Congo region. The Kongo kingdom, for instance, was reduced significantly in size and power, while groups in the interior such as the Chokwe, the Lunda, and the Ovimbundu gained prominence. These groups, among others, built on the slave trading routes of decades earlier and organized huge trading ventures to move products across the continent, both to African groups and to Europeans and Americans at the coasts. Through these trade networks new European crops worked their way into the interior. Other products were traded as well. Local woods, camwood powder used in cosmetics, wax, tin, copper, lead, palm oil, and rubber (used for the newly-invented bicycle tire) were exported to the coast and then on to Europe and North America.

A European demand for elephant ivory began to rise around the same time. Ivory became knife handles, piano keys, billiard balls, and jewelry. To keep the trade routes working, many of the Africans who had trafficked in slaves for the Europeans now kept slaves to carry ivory and other products downstream for export and to bring European manufactured goods upstream as valuable imports.

What was the Indian Ocean slave trade?

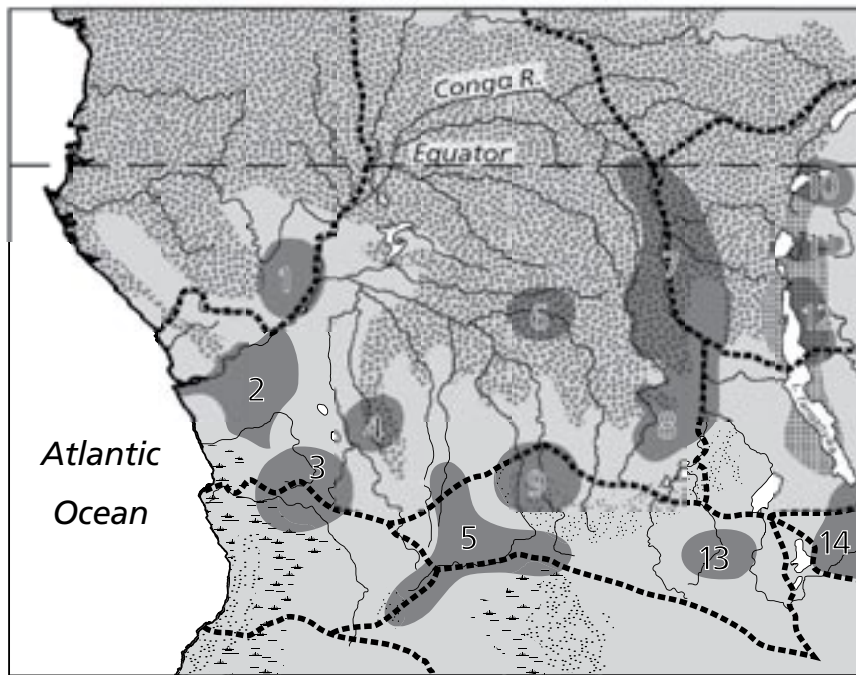
Around the same time, and despite the end of the European-dominated Atlantic slave trade, slave traders on the east coast of Africa worked their way inland to the eastern Congo and began to export large numbers of slaves to ports on the Indian Ocean. Many of these slave traders came from the Swahili ethnic group, coastal merchants who moved inland to trade slaves and take control of large territories. The traders sold the slaves they captured to French plantation owners on the coast of East Africa, to Brazilian traders who needed still more slaves for their huge plantations in South America, and to others who owned plantations on the east coast of Africa. The slave market at Zanzibar, an island off of what is now Tansa-

nia, exported as many as seventy thousand slaves per year in the 1860s. One of the most famous of these traders who worked his way inland was commonly known as Tippu Tip, and his weapons and men extended his empire deep into the forests of the Congo. Leaders of African groups to the west feared him and his “army” of raiders.

“These [raiders] have no cloth or beads or wares of merchandise. They obtain their ivory by robbing.... They attack the simple peoples...right and left., 12 or 15 slaves then caught are sold for 35 pounds of ivory.”

—From the diary of Henry Stanley, explorer

Although most of the various ethnic groups in the Congo were self-governing in the late nineteenth century and had little or no direct contact with white people, this demand for ivory and slaves from the east and for resources like copper and rubber from the west increasingly opened up the interior of the Congo to outsiders. These more secure trade routes as well as other developments made Europeans more interested in intervention in the area.



States of Central Africa, 1850

- | | | | |
|----------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1 Teke | 5 Chokwe | 9 Mwata Yamvo's territory | 12 Burundi |
| 2 Kongo | 6 Kuba | 10 Nkore | 13 Yeke |
| 3 Bagala | 7 Tippu Tip's territory | 11 Rwanda | 14 Bemba |
| 4 Yaka | 8 Luba Empire | | |

Rainforest	Deciduous Forest
Montane Forest	Grassland
Semidesert	African State
Trade Route	River

European Interests in Africa

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the great powers of Europe (Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, and the Netherlands) divided North and South America among themselves in a process called colonization. Meanwhile, much of

Asia, Australia and the Pacific was also falling under European control. Throughout this period, Sub-Saharan Africa held little interest for Europeans except as a source for slaves. Additionally, Europeans could not access most of the interior of Africa because of disease and difficult travel conditions.

It was not until the 1870s that European advances in tropical medicine, transportation, and technology made it possible to explore the vast interior of this continent. With these new advances in place, the drive to explore and take over central Africa could begin. There were several reasons Europeans became more interested in Africa, and there were several ways in which they intervened.

Why did Europeans want to go to the interior of the African continent?

One reason Europeans wanted to become more involved in Africa had to do with the economic situation in Europe. By the 1870s, the Industrial Revolution had transformed the economies of the Great Powers. The basis of these economies shifted from farming and hand-made products to the mass production of manufactured goods in factories. In 1873, a terrible economic depression struck Europe. Many people suggested that Africa could be a source of cheap raw materials for the factories while providing new customers for products manufactured in Europe.

Competition was another reason Europeans wanted to explore Africa. Many people in different countries argued that their countries would gain more power in Europe if their governments established colonies in Africa. Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands already had colonies in America and Asia. Other Europeans felt they needed to “catch up,” so a race began among European countries to learn more about areas in Africa where they might acquire territory and set up colonies ahead of their rivals.

A third major reason why Europeans developed an increased interest in Africa involved Christianity and morals. Many Europeans were aghast at the “backward” people

they thought lived in Africa. Ironically, many Europeans of the late nineteenth century condemned the widespread practice of slavery in Africa. A condition the Europeans helped to create became evidence of backward practices that were used to justify European control over supposedly “less civilized” people. Many Europeans saw it as their duty to save the souls of those less fortunate, to uplift the populations, and to bring civilization to what they saw as a “heathen” continent.

***“Take up the white man’s burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
go bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives’ need;
To wait in heavy harness,
on fluttered folk and wild—
your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child.”***

—from *The White Man’s Burden*, by
Rudyard Kipling

How did Europeans begin to “open up” the continent?

The first Europeans to make inroads in the interior of Africa were Christian missionaries, but they did not have much effect on African peoples until the late nineteenth century. At that time, European governments began to support the work of missionaries and protect them from Africans who resisted their presence. While many missionaries claimed only to be spreading their faith, often they also insisted that Africans change their style of dress or their social structures. Many Africans who converted to Christianity also adopted European customs, and some African customs declined. Missionaries also often built schools and provided information about hygiene and sanitation. Many Africans learned to read and write in these schools.

European governments also supported the work of explorers who mapped vast regions of Africa. Many of the Europeans who travelled in Africa became major celebrities and household names in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth century. Newspapers competed to carry the most up-to-date details

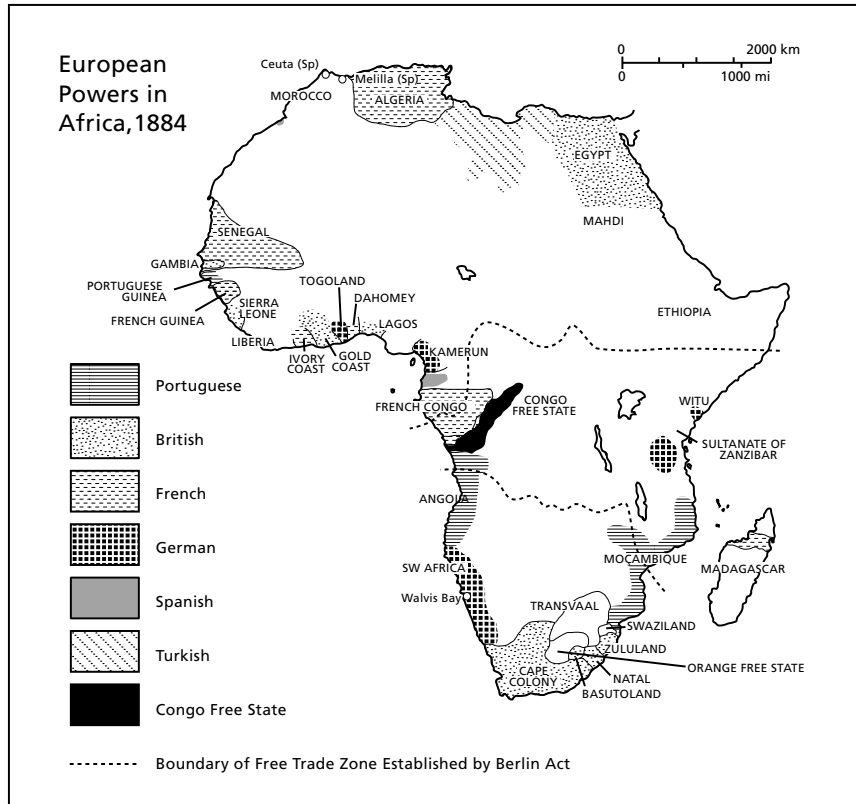


Image courtesy of V. Estabrook.

the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, to abolish the desolating slave trade of Central Africa, where with his last words he wrote, 'All I can add in my solitude, is, may heaven's rich blessing come down on every one, American, English, or Turk, who will help to heal this open sore of the world.'"

—From David Livingstone's epitaph

One of the major goals of these European travelers was to make contacts with Africans of the interior in order to develop trade for European merchants.

By the end of the nineteenth century, several European companies established trading posts near the coasts of the African continent. These trading partnerships would soon make it easier for the European powers to take over African territory and establish colonies.

The Scramble for Africa

The movement among Europeans for control of the African continent is often called the "scramble for Africa" because it happened so quickly, and was so marked by competition among the Europeans.

In the 1870s, the nations of Europe as well as the United States were producing goods at a fast pace in their new factories. In fact, they were running out of people to sell them to. Several European countries struggled to establish "protected" areas of Africa, zones where only they—and no other country—could trade with the local inhabitants. Sometimes Africans would accept these "protections" because they thought that they would be protected from

of the exploits of people like Pierre de Brazza, John Speke, Friedrich Rohlfs, and Verney Cameron. These explorers travelled on the heavily trafficked trade routes Africans had established, and they usually depended heavily on Africans to help them get from place to place. Perhaps a more accurate term for these people would be "reporters," as one of their most important contributions was to inform their fellow Europeans of what Africans had known for centuries.

David Livingstone, a British man, became another famous traveler in Africa. The press portrayed him as a hero, a philanthropist, and even a saint. Livingstone was dismayed to discover the growing Indian Ocean slave trade. He proposed to cure it through the three Cs: Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization. This became the rallying cry of a whole generation of Europeans who sought to "save Africa from itself."

"For 30 years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize

neighboring, hostile groups. Instead, Europeans began to settle in these “protected” areas and forcibly remove Africans from their homes and from power. The advances of European weaponry outpaced those of the African armies. By 1883, France occupied parts of what are now Algeria, Senegal, and Gabon and the Congo Republic; Britain had some of Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt, and South Africa; and the Portuguese had some of Mozambique and Angola. All of these areas were on the coast of the African continent.

In the midst of the rivalries among the Great Powers of Europe, King Leopold II of the tiny nation of Belgium played the most important role in the story of the Congo. This leader of a country overshadowed by its larger, more powerful neighbors wanted desperately to build up an overseas empire in order to secure his position in the world. He thought that a great opportunity existed in Central Africa, a region in which other European countries had not shown interest.

“I believe that the time has come to spread ourselves outwards; we cannot afford to lose more time, under penalty of seeing the best positions, which are already becoming rare, successively occupied by nations more enterprising than our own.”

—King Leopold II

How did one man end up controlling most of Central Africa as his own territory?

In September 1876, King Leopold hosted the largest gathering of explorers and geographers of the entire nineteenth century. In his opening speech he stated that the goal of the conference was to bring civilization to Africa.

“[Our goal is]...to open to civilization the only part of the globe where it has yet to penetrate.... It is, I dare to say, a crusade worthy of this century of progress.... In bringing you to



© Bettmann/Corbis. Used with permission.

King Leopold II of Belgium.

Brussels I was in no way motivated by selfish designs.”

—King Leopold II

The conference ended with the formation of the International Africa Association, an organization meant to coordinate the remaining exploration of Central Africa and to help open the interior of Africa to the benefits of trade with Europe. Most participants left impressed with the king’s dedication to the advancement of humanitarian causes. The king’s real motives were hardly altruistic.

“I do not want to miss a good chance of getting us a slice of this magnificent African cake.”

—King Leopold II

Leopold failed to interest the Belgian Parliament in his scheme to acquire a portion

of Africa, but he did hire Henry Stanley, an American man, to continue his exploration and to secure treaties with the local chiefs of the Congo River basin. At the same time, the French explorer Pierre de Brazza set out on a similar quest in a different part of the Congo basin, creating a rivalry that held the European public's attention for several years.

From 1879 to 1884, Stanley made his way across Central Africa signing treaties with local chiefs on behalf of King Leopold. Through a combination of trade, trickery, alcohol, intimidation, and violent force, Stanley emerged with over 450 treaties. Contrary to the original promises of the International Africa Association, these treaties granted Leopold exclusive trading rights and gave him, or his designated corporations, exclusive control over the land. Elsewhere in Central Africa, Brazza used more honorable methods to secure trade agreements for France. The rivalry between King Leopold and France marked the opening chapter in the “scramble for Africa.” Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, and King Leopold all began to turn their attention to the vast areas that any European power had yet to claim.

Why was the Berlin Conference organized?

To reduce the possibility of conflicts arising among the European powers, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck arranged for an international conference to be held in Berlin in 1884. The conference was intended to provide a kind of organization to the “carving up” of Africa that had begun several years before. Bismarck was not especially interested in Africa, but he recognized that his country's position in Europe could be improved through careful manipulation of events in Africa.

***“Here is Russia and here is France,
with Germany in the middle. That is
my map of Africa.”***

—Chancellor Otto von Bismarck

Bismarck gave the French his word that he would support their claims against the British in Africa. He hoped in turn that this would im-

prove his own country's relations with France. By doing so, Germany could instead direct its attention against its main enemy, Russia, a country with no interests in Africa.

What happened at the Berlin Conference?

Representatives of fourteen nations (including the United States) came together for the Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885. Because it was not a nation, Leopold's association was not invited. Bismarck welcomed the representatives with a speech in which he declared that they were all there to promote the three Cs: Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization. To achieve this goal, he stated, the conference had three aims: to ensure free trade for all nations throughout the Congo, to ensure free navigation for all countries on the Niger River of West Africa (which looked like it was about to fall under British control), and to agree on a set of rules by which the Europeans could proceed to divide the rest of the continent.

Not a single African representative was at the meeting, and few of the participating diplomats had ever set foot on the continent. Conveniently for Leopold, the person at the conference with the most experience in Africa was his friend and paid employee, Henry Stanley. To further assist the Belgian king, he had informants on three of the countries' delegations. Through these contacts, he was able to manipulate events for his own benefit.

For example, when the British delegation complained about the amount of land that was going to be granted to Leopold's association, Leopold suggested that if he did not get what he wanted, he would pull out of Africa completely. That would leave France with the first chance to buy the territory, an outcome the British did not want. Britain quickly shifted its position to support Leopold's bid for a huge territory. Through this and other manipulations, Leopold ended up getting most of what he wanted. Outside of the conference he managed to sign treaties with all the Great Powers recognizing his personal control of the Congo. Leopold hired a lobbyist to convince United States Senators and others of his good inten-

Excerpts from the Berlin Act

- Article I: The trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom.
- Article V: No power exercising sovereign rights in the Congo basin should grant therein a monopoly or favor of any kind in matters of trade.
- Article VI: The Powers exercising Sovereign rights of influence in the aforesaid territories bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well being.

tions in the Congo. The United States was the first country to formally recognize Leopold's control.

The conference ended with the signing of the Berlin Act of 1885. Among other provisions, the signatories agreed to protect freedom of religion in all of the colonial territories of Africa. They also promised to “watch over the preservation of the native tribes and to care for the improvement of their moral and material well-being,” and to help in suppressing slavery.

The Berlin Conference also allowed for the “partition” of Africa. Over the next twenty years all of Africa except Liberia (which was a colony of black immigrants from the United States) and Ethiopia (which retained its independence by defeating Italy in battle) would be sliced up among the Europeans like the “mag-

nificent cake” Leopold had envisioned years earlier. Britain and France took the two largest pieces, adding to their already sprawling colonial empires. These takeovers often involved violent suppression of African resistance.

Additionally, the divisions of the continent did not correspond to any African divisions already in place. At nearly every border ethnic groups were split, and in every new European-drawn country groups hostile to one another came under the same European ruler.

The participants in the Berlin Conference believed they had created a huge free trade zone (hence the Congo “Free” zone) in Central Africa where merchants of all countries would be able to trade equally, regardless of which Europeans governed an area.

“The resolutions we are on the point of sanctioning secure to the commerce of all nations free access to the center of the African continent.”

—Chancellor Otto von Bismarck

Leaders of the other European powers expected Leopold to play the role of the humanitarian administrator creating a just and stable government in the Congo and abolishing the Indian Ocean slave trade. The participants expected he would create the conditions in which missionaries and businessmen could do the work of “civilizing” Central Africa. Instead, Leopold began the process of extracting all possible wealth out of the area with no consideration for the people who lived there.

Part II: The Congo “Free” State

Three months after the Berlin Conference ended its work, Leopold named his new territory, the size of Western Europe, the Congo Free State. King Leopold took on the title of “King-Sovereign of the Congo Free State,” a role considered completely independent of his position as King of the Belgians, as the Belgian government had no interest in running a colony.

Establishing Control Over the Congo

One of the first decrees of the new government, issued on July 1, 1885, gave the state the right to take for itself “vacant” lands not “effectively occupied” by Africans. This one law placed almost the entire territory in the hands of the new Free State government. The law required that villages and towns surrender all of their surrounding lands, which they had used for generations for hunting or farming. Only the smallest fields immediately adjacent to their homes could remain theirs. Putting this law into practice and placing government administrators across the territory became a difficult task for Leopold. He had few people to manage the huge area, inadequate funds, and a great deal of resistance from the local populations.

Why did Leopold not have enough money to appoint administrators in the Congo?

Leopold had to raise large sums of money to finance the administration of his new government, to manage the frontier of his new territory, and to build a railroad in order to bring people and goods from the interior to the coast. Contrary to what Leopold had told the Belgian Parliament and others, he had no money himself to spend on these projects. In fact, he had spent millions of Belgian francs on acquiring the area in the first place. Now he had to borrow still more money to manage it. Because potential lenders did not have much proof that the Congo could be profitable, he found it hard to raise the sums he needed. As a

result, for the first few years of the Congo Free State’s existence, there were very few administrators. Few reliable, well-trained people wanted to move from Europe to the Congo, where conditions were difficult.

How did the Congolese react to the new government?

Leopold faced opposition from the local populations as he took over this vast area in Central Africa. Although some groups were successful in holding off Leopold’s takeover for a time, many were not. The king of the Yeke people, who lived in the mineral-rich Katanga area, refused to turn over his lands to Europeans, but his subjects gave in when their leader was murdered.

“I am the master here, and so long as I live, the Kingdom of Garengaze [Katanga] shall have no other.”

—Msiri, King of the Yeke people, shortly before a Free State officer shot him dead

Meanwhile, as more and more Europeans made their way inland to trade, many of the river-based Congolese trading groups, such as the Bobangi and Boloki, resisted the competition. The European steamships operated by the Free State government and private companies posed a major threat to the canoe-based trading systems of the local peoples. Bobangi traders responded to the new invaders with force. In one location, they raided and burned a Free State trading post twice. Agents of the Free State responded to this resistance with military actions called “pacification campaigns.”

“The expedition has destroyed all the villages between the mouth of the Kasai [River] and Bolobo. The fields are all ravaged. The inhabitants had defended themselves and a great many were killed.”

—a European trader

In order to deal with such revolts, and to manage the Congo Free State's frontiers, Leopold put together a military force in 1888. The *Force Publique*, as it was known, was made up of officers from Europe and soldiers from the Congo and other African states. The Force Publique became the largest military force in Africa, and took more than half of the Free State's funds. Many of the soldiers were slaves who were chained together when traveling from one location to another. They were fed poorly, not paid well, and often abused by their officers.

How did the Swahili traders in the east respond to King Leopold's new reign?

