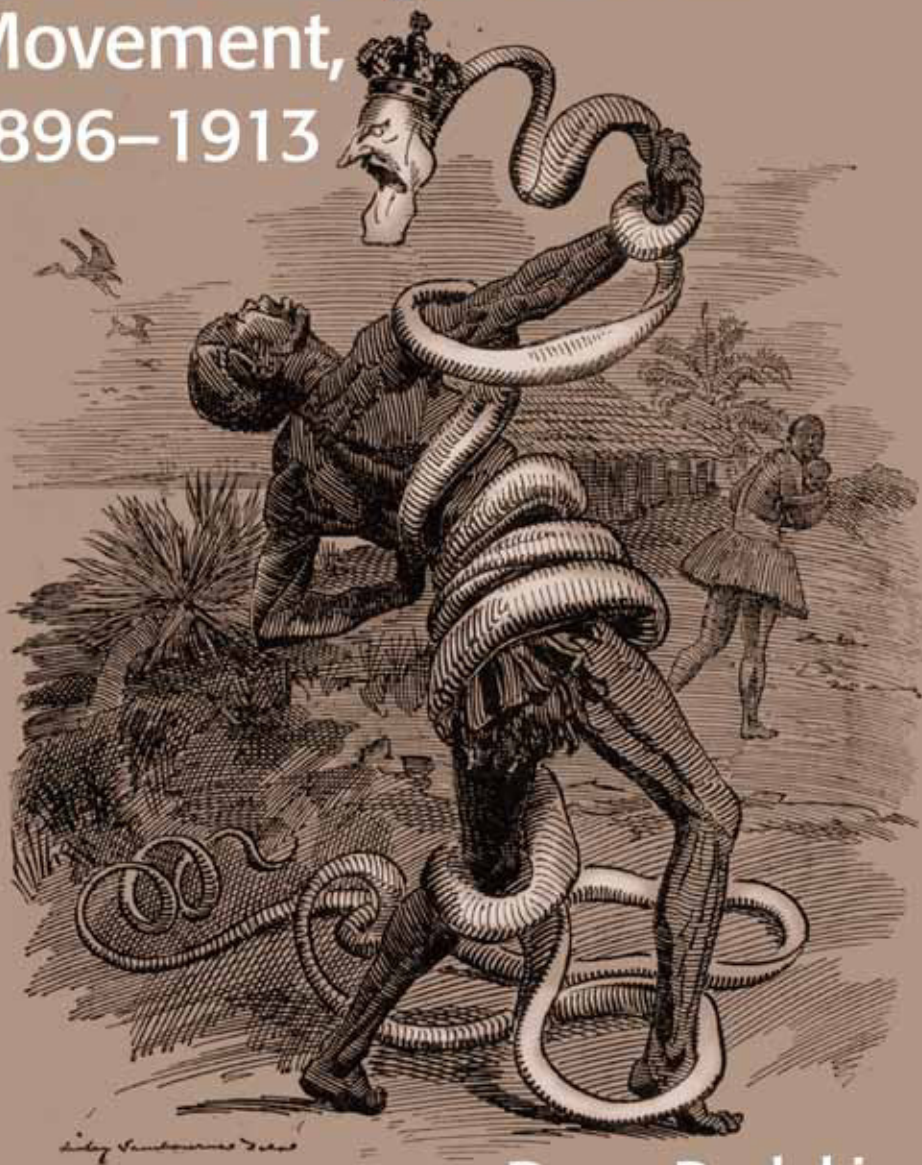


# British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 1896–1913

ROUTLEDGE



Dean Pavlakis

BRITISH HUMANITARIANISM AND THE  
CONGO REFORM MOVEMENT, 1896–1913

*To my wife, in gratitude*

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# Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Preface</i>	<i>xi</i>
1 Context and Questions	1
2 Origins	29
3 Organizing Congo Reform	67
4 Adherents	103
5 Alliances	131
6 The Internationalist Congo Reform Movement	157
7 Contested Representation	175
8 Politicians and Bureaucrats: The Art of the Possible	201
9 Effectiveness	233
Conclusion	261
Appendix I—About the Donor Database	269
Appendix II—Congo Reform Association Auxiliaries	273
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	<i>275</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>295</i>

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# List of Figures and Tables

## Figures

1.1	Average annual crude rubber price per pound (US), for each year ending June 1892–1915	11
1.2	Congo rubber prices at Liverpool, 1905–14	11
2.1	Henry Richard Fox Bourne, Secretary, Aborigines' Protection Society	35
2.2	Old Congo hands who critiqued the Congo Free State: Edward Glave, William Parminster, Herbert Ward, and Roger Casement	38
2.3	E.D. Morel in 1908	40
2.4	Sir Charles Dilke	47
2.5	W.T. Stead	48
2.6	Dr Harry Grattan Guinness, Acting Director, Regions Beyond Missionary Union	52
3.1	The first issue of the <i>Official Organ of the Congo Reform Association</i>	68
3.2	The First Executive Committee of the CRA	70
3.3	William Cadbury, the CRA's largest single donor and Morel's chief patron	92
3.4	John Harris	97
4.1	Alice Seeley Harris	120
5.1	Rev. John Clifford, served as President of the Baptist Union, National Free Church Council, and World Baptist Alliance	142
5.2	Rev. Frederick Brotherton Meyer served as President of the Baptist Union, Free Church Council, and PSA Brotherhood, as well as on the Committee of the Regions Beyond Missionary Union	146
6.1	Félicien Cattier	170
6.2	Emile Vandervelde, Belgian reformer and Socialist leader	172

7.1	<i>West African Mail</i> masthead with Morel's motto	195
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## Tables

1.1	Congo rubber production in tonnes, 1891–1913	9
3.1	Sources of CRA funds, 1904–13	86
4.1	CRA Executive Committee members, 1904–13	107
4.2	The 25 largest donors to the Congo Reform Association	110
4.3	CRA donations by women	114
4.4	Religious affiliation: comparing the 1911 population to the CRA's religiously identifiable donors	124
4.5	Occupational breakdown of donations	126
5.1	Recorded Congo meetings by religious affiliation	143
7.1	Congo reform meetings, and resolutions 1904–10	190

# List of Abbreviations

## Sources, references beginning with

380 COMI	Chamber of Commerce collection, Liverpool City Library Archives
380 HOLI Add.	John Holt collection, Liverpool City Library Archives British Library Manuscript Department's Additional Manuscripts (Add. MSS.)
Afr.	MSS Africa at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House, Oxford
B/JH(A)	National Museums Liverpool, Archives Department, Maritime Archives & Library
Brit. Emp.	Anti-Slavery papers, at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Oxford
DAV	Randall Davidson papers, Lambeth Palace, London
F	Morel papers, London School of Economics and Political Science Archives
MS Emmott	Emmott papers at Nuffield College Library, Oxford University
Osborne	handwritten notes by John Bremner Osborne, Jr of archival material
Reel	RBMU archival footage at Harvard University

## Other abbreviations

AIC	<i>Association Internationale du Congo</i>
AM	<i>African Mail</i>
Anti-Slavery	Until June 1909, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society; after June 1909, the amalgamated British and Foreign Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society
APS	Aborigines' Protection Society
ASR&AF	<i>Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend</i> , the organ of the amalgamated Society beginning in October 1909
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
CBM	The Congo Balolo Mission of the RBMU
CRA	Congo Reform Association

IU	W.T. Stead's International Union
<i>Organ</i>	<i>Official Organ of the Congo Reform Association</i> , from LSE Library
RBMU	Regions Beyond Missionary Union, network of missions and training schools
<i>Reporter</i>	<i>The Anti-Slavery Reporter</i>
<i>WAM</i>	<i>West African Mail</i>

Throughout, Hardinge refers to Arthur Hardinge, Buxton to Travers Buxton, and Harris to John Harris.

The proper name for Leopold's Congo, *L'État Indépendant du Congo*, strictly translates as the Independent State of the Congo or Congo Independent State: I have used the more familiar Congo Free State throughout. This book follows the practice of the early twentieth century in referring to it as "the Congo."

# Preface

The study of the Congo reform movement has, at its core, the question dogging all humanitarian efforts: how can distant strangers ameliorate suffering despite the forces arrayed against their efforts? The question contains a plethora of issues: metaphysical concerns of morality and justice, practical elements of strategy and tactics, mundane problems concerning money and interpersonal conflict, and how to overcome obstacles of all kinds. The present work takes as its subject the reform movement in its many forms, bringing new information to light in some areas while using a fresh look at the sources to evaluate and synthesize earlier interpretations. The movement's expanse prevents an all-encompassing account of its every action, but this study's object has been to pull its many factors together. Britain receives the most attention as the movement's locus of origin and its primary source of momentum, but the study is not limited to that country. The perspective is, by its nature, European; African suffering, accommodation, and resistance deserve book-length attention, but this examination cannot do them justice while focusing on the reform agitation—replicating its subject's Western and indeed hegemonic nature. The reform movement's motives, methods, and effectiveness dominate this story, giving us insight into a campaign to make a better world that has implications for our understanding of that world and our own.

I owe much to the assistance of the archives mentioned in the Bibliography, especially Lucy McCann at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House and Sue Donnelly and the staff at the British Library of Political and Economic Science. Thanks particularly to Patrick McDevitt of the University of Buffalo for his advice and correctives, as well as to readers William Roger Louis, Sasha David Pack, and Claire Schen. Paula Tavrow at UCLA ignited my interest in the reform movement. It was a great pleasure to receive help and encouragement from the scholars I met along the way, such as Robert Burroughs, Martin Ewans, Aidan Forth, Cherry Gertzel, Kevin Grant, Adam Hochschild, Óli Jacobsen, and Sharon Sliwinski. John Bremner Osborne generously shared his Foreign Office notes, introduced me to US archival information, and proved a good host. Richard Harris, Rebecca Seeley Harris, and Judy Pollard Smith joined me in my research into Alice Harris. Finally, I am grateful for the gracious friendship and insightful conversations of Morel biographer Donald Mitchell and his wife Susanna. Donald sharpened my thinking on the effectiveness question and saved me from errors; any remaining are my responsibility alone.

The support of my children, parents, sisters, and friends has made the process better than bearable. Most of all, many thanks to my wife, Patricia Christian, for her patience, encouragement, and affection through my self-absorption and travels.

Dean Pavlakis

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# Chapter 1

## Context and Questions

### Victory or Delusion?

On 16 June 1913, the final meeting of the Congo Reform Association (CRA) convened at London's Westminster Palace Hotel. Delegates from all over the United Kingdom gathered to celebrate the organization's triumph over a terrible colonial evil. The Association's *Official Organ* listed 67 attendees by name; many others attended as well. Observing the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational luminaries on the platform, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, one might have thought this was a religious convocation. Aristocrats, MPs, former colonial governors, newspaper editors, and philanthropists rounded out the gathering. Sir Gilbert Parker, the Canadian-born novelist and Conservative Member of Parliament, opened the meeting by praising his fellow MPs as a victorious army—one that had fought for human dignity and against criminal behavior. This army, he observed, had united different parties, political beliefs, and religions, in unspoken contrast with the divisive Boer War. Their arguments over Britain's behavior in that war had been subsumed in a cause they could agree on: the battle for justice in the Congo. Parker reminded attendees that both Houses of Parliament had taken up the question for ten years without regard for party allegiances.

Edward Talbot, Bishop of Winchester, read the motion to dissolve the Association because "its main purposes have now been secured." He then introduced E.D. Morel, praising him as the man that God had raised up to lead the movement to success. Morel touched on the movement's long history and the current state of affairs in the Congo, now administered along normal lines. In the world outside, Bulgaria attacked Serbia and Greece that very day, starting the second Balkan war in an ominous prelude to the coming world war. But in the meeting room, the world was becoming a better place, thanks to the persistence of good men and women determined to end one of the great evils of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The dissolution of the Congo Reform Association invites skepticism. Some accounts have compared the reformers' boasts to the world situation and concluded that the organization had failed. With the Great War beginning

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<sup>1</sup> E.D. Morel, "Final Meeting of the Association," *Organ* 2, no. 12 (July 1913): 1008–20.

just over a year later, one scholar posited that European security needs had trumped the reform movement, forcing it to dissolve in despair. Although this theory has been disproved, it still surfaces because of the endurance of academic writing in scholarly journals.<sup>2</sup> More recently, some historians have attributed the dissolution to its failure to sustain public interest, especially after several missionary societies abandoned the cause in 1910.<sup>3</sup> Another version of the failure thesis concludes that the Association had little to boast of because the Belgian regime that replaced the Congo Free State was itself far from being a paragon of colonial virtue.

In contrast to these gloomy pictures, some have agreed with the speeches at the last meeting and held up the Congo Reform Association as a model organization, succeeding at its objectives and deserving of the accolades at the Westminster Palace Hotel. This study concludes that the Congo reform movement could boast of a triumph, albeit an incomplete one. As Morel told the organization's Executive Committee the month before, the Congo Reform Association could not be responsible for healing the Congo; its job had been to stop the bleeding by overturning an iniquitous system of rule, and it could claim success in that. The specific conditions that it had fought had largely ended, leading to a material change in the lives of the Congolese people. (Though the inhabitants of the Congo Free State did not think of themselves as "Congolese" at the time, Europeans used this term, and this book will follow their lead.)

However, the reformed Congo suffered from three weaknesses. Most immediately, the reforms were incomplete: some rights, such as access to land, were not codified in law, and those that were legally promulgated were vulnerable to reversal. A dramatic reduction in forced labor for private purposes had not eliminated the practice. More broadly, the reform movement left an institutional vacuum in its wake. The Association advocated principles that could apply to all tropical colonies, but there was no international mechanism to monitor and enforce them in French Congo, Portuguese Angola, German Kamerun, and the Belgian Congo itself. The final flaw, obvious decades later, was that the movement did not contemplate self-government. But it is a mistake to evaluate the movement's degree of success or failure against a standard based on the ideologies and values professed half a century later. The movement is

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<sup>2</sup> The theory presented in Mary Elizabeth Thomas, "Anglo-Belgian Military Relations and the Congo Question, 1911–1913," *Journal of Modern History* 25, no. 2 (June 1953): 157–65, was demolished by Myron Echenberg in "The British Attitude toward the Congo Question, with particular reference to the work of E.D. Morel and the CRA, 1903–1913" (MA thesis, McGill University, 1964), 202–3, and, with even more evidence, by Silvanus J.S. Cookey, *Britain and the Congo Question, 1885–1913* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1968), 312–13.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 77.

best judged by considering its own goals in the context of the ideas, actions, possibilities, and material conditions of the times.