In addition to small attacks from Congolese villages and kingdoms, Leopold found widespread resistance to his rule from the Swahili in the eastern area of his territory as well. Tippu Tip and his fellow raiders were "stealing" Leopold's wealth by bringing ivory and slaves to the east coast of the continent as they had done for dozens of years. These slave raiders resented the new restrictions that Leopold's rule placed on them. It took many months of warfare between the raiders and the eight-thousand-strong Force Publique to put down the Swahili uprisings.

After the defeat of the slave trading states in 1893, Leopold and his Force Publique set about establishing control over the extensive Congo Free State. Often this process meant violently suppressing the troops themselves, who acquired weapons and fought against their officers.

All of this activity cost Leopold and the Free State government money. The government was losing about three million francs a year because it spent so much more than it was able to make. The junior officers of the state, who had been assigned to control areas and collect rubber and ivory, were not collecting enough to be profitable. The government began to pressure officers to collect more. It also began to look into other ways to make a profit.

Profit-Making in the Congo

Although very few outside the Congo region knew it yet, Leopold's endeavors there had little to do with the well-being of the people. Most of Europe was convinced he was engaged in a grand humanitarian effort. He regularly assured people that he was investing vast sums of his personal wealth in projects supposedly undertaken for the good of the Congolese people.

Why did Leopold convene an anti-slavery conference?

In 1889, Leopold devised a scheme to raise more funds for his Free State administration. He convened a major anti-slavery conference in Brussels, Belgium to address the issue of the slave trade. Delegates from seventeen countries came together to consider how this trade could be ended quickly in all places on earth, but especially in Central and East Africa.

At this conference, Leopold was able to convince the leaders of the other countries that the Congo Free State needed to be able to charge import and export duties to raise funds. These funds, he said, would then be used to combat the slave trade. Using this humanitarian disguise, Leopold implemented the first major restriction of free trade in the Congo. In the end, the funds he raised through the additional taxes were used to force Congolese to work for him.

Shortly after the anti-slavery conference, Leopold issued a new decree which said that Africans could only sell their harvested products (mostly ivory and rubber) to the state. This law grew out of the earlier decree which had said that all "unoccupied" land belonged to the state. Any ivory or rubber collected from the state-owned land, the reasoning went, must belong to the state. Suddenly, the only outlet the local population had for their products was the state, which could set purchase prices and therefore could control the amount of income, if any, the Congolese could receive for their work.

Private trading companies began to lose out to the Free State government, which not only paid no taxes but also collected all the potential income. These companies were outraged by the restrictions on free trade, which the Berlin Act had so carefully protected years before. Their protests against the violation of free trade caused Leopold to take another, less obvious tack to make money.

What were the “concession” companies?

In October of 1892, Leopold granted “concessions” to two companies. Each company was given a huge amount of land in the Congo Free State on which to collect rubber and ivory for sale in Europe. These companies, which Leopold largely controlled through friends of his, were allowed to detain Africans who did not work hard enough, to police their vast areas as they saw fit, and to take all the products of the forest for themselves. Although legally they were separate from the state, in practice they had all the same resources at their disposal.

Later, a large portion of the land (a quarter of a million acres) in the center of the country went to Leopold himself. He named that area *Domaine de la Couronne*, literally, “Field of the Crown.” Although the concession companies and the *Domaine* paid taxes to the state, their ability to use the Congolese to extract resources from the land enabled them to begin to make vast sums of money. They forced out private traders, and destroyed the already weak Congolese economies.

How did the rubber tax change the financial situation for the Congo Free State?

Even following these measures, however, the Free State government was still in debt. Leopold’s next move was to tax villages. His agents argued that they had spent large sums on suppressing the slave trade, constructing a railroad around the Congo River rapids from the new city of Leopoldville to the coast, and bringing modern medicine to the tropics. In return they expected a tax to be paid, but since the people had no currency Europeans recognized, the Congolese would need to pay it in

the form of labor to collect rubber. Rubber was becoming more and more important as Europeans began to find more ways to use it—in car tires, hoses, and industrial equipment. The trade in ivory, though still important, became less significant as demand for rubber increased.

The concession companies began to tax the Congolese as well, which increased the amount of rubber the locals brought to the trading posts from the forests as the companies punished people who did not pay these rubber taxes. In a short time, both the concession companies and Leopold’s own agents, including members of the Force Publique, were beginning to make money. Both Free State officers and agents of the concession companies were paid low salaries. They worked mostly on commission, so they had incentive to collect a great deal of rubber from the local Congolese. The value of rubber exports from the Congo grew by a factor of 168 between 1888 and 1905.

What effect did the rubber trade have on the Congolese?

Meanwhile, the effect of the rubber trade on the population of the Congo was more devastating than the European slave trade had been years earlier. Most demographers (people who study population trends) estimate that the population fell by nearly 50 percent over the two decades after the rubber trade began. This remarkable decline was due to a variety of factors, including executions, deaths in battles of resistance, separation of husbands from wives for extended periods of time, people fleeing from the Congo Free State to neighboring territories, exhaustion from overwork, and famine created by the fact that people no longer had time, and in many cases, adequate land, to farm.

Most of the rubber the Congolese collected came from vines, which could not recover quickly from harvesting. As a result, people had to go farther and farther into the forest to reach new vines. When people did not bring back enough rubber to satisfy the traders, punishments were brutal. Members of the

Force Publique as well as state officials and company agents frequently killed people who did not bring in enough rubber. As proof that they had not misused ammunition, soldiers and agents cut the hands off of their victims after killing them and brought them to their superiors. Sometimes women were held hostage until the men brought in enough rubber to satisfy the state or companies. Other people were regularly whipped, often to death. Frequently, to punish people without having to use ammunition at all, agents would cut the hands off of a person still alive.

“We had to go further and further into the forest to find the rubber vines, to go without food, and our women had to give up cultivating the fields and gardens. Then we starved. Wild beasts—leopards—killed some of us when we were working away in



Photos of three children mutilated by Congolese soldiers.

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. Used with permission.

the forest, and others got lost or died from exposure and starvation, and we begged the white man to leave us alone, saying that we could get no more rubber, but the white men and their soldiers said: ‘Go! You are only beasts yourselves.’”

—A Congolese refugee

Because the trade in rubber had destroyed local economies, few Congolese groups could successfully resist. In 1900, the Budja tribe

Cannibalism

Many early European explorers in Central Africa expected to find that the native Congolese were cannibals. They had heard gruesome reports of such practices. In fact, some groups in Central Africa did practice cannibalism, either as a ritual or as a regular food supply. While historians now believe that various forms of cannibalism were widespread in the Congo, many tribes rejected cannibalism entirely.

Some Europeans used the presence of cannibalism—often exaggerated in reports that reached Europe—as a justification for intervention in Africa. Tantalized as well as horrified by the accounts, they spoke of needing to bring morality to the continent. They also used it as a justification for the policies of the Free State. Whatever wrongs might have occurred as a result of Leopold’s rule, they reasoned, the effect of this strict rule ended the practice of cannibalism.

Beginning in 1892, wars between Leopold’s Force Publique and the Swahilis of the eastern area of the Congo killed thousands of people. The violence and destruction forced increasing numbers of people to turn to cannibalism to survive. Following the wars, groups continued to practice cannibalism as a result of policies of the Free State. Because rubber collecting often made it impossible to grow food, many societies were left with no choice. Others simply continued with a practice that had been a part of their culture for centuries.



Kean Collection/Hulton Archive/Getty Images. Used with permission.

George Washington Williams.

revolted against the European trading company that now controlled their land. Five of the company’s agents were killed. The Free State government then took retribution, killing thirteen hundred Budja men. Fighting continued until 1903, when the tribe was finally subdued.

Many Africans resorted to flight as other forms of resistance became impossible. As a result of these evacuations and of the mass killings, many villages were completely depopulated.

“I ran away with two old people, but they were caught and killed, and the soldiers made me carry the baskets holding their cut-off hands. They killed my little sister, threw her in a house, and set it on fire.”

—A Congolese refugee

Early Reports of Atrocities

As early as 1891, the British government began to get reports from its posts in West Africa of atrocities committed in the Congo. British African subjects were being recruited

to serve in the Force Publique, and upon return to their homes shared their experiences with British officials. The British Foreign and Colonial Offices, however, were reluctant to speak up against Leopold’s tactics. If Britain began to force Leopold to make changes, the Foreign Office reasoned, Leopold might be persuaded to make deals with the French in retaliation, thereby increasing French power in Africa. The possibility of such a situation alarmed the Foreign Office and convinced it that no action was the safest course.

In the rest of Europe and in the United States, the Congo Free State was for most still a symbol of the civilizing mission of Europeans in Africa. It was this image that drew the outsiders who would eventually expose the evils of King Leopold’s Congo.

What role did George Washington Williams play in uncovering the atrocities in the Congo?

The first of these outsiders was an African-American named George Washington Williams. Intrigued by the idea of sending educated American blacks to work in this great humanitarian experiment, he traveled to the Congo in 1890. In a matter of days he went from being one of the biggest boosters of the Congo Free State to its fiercest critic.

Williams was the first witness to the abuses in the Congo with the courage to speak out. He wrote a letter directly to King Leopold and another to the president of the United States describing what he had witnessed. In the letters, he catalogued the atrocities.

“...Two Belgian Army officers saw, from the deck of their steamer, a native in a canoe.... The officers made a wager of £5 that they could hit the native with their rifles. Three shots were fired and the native fell dead, pierced through the head, and the trade canoe was transformed into a funeral barge and floated down the river.”

—from George Washington Williams’ letter to King Leopold

Once he had finished recording the enormous range of abuses he found in the Congo, Williams called for action. He appealed to the countries that had signed the Berlin Act to create a commission to investigate his charges. He recommended to the United States that it take the lead in pressuring Leopold to change the nature of the Free State immediately. He felt the United States should play this role since it had been the first country to recognize the Congo Free State as a member of the family of nations. Williams also asked the Belgian people to exercise their influence with their king. He called on concerned individuals to organize themselves to demand change. He urged abolitionist groups, Christian organizations, philanthropists, and diplomats to lobby their governments on behalf of the victims in the Congo. Williams believed that concerned individuals could create a climate in which governments would be forced to take action.

Williams' letters alarmed King Leopold. If the recommendations were followed, Leopold could lose control over a vast area that was just beginning to show its potential for wealth production. He began a campaign to spread damaging rumors about Williams' personal life and to counter the charges before they could do much harm.

For a brief period after Williams' letters were published, it looked as though Leopold's entire project could unravel. However, Williams died of medical complications while in England and his plea on behalf of the millions of people in Central Africa disappeared into the shadows.

How did missionaries contribute to the effort to end the abuses in the Congo Free State?

The outsiders in the best position to know the truth about the Congo were the Christian missionaries who streamed into the colony following its initial exploration. True to his word, Leopold allowed missionaries from all countries to operate within the region. Protestants and Catholics from Europe and North America quickly established their presence in many of the districts of the Free State.

Some of these missionaries did not practice in areas hard hit by the atrocities, or were not in positions to know about the widespread nature of the brutality. A few protested privately to the Free State government. Others chose doing their jobs and helping people in need over being expelled for speaking out. However, by 1895, a tiny number of these individuals began reconstructing the story that Williams had told years before. A Baptist missionary from the United States wrote an article for *The Times* newspaper of London, and a year later a Swedish missionary gave a speech at a meeting in London.

“If the rubber the Congolese collect does not reach the required amount, the sentries attack them, kill some, and bring the severed hands to the District Commissioner. One sentry said ‘The Commissioner has promised us if we have plenty of hands, he will shorten our service.’ The hands were often smoked to preserve them till shown to the District Commissioner.”

—Edvard Sjöblom, Swedish missionary

Initially, stories of the atrocities were few and mostly ignored. Most people believed they were hearing exaggerations when they heard of thousands of people being killed for not collecting enough rubber and having their hands cut off so soldiers could prove they had killed inadequate workers. Some dismissed the missionaries as “do-gooders” who always were looking for victims of atrocity somewhere in the world whom they could help. Leopold also clouded the issues by suggesting that Protestants were simply trying to defame a colony operated by a Catholic monarch. He temporarily succeeded in using the centuries-old Catholic-Protestant rivalry in Europe to distract people from the real issues.

What other groups picked up the call for action?

In 1897, a former Free State administrator published an article deploring the government.

He noted that the expenses for managing the territory were so massive that it was using any means possible to obtain revenue.

“[The Belgians] raid villages, take slaves, and give them back for ivory.... The state has not suppressed slavery, but established a monopoly by driving out the Arabs [Swahili] and Zanzibar competitors.”

—E.J. Glave, former Free State administrator

That same year, Sir Charles Dilke, a member of the British House of Commons (the lower house of the British legislature), also denounced Leopold’s government. Dilke had heard of the poor treatment of British West African subjects who had traveled to the Congo as soldiers. However, throughout the 1890s, most in Europe believed that even if such atrocities were occurring, that they must be isolated incidents perpetrated by a few “bad apples” and not indicative of a system-wide problem.

Starting in 1896, an organization called the Aborigines Protection Society (APS) began to urge the British government to investigate the stories that had filtered out of the Congo. Great Britain had colonies of its own in Africa, so many British people were interested in what happened on that continent. Many British were proud that their country had expended much time and resources in suppressing the Atlantic slave trade earlier in the century. Members of the APS were focused on the well-being of native subjects of European colonies.

Henry Richard Fox Bourne, the head of APS, wrote a book called *Civilization in Congo: A Story of International Wrong-doing*. Unlike the numerous books that people who had never travelled to the Congo published praising Leopold for his humanitarian efforts, this book’s publication in 1903 chronicled the abuses in great detail.

Ironically, the APS had earlier elected Leopold as its honorary president in the 1880s. Like so many others, its members had believed

Leopold’s promises. By the late 1890s, the APS learned its lesson and emerged as one of Leopold’s chief critics.

Why did the British government do nothing despite these early reports?

Charles Dilke and the APS gained little headway initially, as neither the Foreign Office nor the Parliament wanted to discuss the issue at that time. There were fears in the Foreign Office that any reconvening of the Berlin Act signatories would lead to some sort of resettlement about the Congo that could put Britain at a disadvantage. Additionally, Britain at this time was mired in a war in its colony in South Africa. It did not have the energy or the means to deal with what was thought of as another country’s problem. There is evidence, though, that the Foreign Office looked into the matter and decided that there was no legal argument it could make that the Congo was violating the Berlin Act, and that Britain therefore had no jurisdiction over the problem.

“I do not think that...we could do more than make a formal remonstrance on the ground that they were not fulfilling their treaty obligations as defined by the Berlin Act.... We have no further remedy short of the employment of actual force.”

—British Foreign Office, 1900

Meanwhile, Leopold’s ventures in the Congo were finally making enough money to cover the enormous expenses of running the colony and to be profitable. In 1901, six thousand tons of rubber, valued at forty million francs, left the Congo. Between 1896 and 1905, Leopold’s *Domaine* earned seventy million francs. The commissioned companies were making money as well, and Belgians were finding employment in the Congo. Leopold took over the Belgian Departments of State and Treasury himself, and gave himself more loans in order to build castles and other large buildings in Belgium. It seemed that much was going well for Leopold.

How did E.D. Morel turn the tide against Leopold?

In the late 1890s, a shipping clerk working for a company in Liverpool, England became troubled by the cargo lists of ships traveling to and from the Congo Free State. Edmund Dene Morel, head of his company's Congo department, recognized from examining the accounting books that nothing resembling free trade was taking place in the Congo. Like most others, he had ignored the few people who were already sounding the warning. He was startled to discover that 80 percent of the items shipped into the Congo had nothing to do with trade and everything to do with equipping a military state. The ships headed to the Congo were loaded with guns.

“On the face of the import statistics, the natives were getting nothing or next to nothing. How, then, was this rubber and ivory being acquired? Certainly not by commercial dealing. Nothing was going in to pay for what was coming out.”

—E.D. Morel

Morel felt he had “stumbled upon a secret society of murderers.” Appalled at the discovery that his own employer seemed to be promoting an abusive system and benefitting from unfree trade, Morel set about the task of launching an effective movement for change.

Morel argued that the true problem was not the cruel actions of individuals. Instead, he proclaimed, the issue was an entire system that encouraged such atrocities. Morel believed that the fundamental problem in the structure of the Free State was the fact that the native people had their land seized from them and were forbidden to sell the fruits of their labor to the highest bidder, and that the



E.D. Morel.

Anti-Slavery International. Used with permission.

State had taken control of land and labor and therefore determined all prices and wages. He charged that all of the other problems found in the Free State flowed from this condition.

Morel slowly moved from the role of an organizer of others to a spokesman for the cause. In 1902 he made his first public speech on the topic charging that, disguise it as they might, the Congo Free State had “established official slavery.”

“The Congo Free State has invented a form of slavery more degrading and more atrocious than any slavery which has existed previously. They may disguise it as they like. The fact remains...[the Congo Free State] is guilty of having established official slavery.”

—E. D. Morel

Over the next few years, E.D. Morel would prove to be King Leopold's most difficult opponent. He coordinated numerous meetings to educate the public about the issues. His energy, organizational skills, and reputation as an honest businessman turned out to be the missing ingredient needed to sustain the momentum of a struggling movement. He also highlighted the effects of the state's monopoly as detrimental to free trade, and a violation of

the Berlin Act. He tirelessly encouraged those with first-hand knowledge to speak out. He lobbied members of the British Parliament to introduce legislation that would address the problem, and he began working with people in other countries who shared his concerns.

The British Parliament's Involvement

In May 1902, a meeting convened in London among members of several British chambers of commerce and the Aborigines Protection Society. This meeting was widely

reported in the press, and aroused quite a bit of interest in the British public. Shortly thereafter three books appeared on the shelves addressing the situation in the Congo, and less than a year later, in March 1903, the Associated Chambers of Commerce met to discuss the issue again.

The chambers of commerce of London, Liverpool, and Manchester, England were concerned about the restrictions on free trade in the Congo. These organizations, while dismayed at the abuses in the Congo, were primarily interested in ensuring that they and their counterparts world-wide would be able

to conduct trade in the region freely, as the Berlin Act promised. It seemed to them that Leopold's system, which granted a few Belgian companies access to the area and did not allow the Africans to set prices, did not meet the standards for free trade.

How did the Association of Chambers of Commerce force action?

At their meeting in March, the Association of Chambers of Commerce adopted a resolution calling on the British government to do something. This meeting, again widely reported in the press, created public pressure on the British Parliament to act. At a debate in the House of Commons in May 1903, the members of parliament voted to issue a resolution which would require the British government to consult with the other signatories of the Berlin Act to see if anything should be done. One Member of Parliament (MP) stated during the debate that "the Government would be very ill-advised if they went contrary to public opinion in this matter."



IN THE RUBBER COILS.

1903 - The Congo "Free" State.

Punch Cartoon Library. Used with permission.

This cartoon, which portrays Leopold as a serpent, was published in a British magazine.

“Resolved, That the Government of the Free State having at its inception, guaranteed to the Powers that its native subjects should be governed with humanity, and that no trading monopoly or privilege should be permitted within its dominions, this House requests His Majesty’s Government to confer with other Powers, signatories of the Berlin General Act by virtue of which the Congo Free State exists, in order that measures may be adopted to abate the evils prevalent in that State.”

—British Parliament Resolution
passed May, 1903

Not yet willing to take any kind of stand, the British Foreign Office issued a rather weak Note (a proclamation made to another government) accusing the Congo administration of some non-specific possible violations of the Berlin Act, and asking the other powers to reconvene. The other Great Powers had no interest in discussing the Congo. Germany supported King Leopold out of fear that if he were displaced France would get the territory. France’s own practices in Africa were very similar to King Leopold’s—the French government wished no careful examination of any possible atrocities for fear that it would call attention to its own methods.

Although the Foreign Office did not issue a forceful statement to the other Great Powers, it did ask the British Consul in the Congo, Sir Roger Casement, to investigate the claims of atrocity and monopoly and then to write a report.

How did Leopold react to the accusations levied against the Free State government?

While Casement was in the Congo, the Free State authorities swiftly issued a retort to the British Note. The Free State Note attempted to discredit Britain, accusing it of only looking to take over the Congo. It also accused Britain of conducting its affairs in Africa in the same way: with brutality and “murderous and bloody wars against the native populations.”

“It is worthy of remark that this campaign dates from the time when the prosperity of the State became assured.... As the State gave increased proof of vitality and progress, the campaign became more active, reliance being placed on a few individual and isolated cases, with a view to using the interests of humanity as a pretext, and concealing the real object of a covetousness which, in its impatience, has betrayed itself in the writings of pamphleteers and in the speeches of Members of the House of Commons, in which the abolition and partition of the Congo State has been clearly put forward.”

—From the Congo Free State’s
reply to the British Note

Leopold also launched a propaganda campaign to counter any bad press the Congo received. The Casement Report was especially damning.

What did the Casement Report contain?

Casement spent three and a half months traveling throughout the interior of the Congo. Rather than relying on the steamboats owned by the Congo Free State, he rented his own boat from American missionaries. This allowed him to travel wherever he pleased instead of relying on the authorities, who could have controlled his whereabouts.

Casement’s report, while it deplored the atrocities, did begin with praising the Europeans for “intervening” in the “chaotic and disorderly communities” of “one of the most savage regions of Africa.” The report noted the extensive steamship line and well-constructed railway. It commented, however, that the steamships used by the Free State and the concession companies were better cared for than the Congolese people. Over dozens of pages Casement recorded testimonies from victims of abuse.

“Communities I had formerly known [Casement last visited in 1887] as large and flourishing centers of population are today entirely gone, or now exist in such diminished numbers as to be no longer recognizable.”

—The Casement Report

Following a December 1903 meeting between Casement and E.D. Morel, these two men founded the Congo Reform Association. From March 1904 until 1913, this group coordinated efforts to keep the public informed and enthusiastic about the cause, provided accurate information to the newspapers, and pressured the government to take action. Following its first public meeting on March 23, 1904, meetings and demonstrations spread quickly throughout Britain. People of all social classes, religions, and professions labored for the cause.

Leopold and his handful of supporters countered with the publication of defenses of the Congo Free State. They also accused the

leaders of the Congo Reform Association of having selfish motives and inaccurate information.

How did the United States react?

In the United States, too, people began to organize. A group of missionaries made a report to the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate.

“...We would respectfully invite the attention of your honorable bodies to certain conditions at present existing in that State which affect vitally the well-meaning of the people, and concern also the rights and interests of persons from other countries.”

—Memorial from the Conference of Missionary Societies to the U.S. Senate

The position of the United States, which had not signed the Berlin Act, was to avoid involvement in European affairs. It was not until much later that the United States would change that position.

June 9, 1904: The Moment of Decision

Leopold's propaganda campaign and his persistent writings against Britain and British subjects angered the Foreign Office. By 1904, both public pressure and the embarrassment of Leopold's claims against Britain compelled the Foreign Office to seek action. Other nations were also tired of Leopold's defenses. Some in Britain even called for a dispatch of military might to the Congo. The Congo Reform Association organized demonstrations, and debates took place in community organizations throughout Britain. There were discussions in other countries as well. Some people supported King Leopold and did not believe the British reports. Some were horrified by the stories of abuse and argued for intervention on those grounds. Others were more concerned about the erosion of free trade, and that a monarch seemed to be getting away with violating an international agreement as well as destroying international companies.

In such an atmosphere, Parliament held another debate to decide how to handle the situation. Throughout the debate it was clear that MPs were aware of the public desire for action. Casement's report had convinced all Members of Parliament that the Congo Free State authorities were committing atrocities on a mass scale. Numerous MPs remarked upon how uncommon it was for all members of the

House of Commons to agree upon the nature of a problem. Opinions were not as unanimous regarding the solution. The issue involved how to create change most effectively in the Congo while also considering the diplomatic consequences for Britain's relations with the other Great Powers.

Three major points of view found supporters. Some favored Britain taking action on its own. Others urged close cooperation with other Great Powers to force action. Still others argued that it would be enough simply to encourage Leopold to make reforms on his own. Often a single individual expressed support for more than one of these positions in the hope that something would be done to address the problems immediately. Other MPs consistently argued for a single position.

All Members of Parliament remained very conscious of the fact that public opinion strongly favored stopping the abuses in the Congo.

They also recognized that their decisions had life-or-death consequences for millions of people in the Congo and would directly affect the British economy. Furthermore, they knew they were setting a precedent for future cases involving human rights abuses and colonial administration in Africa and elsewhere.

Options in Brief

Option 1: Act Now, Act Alone, Force Change

Since most of the other Great Powers have succumbed to King Leopold's powers of persuasion, Britain must act alone. Britain, with the largest empire in the world, is the strongest of the Great Powers. With four British colonies bordering on the Congo, we must not allow the situation to deteriorate and destabilize our own colonies. Furthermore, the actions of the Congo Free State are giving colonialism a bad name; no one has more to lose from this than Britain. Britain led the way in developing the free trade system that has helped our country prosper. If we do not act to protect these free trade rights now, we will see the whole system start to erode. The British people also have a long history of being in the forefront of humanitarian movements. It was our navy that took the lead in combating the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and it is Britain that developed the Parliamentary system that now allows the force of enlightened public opinion to demand change. If other countries are unwilling to take a stand in this situation, then it is our duty to forge ahead without them.

Option 2: Cooperate with Other Great Powers

While only three other governments have expressed interest in the cause so far, careful and determined diplomacy can bring others around to our point of view. Since it was a conference of the Great Powers in 1885 that brought the Congo Free State into existence, it is for all the Powers to take action to ad-

dress problems. We are living in a new age of international organizations such as the Hague Tribunal, The Red Cross, and the League for Human Rights that are laboring to create a sense of law and norms of behavior that are expected of all civilized nations. Solving this problem collectively will enhance this new cooperative spirit. In addition, acting alone could disrupt the balance of power among the nations of Europe and create further diplomatic problems for Britain.

Option 3: Focus on the British Empire

As the largest colonial power in the world, we must be careful about intervening in internal affairs of a foreign colony. We all know that agents of the British Empire have occasionally carried out actions against our colonial subjects that run contrary to our values. It is up to each government to investigate and punish such actions appropriately. We also must acknowledge that Leopold's government is responsible for some positive developments along with the negative. Leopold should be encouraged to run the Congo Free State more effectively. We should supply information to the Free State that will help its government to investigate atrocities. Simultaneously we must strive to govern our own territories as justly as possible. We can offer Leopold advice from our centuries of colonial experience. As for our trade interests, we must work to tie the economies of our colonies more closely to our home economy. In doing so, we can create the largest free trade zone in the world.

Option 1: Act Alone, Act Now, Force Change

Since most of the other Great Powers have succumbed to King Leopold's powers of persuasion, Britain must act alone. Britain, with the largest empire in the world, is the strongest of the Great Powers. With four British colonies bordering on the Congo, we must not allow the situation to deteriorate and destabilize our own colonies. Our officials in the border areas already must deal with refugees who flee the Congo in a desperate search for a safe haven. Furthermore, the actions of the Congo Free State are giving colonialism a bad name; no one has more to lose from this than Britain. We cannot allow the Congo's failures to taint Britain's colonizing mission.

Britain led the way in developing the free trade system that has helped our country prosper. If we do not act to protect these free trade rights now, we will see the whole system start to erode. Leopold's policies have taken their toll on British subjects as well as on the Congolese people. British merchants have been arrested and tried for practicing free trade as it is defined in the Berlin Act. Our country imports and exports more than any other nation in the world and 75 percent of our trade comes from outside of our empire. We must ensure our access to markets all over the world. British shipping lines also carry much of the world's trade. Britain has much to lose from this state of affairs.

The British people also have a long history of being in the forefront of humanitarian movements. It was our navy that took the lead in combating the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and it was Britain that developed the Parliamentary system that now allows the force of enlightened public opinion to demand change. If other countries are unwilling to take a stand in this situation, then it is our duty to forge ahead without them.

We have seen in our own country that an economic system in which individuals are able to buy and sell their goods and services as they please has created a prosperous, happy population. We know that if the Congolese had these same rights, most of the evils now carried out by the rubber monopolies would disappear. Reform in the Congo requires more than promises of better behavior from government officials. Fundamental, far-reaching changes are needed. Land ownership must be placed back in the hands of the people. The natives must have the right to reap the fruits of their own labors. One monarch should not exercise the sort of absolute power that Leopold now maintains. This vast region must be placed under the control of some institution that is more responsive to popular concerns. While we do not suggest that the Congolese are ready to govern themselves, the Belgian Parliament could take on the powers of government and limit the power of the monarch.

The people of Britain have made it clear that they expect us to take action now. Rarely has popular opinion been so unanimous in its expectations of its elected leaders. If no other nation is willing to act, we must do so alone in order to help those who cannot help themselves. History will judge us to have acted correctly.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

1. Our nation's continued prosperity depends upon our access to global markets. As the largest commercial and industrial nation in the world, Britain has the most to lose from restrictions placed on free trade anywhere.

2. The problem in the Congo Free State is not just the presence of a few corrupt and abusive officials. The problems all originate from the system of forced labor and quotas that have been imposed upon the people. Change requires a fundamental overhaul of the system, not just promises of closer monitoring of officials.

3. As the strongest military and

economic power in the world, Britain has a special responsibility to use its strength for positive causes.

4. Britain's massive colonial holdings in Africa and around the world make it particularly sensitive to the possibility that poor governance will challenge the very idea of colonialism.

5. The House of Commons is a popularly-elected legislative body. The people of Britain have made it clear that they expect change in the Congo. Therefore, it is the responsibility of Members of Parliament to act.

Arguments Supporting Option 1

1. If Britain takes the lead in ending the abuses in the Congo, peoples around the world will respect her ability to act in the face of wrongdoing. Britain's colonial subjects will recognize that she does not tolerate atrocities.

2. By acting quickly and decisively Britain will benefit from the restoration of free trade in the Congo.

3. Once Britain begins to take concrete actions, other Great Powers will soon follow our lead. If we wait until all of the other Great Powers are willing to take action, too many more abuses will have been committed.

From the Historical Record

The Morning Post, a Conservative British newspaper

“Nothing effective, it may safely be predicted, will be done unless one of the Powers adopts a strong initiative, and were the British Government to do so, it would only be interpreting what is, we are convinced, almost the unanimous feeling not only of the House of Commons but of the country.”

Joseph Conrad, novelist

“It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe, which seventy years ago had put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds, tolerates the Congo State today. It is as if the moral clock had been put back many hours... In the old days England had in her keeping the conscience of Europe.... But I suppose we are busy with other things—too much involved in great affairs to take up the cudgels for humanity, decency and justice.”

E.D. Morel

“I am convinced that our principal concentration of effort should be in this country [Britain]. At the present stage of world politics, the British people can get anything they want if they put their backs into it.”

Sir Charles Dilke, Liberal MP

“The subject was...the affairs of the Congo State, a matter on which public feeling in this country had been excited for many years past to an extent that had rarely been known.... The motion of last year was passed on 20th May [1903], when attention was called by several honorable Members to the treatment of the natives in the Congo State, and to the responsibilities of this country in connection therewith.”

Sir Charles Dilke, Liberal MP

“This country was now at war with Tibet ...for the protection of trade; and if British trade were treated in Morocco as it [is] in the Congo...every British warship in the Mediterranean would be ordered to the African coast.... Has not the time come when we

should sweep away all the difficulties which stand in the way, and force the Government to take stronger actions than mere words...to deal with this horrible scandal?”

Mr. Austin Taylor, MP

“This country cannot allow such a state of things as exists in the Free State to go on without protest; and without something which I hope will be more efficient than mere protest.”

Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, Liberal MP

“I would venture to remind the Congo Free State how very easy it would be for Europe, or indeed for any State that chose, to practically put an end to its existence by sending a few ships to the mouth of the Congo.... The Congo Free State lay absolutely at the mercy of this country.”

Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, Liberal MP

“The Congo Free State has reached the point when it ought to be no longer recognized as a civilized state. What we ought to do...is, in the first place, to take advantage of everything there is in the Berlin Act to exert to the utmost the rights of this country against the Congo Free State, and also to assert where we could, the international rights of Europe against the Congo Free State. My first suggestion is that we should insist on the establishment of Consular Courts.”

Earl Percy, Conservative Under Secretary of the Foreign Office

“We are quite aware that these philanthropic crusades do not contribute to our popularity abroad; we know very well, and we are constantly informed of the fact by the foreign press, that they are commonly ascribed to motives of hypocrisy, if to nothing worse; and we act, if we act at all, simply from the conviction that an international convention binding its signatories to act on certain definite and recognised principles implies an individual responsibility to see that those obligations are carried out.”

Option 2: Cooperate with the Other Great Powers

While only three other governments have expressed interest in the cause so far, careful and determined diplomacy can bring others around to our point of view. Since it was a conference of the Great Powers in 1885 that brought the Congo Free State into existence, it is for all the Powers to take action to address problems. We are living in a new age of international organizations such as the Hague Tribunal, The Red Cross, and the League for Human Rights that are laboring to create a sense of law and norms of behavior that are expected of all civilized nations. Solving this problem collectively will enhance this new cooperative spirit. If we are to believe that international agreements have any meaning, we must act together to enforce these agreements.

Acting alone could disrupt the balance of power among the nations of Europe and create further diplomatic problems for Britain. The last thing we want is to give the Belgian government the impression that we see them as an enemy. We must carefully distinguish our concerns with King Leopold and our friendship with the Belgian people and their government. We must not push Belgium into an alliance with Germany that would be hostile to British interests. We must also be careful regarding our friendship with France. Sadly, the French Congo has adopted some of the same practices we now criticize in the Congo Free State. The French must not come to see us as adversaries, since they too could easily form a hostile alliance with the Germans.

The atrocities of the Congo Free State are so severe that they should be the concern of people from all civilized countries, not just Britain. Britain, while capable of acting on its own, can be far more effective by working with the other powers. Unless we are ready to deploy the British army and navy to yet another trouble spot in the world, we must act hand-in-hand with other countries.

In addition to the Congolese themselves, citizens of many European nations have been wronged by the administration of the Congo Free State. European merchants have been persecuted for attempting to practice the free trade that the Berlin Act guarantees. We should capitalize on this widespread dissatisfaction to form a united front against Leopold's government.

We must work with sympathetic individuals and organizations in France and Belgium, as well as across Europe and in the United States to end the horror of King Leopold's Congo.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

1. People in all countries, once aware of the horrible atrocities, will be outraged about the situation in the Congo Free State and will want to take action.

2. The cooperative spirit of the age calls upon us to act with other nations rather than alone.

3. The origins of the Congo Free State lie in the actions of the Great Powers as a whole,

so the responsibility for solving the current problems lies with the Great Powers of Europe.

4. All Europeans should be concerned about the reputation of their much celebrated Western Civilization. Failure to correct one of the worst abuses in the name of Western Civilization will ultimately taint the image of Europeans all over the world.

Arguments Supporting Option 2

1. The Great Powers, with a unified approach, will force King Leopold to take action immediately. Any need for the use of force will thus be avoided.

2. The decrease in free trade in the Congo Free State has wronged many citizens of other nations. If we capitalize on their discontent and work with them we will find greater success.

3. Germany and France both have colonial territories bordering on the Congo Free State.

Given the refugees fleeing the Congo to these colonies, we cannot expect to find success in our efforts unless we work with them.

4. Other nations are jealous of the prosperity and power of the British Empire and fear any actions that appear intended to increase that power further. Failure to act cooperatively will result in the formation of alliances on the continent hostile to Britain.

From the Historical Record

E.D. Morel, in a letter to a French citizen

“Our most earnest desire in this country is to work with France on the Congo question, and the most genuine wish exists amongst Englishmen that no international jealousies or misunderstandings should prevent the destruction, once and for all, of the Congo State as such.”

E.D. Morel to a German government official

“If Germany will back up England frankly, fully and loyally in this business, we shall get what we want. Germany will necessarily bring along Austria, Italy will follow, and America may be induced to act. France will then be left in a state of absolute isolation, which she would not like. The key of the situation is largely in the hands of your Government. Now it used to be said that Germany would follow eagerly in England’s footsteps, if England led the way, but that Germany herself would not lead the way. Now that we have led the way I do sincerely trust Germany will follow.”

Sir Charles Dilke, Liberal MP

“The Government ought to be asked to go outside the signatory Powers of the Berlin Act and to appeal to the United States...such an appeal would be pregnant with good results.”

Sir Charles Dilke, Liberal MP

“The whole question is what is the best way to affect French and German opinion and that of the U.S.? ... The more unanimous we are, the more tendency there is in France, and possibly on the Continent generally, to oppose this as a purely English movement.”

Monsieur Serge Basset, French journalist

“There is not a diplomat living who does not know that the Congo State massacres thousands of human beings with the connivance of His Majesty Leopold II.”

Mr. Alfred Emmott, Liberal MP (replying to Congo Free State accusations that Britain wanted to take the territory for itself)

“It is important that this country should repudiate any idea of aggression or of ‘grab’ in the matter.... After all, the Congo Free State was formed, in the first place, to prevent the great nations of Europe from grabbing portions of the territory, and it was founded on a free-trade and humanitarian basis.”

Mr. Alfred Emmott, Liberal MP

“This system is wrong and I believe illegal, but whether illegal or not it is fundamentally, wholly and unutterably bad. This was a danger for which we might have to pay very dearly, for when they (the Congolese) are strong enough to raise a great black rebellion in that part of Africa it might affect the dominions of every other Power in negro Africa.”

Mr. Alfred Emmott, Liberal MP

“No half-hearted inquiry under the supervision of the King would be of any use.... What we want is another European conference on this question...another suggestion is to refer the legal point to the Hague Tribunal.”

Sir Edward Grey, Liberal MP

“To the Powers which said they have no material interests [in the Congo], I think they must say that we also have no material interests sufficient to justify separate action on our part, but that as it was so obvious that very little combined pressure from the European Powers would effect what was wanted, and as the honour and good name of the Powers who consented to the creation of this State was involved, they, like us, must see that there is a little more than the question of material interests involved.”

Option 3: Focus on the British Empire

As the largest colonial power in the world, we must be careful about intervening in the internal affairs of a foreign colony—we must be careful of the precedents we set. Britain currently administers the world’s largest colonial empire. While the home islands of Great Britain cover 120,979 square miles, the colonies consist of 11,605,238 square miles. Nearly 41 million people live in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, but more than 345 million subjects reside in our 74 overseas territories. Governing people is never an easy task and it imposes great burdens on those attempting to bring the blessings of civilization to reluctant recipients. We all know that agents of the British Empire have occasionally carried out actions against our colonial subjects that run contrary to our values. The last thing we want to do is give other countries an open invitation to tell us how to govern our vast dominions. Moreover, acting too forcefully against the Belgian King could encourage the Belgians to turn to Germany for assistance. We must refrain from any reckless colonial adventures that will jeopardize our position in Europe.

It is up to each government to investigate and punish such actions appropriately. While the atrocities taking place in the Congo are horrific, we also must acknowledge that Leopold’s government is responsible for some positive developments along with the negative. Leopold should be encouraged to run the Congo Free State more effectively. We should supply information to the Free State that will help its government to investigate atrocities. Unlike the Congo, we have established a justice system that punishes those who abuse their power. We can help the Congo Free State to develop a similar court system. We believe that King Leopold means to administer his colony effectively, but has thus far failed to do so. Let us encourage King Leopold’s government in the Congo to conduct itself in a more civilized manner. We can offer Leopold advice from our centuries of colonial experience.

As for our trade interests, we must work to tie the economies of our own colonies more closely to our home economy. At present, only 25 percent of British trade is carried out with these regions while the remaining 75 percent of our trade is with non-British nations. Nearly all of the resources needed for the functioning of our industries can be found in the lands beneath the Union Jack. The nearly 400 million people under the British Crown can be ample customers for British manufactured goods. Rather than expecting that the rest of the world adopt the British system of free trade, it is time to create a vast region of free trade among our own territories, and grant free access to those markets only to those countries that extend the same trade rights to all of the British Empire.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 3

1. Concerns about human rights abuses in the Congo are legitimate, but some of the proposed actions to solve them could work against British interests.

2. The Congo Free State has accomplished some positive things amidst all of its abuses. The key is changing the balance so the positive outweigh the negative.

3. Whenever white Europeans try to rule over the non-white races of the world, there will be problems when the non-whites do not recognize the benefits of Western Civilization. The Mother Country must be

vigilant in dealing with abuses carried out by its own agents so as to steadily demonstrate the blessings of Western Civilization.

4. The British Empire already has enough problems to deal with internally. We have no business telling other nations how to run their colonies when we are still having difficulties administering some of our own.

5. Concern about the preservation of free trade in the Congo is overblown. Our economic interests would be better served by tying the vast British colonies to the Mother Country more closely.

Arguments Supporting Option 3

1. If we try to intervene forcefully in the Congo Free State, we risk setting a precedent that would encourage other nations to try to interfere in the administration of British colonies.

2. Our time and energy would be much more effectively used in developing the economies of our own colonies. Most especially, we should pursue the possibility of building a railroad across the African continent, north to south.

3. King Leopold can be persuaded to make reforms that will address the problems of the Congo. If we offer advice in a helpful manner and we encourage him to investigate the allegations of the Casement Report on his own, he will likely take actions to protect the natives from the abuses that have developed.

4. Taking any action against Leopold, rather than supporting him in his own actions, might upset the balance of power in Europe.

From the Historical Record

Mr. John Ward, Liberal MP

“Considering what has already been sanctioned with regard to the suppression of the Natal rebellion [in South Africa], has this country any jurisdiction for interfering [in the Congo]?”

Sir Constantine Phipps of the British Foreign Office

“If the operation of the Commission [for the Protection of the Natives] has not been so effective as might have been anticipated the fault is due not to any deficiency of conception or absence of energy on the part of the central government [of the Congo Free State]”

Earl Percy, Conservative Under Secretary of the Foreign Office

“I think perhaps the House may be interested to hear the measures taken in this connection by the Congo Government which have up to the present been brought under our notice. They are at all events a satisfactory indication that the action of this House and the representations which have been made by His Majesty’s Government have not been without their effect. They include the issuing of orders to the local administration at Boma to make a detailed inquiry into the system of forced contributions...and the creation of a new office of Royal High Commissioner of the Congo who has been instructed to ensure the complete... protection of the natives.”