This particular movement was not a mass force that then found leaders. It had to be coaxed into existence, given institutional form, and sustained by a few individuals whose importance is still a matter of debate, none more so than E.D. Morel. His centrality comes not just from his role as Honorary Secretary, so called because the CRA did not pay him a salary. His papers provide much of the surviving documentary evidence. His correspondence shows him to be sensitive to criticism and in constant need of reassurance; consequently, the archives brim with praise for the man and his work. In addition, his sometimes cantankerous interpersonal relationships loom large in the archival record—so large that they can overshadow the main story. Morel's role in the movement, his conflicts, and his affections need to be put in their place, neither glorified nor dismissed, to understand the movement and how the initiative for reform shifted over time.

Morel and others claimed that the movement was comparable only to the battle against the slave trade a century before. This is a distraction. Though the movement had unusual aspects, it had far more in common with other reforming and humanitarian campaigns than the participants admitted in their pursuit of support and impact. However, invoking the heroic past did have a purpose beyond inspiring its adherents with the borrowed finery of abolitionism. The Congo reformers used the imagined golden age of British humanitarian intervention as a standard to measure the government's handling of the Congo question. The government often failed this test, provoking mounting criticism from the reformers until the entire structure of British foreign policy-making was at issue.

This idealized humanitarianism also spoke to British anxieties that reached far beyond the Congo question. The movement flourished at a time when an increasing sense of uneasiness and vulnerability hit British society and government. Many of the old certainties about the stability and reasonableness of the British imperial nation-state had come under attack by social stresses and international threats that loomed larger than in previous decades, leading to what Roy Hattersley calls the "strange mixture of confidence and uncertainty" in Edwardian society.<sup>4</sup>

The reformers assured the public and government that, by embracing Congo reform, they were restoring British moral leadership in the world. At a time when national *degeneration* and *regeneration* were commonly used terms, the reformers

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<sup>4</sup> Roy Hattersley, *The Edwardians* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2005), 16, 334, 338; Peter Broks, "Science, Press, and Empire," in *Imperialism and the Natural World*, ed. John Mackenzie (New York: St Martin's Press, 1990), 141–63; David Brooks, *The Age of Upheaval: Edwardian Politics, 1899–1914* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), 1, 5.

offered a way to regenerate Britain's national pride and confidence. This trope appears in letters, articles, CRA publications, and in speeches made throughout the campaign. In a time of uncertainty, the Congo Reform Association offered Britons a way to reconnect with a positive image of their country, in much the same way that the anti-slave trade movement helped British society rebuild its moral capital over a century earlier.<sup>5</sup>

This book takes the reform movement itself as its primary object of study. It examines the ideologies of the movement's pioneers; its goals, evolving structure, membership, strategy, and tactics; its international connections; and its impact on the Congo. As an episode in the long tradition of British overseas humanitarianism, the movement relied heavily on well-established motivations and practices. It was simultaneously a humanitarian lobbying effort to influence British foreign policy, a research organization, and a mass movement that rallied large numbers of people to express their support for change. Understanding the depth of popular support for the movement complicates some recent accounts of how that support translated into pressure for change.

The oft-praised agency of the Congo Reform Association did not bring about change by itself. The British Foreign Office, initially reluctant to speak against Leopold's system, became an increasingly important reforming force in its own right, and the initiative shifted from the Association to the Foreign Office. Morel's personal influence with the Foreign Office waxed through 1908, illuminating policy choices and principles for its staff, then precipitously waned, beginning with his public attack on the foreign policy establishment in June 1909. After this, the Association became more a gadfly than a mover of events or even ideas, though it kept the informed British public from forgetting the Congo by pricking its conscience in a world of distracting events that struck much nearer home.

With affiliates in other countries and personal contacts with key individuals in Belgium, the British reformers were at the hub of a transnational movement that generated its own dynamic. The reformers and organizations in other countries, most importantly in Belgium, are reintegrated into the story of Congo reform in the later discussion of transnationalism.

This analysis also questions Morel's emphasis on his own centrality to every event while giving due credit for his perseverance, energy, and his vision of the movement as an organization. Like his contemporary, Lenin, he believed in the importance of a centralized movement that was well disciplined in its message and tactics. His ability to enforce this discipline made the Congo Reform Association far more effective than previous efforts. On the other hand, the loss of influence in the Foreign Office in 1909 was primarily Morel's responsibility.

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); J.R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

This new interpretation of the movement neither adulates nor trivializes Morel but makes an effort to incorporate the human and structural factors that created the movement's flawed success.

The Westminster Palace Hotel was the site of different kinds of activism. The Museum of London displays a shard of glass from the window of the hotel's main dining room, where the CRA officially disbanded in 1913. Suffragists fanning out from Parliament had broken windows there on 21 November 1911. Police arrested over 200 activists, including Emmeline and Frederick Pethick Lawrence, who had donated £5 to the Congo Reform Association.<sup>6</sup> Sent to prison, their jailers force-fed them when they went on hunger strike. The fight for the Congo entailed no such risks for its British participants, secure in their great distance from the scene of the crime. Their battle against what they perceived as the natural indifference of the British public and the hesitation of the Foreign Office did not require violence. Though this fits into a half-century of law-abiding Britons demanding reform, the early 1900s had undermined this pacific tradition, with increasing strife over women's suffrage, labor relations, and the Irish question. The Congo reform movement illuminates a different aspect of that world: an arena where reformers could invoke British virtue to spur their compatriots and government to be once again a force for good in the world, as they imagined it had been in years past.

### The Rise and Fall of Leopold's Congo Empire: A Brief Overview

The fascinating story of the founding and functioning of the Congo Free State is beyond the scope of the present work. Readable accounts include Barbara Emerson's *Leopold II of the Belgians*, Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*, Jean Stengers and Jan Vansina's "King Leopold's Congo, 1886–1908" in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, Neil Ascherson's *The King Incorporated*, and similar titles in the bibliography. A brief introduction will suffice.

In the 1880s, King Leopold II of the Belgians had staked a claim to an area of the Congo basin as large as Western Europe in the name of the International Association of the Congo, an organization that was his personal vehicle. After voyages of exploration and treaty-signing by Henry Stanley and others, Leopold secured the recognition of the Association's sovereignty (and thus his own personal sovereignty) in bilateral treaties before and during the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884–85. Furthermore, Leopold's International

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<sup>6</sup> "Women Smash London Windows," *New York Times*, 22 November 1911; "Suffragette Outrages," *Poverty Bay Herald*, 11 January 1912, 2 (dateline 1 December 1911), <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=PBH19120111.2.3&l=mi&e=-10-1-0->.

Association of the Congo acceded as a sovereign power to the Act of the Berlin Conference, which committed him to free trade and to improving the moral and material lot of the people living there. In this way, Leopold carried out his colonial ambitions through a territory that was not technically a colony of any country, but instead a free-standing government headquartered anomalously in Brussels that functioned primarily as a vehicle for a commercial enterprise.