Earl Percy, Conservative Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office

“In stating the view of His Majesty’s Government in regard to the position of affairs in the Congo...we have never claimed, nor do we claim now, any special responsibility, or any special right of intervention in the affairs of the Congo State.”

Earl Percy, Conservative Under Secretary of the Foreign Office

“The Congo Government...although, of course, they did not admit the truth of the allegations made in Mr. Casement’s Report, they did not reject them *in toto*, but, on the contrary, recognized that they formed a strong case for inquiry, and intimated their intention to promote an investigation.”

Mr. John O’Dowd, Irish Nationalist MP

“I beg to ask the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether an organized effort is being made by British subjects in South Africa and elsewhere to bring Belgian rule in the Congo into disrepute by the circulation of stories as to alleged atrocities and acts of maladministration; if so, whether such interference on the part of His Majesty’s subjects in the affairs of a friendly State has the sanction of the Government; and, if not, what steps it is proposed to take to discourage such action in the future.”

Mr. Joseph Nolan, Irish Nationalist MP

“I should like to ask [the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs] the following question... whether he considers His Majesty’s Government to have any greater right to interfere in the affairs of the Congo Free State than it had to prevent the shooting in cold blood in Natal of two batches of unarmed prisoners, subjects of His Majesty, by His Majesty’s troops, without trial by law...and whether he does not think His Majesty’s Government has enough trouble on hand on the African continent, in connection with Egypt, Natal, and Nigeria, without going in search of further trouble in the territories of independent foreign states.”

Epilogue: The Aftermath—1904 to the Present

While the debate of June 9, 1904 did not actually end with the passage of a resolution on the status of the Congo, it did have far-reaching consequences. The overall tone of the parliamentary debate convinced the British government it must use its influence against the Congo Free State. The policies that followed over the next decade showed some elements of each of the three positions argued in Parliament.

Britain immediately suggested to the Congo Free State that it needed to appoint an independent commission to investigate the true conditions in the Congo. Leopold was truly frightened that he might lose control of his vast personal kingdom. To hold them off he needed to prove he was responding to concerns. He appointed the Independent Commission of Inquiry within six weeks of the parliamentary debate.

While he waited for his hand-picked Commissioners to finish their investigations, Leopold attempted to win over public opinion. He distributed pamphlets entitled “The Truth about the Congo” in bars and railroad cars throughout Europe to publish his version of events. Meanwhile, the Congo Reform Association continued its own work of organizing public informational meetings in Britain and abroad to counter Leopold’s propaganda.

What were the results of Leopold’s Independent Commission of Inquiry?

The members of the Independent Commission of Inquiry spent four and a half months in the Congo. Most observers had expected another piece of Leopold’s propaganda. Although the report’s contents were not nearly as harsh as those found in the Casement Report, most people were shocked that it even admitted the reality of many things Casement had mentioned.

The Casement Report had triggered many groups in Britain, mainland Europe, and North America to demand fundamental changes in the Congo, including taking its control out of

the hands of Leopold. The Commission confirmed the necessity of reforms but suggested that Leopold himself could make reforms to protect the native peoples from excessive taxation and forced labor. It also urged stronger oversight of the Force Publique to ensure that it followed proper procedures. It did not question the basic structure of the Free State.

The Independent Commission of Inquiry unintentionally unleashed many critics in Belgium who had kept silent over the prior decade. Leopold now faced a barrage of criticism both at home and abroad. In an effort to appease his critics, Leopold tried to make symbolic changes while still making sizable profits from rubber. However, his critics kept the issue in the spotlight.

Popular support for the Congo Reform Association forced the British government to keep this issue a high priority. The Congo Reform Association believed that modest reforms could not solve the problem. Only a fundamental overhaul of the system could achieve that. The organization convinced the British government to pressure the Belgian government to take possession of the Congo from Leopold. It also worked with reformers in Belgium to lobby Belgian lawmakers to change their position.

In the United States, a 1906 report emerged which changed U.S. policy toward Leopold. A magazine published a story in February of that year, exposing the fact that Leopold had hired lobbyists to sway members of Congress toward his side. As soon as the article appeared on the news stands, Senators passed a resolution which offered full U.S. support of any British action against Leopold. Four days later, Leopold proposed a Belgian takeover of the Congo.

The Belgian Congo

In 1908, the Belgian government reluctantly took over the Congo Free State. Defiant to the end, Leopold created new Congo com-

panies of which he was a large shareholder so that he could continue to gain wealth from the area. In addition, he ordered the destruction of all the records of the Free State, plus the archives of the departments of finance and the interior. Leopold even managed to acquire fifty million francs more from Belgium, in “gratitude for his great sacrifices made for the Congo.” Leopold died one year later.

Did Belgium make reforms in the Congo?

Initially, the new government of the re-named Belgian Congo continued to use forced

labor to harvest rubber, while making the modest changes Leopold had initially proposed. However, international pressure, particularly from Britain, forced Belgium—which was not happy to be in charge of a vast, underdeveloped area in central Africa—to acknowledge that the system of forced labor, trade monopoly, and land confiscation would have to end.

It was not until 1913, two years after Belgium dismantled this system, that Britain finally recognized Belgian control over the Congo. Although some of the Great Powers had granted recognition earlier, the Belgian government knew that British recognition was essential for its control of the Congo to be viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the world.

How did Belgium attempt to operate a “model colony?”

From 1911 until 1960 the Belgians operated what they liked to refer to as a “model colony.” The Belgian colonizers continued to create policies around the assumption that white European culture was preferable, even superior, to African cultures. As a result, a tiny European elite controlled the economic and political power of the Belgian Congo while Africans continued to provide most of the labor with minimal profit for themselves.

In an attempt to reconstruct Congolese society, the Belgians tried to restore power to traditional chiefs. This reform, a disguise for indirect Belgian control, proved ineffective as most of the old chiefs were dead, and the decades of abuse under the Free State had destroyed the economic and family relationships that had previously formed the basis of chiefly power.

In other reforms, the Belgians brought modern medicine to much of the population. By 1955, 80 percent of the people suffering from leprosy were receiving modern treatment, nearly stopping the spread of this disease.

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A flyer advertising a demonstration in London against the policies of the Belgian Congo.

Missionaries led a widespread system of primary education that ensured many Congolese became literate, yet they learned from a curriculum that largely ignored values and stories that had been important to African cultures. They were taught an agricultural and vocational syllabus, and were taught to be thankful for what the Belgians saw as the blessings of civilization. The history of the millions killed during the atrocities committed under King Leopold was ignored. Very few students went on to secondary school.

Belgium restored the control of farmland to villages, but white-owned corporations continued to control land containing valuable natural resources. In fact, in the area known as Katanga, the discovery of productive copper mines brought thousands of Europeans searching for wealth. For many years Africans had been mining the copper there; now European companies took over. The need for copper during World War I soared, and Katanga Province gained some economic success. Over the next thirty years, thousands of houses were built of brick, and luxury hotels, hospitals, and schools sprang up. Elsewhere around the country, as new resources like diamonds and gold were discovered, additional services benefitted the people. At the time of Congo's independence, there were more hospital beds in Congo than any other African country.

While some Congolese saw improvements in their standard of living, many still had to pay some sort of head tax, were required to work for the government or the European-owned companies, and were paid little. The Congolese, like most Africans of that time, could not control their own political destiny as colonial administrators made all political decisions. While the government boasted of its attempts to bring prosperity and education to the black population, the 99 percent of the population that was black still could not eat in white restaurants, stay in white hotels, be treated in white hospitals, or live in white sectors of the capital city, Leopoldville. In short, the Belgian claim to be operating a "model colony" selflessly for the good of its native inhabitants was not the reality.

What followed Belgian colonial rule?

Following World War II, colonial empires around the world began to unravel. The United States restored independence to the Philippines in 1946. Britain conceded independence to India and Pakistan in 1947, and then to its African colony of Ghana in 1957. Over the next decade thirty African countries became independent.

As of 1958, Belgium still controlled the Congo with the assumption that the Congolese were content in the "model colony." Yet, in January 1959, the Congolese in Leopoldville expressed their disagreement with this assumption through protests and riots in the streets. In most British and French colonies, the colonial governments made some attempts, although often inadequate, to prepare Africans for self-rule. But in the Congo, within one year of the first protests, the Belgians announced that they would grant independence to the Congo.

After a hastily prepared election, the Belgians left, and six months later, in 1960, Patrice-Emery Lumumba became the first prime minister of an independent Congo. By that year, only seventeen Congolese had earned a university degree. There were 120 political parties. Because of Belgium's refusal to allow Africans in government posts, Africans had little sense of the Congo as a unified, political entity. Most Africans thought of themselves as members of their ethnic group, not of the country of Congo. Additionally, ninety-five percent of the economic assets of the Belgian Congo were in the hands of the 110,000 whites that lived there (about one percent of the population). It was clear that self-rule would be difficult for the Congo.

Congo in the Cold War

At independence, Lumumba, the prime minister, and Joseph Kasavubu, the president, led a new coalition government, but Lumumba favored a strong, centralized government in order to unify the Congo, while Kasavubu wanted to empower only several key ethnic groups. Both men rejected the other and

vied for overall power. This situation succeeded in sowing the seeds of new conflict and discontent among the diverse population, with negative consequences for all involved. Meanwhile, Moïse Tshombe, the leader of the mineral-rich province of Katanga, declared its secession from the rest of the Congo. In this environment of disunity and hostility, civil war erupted within two weeks of independence. Most Europeans living in the Congo fled. Many of those who did not suffered assaults, rapes, and torture by the mutinous Force Publique.

Why was Lumumba assassinated?

Belgian mining companies supported Tshombe in his secession bid because they wanted to continue to control Katanga's wealth. Tshombe invited Belgian troops to help his own soldiers. This well-equipped army overwhelmed Lumumba, who appealed to the United Nations for help. The UN Security Council demanded that the Belgian forces withdraw, but with little success. Frustrated by the UN's ineffectiveness in the struggle with Katanga, Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for help—a move that angered the United States, the Soviet Union's chief rival during the Cold War.

The United States labeled Lumumba a communist puppet given his alliance with the Soviet Union. When Lumumba accepted military assistance from the Soviets, the U.S. government gave him the code name "Stinky" and drew up plans to have him assassinated. Lumumba, meanwhile, tried to repair his country, but President Kasavubu dismissed him from power. Finally, in January 1961, he was arrested. Members of a rival army led by General Joseph Mobutu and supported by Kasavubu, Tshombe, the United States, and Belgium beat him severely on live television. Later the same day a Belgian firing squad killed him. His body was never found.

With Lumumba's assassination, further despair about the future set in. UN troops were accused of abuses in the Katanga Province. Rebel armies vied for control of various areas of the country. Five years of nearly non-stop



Terrence Spencer/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images. Used with permission.

Patrice Lumumba.

turmoil and violence ensued. Finally, General Mobutu, with the assistance of the United States, gained the upper hand, took over the country, and established a new Congolese government.

What characterized Mobutu's reign?

Joseph Mobutu established a one-party system and declared himself head of state, holding periodic elections in which he was the only candidate. In an effort to reduce the legacy of colonialism and European influence, he renamed the country Zaire, gave all the cities African titles (for example, the capital, Leopoldville, was renamed Kinshasa), and required that all citizens have African names.

His reign was most noteworthy for its corruption, repression, human rights violations, and cult of personality. His picture was everywhere, including on banknotes, public buildings, billboards, and even people's cloth-

ing. Once in power, Mobutu changed his name to Mobutu Sese Seko Nkuku Wa Za Banga, meaning “The all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.”

Mobutu’s rule caused much disarray in an already failing Congo. At independence in 1960, there were eighty-eight thousand miles of auto roads in the Congo. By 1985, only twelve thousand miles were still passable to cars and trucks, thus food grown in one part of the country could not be transported efficiently to other regions. In 1960, the country was able to feed itself. Mobutu’s economic policies ignored areas of the country that had no mineral resources, thus by the mid-1970s, about 60 percent of the deaths in Zaire were blamed on malnutrition.

Despite the widespread corruption, misery, and human rights abuses, the United States continued to support Mobutu throughout the Cold War, politically and financially, giving Zaire millions of dollars in foreign aid.



Joseph Mobutu.

Mobutu not only took the profits earned from diamond, copper, uranium, and oil exports to increase his personal wealth, but pilfered the foreign aid for personal use as well. In 1984, it was believed that Mobutu had close to four billion dollars, an amount equivalent to Zaire’s national debt, in personal Swiss bank accounts.

What is the status of the Congo today?

In 1996, another civil war ushered in a new chapter in the history of the long-suffering region. The effects of the Rwandan genocide spilled into Zaire, as Hutu refugees fled the new Tutsi government in Rwanda. Zairian Tutsis opposed the presence of Hutus in Zaire, and rebelled against both the Hutu refugees and Mobutu’s government, which supported the Hutus. The Tutsi rebels, led by Laurent Kabila, gained city after city in Zaire, finally descending on Kinshasa, the capital.

After years of corrupt and cruel leadership, Mobutu had few friends to come to his aid. With the end of the Cold War, the United States had no need for anti-communist allies, thus was no longer his staunch supporter. The U.S. government urged him to negotiate the end of the conflict with Kabila. In 1997, less than a year after fighting had begun, Mobutu fled the country. He died of cancer four months later, never having been held responsible for Zaire’s decades of disarray.

Kabila assumed power as prime minister, and wishing to erase Mobutu’s influence, renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Like Kasavubu before him, Kabila relied on support from only a few ethnic groups rather than from the country as a whole, thus new rivalries emerged over the valuable natural resources. Neighboring countries were drawn into the conflict, and Kabila’s rule remained weak. He was assassinated by his own bodyguard in January 2001. His son Joseph Kabila came to power, and has made progress in setting up a government aimed at fostering national unity. Joseph Kabila signed ceasefires with some surrounding countries, and with the assistance of the UN, expelled the neighboring armies from the Congo.

Nonetheless, the Democratic Republic of Congo is still characterized by discord. Almost four million people died between 1998 and 2005. Tyrannical warlords have taken control of the eastern provinces, ruthlessly exploiting the mineral wealth of the region and committing human rights abuses by killing, raping, and torturing civilians, making arbitrary arrests, and destroying civilian property. The DRC's military is disorganized, and has done little to combat the violence in the region. UN peacekeepers remain in the DRC.



UN troops working in the DRC in January 2005.

UN Photo. Used with permission.

Supplementary Documents

Selections from the 1885 Berlin Act

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India; His Majesty the German Emperor, King of Prussia; His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, King of Bohemia, etc, and Apostolic King of Hungary; His Majesty the King of the Belgians; His Majesty the King of Denmark; His Majesty the King of Spain; the President of the United States of America; the President of the French Republic; His Majesty the King of Italy; His Majesty the King of the Netherlands, Grand Duke of Luxemburg, etc; His Majesty the King of Portugal and the Algarves, etc; His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias; His Majesty the King of Sweden and Norway, etc; and His Majesty the Emperor of the Ottomans,

WISHING, in a spirit of good and mutual accord, to regulate the conditions most favourable to the development of trade and civilization in certain regions of Africa, and to assure to all nations the advantages of free navigation on the two chief rivers of Africa flowing into the Atlantic Ocean;

BEING DESIROUS, on the other hand, to obviate the misunderstanding and disputes which might in future arise from new acts of occupation...on the coast of Africa; and concerned, at the same time, as to the means of furthering the moral and material well-being of the native populations;

HAVE RESOLVED, on the invitation addressed to them by the Imperial Government of Germany, in agreement with the Government of the French Republic, to meet for those purposes in Conference at Berlin, and have appointed as their Plenipotentiaries, to wit:

Who, being provided with full powers, which have been found in good and due form, have successively discussed and adopted:

1. A Declaration relative to freedom of trade in the basin of the Congo, its embouchures and circumjacent regions, with other provisions connected therewith.

2. A Declaration relative to the slave trade, and the operations by sea or land which furnish slaves to that trade.

3. A Declaration relative to the neutrality of the territories comprised in the Conventional basin of the Congo.

4. An Act of Navigation for the Congo, which, while having regard to local circumstances, extends to this river, its affluents, and the waters in its system..., the general principles enunciated in Articles CVIII and CXVI of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, and intended to regulate, as between the Signatory Powers of that Act, the free navigation of the waterways separating or traversing several States—these said principles having since then been applied by agreement to certain rivers of Europe and America, but especially to the Danube, with the modifications stipulated by the Treaties of Paris (1856), of Berlin (1878), and of London (1871 and 1883).

5. An Act of Navigation for the Niger, which, while likewise having regard to local circumstances, extends to this river and its affluents the same principles as set forth in Articles CVIII and CXVI of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna.

6. A Declaration introducing into international relations certain uniform rules with reference to future occupations on the coast of the African Continent.

And deeming it expedient that all these several documents should be combined in one single instrument, they (the Signatory Powers) have collected them into one General Act, composed of the following Articles:

CHAPTER I

DECLARATION RELATIVE TO FREEDOM OF TRADE IN THE BASIN OF THE CONGO, ITS MOUTHS AND CIRCUMJACENT REGIONS, WITH OTHER PROVISIONS CONNECTED THEREWITH

Article I

The trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom....

Article II

All flags, without distinction of nationality, shall have free access to the whole of the coastline of the territories above enumerated, to the rivers there running into the sea, to all the waters of the Congo and its effluents, including the lakes, and to all the ports situated on the banks of these waters, as well as to all canals which may in future be constructed with intent to unite the watercourses or lakes within the entire area of the territories described in Article I. Those trading under such flags may engage in all sorts of transport, and carry on the coasting trade by sea and river, as well as boat traffic, on the same footing as if they were subjects.

Article III

Wares, of whatever origin, imported into these regions, under whatsoever flag, by sea or river, or overland, shall be subject to no other taxes than such as may be levied as fair compensation for expenditure in the interests of trade, and which for this reason must be equally borne by the subjects themselves and by foreigners of all nationalities. All differential dues on vessels, as well as on merchandise, are forbidden.

Article IV

Merchandise imported into these regions shall remain free from import and transit dues....

Article V

No Power which exercises or shall exercise sovereign rights in the abovementioned regions shall be allowed to grant therein a monopoly or favour of any kind in matters of trade.

PROVISIONS RELATIVE TO PROTECTION OF THE NATIVES, OF MISSIONARIES AND TRAVELLERS, AS WELL AS RELATIVE TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Article VI

All the Powers exercising sovereign rights

or influence in the aforesaid territories bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade. They shall, without distinction of creed or nation, protect and favour all religious, scientific or charitable institutions and undertakings created and organized for the above ends, or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization.

Christian missionaries, scientists and explorers, with their followers, property and collections, shall likewise be the objects of especial protection.

Freedom of conscience and religious toleration are expressly guaranteed to the natives, no less than to subjects and to foreigners. The free and public exercise of all forms of divine worship, and the right to build edifices for religious purposes, and to organize religious missions belonging to all creeds, shall not be limited or fettered in any way whatsoever....

CHAPTER II

DECLARATION RELATIVE TO THE SLAVE TRADE

Article IX

Seeing that trading in slaves is forbidden in conformity with the principles of international law as recognized by the Signatory Powers, and seeing also that the operations, which, by sea or land, furnish slaves to trade, ought likewise to be regarded as forbidden, the Powers which do or shall exercise sovereign rights or influence in the territories forming the Conventional basin of the Congo declare that these territories may not serve as a market or means of transit for the trade in slaves, of whatever race they may be. Each of the Powers binds itself to employ all the means at its disposal for putting an end to this trade and for punishing those who engage in it.

CHAPTER III

DECLARATION RELATIVE TO THE NEU-

TRALITY OF THE TERRITORIES COMPRISED
IN THE CONVENTIONAL BASIN OF THE
CONGO

Article XII

In case a serious disagreement originating on the subject of, or in the limits of, the territories mentioned in Article I, and placed under the free trade system, shall arise between any Signatory Powers of the present Act, or the Powers which may become parties to it, these Powers bind themselves, before appealing to arms, to have recourse to the mediation of one or more of the friendly Powers.

In a similar case the same Powers reserve to themselves the option of having recourse to arbitration....

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF the several plenipotentiaries have signed the present General Act and have affixed thereto their seals.

DONE at Berlin, the 26th day of February, 1885.

Conclusion from “An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo” by George Washington Williams July 18th, 1890

Against the deceit, fraud, robberies, arson, murder, slave-trading, and general policy of cruelty of your Majesty’s Government to the natives, stands their record of unexampled patience, long-suffering and forgiving spirit, which put the boasted civilisation and professed religion of your Majesty’s Government to the blush. During thirteen years only one white man has lost his life by the hands of the natives, and only two white men have been killed in the Congo. Major Marttelot was shot by a Zanzibari soldier, and the captain of a Belgian trading boat was the victim of his own rash and unjust treatment of a native chief.