Within months he had declared himself the king-sovereign of the Congo Free State, which he ruled as an autocrat from 1885–1908, extracting huge sums of money from the sale of Congo ivory and rubber through a system of government that comingled administration and commercial exploitation. All lands not actively cultivated or inhabited by Africans became the property of the state and thus of Leopold. He granted large tracts to concession companies in exchange for fees and a large ownership stake. Government officials and company agents alike had instructions to increase rubber production, reinforced with the carrot of financial incentives and the stick of possible dismissal or reassignment. In remote districts away from prying eyes, these Europeans terrorized villages to deliver rubber, ivory, provisions, men, and women, relying on the use of armed men—the Free State’s official European-led, African-staffed military, the Force Publique, or the euphemistically named sentries of the concession companies. The massive disruption of local society, the system’s tendency to encourage violent behavior in the pursuit of profits, and the consequent death toll made the Free State a dramatic epitome of exploitation and oppression, a colony in intent if not strictly in name. However, the marriage of commerce and administration, the absence of any checks on state power, and the prioritizing of profit above all other considerations meant that a vast area suffered a level of violence with few colonial parallels.

After a few false starts, the sporadic calls to reform the administration of the Congo became a sustained campaign when the venerable London-based Aborigines’ Protection Society took up the cause under the leadership of its Secretary, Henry Richard Fox Bourne. Despite the Society’s efforts, the British government would not act. Conservative British foreign secretaries Lord Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne were reluctant to interfere in another country’s business and felt that no colonial power’s hands—even Britain’s—were altogether clean. The movement for reform accelerated in 1900 when E.D. Morel, a shipping company department head, compared the falsified official reports of the Free State with shipping records and sales statistics from the Antwerp rubber market. Far from being a money-losing enterprise, as Leopold complained, the Free State had changed years before into a highly profitable venture, on the scale of £500,000 in two years (1899–1900), or over £40,000,000 in today’s money.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> E.D. Morel, “History of the Congo Reform Movement,” in *E.D. Morel’s History of the Congo Reform Movement*, eds William Roger Louis and Jean Stengers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 39–40; currency deflator at [www.measuringworth.com](http://www.measuringworth.com).

Finding that the Free State's imports consisted primarily of munitions, Morel concluded that the Congo Free State reaped these large sums from the coerced labor of unwilling subjects. Morel published his findings, arousing public concern. Information from the Aborigines' Protection Society and Morel, supported by some chambers of commerce, the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, and journalist W.T. Stead, convinced Parliament in 1903 to pass a resolution protesting mistreatment of the Congo people and Leopold's trading monopoly. As a result, the Foreign Office dispatched Consul Roger Casement to investigate conditions in the interior. Casement's report provoked a public outcry. To sustain the outcry and exert pressure on the British government, Casement convinced missionary leader Dr Harry Grattan Guinness, cotton manufacturer and MP Alfred Emmott, and African trader John Holt to join Morel in founding the Congo Reform Association in 1904.

A Commission of Inquiry appointed by Leopold to exonerate the Free State surprised the world by corroborating Casement's findings. The agitation quickly became international. The CRA supported reformers in Belgium and inspired the formation of an American Congo Reform Association and similar organizations in France, Switzerland, and Germany. By early 1906, the new Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, had committed British foreign policy to reform. Yielding to international pressure from Britain and the United States as well as to alarmed Belgian politicians who fretted that the King's difficulties could become Belgium's problem, King Leopold agreed in late 1906 to negotiate the transfer of the Congo to Belgium. After difficult debates and bargaining in Belgium, this occurred in 1908 in exchange for a large financial settlement. A year later, the Belgian government announced substantial reforms to Leopold's system that became effective in phases from 1910–12. By 1913, British consuls in the Congo and other observers provided evidence that the reforms had largely ended Leopold's colonial system. Grey presented their reports to Parliament and the Association dissolved as Britain officially recognized Belgium's annexation of the Congo.

### **Material Foundations of the Congo Red Rubber Regime**

Until the mid-1890s, the brutality evident in the conquest of the Congo had limited impact on European or American public opinion. All colonial powers used violence. Britain's record had notorious examples, such as the massacres of Australian and Tasmanian aborigines and the treatment of the Xhosa in South Africa. The occupation and early administration of the Congo foreshadowed what was to come; within a few years, material factors transformed the Congo Free State into an ongoing regime of astonishing harshness. Its output became known among reformers as red rubber for its high cost in human suffering.

By 1891, Congo expenditures had swallowed up much of Leopold's fortune.<sup>8</sup> When selling Congo bonds met with difficulties, he pursued three new ways to raise money: revising the Berlin treaty to allow him to collect import duties, obtaining loans from the Belgian government, and recasting the colonial state as a vast moneymaking enterprise based on ivory, copal (a resin), and most of all, rubber. He succeeded in all three of these initiatives, leading to an immense cash flow as well as the Congo humanitarian outcry that was to prove his nemesis.

Leopold's secret decree of 29 September 1891 and public decree of 5 December 1892 reserving to the state all trade in ivory, copal, and rubber in most of the country could not have been better timed. World demand for rubber was rising rapidly. In the decades since vulcanization was patented in the 1840s, rubber consumption had grown as its uses expanded to consumer goods such as apparel and industrial purposes such as machinery and insulation for electric wiring. After the 1888 invention of the pneumatic rubber tire, bicycle production exploded in the 1890s to nearly 2,000,000 a year. Automobile tires began to have a material impact on rubber demand after 1900.<sup>9</sup> Worldwide rubber consumption doubled in the decade after 1890 to over 53,000 tons. Leopold rode this wave of demand and the associated price bubble. Under his direction, state agents and concessionary companies made it their top priority to get the local people to collect rubber by persuasion or force; fair payment was not an option, though token payments occurred in most places. The rubber thus collected traveled on the steamers of Liverpool-based Elder Dempster to Antwerp, where it was auctioned. Merchants re-exported much of it via Liverpool to points around the world.<sup>10</sup>

Few reformers advocated a boycott of Congo rubber. Unlike sugar and cocoa, consumer discretionary goods that were the subject of principled boycotts, rubber had become an integral part of all manner of industrial and consumer production. A boycott would have harmed not only the Liverpool shipping and warehousing companies that purchased and resold much of the Congo's rubber, but also the British manufacturers that used rubber both as an input and in the industrial machinery that kept their plants running.

Spurred by the hunger for rubber, Congo exploitation expanded dramatically after the secret decrees of 1891. As Table 1.1 shows, Congo wild rubber production rose more than fourteenfold from 1891 to 1896 and more than fourfold in the next five years to 1901, when the Congo Free State supplied 12 percent of the world market for rubber, less than Brazil but still a force to be

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<sup>8</sup> Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1960*, trans. Alice Cameron and Stephen Windross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 53, fn. 47.

<sup>9</sup> Erik Eckermann, *World History of the Automobile* (Warrendale, PA: Society of Automotive Engineers, 2001), 48.

<sup>10</sup> *India Rubber World*, February 1912, 254.

reckoned with. The extraordinary growth in Congo production, averaging 54 percent per year for ten years, was possible only because of coercion. But 1901 was its best year. After this, rubber production slowly declined, shrinking on average 6 percent a year for the next 12 years. Nonetheless, the reformed Belgian Congo of 1913 produced more rubber than the Congo Free State had in 1898, when the red rubber regime was in full swing.