All the crimes perpetrated in the Congo have been done in *your* name, and *you* must answer at the bar of Public Sentiment for the

misgovernment of a people, whose lives and fortunes were entrusted you by the august Conference of Berlin, 1884-1885. I now appeal to the Powers, which committed this infant State to your Majesty’s charge, and to the great States which gave it international being; and whose majestic law you have scorned and trampled upon, to call and create an international Commission to investigate the charges herein preferred in the name of Humanity, Commerce, Constitutional Government and Christian Civilisation.

I base this appeal upon the terms of Article 36 of Chapter VII of the General Act of the Conference of Berlin, in which that august assembly of Sovereign States reserved to themselves the right “to introduce into it later and by common accord the modifications or ameliorations, the utility of which may be demonstrated experience.”

I appeal to the Belgian people and to their Constitutional Government, so proud of its traditions, replete with the song and story of its champions of human liberty, and so jealous of its present position in the sisterhood of European States,—to cleanse itself from the imputation of the crimes with which your Majesty’s personal State of Congo is polluted.

I appeal to Anti-Slavery Societies in all parts of Christendom, to Philanthropists, Christians, Statesmen, and to the great mass of people everywhere, to call upon the Governments of Europe, to hasten the close of the tragedy your Majesty’s unlimited Monarchy is enacting in the Congo.

I appeal to our Heavenly Father, whose service is perfect love, in witness of the purity of my motives and the integrity of my aims; and to history and mankind I appeal for the demonstration and vindication of the truthfulness of the charges I have herein briefly outlined.

And all this upon the word of honour of a gentleman, I subscribe myself your Majesty’s humble and obedient servant.

Geo. W. Williams
Stanley Falls, Central Africa

Testimonies from the Congo Free State

The Casement Report

“They had endured such ill-treatment at the hands of the Government officials and soldiers that nothing had remained but to be killed for failure to bring in rubber or to die in their attempts to satisfy the demands.”

The Casement Report

“A widow came and declared that she had been forced to sell her daughter, a little girl about ten.... I found on returning that the statements made with regard to the girl were true.... The girl had again changed hands and was promised in sale to a town whose people are open cannibals.”

The Casement Report

“Why do you catch the women and not the men?”

“If I caught the men who would work the rubber? But if I catch the wives...the rubber is brought in quickly.”

The Casement Report

“At a village I touched at up the Lulanga River...the people complained that there was no rubber left in their district, and yet that the La Lulanga Company required of them each fortnight [every two weeks] a fixed quantity they could not supply. Three forest guards of that company were quartered, it was said, in this village, one of whom I found on duty, the two others, he informed me, having gone to Mampoka to convoy the fortnight’s rubber. No livestock of any kind could be seen or purchased in this town, which had only a few years ago been a large and populous community, filled with people and well stocked with sheep, goats, ducks and fowls. Although I walked through most of it, I could only count ten men, with their families. There were said to be others in the part of the town I did not visit, but the entire community I saw were living in wretched houses and in visible distress.”

The Casement Report

“The population of the lake-side towns would seem to have diminished within the last ten years by 60 or 70 percent. It was in 1893 that the effort to levy an india rubber imposition [tax] in this district was begun, and for some four or five years this imposition could only be collected at the cost of continual fighting. Finding the task of collecting india rubber a well-nigh impossible one, the authorities abandoned it in this district, and the remaining inhabitants now deliver a weekly supply of foodstuffs for the up-keep of the military camp at Irebu, of the big coffee plantation at Bikoro.”

The Casement Report

“In the past they escaped in large numbers to the French territory, but many were prevented by force from doing this, and numbers were shot in the attempt.”

A Congolese interviewed by Casement

“When the soldiers were sent to make us cut rubber there were so many killed we got tired of burying.”

R.R., a Congolese interviewed by Casement

“I ran away with two old people, but they were caught and killed, and the soldiers made me carry the baskets holding their cut-off hands. They killed my little sister, threw her in a house, and set it on fire.”

S.S., a Congolese interviewed by Casement

“I hid in a house with my little brother and sister. I heard guns fire. I took up my little sister and a big basket with native money in it, but had to leave the basket behind. My brother ran away. I tried to make my sister walk, but she was tired, and could not run through weakness. The soldiers took us, saying: ‘We might keep them both. The little one is not bad looking.’ But others said: ‘No, we must kill the younger girl.’ They put a knife through her stomach, left the body lying there. They also caught an old woman, cut her throat, divided her, ate her. They cut off the hands of those they had killed, and spread them out in a row

for the District Commissioner to see.... My mother was killed too.”

A refugee from the rubber-producing regions, interviewed by Casement

“We had to go further and further into the forest to find the rubber vines, to go without food, and our women had to give up cultivating the fields and gardens. Then we starved. Wild beasts—leopards—killed some of us when we were working away in the forest, and others got lost or died from exposure and starvation, and we begged the white man to leave us alone, saying that we could get no more rubber, but the white men and their soldiers said: ‘Go! You are only beasts yourselves.’”

U.U., a Congolese interviewed by Casement

“As we fled, the soldiers killed ten children, in the water. They killed a lot of adults, cut off their hands, put them in baskets, and took them to the white man, who counted 200 hands.... One day, soldiers struck a child with a gun-butt, cut off its head, and killed my sister and cut off her head, hands and feet because she had on rings.”

Village headman to Reverend Harris, a British missionary

“Tell them [the rubber agents] that we cannot and therefore will not find rubber; we are willing to spend our strength at any work possible, but the rubber is finished. If we must either be massacred or bring rubber, well, let them kill us; then we suppose they will be satisfied.”

Testimony by a Congolese given to Rev. A.E. Schrivener

“I myself saw a man at Likange who had had both his hands cut off. Sometimes they cut them at the wrist, sometimes farther up...with a machete. Also there was Muboma...who has a long scar across the back of his neck. There is another man called Botei at Inanga with the same sort of scar, where they wounded him maliciously, expecting him to die. They didn’t cut his head off, they didn’t get to the bone, but expected him to bleed to death. It was sheer cruelty; the State treated us abominably.”

Chewema, a member of the Mahusi tribe

“I remember my mother, the people in our village, but have forgotten its name. When we were transported to Lukafu we were fastened together by a rope round our necks, and at night-time our hands and feet were tied together to prevent us from escaping. At Lukafu the elder women were forced at first by the soldiers to sleep in their huts until Commandant Kasiera prohibited this. At M’pwetu I witnessed the killing of two natives who had stolen rubber from the Government stores. By the order of the white man called Lutina, the two natives were beaten by his soldiers with a hippo-hide whip, after this they were made to stand up, the soldiers then threw bricks on them till they died. One native was from Chewerchewera’s village, very near M’pwetu, and was buried by his relations; the other, who had no relations so near, was thrown into the Lake Mweru.”

John and Johan, two African men recruited from British Central Africa to serve as soldiers during the construction of a telegraph line in the Congo Free State

“On our arrival in the Congo Free State we learnt from the inhabitants and the Government soldiers that there is always war between the white men, the soldiers and the natives. The reason of a war and the constant troubles are as follows:

“Long ago the Belgian officials hanged the soldiers for their bad behavior. They hanged so many that this created a vengeance to such an extent that all soldiers formed a ring under the headman...with the object to kill all officers at the different stations on or near the Lake Tanganyika. This they did and took all the guns and ammunition. They then formed a stockade and made Yankoffu their chief. Later on they were attacked by a strong force of the Belgians, also we under Mr. Mohun attacked them, we killed many people but could not get Yankoffu. Most of his people crossed the lake to German territory taking with them the captured guns and ammunition. After this other Belgian officers re-occupied the plundered stations, but from that time the officers became afraid of the soldiers. When we were there, one officer of Marabu station, about ten days

from Lake Tanganyika, thrashed a soldier with a hippo-hide whip. Sometime later the...soldier shot him dead. We...were given orders to catch the murderer, we went after him for many days but could not find him. The white men are so afraid of the soldiers that they let them do whatever they like, they rape, murder and steal everything of the inhabitants, and if the chief or villagers object they are often shot dead on the spot. The officers all know this, but they never take any notice of it as they are afraid to punish the soldiers.”

Edward Bannister, British Vice-Consul for the Congo, on the complaints of British subjects serving in the Congo, 1894

“I had hundreds of complaints, and am still occupied with grave charges of cruelty practised on these men by officers of the State who stop short at nothing in brutality under the guise of discipline.”

Leonard Arthur, British Vice-Consul for the Congo, 1896

“I have also ascertained, from a purely private source of information, that Captain Francqui was in the habit of sending out small parties of troops under a non-commissioned officer to the villages and neighborhoods for the purpose of demanding ivory and rubber. If these articles were not forthcoming, he would dispatch another armed party to attack the natives. On the return of the party the non-commissioned officer in charge would report that so many natives had been killed. This, however, would not satisfy Captain Francqui, who demanded proofs in the form of human hands that he number stated had been killed, and the armed part would again be sent out for this purpose, returning in due course with the right hands of the natives who had been killed, and having seized whatever ivory and india-rubber that could be found in the village.”

W. Clayton Pickersgill, British Consul in the Congo

“A sentry on the Congo is a dare-devil aboriginal chosen from troops impressed outside the district in which he serves, for his loyalty and force of character. Armed with a rifle and pouch of cartridges he is located in a native village to see that the labour for which

its inhabitants are responsible is duly attended to. If they are india rubber collectors, his duty is to send the men into the forest and take note of those who do not return with the proper quantity. When food is the tax demanded, his business is to make sure that the women prepare and deliver it.”

Robert Codrington, the Administrator of North Eastern Rhodesia

“When they could do so, the natives fled to the territories governed by other Powers. Monsieur de Lamotte, the Governor of the French Congo, said in his evidence before a Commission on Colonial Concessions held in Paris in 1900, ‘...the agents of the Abir [one of the great rubber companies] have used their powers to such effect that they have succeeded in inducing 30,000 natives to leave their territory and take refuge on the French bank of the Congo.’”

Rev. Whitehead, a missionary at Lukolela, interviewed by Casement

“Their chiefs are being weakened in their prestige and physique through imprisonment, which is often cruel, and thus weakened in their authority over their own people, they are put into chains for the shortage of manioc bread.”

Edvard Sjöblom, a Swedish missionary

“They often kill the Congolese for the sake of rubber. Once, a soldier, pointing to a basket, said to me: ‘look, only two hands! That’s nothing. A few days ago I brought the white man 160 hands and they were thrown in the river.’ As he spoke I saw the horrible sight of dead bodies hanging down from the branches into the water.”

John Weeks, a British missionary

“Last week I returned from spending eight days in the Bokongo, Bongondo and other towns below this, our station at Monsembe, and while there I learned of the killing by Mabata [the native name of a Belgian officer] and his soldiers of twenty-two men and women. And what was the crime of which these unfortunate folk were guilty? They were behind in

their taxes, and owed the State between them a few goats.”

John Weeks, a British missionary

“The cutting off of hands, I do not know from whom the order emanates. But this I know. There are victims who have survived the cruelty in every district, in some more than others. I know White men who have seen the baskets of hands being carried to the central State Station and others have told me of the hands being put in a line or lines. State soldiers themselves give as their reasons for this barbarous deed that ‘...they have to account for the use of the cartridges in this way.’”

Mr. William Morrison, from the American Baptist Mission

“Mr. Sheppard (an American missionary) saw along the way several burnt villages, also some wounded persons. He reached the well-arranged stockade, and was received in a friendly way by Mlumba Nkusa and his 500 or more followers. Inside the stockade Mr. Sheppard counted eighty-one human hands slowly drying over a fire. Outside the stockade he counted more than two score bodies piled in a heap.... Mr. Sheppard also saw several Albinis rifles and a pistol, with cartridges—all of which natives are forbidden to have. Mlumba Nkasa said plainly that he had been sent by the State officer at Luluaburg, and that he had already dispatched him sixteen slaves.”

Mr. William Morrison, from the American Baptist Mission

“During the months of June, July and August of last year we had at Luebo...another reign of terror. A new officer, named Deschamps, had just come into power at Luluaburg. During my absence he came to Luebo, and there, without a warning to the chiefs or villagers, sent out his soldiers to catch men by force wherever they could be found. The people fled at once to the forest for safety.... I made a complaint to the authorities about the matter and demanded protection for the natives and urged that none be taken by force.

This Monsieur Duces promised...within

a few days, however, he received imperative orders from his chief, Deschamps. Consequently he began catching the people by force. They fled to the forests for safety...the soldiers scoured the woods in search of men. They succeeded in catching about eighteen or twenty, and these I saw taken away under guard, tied about the neck with ropes.

This whole affair I reported to the Native Protection Commission appointed by the King some years ago...asking it to see that the natives were protected in their rights. The only answer I received was that the State established forced labor by law, and that doubtless the officers were acting entirely within their powers.”

Mrs. Banks, a missionary

“[I] saw a native sentry beating and loudly abusing a poor woman who was crossing the station with a basket on her back. On investigating the cause of the disturbance [I] found that the basket was full of hands which had been cut off in one of the rubber palaver, and that instead of nineteen hands only eighteen could be found, the woman having dropped one en route. [I] counted the smoked hands, and found some of them to belong to children, others to women, and to men. Many of the victims were relations of the poor creature who was bearing the basket to the local agent.”

An anonymous missionary explaining why he would not speak out

“I am not afraid of what the State may do to me personally, but I fear that some officers might try and worry me through the people with whom I work—hence my reticence in appealing in any of these matters.”

Mr. Yule, a missionary

“In the daytime they (the women) do all the usual station work, such as carrying water for the Government officials, cleaning their rooms, etc., etc., and during the night they are obliged to be at the disposal of the soldiers. The soldier must live with the woman as long as he is at the station; should he be removed, the woman must remain at the station whether

she has children by him or not. The women are slaves captured by the Government soldiers when raiding the country, they are there to facilitate the ordinary requirements of labor, and to prevent the soldiers from their usual customs of raping in the native villages.”

Mr. Kirby, an American missionary

“The further away from publicity the greater the atrocities, such as the employment of fierce cannibal soldiers that terrorize the people; the shooting down of 20 male Congolese to pay for a lost dog; the forcing of Congolese to drink from latrines; the shooting down of handcuffed blacks.”

An anonymous missionary

“In stations in the charge of white government officers, one sees strings of poor emaciated old women, some mere skeletons, working in gangs, with a rope round their necks and connected with a rope 1 1/2 yards apart...thousands of Congolese have been slaughtered in Equateur. Twenty one severed heads, brought to Captain Rom, were used by him as decoration round the front of his house.”

King Baudouin June 30, 1960 Independence Day

Mr. President,

Sirs,

The independence of the Congo is formed by the outcome of the work conceived by King Leopold II's genius, undertaken by Him with tenacious and continuous courage with Belgium's perseverance. It marks a decisive hour in the destinies not only of the Congo itself, but, I do not hesitate to affirm, of the whole of Africa.

Over the course of 80 years, Belgium sent the best of its sons to our soil, first to deliver the basin of the Congo from the odious slave trafficking that decimated its populations; then to bring ethnic groups together with one another who, once enemies, learned to build the greatest of independent African States together; finally, to call for a happier life in the

diverse regions of the Congo that you represent here, united by the same Parliament.

In this historical moment, our thought to all must turn towards the pioneers of the African emancipation and towards those, who after them made the Congo what it is today. They deserve both OUR admiration and YOUR recognition because it is those who, consecrate all of their efforts and even their lives to a great ideal, have brought you peace and have enriched your moral and material patrimony. They must never be forgotten, neither by Belgium nor by the Congo.

When Leopold II undertook the great work that today finds its crowning, it is not presented to you in conquering but in civilizing.

From its foundation, the Congo has opened its borders to international traffic without Belgium ever exercising a monopoly in its exclusive interest.

The Congo was equipped with railroads, roads, air and maritime routes that, in putting your populations in contact with one another, have favored their unity and have enlarged the country to the dimensions of the world.

A medical service, which has taken several decades to be established, was patiently organized and has delivered you from sicknesses, however devastating. Numerous and remarkably useful hospitals have been built. Agriculture was improved and modernized. Large cities have been built and, across the whole country, living and hygienic conditions have translated into remarkable progress. Industrial enterprises have made the natural riches of the soil valuable. The expansion of economic activity has been considerable, also raising the well-being of your populations and equipping the Country with technicians indispensable to its development.

Thanks to mission schools, like those who create public powers, basic education has known an enviable growth; an intellectual elite has begun to form so that your universities will rapidly grow.

A greater and greater number of qualified workers who earn their living in agriculture,

industry, artisanry, commerce, and administration, are penetrating all the classes of the population and emancipating themselves, building the true base of any civilization.

We are happy to have also given to the Congo, despite the greatest hardships, the elements needed to arm a country on the path of development.

The great movement of independence that sweeps all of Africa has found, nearby the Belgian powers, the biggest comprehension. Facing the unanimous desires of your populations, we have not hesitated to recognize your independence from this time on.

It is up to you now, Sirs, to demonstrate that we were right to trust you.

Henceforth, Belgium and the Congo find one another side by side, like sovereign States but linked by friendship and dedicated to help one another out. Also, we remit in your hands today all the administrative, economic, technical, and social services as well as judicial organization, without which a modern State is not viable. The Belgian agents are ready to give you a loyal and clarified collaboration.

Your task is immense and you are the first to realize it. The principal dangers that threaten you are: the inexperience of the populations to govern themselves, tribal fighting, that formerly have done so much harm that, at no price, must not be begun again, the attraction that might exercise itself on certain region of foreign powers, ready to profit from the least lapse.

Your followers will know the difficult task of governing. One must put first on the agenda their worries, whatever be their political party affiliation, the general interests of the country. They will have to teach the Congolese people that independence cannot be realized by immediate satisfaction of easy pleasures, but by work, by respect of liberty of others and by the rights of the minority, by tolerance and order, without which no democratic regime can survive.

I will give here a particular tribute to the Force Publique that accomplished its heavy

mission with unwavering courage and devotion.

Independence will necessitate efforts and sacrifices from all. You must adapt institutions to your conceptions and your needs, in such a manner to render them stable and balanced. You must also form experimental administrative bureaus, intensify intellectual and moral formation of the population, maintain the stability of the currency, safeguard and develop your economic, social, and, financial organizations.

Do not compromise the future with hasty reforms, and do not replace the structures that Belgium has given you, as long as you are not certain that you cannot do better.

Maintain vigilantly the administration of medical services whose interruption would have disastrous consequences and will cause diseases to return that we had succeeded in suppressing. Watch over on scientific work that constitutes an inestimable intellectual patrimony for you. Do not forget that a serene and independent system of justice is a factor of social peace; the guarantee of respect of everyone's rights confers a great moral authority to the State in international opinion.

Do not fear turning yourselves towards us. We are ready to stay by your side to help you with our advice, to share with you technicians and functionaries (government employees) that you will need.

Africa and Europe mutually complete one another and are called in cooperation to the greatest leap. The Congo and Belgium can play a first class role by a constructive and fruitful collaboration, with a reciprocal trust.

Sirs,

The whole world has fixed its eyes on you. At the hour where the Congo sovereignty chooses its way of life, I hope that the Congolese people conserve and develop the patrimony of spiritual, moral, and religious values that we share and that transcend the political vicissitudes and the differences in race or in border.

Remain united, and you will know to

show yourself deserving the great role that you have been called to play in the history of Africa.

Congolese people,

My country and I recognize you with joy and emotion that the Congo attains this 30th of June 1960, in full agreement and friendship with Belgium, to independence and international sovereignty.

May God protect the Congo!

Patrice Lumumba June 30, 1960 Independence Day

Men and women of the Congo,

Victorious fighters for independence, today victorious, I greet you in the name of the Congolese Government. All of you, my friends, who have fought tirelessly at our sides, I ask you to make this June 30, 1960, an illustrious date that you will keep indelibly engraved in your hearts, a date of significance of which you will teach to your children, so that they will make known to their sons and to their grandchildren the glorious history of our fight for liberty.

For this independence of the Congo, even as it is celebrated today with Belgium, a friendly country with whom we deal as equal to equal, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it was by fighting that it has been won [applause], a day-to-day fight, an ardent and idealistic fight, a fight in which we were spared neither privation nor suffering, and for which we gave our strength and our blood.

We are proud of this struggle, of tears, of fire, and of blood, to the depths of our being, for it was a noble and just struggle, and indispensable to put an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force.

This was our fate for eighty years of a colonial regime; our wounds are too fresh and too painful still for us to drive them from our memory. We have known harassing work, exacted in exchange for salaries which did not permit us to eat enough to drive away hunger, or to clothe ourselves, or to house ourselves

decently, or to raise our children as creatures dear to us.

We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon, and evening, because we are Negroes. Who will forget that to a black one said “tu,” certainly not as to a friend, but because the more honorable “vous” was reserved for whites alone?

We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws which in fact recognized only that might is right.

We have seen that the law was not the same for a white and for a black, accommodating for the first, cruel and inhuman for the other.

We have witnessed atrocious sufferings of those condemned for their political opinions or religious beliefs; exiled in their own country, their fate truly worse than death itself.