Table 1.1 Congo rubber production in tonnes, 1891–1913

Year	World	Congo wild rubber	% Congo	Plantation	% Plantation
1891	N/A	82			
1892	N/A	156			
1893	N/A	241			
1894	N/A	348			
1895	34,277	576	2%		
1896	37,725	1,317	3%		
1897	39,890	1,662	4%		
1898	45,260	2,113	5%	1	0%
1899	49,790	3,747	8%	4	0%
1900	53,931	5,317	10%	4	0%
1901	51,852	6,023	12%	5	0%
1902	52,346	5,350	10%	8	0%
1903	55,948	5,918	11%	21	0%
1904	62,123	4,831	8%	43	0%
1905	69,507	4,862	7%	179	0%
1906	67,918	4,849	7%	646	1%
1907	68,646	4,529	7%	1,175	2%
1908	67,031	4,263	6%	2,120	3%
1909	69,372	3,492	5%	3,700	5%
1910	est. 75,000	3,106	4%	N/A	
1911	88,000	3,176	4%	14,200	16%
1912	99,000	3,230	3%	28,590	29%
1913	105,670	2,886	3%	47,200	45%
1914	120,977	N/A		71,977	60%

Note: N/A = information not available.

Source: World Production from L&W Van de Velde's *India-Rubber Statistics*, in *India Rubber World*, March 1910, 227; March 1912, 290; March 1913, 290; February 1914, 238. Congo data 1891–1909 from Gann and Duignan, 123 (correlated with Mackie to Grey, 14 June 1910, FO 881/9854:12 and *Economist*, 3 June 1911, 1180–81); Congo 1910–13 from Antwerp rubber arrivals, *India Rubber World*, February 1911–14. Pre-1909 Antwerp statistics are slightly lower than Gann & Duignan.

The expansion of rubber plantations in Asia after 1901 transformed the market by 1913. Though plantation rubber was initially of lesser quality than wild rubber, economies of scale made it cheaper to produce, and by 1912 its sheer volume was pulling down prices and eroding profit margins for all producers. Entrepreneurs and speculators frenetically promoted plantation rubber. The *India-Rubber Journal* reported the formation of 31 new rubber plantation companies in London in 1905, 58 in 1906, and 103 in 1907, the year of the greatest frenzy.<sup>11</sup> Some companies sought to create new plantations, but most bought up existing plantations to combine, expand, or convert from other products to rubber. The new companies operated mostly in Ceylon, Indochina, and the Indonesian archipelago, with a small number in Africa and Latin America. New rubber trees became reliable producers in just a few years. In 1912, a study of 43 Asian companies showed they had planted 13,377,928 trees, of which 12,006,713 were expected to produce rubber by 1915.<sup>12</sup> Not so the Congo rubber vines. With the danger to self, family, or village if they did not meet the rubber quota, the rubber-gatherers had every incentive to kill the vine to get as much rubber as quickly as possible. *India Rubber World* bemoaned this as early as 1903: “The rubber consumer may or may not be concerned about the cruelty of this system ... he cannot be indifferent long, however, to the exhaustion of rubber which the Congo system is bringing about.”<sup>13</sup> Leopold required new plantings and soon boasted that millions of vines had been planted. Because regulations provided no incentive to care for the new plants, few lived to maturity.<sup>14</sup> For all intents and purposes, there were no functioning rubber plantations in the Congo Free State.

The boom was marked by a rise in prices (Figure 1.1). The peak prices reached in 1900, 1906–07, and 1910–11 may have created incentives for plantations but they also led to greater pressure on the people of the Congo. Daniel Lagergren has showed that the worst abuses existed when the crown or concession companies extended the rubber tax to a new area. Once the locals had been terrorized into submission, with resisters driven away or killed, a comparatively stable situation emerged and abuses declined (though they did not disappear) until there were no rubber vines within many days’ walk. At this point, vicious treatment and atrocities proliferated again as the authorities used brutality in a vain attempt to stave off rapidly declining production.<sup>15</sup> Because the rubber frontier continued to move, the areas reporting the worst abuses shifted also until the end of the

<sup>11</sup> *IRJ*, various issues, 1905–08.

<sup>12</sup> *IRW*, November 1911, 64.

<sup>13</sup> *IRW*, July 1903, 328.

<sup>14</sup> John Harris, “Present Conditions in the Congo,” 1911, section II, 1–10.

<sup>15</sup> David Lagergren, *Mission and State in the Congo: A Study of the Relations between Protestant Missions and the Congo Independent State Authorities with Special Reference to the Equator District, 1885–1903* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wikshells, 1970), 234, 264, 275–89, 293.

rubber tax, notably to areas farther from missionary stations, such as the Ubangi and Kwango regions.<sup>16</sup>

One reason for the Belgians' elongated three-year timetable to introduce reforms in the Congo from 1910–12 was their desire to get as much value as possible from the most productive remaining areas before reforming them. As the graph of prices in Figure 1.1 shows, these were important years, with rubber prices at 20-year highs.

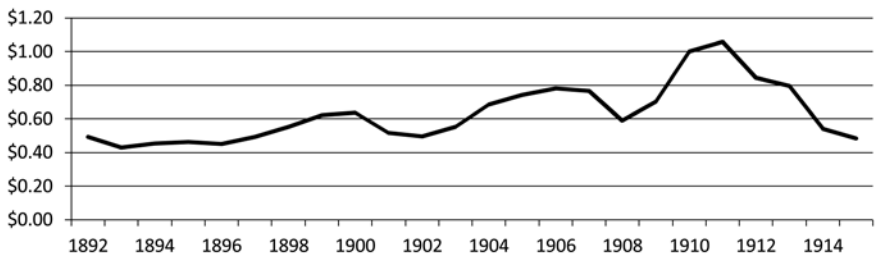


Figure 1.1 Average annual crude rubber price per pound (US), for each year ending June 1892–1915

Source: *India Rubber World*.

Brief falls in 1902 and 1908 did not last, and during the speculative peak of 1910–11, prices briefly reached \$2 per pound in New York on 31 March 1910, treble the price of just two years earlier. Because it uses full-year averages, Figure 1.1 understates the speculative peaks that are more visible in Figure 1.2. The Congo concession companies were extremely profitable in their heyday.

Subsequently, prices fell, as shown in stark relief in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Congo rubber prices had fallen by 1914 to levels not seen since the 1890s due to the long-anticipated explosion in plantation rubber production shown in Table 1.1.

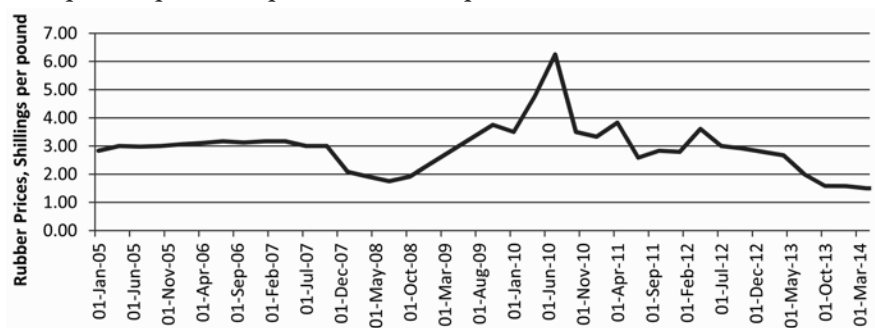


Figure 1.2 Congo rubber prices at Liverpool, 1905–14

Source: *West African Mail*, *African Mail*, and *India Rubber World*.