We have seen that in the towns there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling shanties for the blacks, that a black was not admitted in the motion-picture houses, in the restaurants, in the stores of the Europeans; that a black traveled in the holds, at the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins.

Who will ever forget the massacres where so many of our brothers perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown?

All that, my brothers, we have endured.

But we, whom the vote of your elected representatives have given the right to direct our dear country, we who have suffered in our body and in our heart from colonial oppression, we tell you very loud, all that is henceforth ended.

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed, and our country is now in the hands of its own children.

Together, my brothers, my sisters, we are going to begin a new struggle, a sublime struggle, which will lead our country to peace, prosperity, and greatness.

Together, we are going to establish social

justice and make sure everyone has just remuneration for his labor.

We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make of the Congo the center of the sun's radiance for all of Africa.

We are going to keep watch over the lands of our country so that they truly profit her children. We are going to restore ancient laws and make new ones which will be just and noble.

We are going to put an end to suppression of free thought and see to it that all our citizens enjoy to the full the fundamental liberties foreseen in the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

We are going to do away with all discrimination of every variety and assure for each and all the position to which human dignity, work, and dedication entitles him.

We are going to rule not by the peace of guns and bayonets but by a peace of the heart and the will.

And for all that, dear fellow countrymen, be sure that we will count not only on our enormous strength and immense riches but on the assistance of numerous foreign countries whose collaboration we will accept if it is offered freely and with no attempt to impose on us an alien culture of no matter what nature.

In this domain, Belgium, at last accepting the flow of history, has not tried to oppose our independence and is ready to give us their aid and their friendship, and a treaty has just been signed between our two countries, equal and independent. On our side, while we stay vigilant, we shall respect our obligations, given freely.

Thus, in the interior and the exterior, the new Congo, our dear Republic that my government will create, will be a rich, free, and prosperous country. But so that we will reach this aim without delay, I ask all of you, legis-

lators and citizens, to help me with all your strength.

I ask all of you to forget your tribal quarrels. They exhaust us. They risk making us despised abroad.

I ask the parliamentary minority to help my Government through a constructive opposition and to limit themselves strictly to legal and democratic channels.

I ask all of you not to shrink before any sacrifice in order to achieve the success of our huge undertaking.

In conclusion, I ask you unconditionally to respect the life and the property of your fellow citizens and of foreigners living in our country. If the conduct of these foreigners leaves something to be desired, our justice will be prompt in expelling them from the territory of the Republic; if, on the contrary, their conduct is good, they must be left in peace, for they also are working for our country's prosperity.

The Congo's independence marks a decisive step towards the liberation of the entire African continent.

Sire, Excellencies, Mesdames, Messieurs, my dear fellow countrymen, my brothers of race, my brothers of struggle-- this is what I wanted to tell you in the name of the Government on this magnificent day of our complete independence.

Our government, strong, national, popular, will be the health of our country.

I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a prosperous national economy which will assure our economic independence.

Glory to the fighters for national liberation!

Long live independence and African unity!

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!

Supplementary Resources

Books

- Birmingham, David and Phyllis Martin, eds. *History of Central Africa*, Volumes 1 and 2 (New York: Longman, 1983) 382 pages.
- Cookey, S.J.S. *Britain and the Congo Question*. (New York: Humanities Press, 1968) 314 pages.
- Edgerton, Robert S. *The Troubled Heart of Africa*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002) 246 pages.
- Ewans, Martin. *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, The Congo Free State, and its Aftermath*. (New York: Routledge, 2002) 253 pages.
- Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) 306 pages.
- Pakenham, Thomas. *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876 to 1912*. (New York: Avon Books, 1991) 680 pages.

World Wide Web

- The American Museum Congo Expedition <<http://diglib1.amnh.org/>> Explains the 1909-1915 expedition supported by the Museum of Natural History. Contains anthropological and zoological reports, resources, maps, links, and photographs.
- The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/monuc/>> The UN's current Congo peacekeeping mission website. Includes background, maps, press releases, etc.
- University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Country_Specific/Zaire.html> History of the country and links to several other websites.
- The Choices Program <<http://www.choices.edu/Congo.cfm>> Updated resources and links.

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Watson Institute for International Studies
Box 1948, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912

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Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce

Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce engages students in an examination of the effects of colonialism in the Congo. The unit helps them to understand the impact on indigenous people and the debate that grew in Europe about widespread abuses by colonial authorities.

Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce



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The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict and Commerce is part of a continuing series on international public policy issues. New units are published each academic year and all units are updated regularly.

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THE CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION PROGRAM is a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. CHOICES was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgement on policy issues.



The Watson Institute for International Studies was established at Brown University in 1986 to serve as a forum for students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing contemporary global problems and developing initiatives to address them.

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The Choices Approach to Historical Turning Points

Choices curricula are designed to make complex international issues understandable and meaningful for students. Using a student-centered approach, Choices units develop critical thinking and an understanding of the significance of history in our lives today—essential ingredients of responsible citizenship.

Teachers say the collaboration and interaction in Choices units are highly motivating for students. Studies consistently demonstrate that students of all abilities learn best when they are actively engaged with the material. Cooperative learning invites students to take pride in their own contributions and in the group product, enhancing students' confidence as learners. Research demonstrates that students using the Choices approach learn the factual information presented as well as or better than those using a lecture-discussion format. Choices units offer students with diverse abilities and learning styles the opportunity to contribute, collaborate, and achieve.

Choices units on historical turning points include student readings, a framework of policy options, primary sources, suggested lesson plans, and resources for structuring cooperative learning, role plays, and simulations. Students are challenged to:

- understand historical context
- recreate historical debate
- analyze and evaluate multiple perspectives at a turning point in history
- analyze primary sources that provide a grounded understanding of the moment
- understand the internal logic of a viewpoint
- identify the conflicting values represented by different points of view
- develop and articulate original viewpoints
- recognize relationships between history and current issues
- communicate in written and oral presentations
- collaborate with peers

Choices curricula offer teachers a flexible resource for covering course material while actively engaging students and developing skills in critical thinking, persuasive writing, and informed citizenship. The instructional activities that are central to Choices units can be valuable components in any teacher's repertoire of effective teaching strategies.

Historical Understanding

Each Choices curriculum resource provides students with extensive information about an historical issue. By providing students only the information available at the time, Choices units help students to understand that historical events often involved competing and highly contested views. The Choices approach emphasizes that historical outcomes were hardly inevitable. This approach helps students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of history.

Each Choices unit presents the range of options that were considered at a turning point in history. Students understand and analyze these options through a role play activity.

In each unit the setting is the same as it was during the actual event. Students may be role playing a meeting of the National Security Council, a town gathering, or a Senate debate. Student groups defend their assigned policy options and, in turn, are challenged with questions from their classmates playing the role of "decisionmakers" at the time. The ensuing debate demands analysis and evaluation of the conflicting values, interests, and priorities reflected in the options.

The final reading in a Choices historical unit presents the outcome of the debate and reviews subsequent events. The final lesson encourages students to make connections between past and present.

Note To Teachers

In the first decade of the twentieth century, again in the 1960s, and then as the world passed from the twentieth to twenty-first centuries, conflict in the Central African region of the Congo became the focus of global concern. This region, the site of so much violence and chaos throughout the twentieth century, still suffers today. *Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce* helps students explore the history of precolonial Congo and European imperialism there. The unit also discusses Congo's independence and the troubles it has experienced since then.

In this unit, students participate in the international debate about the future of what was then called the Congo Free State. The debate raises questions that are relevant to decision-makers today: When should citizens and governments of one country be concerned about people in other countries? How should we balance issues of economics and morality when making decisions?

Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan: The Teacher Resource Book accompanying *Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce* contains a day-by-day lesson plan and student activities. On the first day students explore precolonial Congo by looking at proverbs from one ethnic group. An alternative lesson addresses geography and European imperialism. On Day Two of the lesson plan students take on the roles of several real people at the turn of the twentieth century. Those characters share their opinions about the events in the Congo Free State and what could be done about them. On the third and fourth days, students engage in a simulation of the 1904 British parliamentary debate in which MPs discussed whether and how Great Britain should intervene in the Congo. On the fifth day students read and evaluate two

speeches made at Congolese independence in 1960. An optional lesson addresses the use of primary sources. You may also find the "Alternative Three Day Lesson Plan" helpful.

- **Alternative Study Guides:** Each section of background reading is accompanied by two distinct study guides. The standard study guide is designed to help students harvest the information provided in the background readings in preparation for analysis and synthesis within classroom activities. The advanced study guide requires analysis and synthesis prior to class activities.

- **Vocabulary and Concepts:** The background reading in *Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce* addresses subjects that are complex and challenging. To help your students get the most out of the text, you may want to review with them "Key Terms" found in the Teacher Resource Book (TRB) on page TRB-37 before they begin their assignment. An "Issues Toolbox" is also included on page TRB-38. This provides additional information on key concepts of particular importance to understanding the unit.

- **Primary Source Documents:** Materials are included in the student text (pages 40-50) that may be used to supplement lessons.

- **Additional Online Resources:** More resources are available online at <www.choices.edu/congo.cfm>

The lesson plans offered in *Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce* are provided as a guide. They are designed for traditional class periods of approximately 50 minutes. Those on block schedules will need to make adaptations. Many teachers choose to devote additional time to certain activities. We hope that these suggestions help you in tailoring the unit to fit the needs of your classroom.

Integrating This Unit into Your Curriculum

Units produced by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program are designed to be integrated into a variety of social studies courses. Below are a few ideas about where *Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce* might fit into your curriculum.

World History: Students studying pre-colonial African civilizations often focus on the great kingdoms of West Africa, Great Zimbabwe, or the Swahili city-states of East Africa. Following a study of these civilizations, it might be helpful to examine the fate of this large region at the heart of the continent. This unit examines the status of these societies before and after the arrival of Europeans. Students can analyze the effects of contacts with outsiders.

The history of nineteenth century imperialism often focuses on well-known examples such as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and India. The Congo Free State can be used to compare and contrast with these cases, and as a means of studying the forces in European society that were creating the pressure for colonization.

In the study of the twentieth century, the drama of decolonization in the post-World War II era is often examined. This unit vividly portrays the abuses that sometimes took place under European rule. By coming face to face with some of the worst abuses, students can understand why the citizens of much of the colonial world so desired an end to colonial rule.

Modern European History: Students studying nineteenth century imperialism from the European perspective can gain insight into how European policies affected the lives of people in the colonies.

A study of the Great Power politics of Europe is not complete without addressing colonization. The founding of the Congo Free State, the British campaign against it, and the

nature of the new Belgian Congo all reflect the manner in which Great Power politics in Europe had far-reaching consequences beyond that continent.

While studying the spread of democracy and electoral reform in Western Europe, and especially in Britain, students must examine how the voices of newly enfranchised citizens affected political debate. The story of the Congo Reform Association demonstrates the power of a grass-roots movement to effect change. The manner in which this organization spread its influence across Europe and North America also testifies to the changing communication structure of the time and the rise of a global community.

Sociology: The diverse peoples of the Congo reacted differently to the social change caused by the arrival of the Europeans. Through studying pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras of Congolese history, students can trace the ways social structures and values change over time in reaction to external and internal pressures.

International Relations: The Congo Reform Association is an early example of an international human rights movement. In the late twentieth century concerns about human rights became a major element of international relations. This unit can be used to examine the roots of some of today's international movements. Students can compare the methods and mission of the Congo Reform Association with those of human rights groups today.

The connection between trade and human rights is very much an issue of debate today. The experience of the Congo Free State demonstrates that this debate is not a new one. Students can examine how the people of the Congo interacted with a rapidly globalizing economy at the turn of the century.

Understanding Precolonial Central Africa

Objectives:

Students will: Understand how historians use various sources to study a time period.

Use primary source materials to develop a clearer understanding of some precolonial Congolese societies.

Identify values expressed in primary source materials.

Consider how African values interacted with European values.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Introduction and Part I of the background reading in the student text (pages 1-11) and completed “Study Guide—Part I” (TRB 6-7) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part I” (TRB-8).

Handouts:

“Proverbs of the Congo” (TRB 4-5)

In the Classroom:

1. Understanding Proverbs—Define “proverb” for students. One definition is “a short saying in common use expressing a well-known truth or common fact learned by experience or observation.” Point out that often a profound truth is hidden beneath what may at first seem like a silly or frivolous expression. Share one of your own favorite

proverbs and explain what it means to you. Ask one or two students to do the same. Explain that historians use a variety of sources to gather information about cultures, and that proverbs can be a rich source for understanding the values of a culture. In all cultures, proverbs are often rooted in folklore and are a way of preserving oral traditions.

2. Groupwork—Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Distribute “Proverbs of the Congo” to each group. Review the directions together as a class and have groups complete the assignment.

3. Sharing Conclusions—After the groups have completed the activity, call on students to share answers to the questions posed at the end.

Suggestion:

If your class finishes this exercise with time to spare, you might want to have them also do the alternative lesson (TRB 9-13) on European Imperialism.

Homework:

Students should read Part II of the background reading in the student text (pages 12-22) and complete “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 22-23) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-24).

Proverbs of the Congo

Introduction: Proverbs are concise sayings that are used to convey the values of a culture. Proverbs often use symbolism or language from one aspect of life to give advice that can be applied more generally (For instance: “A stitch in time saves nine” applies not just to people who are mending clothing). Most of the proverbs below come from the Mongo people of the inner Congo Basin, but some come from other ethnic groups of the Congo. Read each of the proverbs and answer the questions.

1. Glory is found in the family.
2. The older one is, the greater the respect.
3. The forest is a relic of the ancestors; it stays with the family.
4. For each beast that is killed, there is a man to eat its liver.
5. The health of a banana is found in its leaves as that of the family is in its members.
6. Wealth is not eternal. It is able to be lost.
7. Those who are wives belong to their husbands; those who are single belong to their fathers.
8. A well-educated youth needs only one order.
9. It is the young who want war and the old who yearn for peace.
10. A rich man gains from his generosity.
11. A mistreated woman will drown her husband in tears.
12. If you are married, don't lose touch with your own family.
13. Help received today is returned tomorrow.
14. The young cannot teach tradition to the old.
15. The fish does not reject its water; man must follow the family.
16. An action repeated has a motive of interest.
17. Before judging others, judge yourself.
18. Firewood burns as long as it is not wet; a good man triumphs only when he is just.
19. It is better to hunger than to steal.
20. Peace is preferable to war.
21. To keep the peace, prevent arguments.

Name: _____

7. Many ethnic groups in the interior of the continent _____ their traditional productive activities such as _____ and _____ to devote all of their time to the _____ and the trade of other _____ products.

8. How did trade networks of the nineteenth century assist Africans throughout the Congo?

9. Who was Tippu Tip?

10. List the three major reasons Europeans were interested in exploring and colonizing Africa.

a.

b.

c.

11. Who were the first two groups of Europeans to come to the interior of the African continent?

a.

b.

12. Why was King Leopold II of Belgium interested in the Congo region?

13. What were the three aims of the 1885 Berlin Conference?

a.

b.

c.

Advanced Study Guide—Part I

1. How were ethnic groups in the Central African region distinguished? Offer examples to support your claims.
2. How did the Atlantic slave trade change the economy of African ethnic groups?
3. Why did Europeans want to explore and colonize Africa?
4. What factors motivated King Leopold to seek ownership of the Congo region?
5. Why would Europeans at the Berlin Conference of 1885 not have invited any Africans?

Europe in Africa

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze maps to draw conclusions about the effect of geography on European expansion in Africa.

Compare and contrast different maps to make connections over time.

Required Reading:

Students should have read the Introduction and Part I of the background reading in the student text (pages 1-11) and completed “Study Guide—Part I” in the Teacher Resource Book (TRB 6-7) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part I” (TRB-8).

Handouts:

“Map Analysis Questions” (TRB 10-11)

Maps:

Africa in 1884 and 1914 (TRB 12-13)

In the Classroom:

1. Establishing Background—Ask students to think about Part I of the student text.

Have them generate as a class a short list of examples of events in Europe that influenced African history.

2. Map Analysis—Explain to students that they will be using maps to examine the nature of European expansion in Africa. Put students in groups of two or three and hand out the “Map Analysis Questions.”

3. Sharing Conclusions—After students have finished the activity, review some of the answers.

Suggestion:

If your class finishes this exercise with time to spare, you might want to have them also do the Day One lesson (TRB 3-5) on provinces of the Congo.

Homework:

Students should read Part II of the background reading in the student text (pages 12-22) and complete “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 22-23) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-24).

Map Analysis Questions

Instructions: The numbers inside the parentheses before each question indicate which map(s) are necessary to answer the question. Look carefully at the maps before answering each question.

1. (1884) As of 1884, which outside power controlled the largest territory?
2. (1884) What do the European territories have in common in terms of their geographic location?
3. (1884) In West Africa several different European countries control small areas right next to each other. Why do you think this might be so?
4. (1884) Why don't European countries control the interior of the African continent?
5. (1884/1914) What countries control area in 1884 next to what becomes the Belgian Congo?
6. (1914) Which two powers have the largest colonial territories as of 1914?
7. (1914) Which European country controls the smallest amount of land in 1914?
8. (1884/1914) The colony of Libya was controlled by what country in 1914? In 1884, who controlled that area?

Name: _____

9. (1914) The British were interested in building a “Cape-to-Cairo” railroad from South Africa to Egypt. Which two colonies block their ability to do so?

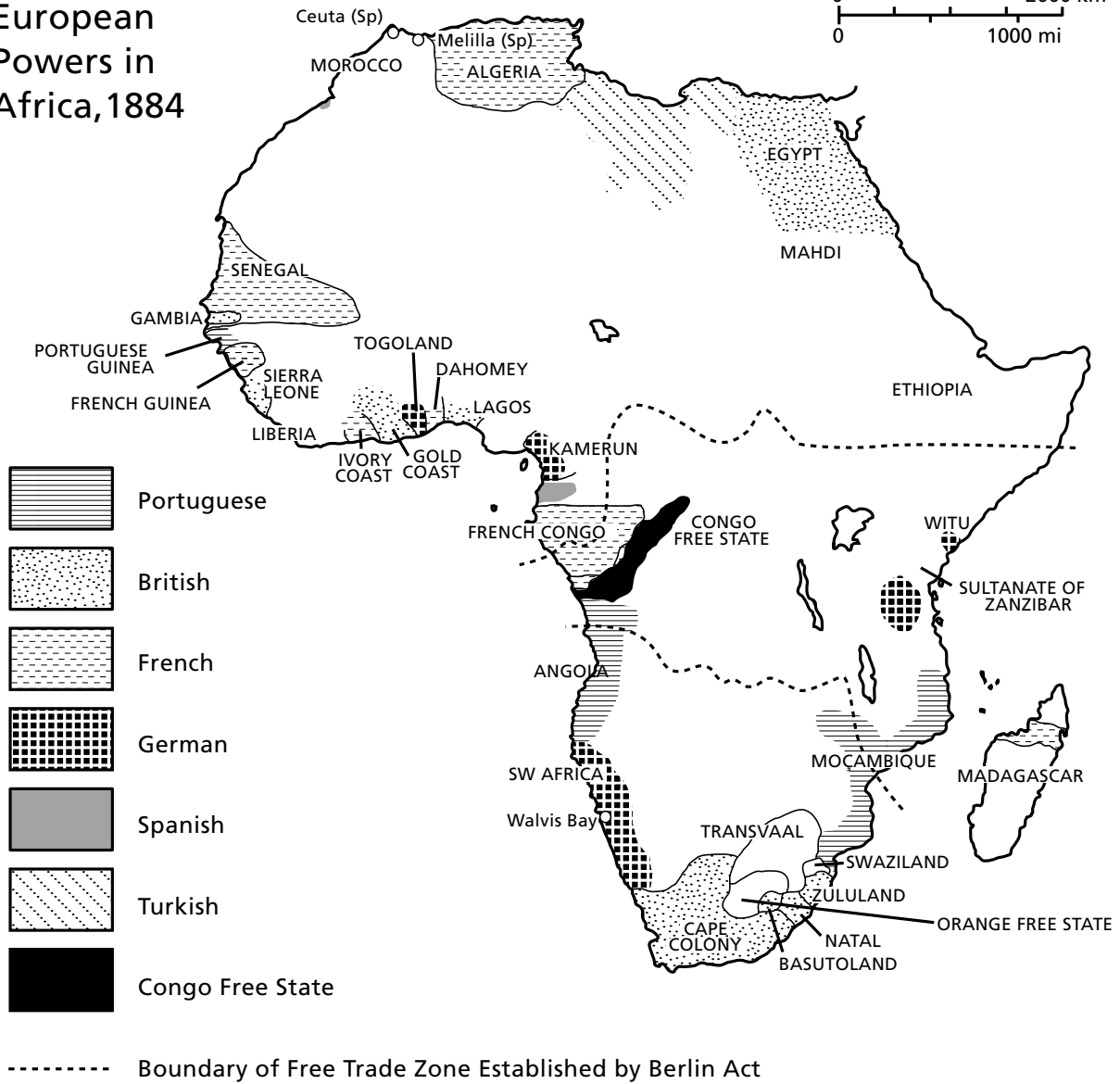
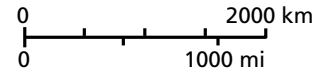
10. (1884/1914) Which Portuguese colony expanded the most between these two dates?

11. (1914) List all of the colonies that surround the Belgian Congo. Include in parentheses the name of the European power that controlled each.

12. (1914) Two areas in 1914 were not controlled by European powers. What were they?

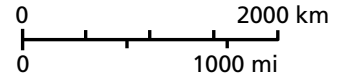
13. (1884/1914) Recall that the rivalry between France and Britain was one of the most intense among the Great Powers of Europe. Offer some evidence from these maps that you suspect demonstrates this rivalry.


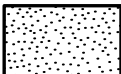
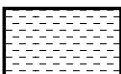



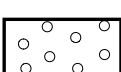
European Powers in Africa, 1884

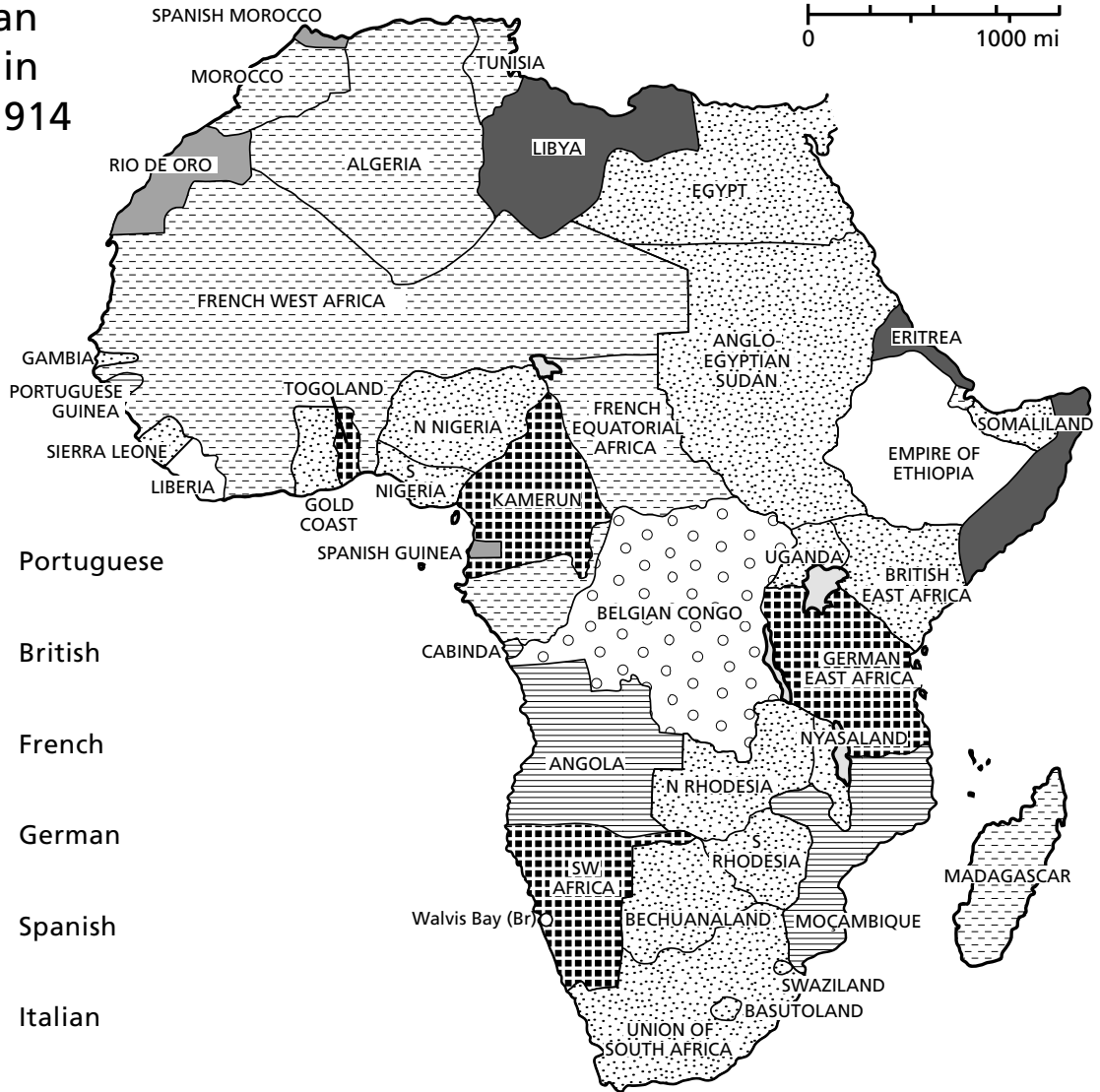


Name: _____

European Powers in Africa, 1914



-  Portuguese
-  British
-  French
-  German
-  Spanish
-  Italian
-  Belgian



Testimonies

Objectives:

Students will: Understand how historians use oral and written testimonies to understand history.

Determine what makes a source reliable or biased.

Gain further insight into what happened in the Congo Free State.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II in the background readings (pages 12-22) and completed the “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 22-23) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-24).

Handouts:

“Testimonies from the Congo Free State” from the student text, pages 43-47.

“Sources From the Past” (TRB-15)

In the Classroom:

1. Understanding Reliability—How can students determine if a source is reliable? Pick one selection from “Testimonies” to use as an example. Ask students to consider who wrote the piece, when it might have been written, and for what purpose. Remind students that multiple accounts of the same event can help historians to sort out what is fact and what is opinion. Understanding the motives of the writer, as well as the context in which the source was written, can help to determine reliability and accuracy. A further conversation could address the concept of reliability in secondary as well as primary sources.

2. Understanding Viewpoint and Bias—Even if a source is accurate, it might still have a bias. In the large group setting, review with students the concept of bias. Nearly every primary source will reflect bias in some way. Ask students to consider how different groups

familiar with the Congo Free State might have interpreted events differently. How might a missionary’s viewpoint be different from a Congolese native’s? Can a biased source be useful for an historian? Discuss how students might recognize bias in a source: language use, or selective use of facts, for instance.

3. Groupwork—Divide students into groups of three or four. Distribute “Testimonies from the Congo Free State” to each group. Ask groups to choose four selections, one each from the Casement Report, from a Congolese interviewed, from a missionary, and from a British official. You may wish to make these selections before class and assign them to groups to save time. Note that these selections do not represent all of the existing responses to the Congo Free State but rather are a collection of some of the available sources. Distribute “Sources From the Past” to each group and ask groups to answer the questions.

4. Debriefing—Return to the large group setting and ask students to comment on the reliability of their sources. Look in particular at question 5 from “Sources from the Past.” How do students imagine historians might use these sources?

Extra Challenge

Ask students to write a paragraph in which they describe the events from their four selections, incorporating them as an historian might into a single secondary source.

Note:

Several resources exist for teachers wishing to learn more about teaching with primary sources. Here are two websites:

The Library of Congress <<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/psources/pshome.html>>

The National Archives <<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/>>

Name: _____

Sources From the Past

Introduction: You learned through reading Part I that historians use several sources to understand the past. One type of source is written and oral testimonies from people who lived during that time period. With your group, read your four selections. Use your selections to answer these questions.

1. Who is the author of the selection?

Source A:

Source C:

Source B:

Source D:

2. What events are described in the selection?

Source A:

Source C:

Source B:

Source D:

3. Can you determine whether the sources are accurate? Why or why not?

Source A:

Source C:

Source B:

Source D:

4. What similarities and differences are there among your four sources?

5. How might an historian use each of the sources to study the Congo Free State?

Source A:

Source C:

Source B:

Source D:

Hyde Park Corner

Objectives:

Students will: Understand the perspectives of other countries and societies, as well as members of the British public, in the debate over the Congo question.

Be introduced to a number of less prominent historical figures from the time of the British parliamentary debate.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II in the background readings (pages 12-22) and completed the “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 22-23) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-24).

Handouts:

“An Afternoon at Speaker’s Corner, Hyde Park” (TRB 17-19)

“Preparing for the Afternoon” (TRB-20) for members of the public

“Press Release” (TRB-21) for press members

In the Classroom:

1. Getting Started—Assign each student a character or a role as a member of the press and inform them that they will need to create a short presentation that they will make to the group about their character’s views. Although these characters are real, keep in mind they would not have all been in the same place at

the same time. Each character should complete the preparation worksheet before the gathering. You may wish to have students familiarize themselves with their character as homework before the simulation.

2. Sharing Viewpoints—Although the discussions are fictional in this simulation, the themes and ideas presented help students to understand the issues many groups and individuals faced at the time. Ask students to present their character and his or her hopes for the future quickly. After each character has spoken, the teacher has the responsibility to facilitate the discussion. Students who are not assigned a character are to act as members of the press. It is their job at the conclusion of the discussion to craft a short article about the afternoon’s event and to submit it to their editors for print. Press members should pose clarifying questions once all the speakers have interacted with one another. Press members will need to complete the “Press Release” worksheet in preparation for their articles.

Suggestion:

Ask students to write a short journal entry or letter to a relative from the perspective of their character before the presentations in Hyde Park.

Homework:

Students should read “June 9, 1904: The Moment of Decision” (page 23) and “Options in Brief” (page 24).

An Afternoon at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park

Introduction: Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, London is a well-known spot where anyone can speak publicly. Politicians frequently come to try their ideas out on passersby, and others come to speak their mind about issues of the day. Famous speakers include Vladimir Lenin and Karl Marx.

It is late May of 1904. You have decided to come to Speaker's Corner to make a short presentation about the events in the Congo. Following your presentation there will be time for discussion. Several newspaper reporters are also there, as the debate about the Congo has held the public's interest for some time. It is clear that Members of Parliament will be reading these stories in papers tomorrow to gauge public opinion.

Today, the following people have come to share their views:

Lofumbwa Antoine: As a native Congolese and teenage resident of the village of Isaka, you have witnessed and experienced firsthand the atrocities taking place in your country. Neighbors, friends, and even your family members are at the mercy of the rubber companies as they are ruthlessly driven to extract rubber at an impossible rate. The land is ruined, and there is little opportunity to sustain yourself through the farming and trade that were the former occupations of your village. If the Congolese do not die from working for the rubber companies, they are often brutally killed by the Force Publique. No one has stepped in to check this brutality. Given that the Congolese are dying so quickly, internal opposition is hard to organize, and you realize that you will have to depend increasingly on the help of outsiders.

Demetrius Boulger: As a Belgian writer and adamant supporter of King Leopold, you have publicly denounced claims that the Congo natives are being mistreated. You firmly believe that there has been no foul play in the Congo, and that Leopold has the Congo's best

interests in mind, which include, primarily, introducing civilization to the region. You wrote part of the book *The Congo State is NOT a Slave State* in direct response to E.D. Morel's pamphlet of 1903 entitled "The Congo Slave State." Furthermore, you would like to highlight the Berlin Act as evidence that other European powers supported the colony, and are opposed now only because they look to it for lucrative trade opportunities.

Lord Cranbourne: You are the parliamentary undersecretary at the British Foreign Office, and believe that Britain has no business getting involved in Leopold's colony. With years of experience as colonizers, the British should be happy to advise Leopold on how to make his colony function effectively and profitably, but there is certainly no reason to expend British resources and time attempting to get rid of him or overhaul a government. As for the arguments concerning Leopold's violations of free trade, if Britain focuses more on its economic connections with its own colonies, it can encourage an ever-growing zone of free trade in Africa.

Browne de Tiege: You are president of the Société Anversoise du Commerce du Congo, Leopold's financial advisor, and his personal friend. You have never visited the Congo, but you make a sizeable profit from the natural resources extracted from there, and as a staunch supporter of the king, you are strongly against any countries intervening in the Congo Free State. As ruler of the colony, Leopold has sole control over its resources and natives, and you defend not only his economic interests but also his honorable intentions in Africa.

Sir Charles Dilke: As a radical liberal member of the British Parliament, in May 1903 you argued that one of the most important problems in the Congo was the lack of free trade. The maintenance of free trade in and with the Congo is imperative for Europeans

and Congolese because it gives everyone equal access to goods and natural resources. Article I of the Berlin Act clearly states, “The trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom...In all the regions forming the basin of the Congo and its outlets...” Leopold has violated this article by favoring his own Belgian companies or those owned by close friends, and this unfair trade monopoly must be dismantled. Furthermore, the gross human rights violations that the Belgians and Leopold’s companies commit are not to be tolerated.

Alice Harris: You have traveled the Congo as a Protestant missionary, witnessing atrocities firsthand. You and your husband John worked to produce proof of these atrocities to put before administrators in the area, calling upon an African chief named Lontulu to testify. He confirms your findings—that hundreds of natives have been mutilated for the sake of rubber and personal glory of white men. You are making concerted efforts to ensure that this brutality is brought to light and stopped. You and your husband are confidants of E.D. Morel and members of the Congo Reform Association (CRA), and provide him with eyewitness accounts and photographs. You have also traveled to the United States, speaking at more than two hundred public meetings in forty-nine cities, rallying the American public around the Congo cause.

John Holt: As vice president of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce and head of a Liverpool shipping firm, you believe that everything in England is done by and for the sake of business. Liverpool is England’s major port city, and the chamber of commerce lobbies the government on behalf of the business community. It is now pressing Parliament to enforce the free trade in the Congo that was promised in the Berlin Act. Leopold has established an unfair monopoly of goods and trade in the Congo for his own personal wealth, denying other European companies access. You are also an active member of the Congo Reform Association, and a personal friend of E.D. Mo-

rel, so you are highly in favor of investigating the injustices occurring in Leopold’s Congo.

Charles Adolphe Marie Liebrichts: You served as the secretary-general of Home and Military Affairs of the Congo Free State government for several years, first as under secretary, spending over six years in the Congo, and then as secretary-general, residing in Brussels, Belgium. You support the king wholeheartedly in his endeavors to civilize the Congolese natives, who were formerly committing acts of cannibalism and mutilation. Having spent time in the Congo, you are aware that certain individuals who work for the Congo Free State can get carried away in their discipline of black workers and soldiers, but they are not representative of the larger governing body, which has no intention of mistreating natives, only educating and civilizing them.

E.D. Morel: A former shipping clerk, you were one of the first to call attention to the human rights abuses and absence of free trade in the Belgian Congo. As a founding member of the Congo Reform Association (CRA), you are calling for a complete dismantling of the Congo Free State—it is a corrupt government system that supports atrocities committed against native Congolese. As one of the CRA leaders, your primary goal is to inform Europeans about what is occurring in the Congo and mobilize public opinion to call for major reforms. You have also placed continuous pressure on the British Parliament to take action against the Congo Free State, and you work on countering Leopold’s propaganda. You believe that the Congolese should have the right to choose with whom they do business.

Leon Rom: As a Belgian, you traveled to the Congo at age twenty-five to seek your fortune. You were quickly promoted to district commissioner of the Matadi region, were later put in charge of training black troops for

Name: _____

the Force Publique, and finally promoted to station chief at Stanley Falls and then Leopoldville. You have worked hard and feel that Leopold and the Belgian companies working in the Congo have rewarded you handsomely. You have received medals for your raids and campaigns against the Swahili slave traders and the native population. You have written extensively on proper methods for pacifying and civilizing the natives.

Elihu Root: As United States secretary of state, you are aware of the claims the British have made about the horrible conditions in the Congo, yet you firmly believe the United States should not get involved in the debate. It is unwise to intervene directly in the internal affairs of a foreign colony. The United States was the first country to recognize the Congo Free State, and it wishes to maintain its relationship as an ally to King Leopold. However, you understand reason in helping Britain gently encourage Leopold to run his colony more effectively.

William Sheppard: After George Washington Williams, you were the first African-American to experience the horrible conditions of the Congo and bring them to the attention of the American public. As a Presbyterian missionary, you were one of the first to publish your eyewitness accounts of the Belgian administrators' collection of severed hands. You wrote increasingly hostile articles about Belgian companies' horrendous mistreatment of natives, and were subsequently put on trial for spreading negative ideas about the Congo.

Senator van den Nest: From Antwerp, Belgium, you are president of the Anglo-Belgian Rubber Company (ABIR), one of the

concessionary rubber companies in the Belgian Congo. A strict pro-business man, you are a close friend of Leopold, and in 1892 were given a thirty-year land concession, giving you total control of resources and people on your property. You have never been to the Congo, but are confident that your administrators follow appropriate guidelines of comportment. Your primary concern as president of a company is profit, and you are satisfied with the results and wealth coming out of the region. You have no intention of letting that wealth be compromised by human rights groups that are making false claims.

Emile Vandervelde: You are a Belgian lawyer, a socialist leader in the Belgian legislature, a close friend of E.D. Morel, and a fierce opponent of King Leopold. Since Morel's formation of the Congo Reform Association, you have provided him with detailed reports of the Belgian parliamentary debates. Furthermore, on Morel's request, you were the lawyer defending American missionary William Sheppard in a case brought against him by one of Leopold's companies.

Reverend John Whitehead: As a British missionary, you have spent many years in the Congo, paying particular attention to the physical condition of the native population. You are absolutely appalled at the administrators' handling of the natives—they are cruelly beaten, and since they do not receive payment for their backbreaking work, are virtual slaves. You wrote two letters to the governor-general of the Free State, imploring him to address the rapid death rate due to disease and inhumane treatment. The conditions in the Congo must be altered for the better—no human being should be ill-treated in this manner.

Preparing for the Afternoon Concerned Members of the Public

Instructions: Answer the questions below from the perspective of your assigned role.

1. According to your role, what are your concerns about the Congo Free State and the press reports about it?

2. What do you think the British Parliament should do, if anything, about the situation in the Congo Free State?

3. What are the strongest justifications you have for those demands?

4. Complete the following sentence based on what you know about your assigned role.

The purpose of the Congo Free State should be...

Press Release Members of the Press

Instructions: You have an important job in reporting to your respective papers what this afternoon's speakers discuss. Any occasion where all these people are speaking together will be heated, and you are determined to get the scoop for your paper. During the afternoon's discussion, your teacher will act as the facilitator. You will have an opportunity at the end of the afternoon to pose your questions to all the speakers. Your questions should seek clarification of each person's demands, their justification, and their background. Once the afternoon is over you are expected to write a small article (five hundred words or fewer) about the evening and to present it to your editor for publication. Use your answers to the following questions to help you write your article.

1. Why did these people come to Hyde Park? Who was there?
2. What kinds of hopes did they have for the future of the Congo Free State?
3. What demands do the speakers have for the British Parliament?
4. What was the atmosphere of the discussion? Did people get along? Was the conversation lively?
5. What do you think will be the outcome of this afternoon? Will any of the demands be met?

Study Guide—Part II

1. One of the first decrees of the new government, issued on July 1, 1885, gave the state the right to take for itself _____ not _____ by Africans. This one law placed almost the entire territory in the hands of the new _____.
2. Why did Leopold create the Force Publique?
3. Why did Leopold want to defeat the Swahili traders in the eastern areas?
4. Why was the Congo Free State not able to make a profit in the early years?
5. How did King Leopold develop his image as a great humanitarian leader?
- 6a. Why did private companies complain about restrictions to free trade in the Congo Free State?
- b. How did Leopold respond to these complaints?

Name: _____

7. Give two reasons why rubber became such an important commodity.

a.

b.

8. Why was it difficult for the Congolese to resist the atrocities?

9. Why didn't the British Foreign Office want to take action in the 1890s?

10. List three steps Williams took to oppose Leopold's rule in the Congo.

a.

b.

c.

11a. Why didn't more missionaries speak out? Give three reasons.

a.

b.

c.

b. How did outsiders react to the reports from missionaries who did speak?

12. How did E.D. Morel find out that there were atrocities going on in the Congo Free State?

13. What organization did Morel and Casement form?

Role Playing the Three Options: Organization and Preparation

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze the issues and forces shaping public opinion and the opinions of Members of Parliament in Britain regarding the situation in the Congo.

Identify core values underlying each of the options.

Work cooperatively within groups to organize effective presentations.

Required Reading:

Students should have read “June 9, 1904: The Moment of Decision” in the student text (page 23) and “Options in Brief” (page 24).

Handouts:

“Considering Your Option” (TRB-26) for Options groups

“Undecided MPs” (TRB-27) for the undecided MPs

In the Classroom:

1. Planning for Group Work—In order to save time in the classroom, form student groups before beginning Day Three. During the class period, students will be preparing for the Day Four simulation. Remind them to

incorporate the background reading into their presentations and questions.

2a. Option Groups—Form three groups of four students each. Assign an option to each group. Inform students that each option group will be called upon on Day Four to present the case for its assigned option to the undecided MPs. Explain that the option groups should follow the instructions in “Presenting Your Option.” Note that the option groups should begin by assigning each member a role (students may double up).

2b. Undecided MPs—Distribute “Undecided MPs” to the remaining students. While the options groups are preparing their presentations, these students should prepare questions for Day Four. Remind these students that they are expected to turn in their questions at the end of the simulation.

Suggestion:

Ask the option groups to design a poster illustrating the best case for their options.