<sup>16</sup> Jack Proby Armstrong, memorandum, 25 January 1910, FO881/9730:30–39.

High prices led Leopold to emphasize rubber production over all other considerations through 1908 and motivated the Belgian government to introduce reforms by region thereafter. This opens the possibility that the patterns of rubber exploitation may have created the material conditions conducive for reform through exhaustion of supply. Historian Robert Harms, after studying some of the most notorious concession companies, found that ruthless exploitation had largely exterminated the wild rubber vine in the Abir, Anversoise, and Lulonga concessions by 1906, the very year Leopold agreed to surrender the Congo.<sup>17</sup> From 1903–05, rubber production in the three concessions fell by 70 percent. Eradication of rubber vines rendered the rubber tax and the concession itself profitless and obsolete, and thus easy to end. This appears to be a regional story. As production in some concessions fell, it expanded in others. For example, the Kasai Company's rubber output, which had been similar to the Abir's in 1903, had risen by 48 percent by 1905.<sup>18</sup> The statistics in Table 1.1 show that rubber production in the Congo as a whole fell 18 percent from 1903 to 1905. This indicates that the decline in coerced rubber production was relatively small because dramatic shrinkage in some areas was largely offset by expansion in others. The fate of the Abir, Anversoise, and Lulonga concessions was years away from affecting the country as a whole.

This pattern continued. From 1905 to Belgian annexation in 1908, Congo rubber production declined slowly, at just 4 percent a year. The new Belgian administration made changes with an immediate impact; in its first year, stories of atrocities largely ended and rubber output fell 18 percent. As other reforms phased in from 1910–12, production held steady at just over 3,000 metric tonnes annually.<sup>19</sup> The first phase, in 1910, applied to depleted areas and areas not suitable for rubber. Reforms went into effect last in areas most recently opened to rubber collection. In 1910–12, British consuls reported coerced rubber labor and associated abuses ending region by region as the Belgian government ended the rubber tax and the trade monopoly.<sup>20</sup> Once the reforms were in place across the country, rubber production dropped another 10 percent, again indicating the less brutal practices meant a lower level of production. Although humanitarian ideals and tradition, representation, and the use of power drove the reform movement, material conditions were at the heart of the problem and

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Harms, "The End of Red Rubber: A Reassessment," *The Journal of African History* 16, no. 1 (1975): 88.

<sup>18</sup> *India Rubber World*, September 1906, 399.

<sup>19</sup> L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of Belgian Africa 1884–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 123. 1910–12 from Daniel Vangroenweghe, *Du Sang sur les Lianes* (Bruxelles: Didier Hatier, 1986), 302.

<sup>20</sup> John Bremner Osborne, Jr, "Sir Edward Grey, the British Consular Staff, and the Congo Reform Campaign," (PhD thesis, Rutgers University, 1971), 277–80.

changes in these conditions affected the reform movement's ability to influence events, particularly after 1910.

## Imperialism

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was the heyday of the so-called New Imperialism, when European powers, the United States, and Japan used their technological and military superiority to expand their colonial empires. Leopold's Congo Free State was born of the age of the New Imperialism and in many ways exemplified it. The heart of imperial ideology was the belief that it was appropriate to control the people of physically and/or culturally separate territories without regard to their opinions in the matter. The acceptability of colonial rule was widespread, not least in Britain where the symbols, products, and profits of empire pervaded society. Imperial ideas ranged from the aggressive expansionism associated with Rhodes and Milner to reluctant annexationists such as Gladstone who believed that conquest was a tool to use sparingly in dealing with threats to British interests and to others who felt that Britain should be satisfied with the empire it had. Very few argued *against* empire. The activists of the Congo reform movement were by and large critics of empire but not anti-empire.

Proponents of imperial expansion often justified the New Imperialism in contemporary rhetoric involving race and Social Darwinism. In the mid-Victorian years, British attitudes towards racial questions had hardened, at the same time that thinking in evolutionary terms had become pervasive, creating a general sense of the unity of the human race that did not include racial equality.<sup>21</sup> The new language of Social Darwinism labeled cultures dynamically: successful societies progressed and expanded, and others degenerated. In this context, conquest of so-called degenerate or primitive peoples appeared to be a law of nature. Even a passionate critic of empire like Roger Casement reflected this line of thinking when he wrote that colonies were necessary outlets for the population and power of leading European countries.<sup>22</sup> This rhetoric merged with commercial self-interest, which increasingly seemed to require territorial domination because Britain's commercial rivals protected their colonial markets to secure outlets for manufactured goods and sources for raw materials and tropical produce. Social Darwinism could apply to competition among great powers as well as between civilized and primitive peoples, as implied in a 1905 essay by Lady Lugard, who before marrying colonial administrator Sir Frederick

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<sup>21</sup> Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class, and the Victorians* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1978), 202–6.

<sup>22</sup> Casement to Morel, 14 September 1909, F8/23:431–3.

Lugard had achieved fame in her own right as Flora Shaw, the African expert at *The Times*:

The first fact which we have to face in regard to the tropical Colonies—the fact indeed which has generally determined our acquisition of them—is that if they were not British they would almost of necessity belong to some other Western Power. There is no such thing as the possibility of leaving them neutral and independent. They must by their nature be either for us or against us.<sup>23</sup>

Religion too played a role in imperialism. Many religious people saw the rise of European empires as the work of divine Providence.<sup>24</sup> The missionary movement, though sometimes critical of imperial practice, was at heart an imperialist cultural venture dedicated to converting people's beliefs and ways of life. Although missionary universalism assumed fundamental racial equality, missionaries reinforced racial stereotypes by publicizing cultural chauvinism. They justified their work with reports of those African practices most likely to shock metropolitan readers. The frequent and selective misrepresentation of African culture by missionaries had the unplanned consequence of stimulating racial and cultural arrogance.<sup>25</sup> Andrew Porter describes this complex interaction of missionary idealism, empire, and race as characterized by expediency and ambiguity, with different responses to specific situations that also reflected the background and outlook of the participants.<sup>26</sup>

Imperialism also coordinated well with national ideology. It was a commonplace belief that Britain's comparatively free society and its voluntary rejection of slavery and the slave trade made the country particularly well-suited to rule. Both enthusiastic imperialists and critics of empire believed that British moral superiority entitled and obligated it to set an example for others.<sup>27</sup>

These racial, commercial, religious, and moral bases for a colonial empire permeated the discourse of the day. For instance, a British program of tropical development would, of course, use the African "reserve of labour" just as Japan

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<sup>23</sup> Flora Lugard, "The Tropics of the Empire," in *The Empire and the Century: A Series of Essays on Imperial Problems and Possibilities*, ed. Charles Sydney Goldman (London: J. Murray, 1905), 817, <http://books.google.com/books?id=-hELAAAAYAAJ>.

<sup>24</sup> D.W. Bebbington, "Atonement, Sin, and Empire, 1880–1914," in *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880–1914*, ed. Andrew Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 18.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 326.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 281, 314.

<sup>27</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 39.

was taking advantage of Chinese labor.<sup>28</sup> This was a racial argument, based on notions of European superiority as much as on African resistance to tropical diseases. Some, like Morel, felt that development would depend on African labor because tropical Africa would never be white man's country. Others in Britain and elsewhere, taking Social Darwinism to a logical extreme, believed that Africans would disappear altogether in the face of superior Europeans, seeing this as "a law of nature" and "a blessing."<sup>29</sup>

Whether Africans were surviving or disappearing, there was great interest in using their labor and great concern about their reluctance to work for Europeans under the conditions and for the pay offered to them. A persistent trope was that African men needed to be trained to work. Morel and others believed that Africans needed only free access to markets as free labor to be converted to European notions of work. But others disagreed. Frederick Lugard opined that the work of women in garden plots, the abundance of forest produce, and the absence of population pressure led to abundant leisure for the men, which was "apt to be devoted to indolence, quarrelling, drink, or sensuality."<sup>30</sup> As two practical men reflected in an article about growing rubber on plantations through a combination of paternalistic philanthropy and forced labor for "only" one eight-hour day per week: "it is against the nature of the negro to work without compulsion; he is lazy and happy-go-lucky."<sup>31</sup> This current set the tone for Leopold's Congo: for the foreseeable future, Congolese labor would be procured only by coercion.

The reasons given by Europeans for the necessity of forced labor ranged from the grimly practical to the socially progressive. For example, Africans' forced labor would pay for the services of European governments, such as suppression of intra-African wars and slave-raids, road-building, and port improvements. Many Europeans also felt that African culture needed to adapt to a world without warfare by adopting a new gender division of labor: forced labor for African men would reduce the slave-like burdens of African women by imposing a European domestic model, where men would be wage-earners and providers, supporting women whose first responsibility would be to raise children and make a home while supplementing male wages by gardening or selling goods

<sup>28</sup> Flora Lugard, "The Tropics of the Empire," 817, 826.

<sup>29</sup> "Captain Baccardi's Report," *Congo Supplement to the WAM*, September 1904, 388; Dr Paul Rohrbach quoted in Kingsley Kenneth Dike Nworah, "Humanitarian Pressure-Groups and British Attitudes to West Africa, 1895–1915" (PhD thesis, University of London, 1966), 8; Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain* (London, 1868), 130, quoted in Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 115.

<sup>30</sup> Frederick Lugard, "West African Possessions and Administrations," in *The Empire and the Century*, ed. C.S. Goldman (London: J. Murray, 1905), 835–60.

<sup>31</sup> Wildeman and Gentil, *IRJ*, 21 November 1904, 521.

at markets. If the current inhabitants could not see this, then compulsory labor would teach them.

Like African labor, African resources were the objects of much European interest. Imperialists often claimed that they were acting as trustees for their subjects, with a legal or even sacred charge to rule them for their own good, in the same way that a bank acts as trustee for those without the ability, knowledge, or inclination to take care of their own assets. In Britain, this argument had a component of atonement for past misdeeds associated with slavery.<sup>32</sup> The tension between ensuring the most profitable use of the assets and ensuring the best outcome for the beneficiaries made trusteeship a flexible concept; most Europeans believed they could use the resources of Africa better than the inhabitants. Whether taking control of resources or altering cultural practices, for European purposes or for the supposed benefit of local people, the result was imperial control.

Only a few people contested the idea that conquest and rule were the natural order of things. Recent studies show that the number of anti-imperialists remained small through the late Victorian and Edwardian eras.<sup>33</sup> Many were socialists whose overall program marginalized their views on colonialism, but some anti-imperialists were in prominent positions and could make themselves heard. Their ideas had roots in the application of theory and in reaction to the realities of imperial rule. The philosopher and social scientist Herbert Spencer focused on the harmful effects on home societies as a necessary byproduct of imperial control. The British Positivists, whose secular religion of humanity combined formal rituals with trust in science to answer questions about both nature and society, rejected colonial rule as a violation of the principles of human equality. For Frederic Harrison, President of the English Positivist Committee, “all are our brothers and fellow-citizens of the world.”<sup>34</sup> The Irish historian Alice Stopford Green came at the question from a more practical perspective: her reflexive anti-imperialism sprang from her sympathy for the plight of her native Ireland.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> William Bain, *Between Anarchy and Society: Trusteeship and the Obligations of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition: Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late-Victorian Britain* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> Frederic Harrison, “Empire and Humanity,” in *National and Social Problems* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 247.

<sup>35</sup> Herbert Spencer, “Imperialism and Slavery,” in *Facts and Comments* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1902), 157–71; Robert Wuliger, “The idea of economic imperialism with special reference to the life and work of E.D. Morel” (PhD thesis, University of London, 1953), 25; Brenda Clarke, “Alice Sophia Amelia Green,” in *A Historical Dictionary of British Women* (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 2003), 192.

It is no accident that Spencer, Harrison, and Green all supported the attack on the Congo regime.

The more numerous critics of empire steered a middle path to seek a better sort of imperial rule.<sup>36</sup> J.A. Hobson tied imperialism to flaws in the operation of the capitalist system: unequal distribution of wealth in European societies brought about underconsumption and thus surplus capital, which led financial interests to seek investment opportunities in less advanced countries. For Hobson, the founding and functioning of the Congo Free State sprang from this very problem and served as an object lesson about the need for government control of colonies. Leopold's Congo Free State existed for the benefit of private economic interests: the concession companies and Leopold's government itself, which functioned as a commercial enterprise. This illustrated Hobson's contention that the absence of a proper colonial power such as Britain in a less advanced region would open the floodgates for the unregulated agents of surplus capital to exploit the local people without limitation.<sup>37</sup>

Most critics—including all the early Congo reformers—accepted the basic fact of imperial rule, arguing for improving its practice based on religious, humanitarian, and commercial ideas that resonated with their society. Morel's own idealization of empire appeared when he wished that Belgian socialists

could be induced to modify their sweeping condemnation of all colonial enterprise without exception ... It is a thousand pities that the Belgian Socialist leaders do not make it their business to really study the work of Great Britain in Western Central Africa and of France in her West African dependencies proper. They would then realise not only that it is possible for the management of overseas dependencies to be conducted on lines materially advantageous to both Europeans and natives, but they would realize how inextricably interwoven are the economic and humanitarian sides of all such enterprise.<sup>38</sup>

J. Compton Rickett, MP, captured this spirit when he wrote of “the Imperial idea sanely expressed” in a 1902 letter to Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman asking him to meet with Nonconformist religious leaders, most of whom became active in the Congo reform campaign.<sup>39</sup>

The question of a sane imperialism had divided British public opinion and especially the Liberal party during the Boer War of 1899–1902. The war's

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes towards Colonialism in Africa*, 2nd ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> J.A. Hobson, “Free Trade and Foreign Policy,” *Contemporary Review*, no. 74 (August 1898): 167–80; Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1902) 209, 243–5.

<sup>38</sup> *Organ*, July 1907, 15.