Homework:

Students should complete preparations for the simulation.

Considering Your Option—June 9, 1904

The Setting: It is June 9, 1904. You are a member of the British Parliament who supports a particular approach to addressing the problems of the Congo Free State. As a member of the House of Commons, you must constantly remember that you are an elected official. Therefore you are expected to react to public opinion, but you are also expected to follow your conscience in making decisions that are for the good of the nation, both now and in the future.

Your Assignment: Your goal is to persuade undecided MPs who are present at this debate. On Day Four, your group will be called upon to present a persuasive three-to-five minute summary of your option. You will be judged on how well you present your option. This worksheet will help you prepare. After all

three groups have presented their options, the undecided MPs will have a chance to ask you questions or challenge your ideas.

Organizing Your Group: Each MP in your group is a specialist. Below is a brief explanation of the responsibility of each role. The **group director** is responsible for organizing the presentation of your group's option to the MPs. The **foreign policy specialist** is responsible for explaining why your option is most appropriate in light of the current foreign policy situation. The **economy specialist** is responsible for explaining why your option is the best route for Great Britain's economic situation. The **human rights specialist** is responsible for explaining why your group's option offers the best route in terms of human rights issues.

Questions to Consider:

1. According to your option, what primary British interests are at stake in the Congo debate?
2. How does the situation in the Congo relate to the manner in which Britain administers its own vast colonial empire?
3. How might Britain's response to the situation in the Congo affect our country's relations with the other nations of Europe?
4. How will your option affect free trade and humanitarian causes in the Congo region?
5. How has history influenced our rights, privileges, and obligation to act in the Congo?

Undecided MPs

Your Role: You are a member of Parliament who agrees with the basic idea that there are terrible abuses taking place in the Congo, but you have not yet decided upon the best way for Britain to respond to these abuses. How Britain decides to deal with the situation in the Congo will affect British economic interests, the people of the Congo, and others in Europe. Each of you has a stake in this debate, and your opinion is important to the discussion.

Your Assignment: While the three option groups are organizing their presentations, each of you should prepare two questions regarding each of the options. Your teacher will collect these questions at the end of Day Four.

Your questions should be challenging and critical. For example, a good question for Option 1 might be:

Wouldn't acting alone put our position in Europe in jeopardy? What if Leopold makes an alliance with France?

On Day Four, the three option groups will present their positions. After their presentations are completed, your teacher will call on you to ask questions. The "Evaluation Form" you will receive is designed for you to record your impressions of the options. After this activity is concluded, you and your classmates may be called upon to tell Members of Parliament what you think Parliament should do.

Role Playing the Three Options: Debate and Discussion

Objectives:

Students will: Articulate the leading values influencing the direction of British foreign policy toward the Congo Free State.

Explore the various domestic and international forces that helped shape the debate.

Sharpen rhetorical skills through debate and discussion.

Cooperate with classmates in staging a persuasive presentation.

Handouts:

“Evaluation Form—Undecided MPs” (TRB-27) for the Undecided MPs

In the Classroom:

1. Setting the Stage—Organize the room so that members of the three option groups sit with each other, and so that the undecided MPs sit together.

2. Managing the Simulation—Explain that the simulation will begin with three-to-five minute presentations by each option group. Encourage all to speak clearly and convincingly.

3. Guiding Discussion—Following the presentations, invite undecided MPs to ask cross-examination questions. Make sure that each member of this group has an opportunity to ask at least one question. If time permits, encourage members of the option groups to challenge the positions of the other groups. During cross-examination, allow any member of the option group to respond. (As an alternative approach, permit cross-examination following the presentation of each option.)

Suggestion:

You may want to invite the members of the press who came to Hyde Park on Day Two to share their stories with the MPs.

Homework:

Students should read “Epilogue: The Aftermath—1904 to the Present” in the student text (pages 34-39) and complete “Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB 34-35), or “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB-36).

Name: _____

Evaluation Form for Undecided MPs

Instructions: Answer the questions below following the simulation.

1. According to each option, what should Parliament do?

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

2. According to each option, what British interests are at stake in this issue?

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

3. According to each option, what is the best way to handle international problems?

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

4. Which of the three options would you support most strongly? Explain your reasoning.

Congolese Independence

Objectives:

Students will: Discuss the twentieth century history of the Congo.

Assess the short- and long-term effects of colonialism in the Congo.

Understand different perspectives on the history of the Congo at independence.

Consider the impact of historical perspective on nationhood.

Required Reading:

Students should have read “Epilogue: The Aftermath—1904 to the Present” in the Student text (pages 34-39) and completed “Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB 34-35) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB-36).

Handouts:

“Independence Day in Congo” (TRB 31-33)

In the Classroom:

1. Understanding History—Spend a few minutes reviewing events in the Congo since

the British debate of 1904. How have things changed? What does the future hold?

2. Understanding Different Impressions—Divide students into groups of three or four and have them read the two speeches and answer the questions that follow.

3. Debriefing—After students have answered the questions in groups, spend some time discussing student responses in the large group setting. Pay particular attention to the concepts of tone and perspective. How could two people have such differing views of the history of a country? Is there evidence to support both sides? Is one side more right than the other? Ask students to consider the impact of perspective on the writing of history, or on governing a nation. For instance, if different groups in the Congo have different understandings of the past, how can the government speak for all of them? Is there a possibility for a united, peaceful Congo?

Note:

The speeches in full are located in the student text, pages 47-50.

Independence Day in Congo

Introduction: On June 30, 1960 Belgium formally turned over the government of the Congo to the Congolese people. At the independence ceremonies both the King of Belgium and Patrice Lumumba, newly elected Prime Minister, spoke. Below are selections from both speeches, translated from French. Read both and answer the questions that follow with your group.

Selection 1

King Baudouin

June 30, 1960, Independence Day

Mr. President,

Sirs,

The independence of the Congo is formed by the outcome of the work conceived by King Leopold II's genius, undertaken by Him with tenacious and continuous courage with Belgium's perseverance. It marks a decisive hour in the destinies not only of the Congo itself, but, I do not hesitate to affirm, of the whole of Africa.

Over the course of 80 years, Belgium sent the best of its sons to our soil, first to deliver the basin of the Congo from the odious slave trafficking that decimated its populations; then to bring ethnic groups together with one another who, once enemies, learned to build the greatest of independent African States together; finally, to call for a happier life in the diverse regions of the Congo that you represent here, united by the same Parliament....

The Congo was equipped with railroads, roads, air and maritime routes that, in putting your populations in contact with one another, have favored their unity and have enlarged the country to the dimensions of the world.

A medical service, which has taken several decades to be established, was patiently organized and has delivered you from sicknesses, however devastating. Numerous and remarkably usefully hospitals have been built. Agriculture was improved and modernized. Large cities have been built and, across the

whole country, living and hygienic conditions have translated into remarkable progress. Industrial enterprises have made the natural riches of the soil valuable. The expansion of economic activity has been considerable, also raising the well-being of your populations and equipping the Country with technicians indispensable to its development.

Thanks to mission schools, like those who create public powers, basic education has known an enviable growth; an intellectual elite has begun to form so that your universities will rapidly grow....

We are happy to have also given to the Congo, despite the greatest hardships, the elements needed to arm a country on the path of development.

...Facing the unanimous desires of your populations, we have not hesitated to recognize you your independence from this time on.

It is up to you now, Sirs, to demonstrate that we were right to trust you.

Henceforth, Belgium and the Congo find one another side by side, like sovereign States but linked by friendship and dedicated to help one another out....

Your followers will know the difficult task of governing. One must put first on the agenda their worries, whatever be their political party affiliation, the general interests of the country. They will have to teach the Congolese people that independence cannot be realized by immediate satisfaction of easy pleasures, but by work, by respect of liberty of others and by the rights of the minority, by tolerance and order, without which no democratic regime can survive.

I will give here a particular tribute to the Force Publique that accomplished its heavy mission with unwavering courage and devotion.

Independence will necessitate efforts and sacrifices from all. You must adapt institutions to your conceptions and your needs, in such

a manner to render them stable and balanced. You must also...intensify intellectual and moral formation of the population, maintain the stability of the currency, safeguard and develop your economic, social, and, financial organizations.

Do not compromise the future with hasty reforms, and do not replace the structures that Belgium has given you, as long as you are not certain that you cannot do better...

Do not fear turning yourselves towards us. We are ready to stay by your side to help you with our advice, to shape with you technicians and functionaries (government employees) that you will need....

The whole world has fixed its eyes on you. At the hour where the Congo sovereignty chooses its way of life, I hope that the Congolese people conserve and develop the patrimony of spiritual, moral, and religious values that we share and that transcend the political vicissitudes and the differences in race or in border.

Remain united, and you will know to show yourself deserving the great role that you have been called to play in the history of Africa.

Congolese people,

My country and I recognize you with joy and emotion that the Congo attains this 30th of June 1960, in full agreement and friendship with Belgium, to independence and international sovereignty.

May God protect the Congo!

Selection 2

Patrice Lumumba

June 30, 1960, Independence Day

Men and women of the Congo,

Victorious fighters for independence, today victorious, I greet you in the name of the Congolese Government. All of you, my friends, who have fought tirelessly at our sides, I ask you to make this June 30, 1960, an illustrious date that you will keep indelibly engraved in your hearts, a date of significance of which

you will teach to your children, so that they will make known to their sons and to their grandchildren the glorious history of our fight for liberty.

For this independence of the Congo, even as it is celebrated today with Belgium, a friendly country with whom we deal as equal to equal, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it was by fighting that it has been won....

We are proud of this struggle, of tears, of fire, and of blood, to the depths of our being, for it was a noble and just struggle, and indispensable to put an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force....

We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon, and evening, because we are Negroes. Who will forget that to a black one said “tu,” certainly not as to a friend, but because the more honorable “vous” was reserved for whites alone?

We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws which in fact recognized only that might is right.

We have seen that the law was not the same for a white and for a black, accommodating for the first, cruel and inhuman for the other.

We have witnessed atrocious sufferings of those condemned for their political opinions or religious beliefs; exiled in their own country, their fate truly worse than death itself.

We have seen that in the towns there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling shanties for the blacks, that a black was not admitted in the motion-picture houses, in the restaurants, in the stores of the Europeans; that a black traveled in the holds, at the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins.

All that, my brothers, we have endured.

But we, whom the vote of your elected representatives have given the right to direct our dear country, we who have suffered in our body and in our heart from colonial oppression, we tell you very loud, all that is henceforth ended.

Name: _____

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed, and our country is now in the hands of its own children....

We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make of the Congo the center of the sun's radiance for all of Africa....

We are going to rule not by the peace of guns and bayonets but by a peace of the heart and the will....

In this domain, Belgium, at last accepting the flow of history, has not tried to oppose our independence and is ready to give us their aid and their friendship, and a treaty has just been signed between our two countries, equal and independent. On our side, while we stay vigilant, we shall respect our obligations, given freely....

I ask all of you to forget your tribal quar-

rels. They exhaust us. They risk making us despised abroad.

I ask all of you not to shrink before any sacrifice in order to achieve the success of our huge undertaking....

The Congo's independence marks a decisive step towards the liberation of the entire African continent.

Sire, Excellencies, Mesdames, Messieurs, my dear fellow countrymen, my brothers of race, my brothers of struggle—this is what I wanted to tell you in the name of the Government on this magnificent day of our complete independence....

Glory to the fighters for national liberation!

Long live independence and African unity!

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!

Questions

1. How does each speech describe Congo's past? Give specific examples of each speech's history of the Congo.
2. What does each speech say is important for the future of the Congo?
3. Describe the tone each of these speeches uses. What do the speeches tell you about the speakers?
4. Why might these two speeches be so different? Are there any similarities?

Study Guide—Epilogue

1. What was the effect of the publication of the Independent Commission of Inquiry's findings?

2. Describe the positive results of Belgian rule in the Congo.

3. Describe the negative results of Belgian rule in the Congo.

4. Why was it difficult for most Congolese to see themselves as part of a nation?

5. Frustrated by the UN's _____ in the struggle with _____, Lumumba turned to the _____ for help—a move that angered the United States. The United States labeled Lumumba a _____.

Name: _____

6. What effect did Joseph Mobutu have on the Congo/Zaire?

7. How did the Rwandan genocide affect Zaire?

8. What problems does the Democratic Republic of the Congo face today?

Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue

1. What events finally triggered Leopold's handover of the Congo?
2. Provide examples to both support and refute Belgium's claims that it ran a "model colony."
3. Why was self-rule initially difficult for the Congo?
4. How did the Cold War affect the Congo? Provide at least two examples.
5. Why were surrounding nations interested in controlling parts of the Congo?
6. What do you think it would take to bring lasting peace to the Congo?

Key Terms

Introduction and Part I

harvesting
 Industrial Revolution
 raw materials
 colonialism
 partition
 hunter-gatherers
 Pygmies
 Bantu
 migration
 tribe
 ethnic group
 identity
 environmental differences
 tropical rainforest
 savanna
 bias
 prejudice
 oral tradition
 goods
 resources
 plantation
 commodity
 assimilate
 middlemen
 traffick
 export
 import
 self-governing
 mass production
 raw materials
 philanthropist
 missionary
 merchant
 suppression
 humanitarian

Part II

government administrators
 military action
 profit
 import and export duties
 atrocity
 abolitionist
 monopoly
 lobby
 chamber of commerce
 propaganda

Epilogue

underdeveloped
 head tax
 self-rule
 coalition government
 secession
 communist puppet
 head of state
 cult of personality
 refugees
 exploit

Issues Toolbox

Human Rights:

Equal and inalienable rights for all members of the human family. During the era of King Leopold, human rights were not universally understood or granted. After the horrors of World War II, nations initiated efforts to develop international standards to protect people from individuals, groups, or nations. Today, there is debate at home and abroad about the nature and scope of human rights. Some believe that human rights exist to protect individuals' civil and political freedoms. Civil and political rights include the right to life, liberty and personal security, freedom from slavery, torture and arbitrary arrest, as well as the right to a fair trial, free speech, free movement, and privacy. Others have argued that there are economic, social, and cultural rights as well. These include economic rights related to work, fair pay, and leisure; social rights concerning an adequate standard of living for health, well-being and education; and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community. International consensus is growing that human rights should encompass the full spectrum that these viewpoints cover.

Imperialism:

The policy of extending the rule of a nation over foreign countries as well as acquiring colonies and dependencies. Imperialism has traditionally involved power and the use of coercion, whether military force or some other form. Supporters of imperialist policy traditionally used one of several arguments. Elements of each of these arguments can be found in the story of King Leopold and the Congo. One argument was economic: imperialism was profitable. A second school of thought drew on Darwinian theory and suggested that there was a struggle between nations and people in which only the fittest would

survive. They believed that the Anglo-Saxon race and northern Europeans were best-suited to spread their religious, cultural, and civic values throughout the world. A third argument was based on security issues: a nation could protect itself by acquiring territory and wealth around the world. The fourth argument was often religious or moral: indigenous people could be given a better life. Livingstone's three C's (Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization) illustrate this school of thought.

Self-determination:

The right of a people to govern their own affairs. Widely accepted today, this was a radical notion at the time of King Leopold. Only George Washington Williams considered self-determination as a solution to the problems of the Congo Free State. In 1918, to the dismay of the European colonial powers, President Wilson proposed in his Fourteen Point peace proposal the right of self-determination.

Decolonization:

After the Second World War, many small nations challenged the rule of empires and claimed a right of self-determination. With this right enshrined in its new charter, the United Nations took up Wilson's banner of self-determination and began to champion a policy of decolonization. The two most powerful nations, the United States and the Soviet Union, also supported decolonization, though evidence suggests that they were interested in replacing the influence of the former colonial rulers with their own. The murder of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo is but one illustration of this. Decolonization proceeded successfully, but brought its own problems that persist to this day in Africa, in the Middle East, and in Asia.

Making Choices Work in Your Classroom

This section of the Teacher Resource Book offers suggestions for teachers as they adapt Choices curricula on historical turning point to their classrooms. They are drawn from the experiences of teachers who have used Choices curricula successfully in their classrooms and from educational research on student-centered instruction.

Managing the Choices Simulation

A central activity of every Choices unit is the role play simulation in which students advocate different options and question each other. Just as thoughtful preparation is necessary to set the stage for cooperative group learning, careful planning for the presentations can increase the effectiveness of the simulation. Time is the essential ingredient to keep in mind. A minimum of 45 to 50 minutes is necessary for the presentations. Teachers who have been able to schedule a double period or extend the length of class to one hour report that the extra time is beneficial. When necessary, the role play simulation can be run over two days, but this disrupts momentum. The best strategy for managing the role play is to establish and enforce strict time limits, such as five minutes for each option presentation, ten minutes for questions and challenges, and the final five minutes of class for wrapping up. It is crucial to make students aware of strict time limits as they prepare their presentations.

Adjusting for Students of Differing Abilities

Teachers of students at all levels—from middle school to AP—have used Choices materials successfully. Many teachers make adjustments to the materials for their students. Here are some suggestions:

- Go over vocabulary and concepts with visual tools such as concept maps and word pictures.
- Require students to answer guiding questions in the text as checks for understanding.

- Shorten reading assignments; cut and paste sections.
- Combine reading with political cartoon analysis, map analysis, or movie-watching.
- Read some sections of the readings out loud.
- Ask students to create graphic organizers for sections of the reading, or fill in ones you have partially completed.
- Supplement with different types of readings, such as from trade books or text books.
- Ask student groups to create a bumper sticker, PowerPoint presentation, or collage representing their option.
- Do only some activities and readings from the unit rather than all of them.

Adjusting for Large and Small Classes

Choices units are designed for an average class of twenty-five students. In larger classes, additional roles, such as those of newspaper reporter or member of a special interest group, can be assigned to increase student participation in the simulation. With larger option groups, additional tasks might be to create a poster, political cartoon, or public service announcement that represents the viewpoint of an option. In smaller classes, the teacher can serve as the moderator of the debate, and administrators, parents, or faculty can be invited to play the roles of congressional leaders. Another option is to combine two small classes.

Assessing Student Achievement

Grading Group Assignments: Students and teachers both know that group grades can be motivating for students, while at the same time they can create controversy. Telling students in advance that the group will receive one grade often motivates group members to hold each other accountable. This can foster group cohesion and lead to better group results. It is also important to give individual grades for groupwork assignments in order to

recognize an individual's contribution to the group. The "Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations" on the following page is designed to help teachers evaluate group presentations.

Requiring Self-Evaluation: Having students complete self-evaluations is an effective way to encourage them to think about their own learning. Self-evaluations can take many forms and are useful in a variety of circumstances. They are particularly helpful in getting students to think constructively about group collaboration. In developing a self-evaluation tool for students, teachers need to pose clear and direct questions to students. Two key benefits of student self-evaluation are that it involves students in the assessment process, and that it provides teachers with valuable insights into the contributions of individual students and the dynamics of different groups. These insights can help teachers to organize groups for future cooperative assignments.

Testing: Research demonstrates that students using the Choices approach learn the factual information presented as well as or better than from lecture-discussion format. Students using Choices curricula demonstrate a greater ability to think critically, analyze multiple perspectives, and articulate original viewpoints. Teachers should hold students accountable for learning historical information and concepts presented in Choices units. A variety of types of testing questions and assessment devices can require students to demonstrate critical thinking and historical understanding.

For Further Reading

Daniels, Harvey, and Marilyn Bizar. *Teaching the Best Practice Way: Methods That Matter, K-12*. Portland, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2005.

Holt, Tom. *Thinking Historically: Narrative, Imagination, and Understanding*. The College Board, 1990.

Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations

Group assignment: _____

Group members: _____

Group Assessment	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Needs Improvement</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
1. The group made good use of its preparation time	5	4	3	2	1
2. The presentation reflected analysis of the issues under consideration	5	4	3	2	1
3. The presentation was coherent and persuasive	5	4	3	2	1
4. The group incorporated relevant sections of the background reading into its presentation	5	4	3	2	1
5. The group's presenters spoke clearly, maintained eye contact, and made an effort to hold the attention of their audience	5	4	3	2	1
6. The presentation incorporated contributions from all the members of the group	5	4	3	2	1
Individual Assessment					
1. The student cooperated with other group members	5	4	3	2	1
2. The student was well-prepared to meet his or her responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1
3. The student made a significant contribution to the group's presentation	5	4	3	2	1

Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan

Day 1:

See Day Two of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan. Students should have read the Introduction and Part II of the background reading and completed “Study Guide—Part II” before beginning the unit.

Day 2:

Assign each student one of the option groups, and allow a few minutes for students to familiarize themselves with the mindsets of the options. Call on students to evaluate the benefits and trade-offs of their assigned options. How do the options differ in their assumptions about England’s role in the world? What are the essential values that shape the mission of each group?

Homework: Students should read “Epilogue: The Aftermath—1904 to the Present.”

Day 3:

See Day Five.

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Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce

Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce engages students in an examination of the effects of colonialism in the Congo. The unit helps them to understand the impact on indigenous people and the debate that grew in Europe about widespread abuses by colonial authorities.

Colonialism in the Congo: Conquest, Conflict, and Commerce is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

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