<sup>39</sup> J. Compton Rickett to Campbell-Bannerman, 3 March 1902, Campbell-Bannerman papers, Add. 41237:18–22.

supporters called its opponents pro-Boers and, occasionally, traitors.<sup>40</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Congo regime provided a target that could unite a broader array of the British public, transcending political, confessional, and other boundaries. Critiquing British imperialism in the age of the New Imperialism meant attacking government officials and powerful interests in British society. Concerns about Russia, a great power, and the Ottoman Empire in Bulgaria, Armenia, and Macedonia, a focus of great-power rivalry, similarly could lead to conflict because of the complications of international diplomacy. Leopold's personal imperialism had few prominent defenders in Britain and much less risk of great-power complications. The Congo campaign restored a sense of unity that the Boer War had jeopardized without aggravating the unhealed wounds of the debates over the war.

### **The British Humanitarian Context**

The British Congo reform movement began late in Victoria's reign, flourished under a sympathetic Edward VII, and concluded under George V. This "long Edwardian" period is a useful timeframe for analyzing both Britain and Europe. Philipp Blom has referred to this period as the "vertigo years," emphasizing the uncertainty that permeated European culture.<sup>41</sup>

The movement for reform began in Britain long before it had a foothold anywhere else, and the British movement was the centerpiece even after the movement became transnational. Other countries developed reform movements because of the inspiration and prodding of the CRA, and those movements, except in America, never developed a large popular following, and no country's reformers, except in America and Belgium, had any influence on government policies. Britain's centrality sprang in part from a combination of cultural factors that had no parallel elsewhere, with the exception of the sense of uncertainty referred to by Blom. In Britain, a long relative economic decline during a period of economic growth triggered this anxiety while naval competition spawned fears of war and invasion. The Congo reformers responded to the uncertainty with the hope that the old British confidence could be renewed if they could resurrect the will, vigor, and moral compass required. To do so, they expressed, used, and wrestled with Edwardian assumptions about Britain's role in the world, imperialism, national honor, and economics.

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<sup>40</sup> John W. Auld, "The Liberal Pro-Boers," *Journal of British Studies* 14, no. 2 (May 1975): 78–101; W.T. Stead, "Restoration of the Transvaal to the Boers," *American Monthly Review of Reviews* 35, no. 4 (April 1907), 429.

<sup>41</sup> Philipp Blom, *The Vertigo Years: Europe 1900–1914* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

Another special factor was evangelical religious feeling, a potent political force for the last time in British history.<sup>42</sup> For over a century, moderate British evangelicals relied on free will and individual initiative to save others, body and soul, because they believed that God would not otherwise intervene in human affairs and that their faith would be demonstrated by their efforts to redeem wrongs in the world.<sup>43</sup> Among other demands it made on its adherents, evangelicalism called for atonement for sin through positive action and for conversion of the heathen. Because helping the Congo promised both, the reform movement attracted churchgoing Nonconformists and evangelical Anglicans. This spirit energized even the Quakers in the mid-nineteenth century and, with an infusion of liberal thought, set the stage for an unparalleled Quaker engagement with the problems of Britain and the world during the vertigo years, in what Thomas Kennedy has called the “Quaker Renaissance.”<sup>44</sup>

This emphasis on atonement, saving, and action in the world had spread beyond the evangelicals. Less devout persons like Morel and secularists like Fox Bourne used language that echoed evangelical themes, including the will of God, without overtly doctrinal content. All evidenced a strong responsibility toward the unprivileged, which some analysts have seen as connected with the value the evangelicals placed on the human soul and thus, the individual.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, a commitment to humanity bridged many divides in British society in what historians Georgios Varouxakis and Eugene Biagini have called “enlightened patriotism,” which could unite evangelicals, positivists, and secularists in campaigns against cruel practices, just as it did in the Congo reform movement.<sup>46</sup> John Halstead traces the roots of this sensibility to the blending of Enlightenment philosophies with evangelicalism in the late eighteenth century that, a century later, had thoroughly permeated nearly every institution of

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<sup>42</sup> John F. Glaser, “English Nonconformity and the Decline of Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 2 (January 1958): 352–63.

<sup>43</sup> Amanda Bowie Moniz, “Labours in the Cause of Humanity in Every Part of the Globe”: Transatlantic Philanthropic Collaboration and the Cosmopolitan Ideal, 1760–1815” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008), 340.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas C. Kennedy, *British Quakerism, 1860–1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 6–7, 193.

<sup>45</sup> David Lambert and Alan Lester, “Geographies of Colonial Philanthropy,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 3 (2004): 323, citing Ernst Howse, *Saints in Politics: The “Clapham Sect” and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 7.

<sup>46</sup> Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism 1876–1906* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3–4; Georgios Varouxakis, “‘Patriotism,’ ‘Cosmopolitanism,’ and ‘Humanity’ in Victorian Political Thought,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 5, no. 1 (January 2006): 100–118.

British society with some level of concern for the underdog.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, religious atonement and secular notions of honor came together in the Congo reform movement, building on the argument that Britain had enabled the formation of the misgoverned Congo Free State. This sense of national honor reflected widely held beliefs that Britain's role in the world was fundamentally a force for good: a beacon of freedom, the guarantor of the *Pax Britannica*, the suppressor of the slave trade, and the home of enlightened colonial administration. In this view, countervailing examples of British greed, perfidy, cruelty, or immorality were exceptions, or better yet, exceptions that proved the rule, because Britain was more self-critical than its rivals.

Most of the British public and political elite accepted the inherent virtues of competition and free trade; Campbell-Bannerman observed that questioning free trade was like arguing about the law of gravity.<sup>48</sup> The electorate rejected Joseph Chamberlain's advocacy for protection in the 1906 election, giving the Liberals a tremendous victory; free trade was the chief plank in the party's platform.<sup>49</sup> The Congo Free State's trading monopolies violated not only the 1885 Berlin treaty but also free-trade principles that were more pervasive in Britain than in her major rivals.

Britain's humanitarian tradition had more depth than any other country's. Since the late seventeenth century, Britain had been the leading country in philanthropy conducted by formally organized voluntary associations, a part of the expansion of its public sphere. The United States was the only country in the same league. An 1803 survey counted almost 10,000 British societies, while by mid-century France had 2,000, Italy 443, and Russia only six.<sup>50</sup> The associations did not rely on state, church, or aristocratic authority to set goals, obtain funding, or operate, shifting control to members of the middle class who were the associations' officers, committee members, and donors.<sup>51</sup> Nonconforming Protestants, who had limited political rights until the nineteenth century, found outlets for their energies and political dissatisfaction in these associations.<sup>52</sup> Just as the joint-stock company led to larger and better-capitalized commercial

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<sup>47</sup> John P. Halstead, *The Second British Empire: Trade, Philanthropy and Good Government* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 18.

<sup>48</sup> Colin Cross, *The Liberals in Power* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), 3.

<sup>49</sup> Biagini, *British Democracy*, 351; Herbert Gladstone papers, 1906 election, Add. 46063.

<sup>50</sup> Joanna Innes, "State, Church, and Voluntarism in European Welfare, 1690–1850," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Reform*, eds Innes and Hugh Cunningham (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), 41. Italy's total includes savings banks.

<sup>51</sup> David Edward Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660–1960* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1964), 13.

<sup>52</sup> G.M. Ditchfield, "Rational Dissent and Philanthropy, c. 1760–1810," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Reform*, 196.